Right to Information Act: a vital Tool to Fight against Corruption

*Yashveer Singh

*Research Scholar, Department of Law, M.D.U. Rohtak (India)

ARTICLE DETAILS

Article History
Received: 14 November 2017
Accepted: 17 November 2017
Published Online: 19 November 2017

Keywords
Cracking Corruption
Reduction
Right to information
Secrecy
Transparency

*Corresponding Author
Email: yashveer_82@yahoo.co.in

ABSTRACT

The Right to Information Act, 2005 (RTI) is doubtless a milestone in the deliberate route taken by the country for setting up bedrock foundation for democratic institutions and impart depth to public responsive functioning of the Government and its various agencies. It is a significant tool to ensure transparency in most of the operations of the Government. Its proper implementation will ensure good governance and eliminate corruption and thereby move up the ranking of the country in the index of honesty in the governmental and institutional operations. Right to Information means the freedom of people to have access to government information. It implies that the citizens and non-governmental organizations should enjoy a reasonable free access to all files and documents pertaining to the governmental operations, decisions, and performance. In other words, it means openness and transparency in the functioning of government. Thus, it is antithetical to secrecy in public administration. According to the Woodrow Wilson, “I for one have the conviction that government ought to be all outside and not inside. I, for my part, believe that there ought to be no place where everything can be done that everyone does not know about. Everyone knows corruption thrives in secret places and avoids public places. ‘Right to Information is a potent weapon to fight against corruption, arbitrariness and misuse of power. This paper tries to highlight the RTI as a vital tool in the reduction of Corruption and some steps for the development of democratic governance.

INTRODUCTION

Corruption today is the greatest enemy of good-governance and causing harm to democracy and development. In our country governance depends on three basic pillars of the constitution namely the Legislative which makes the laws, Judiciary which interprets the laws and the Executive which include both the political as well as bureaucracy to implement the laws. Corruption is the use of Public office for private gains. Public servants, who include both the political executive and bureaucracy, are in a special position to practice corruption because of the public office they occupy. Over the years, successive governments at the Centre and in the State have spent crores of rupees on various programmes and schemes..... Had these resources spent properly? We would solve many problems in education, Health care, infrastructure and been able to make a deeper dent in poverty and unemployment which has robbed millions of countrymen from their right to live decent life. India inherited its legacy of corruption from its ancient ruler, who always expected some gifts in the form Nazaran from their subjects. It has become a social phenomenon. There is hardly any area of activity that has remained wholly free from the impact of corruption. In fact, corruption has now been institutionalized has become a commonly accepted way of life. E.g…. admission fee or high donation. Pre-school/Kindergarten classes in education, selling state secrets, pay-offs, bribes, commissions, under the table payments......... Corruption is not likely to be fully eliminated, but the objective is to minimize it so that it becomes an exception and not the rule, by turning it from a low risk and high return activity into a high risk to low return activity. It is a function of all the three pillars. Corruption has the potential to flourish where rents are high, discretion, extensive and reporting and monitoring are poor. Corruption is the result of a vicious cycle. It starts with political corruption and leads to bureaucratic corruption.

CORRUPTION IN INDIA

Corruption in India is a major issue that adversely affects its economy. A study conducted by Transparency international in year 2005 found that more than 62% of Indians had firsthand experience of paying bribes or influence peddling to get jobs done in public offices successfully. In its study conducted in year 2008, transparency international reports about 40% of Indians had firsthand experience of paying bribes or using a contact to get a job done in public office. In 2012 India has ranked 94th out of 176 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, tied with Benin, Colombia, Djibouti, Greece, Moldova, Mongolia, and Senegal. In 2013, India was ranked 94th out of 175 countries. In 2014 India ranked 85th out of 175 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, in 2016 India ranked 79th out of 176 countries in Transparency Internationals Corruption Perceptions Index, compared to its neighbors Bhutan (26th), Bangladesh (145th), Myanmar (136th), China (79th), Nepal (131th), Pakistan (116th) and Sri Lanka (95th). A 2005 study done by Transparency International (TI) in India found that more than 50 per cent of the people had first-hand experience of paying inducement or peddling influence to get a job done in a public office. Taxes and bribes are common between state borders; Transparency International estimates that truckers pay annually $5 billion in bribes. Officials often steal state property. In Bihar, more than eighty per cent of the subsidized rations aid to poor is stolen. Corruption has taken the role of a pervasive aspect of Indian politics and bureaucracy. The economy of India was under socialist-inspired policies for an
“right to information” means the right to information accessible under this Act which is held by right under the control of any public authority and includes the right to—

(i) inspection of work, documents, records;
(ii) taking notes, extracts or certified copies of documents or records
(iii) taking certified samples of material

Obtaining information in the form of diskettes, floppies, tapes, video cassettes or in any other electronic mode or through printouts where such information is stored in a computer or in any other device. There are some obligations for the public authority given in S4 (1). According to it every public authority shall maintain all its records duly catalogued and indexed in a manner and the form which facilitates the right to information under this Act and ensure that all records that are appropriate to be computerized are, within a reasonable time and subject to availability of resources, computerized and connected through a network all over the country on different systems so that access to such record is facilitated.

ROLE OF RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT IN REDUCING THE CORRUPTION IN INDIA

Information is an inalienable and natural right of every human being. In a democratic country each person has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. This right includes right of holding public opinion and to seek, receive and impart information ideas from the public authorities. They have right to know as to what the government is doing and why it is doing. It is only if the people know how government is functioning that they can fulfill the role which democracy assigns to them and make democracy a really effective participatory democracy. The available and appropriate information helps citizens to live a dignified life in a civilized society. Moreover there is a close link between Right to Information and Good Governance. The Good Governance is only possible when the society is very open and Corruption free. In the following sections of the article, it is discussed how RTI has developed a strategy for reduction of Corruption and smooth governance.

(i) Promotes transparency: Right to Information enables citizens to see how governments, those in public offices, are working. Transparency is the corner stone of any good government. RTI act has the potentiality to tackle with this uncontrolled corruption in both at gross root level and at power corridors of high and mighty. After enactment of this act, many a cases of corruption came to light. From the common wealth Games to 2G scam, RTI queries have been the starting point of exposure in a score recent access to corruption. It is the most powerful weapon in the hands of a common people to challenge the hidden fortress of administrative system.

(ii) Promotes Accountability: Accountability is another requirement for reducing Corruption The Right to Information act provides people with mechanism to access information, which they can use to hold the government accountable or to seek explanation as to why decisions have been taken, by whom and with what consequences or outcomes. When people are aware about the government decisions. The public officers and...
common people are interconnected, then it reduces the chances of corruption.

(iii) **Promotes Accessibility:** when citizens have access to information about service delivery and other government functions, they know what they are entitled to and they know how and where to demand their right to those services and other benefits. The Right to Information act by providing easy access of information reduces the traditional long gap between citizens and administration and thus helps in nation building process. The right to know and easy access of government information helps the people to understand the limitations of government at different levels. The real effect of information focuses on the reduction of corruption.

(iv) **Promotes participation:** RTI Act facilitated and encouraged the participation of common people in the process of governance and reduces the imbalance in power relationship, provides a tool to oppose injustice and allows collective spirit to make democracy work for everyone. Right to Information facilitates citizens in making political and economic choices and thus strengthens democracy. The process of paying bribe in day to day life decreases and tries to control as it becomes a social norm in the society.

(v) **Promotes empowerment:** Before enactment of Right to Information Act, participation in political and economic processes and the ability to make informed choices has been restricted to India. As a consequence, commoners remain ignorant of various schemes and are unable to resist when their rights become causality. At the same time, people remain ignorant in terms of the ways and means through they can obtain their entitled rights from the concerned departments legally. RTI act democratized the information and decentralized the power. Power no more remains confined to select few, rather it was made available equally to all citizens. So, undoubtedly RTI serves as a great tool of empowerment for the common people.

**Conclusion**

With the corruption being viewed as one of the biggest obstacles in the efficient delivery of development resources to the poor developing countries. The quality of life of people has also been adversely affected by corruption. The time has come now where the responsibility of tackling this problem, needs to be taken by the people themselves. Civil society institutions have a key role to play in generating the much needed awareness, determination and drive, to expose the maladies of corruption and fine tune the functioning of public organizations. To snap out of the present phase and coordinate our moral, to make a final thrust to break rampant corruption in which Our people have been held captive for centuries. Right To Information Act done that and given the people power to challenge their government. This is not a small thing. Therefore, 62% decline in corruption in Bihar from the 2005 to 2008 where Bihar is most corrupted State. It prevents corrupt public officials from misusing this information to advance their own interest. Thus, RTI has an immense power to make government accountability and transparency. We have the power and responsibility of bringing Good Governance by using and making awareness about the use of RTI.

**References**


