

Right to Information Project

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What is RTI?

RTI stands for Right to Information, in simple words it means that any citizen of India can request information from the Government which needs to be answered immediately or within thirty days. This act was set out by the Parliament of India on June 15th 2005 and it came into functioning on October 12th 2005 (Right to Information Act, 2005, 2020).

Right to Information includes the right to: Inspect works, documents, records. Take notes, extracts or certified copies of documents or records. Take certified samples of material. Obtain information in form of printouts, diskettes, floppies, tapes, video, cassettes or in any other electronic mode or through printouts. “information” means any material in any form, including records, documents, memos, e-mails, opinions, advice, press releases, circulars, orders, logbooks, contracts, reports, papers, samples, models, data material held in any electronic form and information relating to any private body which can be accessed by a public authority under any other law for the time being in force.

Right to Information Act 2005 mandates timely response to citizen requests for government information. Right to Information empowers every citizen to seek any information from

the Government, inspect any Government documents and seek certified photocopies thereof. Right to Information also empowers citizens to official inspect any Government work or to take the sample of material used in any work. Right to Information is a part of fundamental rights under Article 19(1) of the Constitution. Article 19 (1) says that every citizen has freedom of speech and expression (rtiindia.org, 2018). RTI is considered as a fundamental right of every Indian citizen, the basic objective of this act it to minimize corruption, empower the citizens and promote full transparency and accountability in the working of the Government.

The Right to Information act is the government’s step towards making the Indian citizens more informed about the authorities’ procedures and actions (Right To Information , 2015). Under the RTI act any information regarding the public authorities’ can be accessed and it can sometimes also cover private bodies as well i.e., any records submitted by private entities to the government can be requested by a citizen. These may include co-operative housing societies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and privately (non-aided) run schools/colleges. (RTI Series , 2020)

The Act also requires every public authority to computerize their records for wide dissemination and to proactively publish certain categories of information so that the citizens need minimum recourse to request for information formally.

The RTI act replaced the former Freedom of Information act of 2002, it extended to the entire country except Jammu and Kashmir and its main drawback was that it did not

acknowledge the right to information of the people. Information was provided only for appeals within the public authorities, It barred jurisdiction of the courts and did not ensure any appeal with any independent body. Before the advent of the RTI act, the disclosure of information in India was restricted by the Official Secrets Act and some other special laws (Freedom of information act of 2002, 2020).

History

The history of RTI dates back to 1987, a few laborers in Rajasthan were refused their wages on charges of inconsistent performance. Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), a non-political organization came forward to help them. Aruna Roy, Nikhil Dey, Shankar Singh, Shekhar Singh from MKSS started conducting *jan-sunwais* (public hearings) for spreading awareness at various places in Rajasthan.

The movement soon gathered strength with social activists like Anna Hazare with Arvind Kejriwal, Shailesh Gandhi, Prakash Kardale and others demanding a law for transparency and accountability in India. Tamil Nadu became the first state to commence RTI in 1997 followed by Goa (1997), Madhya Pradesh (1998), Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Karnataka in 2000 (Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, 2018). RTI helps the citizens gather data on government measures and acts. It is crucial to uncovering spending of public money and has helped unearth scams like Adarsh and 2010 Commonwealth Games. There are

several similar instances where a simple RTI application has evoked success which otherwise wouldn't have been possible without bribing or using some other unfair means. (RTI Series , 2020)

The Act is applicable to the whole of India. Earlier, the J&K RTI Act was in power of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. However, after the revocation of much of Article 370 of the Constitution of India, the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir came under the Central Act also. It covers all the constitutional authorities, including executive, legislature and judiciary; any institution or body established or constituted by an act of Parliament or a state legislature. It is also defined in the Act that bodies or authorities established or constituted by order or notification of appropriate government including bodies "owned, controlled or substantially financed" by government, or non-Government organizations "substantially financed, directly or indirectly by funds". The Right to Information Act 2019 passed on July 25, 2019 modified the terms and

conditions of service of the CIC and Information Commissioners at the centre and in states. It had been criticized as watering down the independence of the information commissions. Supreme Court of India on 13 November 2019, upheld the decision of Delhi High Court bringing the office of Chief Justice of India under the purview of Right to Information (RTI) Act. The Right to information in India is governed by two major bodies: Central Information Commission (CIC) and State Information Commission. Both of these are independent bodies i.e. Central Information Commission has no

jurisdiction over the State Information Commission.

A citizen who seeks to request information from the Government needs to send a fees along with their form to the Accounts Officer of the Government, and additional fees may also be required further in providing the information. However, if a citizen lacks financial support or is disabled, they need not pay. Over the years a digital RTI portal has been setup by the Government, this was done to make the information seeking process faster and easier. (Right to Information Act, 2005, 2020)

About Dewas

The district gets its name from the district headquarters town, Dewas which is said to have been derived on the basis of two traditions. One is that Dewas lies on the foot of a conical hill, known as Chamunda hill about 300 ft. above the ground level on top of which the shrine of Chamunda is located. The image of the Goddess is cut in rocky wall of a cave. It is, therefore, known as Devi Vashini or the Goddess's residence. From this the name Dewas (dev-vas) seems to have been derived. The other view of the probable origin is from the name of the founder of the village Dewasa Bania.

The present Dewas district broadly corresponds to the twin treaty States in Malwa Political charge of the Central India Agency, divided into a Senior and a Junior branch of the early twentieth century with some

adjustments of other territories. There were two district chief ships with separate administrations, acting independently in most matters, sharing the same capital town of Dewas. Consequent upon the merger of princely States and the formation of Madhya Bharat State in 1948 there was reconstitution of boundaries and thus the district in the present form was constituted. The reconstituted district was, however, formed by merging 242 villages of the two tahsils of Dewas of the former Senior and Junior State, 452 villages of Sonkatch tahsil and of 99 villages of Ujjain tahsil of former Gwalior state, 99 villages of Nimanpur tahsil of former Dhar state, one village of Jawar tahsil of former Bhopal State, and then the existing tahsils of Kannod and Khategaon of former Holkar State. With the reorganization of States on

linguistic basis on 1st November 1956, Madhya Bharat, with other territories got merged to form the New state of Madhya Pradesh and thus Dewas continues to be one of the districts in it.

The district is now divided in to 9 tehsils viz. Sonkatch, Dewas, Bagli, Kannod, Tonk-Khurd, Khategaon, Satwas, Hatpipliya and Udainagar. Dewas tehsil is situated on the north-western part of the district, Sonkatch

on the north-eastern part, Bagli on the south, Kannod on the south-central part and Khategaon on the South-east. Weather road connects all the tahsil head quarters. The Head-quarters of Dewas tehsil, which is also the district headquarters, is situated on The Bombay-Agra National Highway No.3 and is also connected by broad-gauge railway line of western Railway.

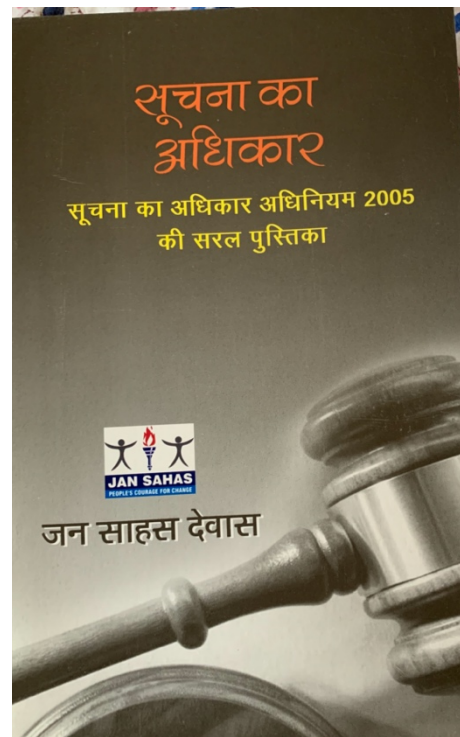
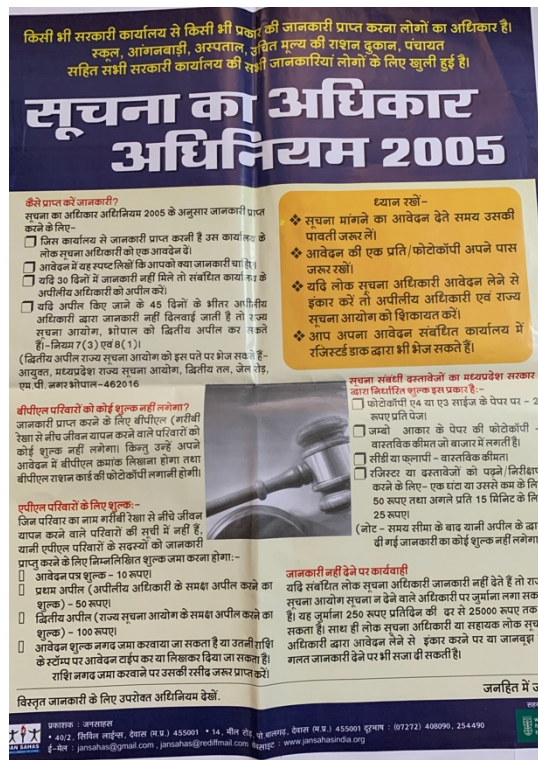
Dewas RTI Campaign

We initiated an awareness campaign regarding Right to information Act in the Dewas district. We went to small villages such as Khategaon and Bagli in the last week of November (i.e 23 November 2020 to 30 November 2020) We went door to door to explain what RTI is and what we are doing to help people. It was striking how peasants working on other people's field or small subsistence farmer had little or no knowledge about this act passed in 2005.

We then decided to take one hour long information sessions regarding the Act. At the end of each session, we asked

people if they had any inquiry that they had to make. On receiving requests, we took care of the fee, explained the form, and read it out to the person. Upon completion of the form we also submitted it at the required district office.

Here are some images of the banners and pamphlets that we used. These were specially made in Hindi so that the few literate people from rural areas are able to understand them.



All other documents and filed samples of our RTI forms are available on charvieshukla.com

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