

# **The Right to Information and Its Advantages Towards the Promotion of Good Governance- A Case Study of Protection of Human Rights**

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## **I. Introduction**

Right to Information can be used to undertake social audit of govt. processes, programmes and schemes i.e., National Rural Employment Guarantee Schemes, Public Distribution Scheme, Integrated Child Development Services, Primary Health Services, Primary Education. Good Governance is an essential ingredient for socio-economic development of the country. The govt. of India and state govt. come out with new ideas and approaches but these don't succeed when put to action because of lack of good governance. Good governance is a paramount importance in these times so far reaching changes. In this backdrop of major changes, we need to re-orient ourselves to deliver ways and means to promote good governance. No government of course can hope to survive without strong and effective good governance nor can an administrative system exist without the support of those was established to serve. The Judiciary also justified the role of Information in protecting the human rights and promotion of good governance.

“Access to government-held information allows citizens to hold their government accountable for policy decisions and public expenditures. Informed citizens can more fully participate in their democracy and more effectively choose their representatives. Importantly, access to information laws can be used to ensure basic human rights are upheld and fundamental needs met, as individuals may request information relating to housing, education and public benefits. Such laws also help government, as they increase the efficiency and organization of critical records. Governance is improved, and the private sector is assured of more transparent investment conditions. Access to information bridges the gap between state and society as a partnership transparency unfolds.”

Jimmy Carter, Former President of United States

As quoted in the Global Corruption Report, 2004

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According to Justice P.N.Bhagwati, “No democratic Government can survive without accountability Openness in Government is a guarantee against Administrative misconduct”

This is the age of information affluence. Technology, with its capacity for storing, simplifying and communicating information with astonishing speed has, more than ever, put information at the centre of development. Information is a global resource of unlimited potential for all.

Importantly, information belongs not to the state, the government of the day or civil servants, but to the public. Officials do not create information for their own benefit alone, but for the benefit of the public they serve, as part of the legitimate and routine discharge of the government’s duties. Information is generated with public money by public servants paid out of public funds. Therefore, it cannot be unreasonably kept from citizens.

## **II. Objectives of the Study**

- To know the meaning and concept of Right to Information.
- To know the Advantages of Right to Information.
- To know the stakeholders of the Good Governance.
- To know the mechanisms for the protection of Human Rights and which promotes Good governance.
- To know the status of Right to Information in the national and international arena.
- To know the role of Judiciary in protecting the Human rights and promoting Good Governance in India.

## **III. Methodology**

This research is based on eclatical approach of research methodology demands only doctrinal research methodology. Therefore the work consists both comparative, analytical method as per the requirements in the study. Under doctrinal method the researcher has collected various information for this research from Primary sources and Secondary sources i.e. books, journals, magazines, Articles, Reports of Law commission, Reports of national and International Treaties, All India Reports etc.

## **IV. Necessity of Information**

- ✓ A well informed public can participate more effective in a democracy.

- ✓ Parliament, press and public must be able to properly follow and scrutinize the actions of government. Secrecy is a major impediment to this accountability.
- ✓ Public servants take important decisions which affect many people and to be accountable, the administration (government) must be more transparent about what they are doing.
- ✓ Better information flows make governments more effective and help towards the more flexible development of policy and
- ✓ Enhance public cooperation and participation with the government.

## **V. Benefits of Right to Information**

### **V.I. Democratic Participation and Understanding**

Freedom of Information is essential for public participation. Democracy is based on the consent of the citizens and that consent turns on the government informing citizens about their activities and recognizing their right to participate. The public is only truly able to participate in the democratic process when they have information about the activities and policies of the government. Public awareness of the reasons behind decisions can improve support and reduce misunderstandings and dissatisfaction. Individual members of Parliament are also better able to conduct oversight.

### **V.II. Protecting Other Rights**

Freedom of Information laws can improve the enforcement of many other economic and political rights. In India, the Freedom of Information laws are used to enforce rations distribution by revealing that food vendors are not providing the government-subsidized food to impoverished citizens. This has resulted in substantial changes in the food distribution system to ensure that citizens are getting their food while vendors are getting adequate compensation. Others are using it to prompt officials to respond to longstanding problems with roads, buildings and jobs.

### **V.III. Making Government Bodies Work Better**

FOI laws also improve how government bodies work. Decisions that are known to be eventually made public are more likely to be based on objective and justifiable reasons. In India, grassroots social activist groups use the right to know laws to obtain information on local public works projects and reveal the amounts said to have been paid at public meetings where community members are then asked if the projects have been completed, and how much they were paid. These have revealed many instances in which actual payments were less than the amount that had been

recorded as given to people who had died and supplied to projects never completed.

#### **V.IV. Redressing Past Harms**

In countries that have recently made the transition to democracy, FOI laws allow governments to break with the past and allow society and the victims and their families of abuses to learn what happened and better understand. Almost all newly developed or modified constitutions include a right to access information from government bodies as a fundamental human or civil right.

#### **VI. Concept and Meaning of Good Governance**

It is a phenomenon which can be felt by people. Good governance not only depends on the executive but also on effective farcifying of legislation, executive, judiciary, private institutions, NGOs and co-operation of the people. Good governance often refers to the task of running the - Government in an effective manner. It is qualitatively and conceptually superior to a mere good Government. The right to a legitimate and accountable government, promotion of a society where the Rule of Law and fundamental human rights are respected, ensuring a socially and economically equitable society that is inclusive in nature are all inherent to the concept of good governance. Good governance depends on various factors. A Government, in discharge of its sovereign functions, has to discharge many constitutional obligations and in discharge of these obligations it should be capable of enabling, enhancing and deploying the power of the State for sustainable human development. It is essentially a package to strengthen the institutions of Government and civil society with the objective of making governments more accountable, open and transparent as well as democratic and participatory.<sup>2</sup>

“Good Governance” means the efficient and effective administration in a democratic framework. It involves high level organizational efficiency and effectiveness corresponding in a responsive way in order to attain the predetermined desirable goals of society. According to the World Bank document entitled ‘Governance and Development (1992)’, the parameters of good governance are as follows:

- 1) Legitimacy of the political system. This implies limited and democratic government.

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<sup>2</sup> “Good Governance in International Law: An Indian Perspective”, Paper submitted on ILA Regional conference, South Africa [27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> August, 2007 (Pretoria)]

- 2) Freedom of association and participation by various social, economic, religious, cultural and professional groups in the process of governance.
- 3) An established legal framework based on the rule of law and independence of judiciary to protect human rights, secure social justice and guard against exploitation and abuse of power.
- 4) Bureaucratic accountability including transparency in administration.
- 5) Freedom of information and expression required for formulation of public policies, decision-making, monitoring and evaluation of government performance.
- 6) A sound administrative system leading to efficiency and effectiveness.
- 7) Co-operation between government and civil society organizations.

Similar principles have been enunciated by the OECD, which emphasizes on legitimate government, accountability of political and official elements of government, competence of government to make policy and deliver services; and respect for human rights and rule of law.

In light of the above, if one were to venture a list of parameters that go into determination of the quality of governance, the major factors would include limited Government, legitimacy of the Government, political and bureaucratic accountability, freedom of information and expression, transparency and cost effective administration, established legal framework based on rule of law for protecting the human life, securing social justice and checking abuse of power.<sup>3</sup>

## **VI.I. Components of Good Governance**

The main components of good governance are:

### **VI.I.I. Improving service delivery**

- To provide services to the people in accordance with specified standards, devoid of harassment or corruption, minimising waiting time or inconvenience to the members of the public;
- To ensure cost effectiveness in the provision of services by adopting the most appropriate system;

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<sup>3</sup> Y.K. Sabharwal, Chief Justice of India, "Right to Information, Issues of Administrative Efficiency, Public Accountability and Constitutional Governance" Page.7.

- To adopt participatory mechanisms in public service delivery, involving the people, people's institutions, civil society groups, community based organisations, and self-help groups;
- To develop the appropriate cost, time and quality benchmarks for service delivery outcomes;
- To develop, implement and monitor performance measurement and management systems by developing performance indicators for service delivery;
- To promote decentralisation and strengthen rural and urban local bodies in order to deliver services by empowering them with devolution of functions, finances and functionaries, and undertaking capacity building programmes; and
- To undertake objective assessments of programmes and obtain feedback in order to improve policy contents and implementation mechanisms.

#### **VI.I.II. System Improvement**

- To take steps to simplify government procedures, reduce costs and improve interface with citizens;
- To improve systems in order to improve transparency, cut red tape and ensure better performance management;
- To modify complicated and rigid government processes so as to reduce and eliminate delay, duplication and redundancy, and improve the speed and quality of public service; and
- To reform processes dealing with citizens and those which breed corruption, such as procurement and tenders.

#### **VI.I.III. Financial Management**

- To ensure fiscal responsibility and sanctity of the budget process;
- To move away from expenditure targets to performance-related measures and milestones which can be defined and are measurable; and
- To institute effective budget formulation, execution, monitoring, reporting and asset management in order to ensure that public money is made available quickly and without delay for the purpose for which it is meant and utilised properly for the benefit of the people.

#### **VI.I.IV. Accountability and Transparency**

- To develop and implement Citizens' Charters and Service Charters so as to obtain feedback on implementation and take corrective action with the involvement of citizens;

- To develop and implement a grievances monitoring and redressal mechanism to ensure sensitivity of the administration to the problems faced by the citizens;
- To end secrecy and opacity in administration and bring about transparency so that the administration is seen as just and fair, especially in matters relating to public procurement;
- To ensure that citizens have maximum access to governmental information, by making transparency the rule and official secrecy the exception; and
- To establish citizen evaluation mechanisms such as citizen report cards, social audit, user groups monitoring and independent evaluation by professional agencies.

#### **VI.I.V. Anti-corruption Measures**

- To declare zero tolerance for corruption, strengthen vigilance and anti-corruption machinery, eliminate duplication in enforcement functions and to promote measures to prevent and combat corruption more effectively and efficiently.<sup>4</sup>

Right to Information can be used to undertake social audit of govt. processes, programmes and schemes i.e., National Rural Employment Guarantee Schemes, Public Distribution Scheme, Integrated Child Development Services, Primary Health Services, Primary Education.

#### **VI.II. National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme**

Volunteers from CSOs can inspect mandatory records maintained by Gram Panchayats & seek information & explanation under the scheme. Records that can be verified include:

- Application Registration Register
- Job Card Register
- Employment Register
- Estimates Register
- Muster Roll Register
- Measurement Books (M B)
- Complaint Register, etc

#### **VI.III. Public Distribution System**

Volunteers from CSOs can invoke the RTI Act to collect information and verify the following under this process:

- Register/s containing names of card holder.

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<sup>4</sup> Karnataka Human Development Report 2005.

- Stock registers to assess the total stock
- Sale registers
- List of BPL cardholders
- List of commodities and rates fixed by the Government
- Other registers supplied by Civil Supplies Officer / Mandal Revenue Officer, etc

#### **VI.IV. Integrated Child Development Services**

Volunteers from CSOs can enquire and ensure whether proper services are provided at ICDS (Anganwadi) centre. RTI Act can be used to get information on: (sub. to exemptions)

- Registration of beneficiaries
- Attendance of children and Anganwadi Teacher
- Growth monitoring of children & pregnant women
- Participation in immunization
- Supplemental nutrition
- Pre-school education (2-5 years)
- Regular health checkups
- Primary schools enrollment after anganwadi

#### **VI.V. Primary Health Services**

RTI can be used significantly to enhance PHC service delivery. Volunteers from CSOs can seek information with respect to the functioning of the PHC such as: (sub. to exemptions)

- Field visits & supervisory visits of the PHC staff
- Stock registers and inventory of medicines
- No. of Outpatients treated
- No. of Surgeries conducted and their success rate
- Inspection of immunisation registers & cold chain
- Inspection of other relevant registers
- Samples of medicines being supplied to patients.

#### **VI.VI. Primary Education**

CSOs can take a lead role in ensuring that the public education system function efficiently. The RTI Act can be used for accessing the following information: (sub. to exemptions)

- Teacher Attendance Registers
- Pupil Attendance Registers
- Teaching standards in the schools (Curriculum and daily lessons)

- Enrollment and drop-out rate of students
- Student performance (Progress reports)
- Implementation of Mid-Day Meal Programme
- Infrastructure standards in schools (Class rooms, black boards, teaching aids, toilets etc.<sup>5</sup>

## **VII. Case Study of Various Countries in Relation to Violation of Human Rights and Inefficiency of Governance System, Which is Corrected Through Access to Information Right.**

### **VII.I. India (Right to Work)**

Poor farm and rural laborers were being denied the minimum wage and not receiving entitlements from poverty alleviation schemes. In order to be paid, laborers on the public payroll who build roads, canals, buildings, schools, etc., sign daily logs called muster rolls. People were aware that local officials had engaged in corruption, but it was impossible to prove it without access to the muster rolls. Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sanghatan (MKSS), a NGO began to demand access to the muster rolls from local bodies and were met with strong resistance, including claims by the local authorities that the muster rolls were “secret documents.” However, MKSS countered this resistance with local rallies, hunger strikes, and sit-ins.

In 1994, MKSS began to organize public hearings (Jun Suinwayi), to which it invited villagers, government officials, and neutral moderators such as a journalist, lawyer or academic. Usually, however, government officials did not participate, and on occasion they tried to squash the hearings by threatening violence. The muster rolls were read aloud, and villagers stood up and pointed out discrepancies, such as the names of two people appearing the same day and the inclusion of the names of dead people and people who have left the village. In one instance, villagers pointed out that construction work recorded in official documents related to a canal that had never actually been built. The public hearings gave the people a platform from which to be heard and helped to tip the balance of power in favor of the people, allowing them to hold their government accountable for its actions. In some instances, corrupt officials who had accepted bribes returned the money after being exposed in the hearings.

Until these public hearings, the right to information in the region was considered an elite urban preoccupation, perhaps useful in the “intellectual arena and not on the street corners.” But the hearings caught the imagination of lawyers, journalists and social activists and allowed MKSS to

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<sup>5</sup> “Right to Information and Civil Society Organisation”, this Article is collected from Internet.

play the role of an auditor, demonstrating that social action exposes corruption. Even though it has rarely led to criminal action against corruption, the campaign did lead to the government of Rajasthan enacting legislation on the right to information.

### **VII.II. Thailand (Right to Education)**

In 1998, a parent whose child was not admitted to a well-regarded state-funded primary school, Kasetsart Demonstration School, invoked the right to information to make public the secret admissions process. The admissions process for the school, whose student body was comprised largely of dek sen, or children from elite families, included an entrance exam. The Official Information Commission ruled that the entrance tests of the 120 admitted students were public information. Once disclosed, it was found that 38 students who had failed the test had been admitted through bribery – payments made to the school by their parents. The concerned parent then filed suit, and a governmental legal advisory body, finding in favour of the parent, held that the equality clause of Thailand's Constitution had been violated. It also required all state-funded schools to abandon corrupt and discriminatory policies.

### **VII.III. Chile (Right to a Healthy Environment)**

In 1998, Terram Foundation, a Chilean environmental NGO, requested information from the Chilean Foreign Investment Committee about a major logging undertaking, the Condor River Project. The NGO sought information on the environmental track record of the company behind the project. Its claim was refused by the Supreme Court of Chile, and the NGO brought the case *In Claude Reyes and Others v. Chile* before the Inter-American Commission (IAC). In March 2005 the Inter-American Commission decided in favour of the Applicants, recognizing a general right of access to government information under Article 13 of the American Convention. On October 2006 the Court affirmed the Commission's decision recognizing the right of access to information as an element of the right to freedom of expression. "The Court held that any restrictions on the right of access should comply with the requirements of Article 13.2 of the Convention, the presumption being that all state-held information should be public, subject to limited exceptions. States are required to adopt a legal framework that gives effect to the right of access, and to reform secrecy laws and practices. The Court also ordered Chile to train public officials on the rules and standards that govern public access to information".

### **VII.IV. United States of America (Right to Welfare Benefits)**

"In my home." This is what Horace Gee, an 87-year-old resident of Wisconsin in the United States, said when asked where he wanted to spend

the last years of his life. But he was poor and disabled, and he could not afford the daily care and medication supervision that living at home would have required. The government provided for this care through a welfare programme called Medical Assistance (MA), but only in an impersonal institution, not in his home. A “special” welfare programme under MA did provide for such care within the home, but it had a waiting list of thousands and Horace would have had to wait for years. Thus, he was to be placed in a nursing care facility because that was the only option for survival the government was offering him.

However, Horace filed suit, his attorneys arguing that MA is an entitlement program, and if he were eligible for MA, he should have also been immediately eligible for the “special” benefits. The state argued that they did not have the funding. Horace’s attorneys submitted requests under the federal Freedom of Information Act and state of Wisconsin open records law, for information held by both the federal government and the state agency. With this information, they showed fallacy in the state’s arguments. Horace won the case, received his home care benefits and realized his wish to live his last years at home.

#### **VII.V. Romania**

In July 2004, the Romanian Press reported that the government had issued a secret order requiring all executive agencies to obtain the Prime Minister’s prior approval for all advertising contracts. Subsequently, the Open Society Justice Initiative and the Center for Independent Journalism, who were researching the abuse of government advertising as a means of interference with media freedom in Romania, filed an information request to learn of the content of the order. The Prime Minister’s Office did not reply and thus, the challenging organisations filed a complaint in the Bucharest Municipal Court. In October 2004, the Court directed the government to provide the requested information. A new government was elected in 2005 and agreed to settle the case and provide all available information.<sup>6</sup>

#### **VII.VI. Armenia**

In October 2001, Gagik Kirakosyan, a resident of the Shengavit community of Yerevan city sought help from the “Freedom of Information Centre”, regarding the apartment building he inhabited. The slope of the sewage system for the building was causing the basement to fill with water. Consequently, the building faced risk of destruction. The inhabitants had applied for public officials to rectify the situation over the course of two years, but they had not received a concrete response. They had first applied

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<sup>6</sup> “Open Society Justice Initiative” website available at [http:// www. Justiceinitiative.org](http://www.Justiceinitiative.org). accessed July 21, 2005.

to the head of the district municipality who asked the chief of the third district department of “Water and Sewage” to present a proposed solution to the issue. No action was taken. Next the inhabitants wrote a letter to the Yerevan City mayor, but this letter remained unanswered. Finally, the inhabitants applied to the Republic of Armenia Prime Minister. At the same time, the FOI Centre applied to the mayor to resolve the problem, stressing that by not responding to the inhabitants the municipality was violating the law, particularly Article 6 which listed procedural requirements for handling residents’ suggestions, appeals and complaints.

## **VII.VII. South Africa**

A South African National Defense Force (SANDF) officer requested access to records regarding his home loan from Nedbank Limited, one of South Africa’s largest banks. The Bank refused and the SANDF Officer appealed to the Johannesburg High Court in 2003. His was a groundbreaking application in relation to the Promotion of Access to Information Act. Nedbank defended their refusal, claiming that allowing the officer access to his personal information would harm the bank’s commercial or financial interests. The Open Democracy Advice Centre took up this case as they believed it was in the public interest for financial institutions to release information regarding the provision of home loans. Ultimately, such disclosure promotes fair lending practices and increases public confidence in the decision making of financial institutions.

However, the application was later withdrawn from the High Court after Nedbank disclosed the relevant information to the SANDF officer. They conceded that the disclosure would not harm the bank.

In 2002, the Pretoria Court decided the first major case involving the interpretation of the Promotion of Access to Information Act. During 1998-2001, the South African government acquired the Strategic Defence Package at about R30,3 Billion. Allegations of impropriety and a large amount of public criticism surrounded the Arms Deal. The Auditor-General first performed a high level review, but public dissatisfaction continued and so a joint commission was appointed to investigate the propriety of the entire SDP. Parliament accepted the Commission’s investigative report.

CCII Systems Ltd., a private company that supplies specialised software and computer systems for defence applications, brought an application under the Act for access to information obtained by the Commission. The company alleged that it had been unlawfully excluded as a supplier of defence sub-systems to the South African Navy. The applicant argued that it had not been selected as a result of political pressure or some impropriety and that a review of certain reports would reveal that this was

the case. Judge Hartzenberg ordered the Auditor-General to provide the applicant with a variety of documents relating to the Arms Deal.

ODAC successfully intervened in the case. The Centre's research showed that prior to this judgment, many government officials did not know about the access to information legislation and had not begun to implement the legislation. Therefore, this was an important decision for South Africa.

### **VIII. Judicial Intervention in Relation to Protection of Human Rights and Promotion of Good Governance in India**

The right to know some extent was considered by the apex Court in **"Sheela Barse vs. Union of India"**<sup>7</sup>. In this case, appellant highlighted the sad condition of the children detained in Jails pending trials and sought for speedy trial. Finding her a right person she being a genuine social worker, the Supreme Court ordered for release of information to her regarding such under trials kept in different parts of the country. Though the Court did not attract the right to freedom of speech and expression to confer the right to know, it can be seen that information were ordered to be released to her though she possessed no such right under any statute. Though the disclosure of information was limited to her and the court, it would very well help a speedy trial of the under trial children. Thus once a need has been shown by a person having proper standing, he would be able to seek information from the Government. The courts do not object to such a process.

The principle laid down by Mathew and Bhagwati JJ. was followed by Rajasthan High Court in **"L.K. Koolwal vs. State of Rajasthan"**<sup>8</sup>. In this case the High Court allowed a public spirited citizen's request for information relating to the sanitation conditions of his home city under the principle of right to know based on freedom of speech and expression. Mr. Koolwal on behalf of local inhabitants wanted to see whether the local authority performed its obligatory and primary duties faithfully in accordance with the law of the land. The High Court while accepting the exceptions to the right to know of citizens held that they had a fuller, right to know regarding sanitation and allied matters.

In **"Khatri Vs. State of Bihar"**<sup>9</sup>, Which is otherwise known as Bhagalpur blinding case, the Supreme Court Highlighted the importance of information by holding that the bar placed by sec. 162 and 172 of Cr. P.C. operates only in an inquiry or trial for an offence and can have no application in proceedings under Arts. 32 or 226 of the Constitution.

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<sup>7</sup> AIR (1986) SC. 1773

<sup>8</sup> AIR 1988, SC.

<sup>9</sup> A.I.R. (1981) C 1068 at p. 1072

In “**D.K. Tribedi Vs. Union of India**”<sup>10</sup> case” the observed that, in modern constitutional democracy, it is axiomatic that citizens have a right to know about the affairs of the Government which having been elected by them, seek to formulate sound policies of Governance aimed at their welfare.

In “**Union of India Vs. Association for Democratic Reforms**”,<sup>11</sup> case”, by enlarging the scope of Art. 19(1)(a) the apex Court said that freedom of speech and expression includes right to impart and receive information which includes freedom to hold opinion. Entertainment is implied in freedom of speech and expressions and there is no reason to hold that freedom of speech and expression would not cover right to get material information with regard to a candidate who is contesting election for a post which is of utmost importance in the democracy. Thus right to know is a fundamental right of the citizens enshrined in Art. 19(1)(a).

While dealing with the case of “**Reliance Petrochemicals Ltd. Vs. Proprietors of Indian Express Newspapers, Bombay Pvt. Ltd.**”<sup>12</sup> the Supreme Court brought about a new judicial innovation by holding that the Right to Information is an integral part of the Right to Life enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution. Sabyasachi Mukharji J., speaking for the Court, said: "We must remember that- the people at large have a right to know in order to be able to take part in a participatory development in industrial life and democracy. Right to Know is a basic right to which citizens of a free country aspire (in the broadening horizon of the right to life) under article 21 of our Constitution. That right has reached new dimensions and urgency. The right puts greater responsibility upon those who take upon the responsibility to inform".

## **IX. Suggestion and Conclusion**

To ensure Good Governance, the Decisions must be taken in the public interest. This phrase, “public interest” must be understood properly. No decision should be taken under any kind of pressure.

Every decision must be able to stand close scrutiny and Administration must be transparent. Nothing should be done in secret. Secrecy breeds evil. The reasons for taking a decision must be recorded for all to see. This will also help to eliminate the almost universal corruption in politics and administration today. Civil servants should leave behind their caste, community, religion, and language in their own homes. They should not carry these labels with them when they go to work.

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<sup>10</sup> A.I.R.(1997) 4 SC. 306 SC

<sup>11</sup> AIR. 2002 SC 2112

<sup>12</sup> AIR 1989 SC 190, 202

At the work place a civil servant is just a public servant acting in public interest, trying to serve the public. It requires that people and civil servants must share the information and take mature and useful decisions to make the life of the people happier and useful. Besides both, i.e. those in government and the public must be men of character<sup>13</sup>.

According to Mr. D. R. Kaarhikeyan, President, Foundation for Peace, Harmony and Good Governance, “The Right to Information Act is considered to be the most revolutionary of all enactments in Independent India. The right to information and the assurance of widespread citizen participation in public affairs and an active civil society are essential for the full realization of democracy”.

The Right to Information is the key to democracy and development in,

- \* Making participatory democracy meaningful
- \* Cementing trust in government
- \* Supporting people-centred development
- \* Facilitating equitable economic growth
- \* Tackling corruption<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> D.K.Oza, an ICS officer in his article, “Administration in values: The key to a meaning life”, (shri Ramakrishna math, Chennai), 1996

<sup>14</sup> Rekha Chakravarthi, Research Officer, IPCS, “Right to Information: Essence of Good Governance”, Report of Seminar held at the Indian Habitat Centre on 10 December 2007