



The Indian Journal for Research in Law and Management

Open Access Law Journal – Copyright © 2026

Editor-in-Chief – Dr. Muktai Deb Chavan; Publisher – Alden Vas; ISSN: 2583-9896

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International (CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0) License, which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium provided the original work is properly cited.

UNDERSTANDING THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION (RTI) ACT

-Saanchi Bajaj

ABSTRACT

This blog examines the Right to Information Act, 2005, a landmark law empowering Indian citizens to access information from public authorities within statutory timelines. It discusses the Act's objectives—transparency, accountability, and reduced corruption—alongside exemptions for national security and privacy. The piece also covers filing procedures, persistent challenges like delays and misuse, and the growing role of digital governance in strengthening RTI implementation and citizen participation.

INTRODUCTION

According to Wikipedia, The Right to Information Act, 2005 (RTI Act) is an act of the Parliament of India and the Delhi Legislative Assembly which sets out the rules and procedures regarding citizens' right to access information. It replaced the former Freedom of Information Act, 2002. Under the provisions of the 2005 RTI Act, any citizen of India may request information from a "public authority" (a body of Government or "instrumentality of State") which is required to reply expeditiously or within thirty days. In case of the matter involving a petitioner's life and liberty, the information has to be provided within 48 hours.

Although Right to Information is not included as a Fundamental Right in the Constitution of India, it protects the fundamental rights to Freedom of Expression and Speech under Article 19(1)(a) and Right to Life and Personal Liberty under Article 21 guaranteed by the Constitution. The authorities under RTI Act 2005 are called public authorities.

The Act extends to the whole of India. 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".

OBJECTIVES OF THE RTI ACT

1. Promoting transparency

The Act ensures openness in government functioning and reduces secrecy in administration.

2. Strengthening Accountability

Public officials become more responsible because citizens can question their actions and decisions.

3. Reducing Corruption

When government activities become transparent, opportunities for corruption and misuse of power decrease.

4. Empowering Citizens

RTI empowers ordinary citizens by giving them access to information that was earlier difficult to obtain.

5. Strengthening Democracy

An informed citizenry is essential for a healthy democracy. RTI helps people participate actively in governance.

Although RTI promotes openness, certain information is exempted for national interest and privacy reasons. Information related to the following may not be disclosed:

- National security
- Defense matters
- Foreign relations
- Personal information affecting privacy
- Trade secrets and confidential commercial information
- Information that may endanger someone's life or safety

However, if public interest is greater, some exempted information may still be disclosed.

CHALLENGES FACED BY THE RTI ACT

Despite its importance, the RTI Act faces several challenges:

1. Delay in Providing Information

Many departments fail to provide timely responses.

2. Lack of Awareness

A large section of society is still unaware of RTI rights and procedures.

3. Misuse of RTI

Sometimes RTI is used for personal vendetta or harassment rather than public interest.

4. Threats to RTI Activists

Several RTI activists have faced threats and harassment while exposing corruption.

5. Administrative Burden

A huge number of applications increases pressure on government departments.

FILING AN RTI

Fees: A nominal application fee applies (often ₹10 for central government), while senior citizens or BPL (Below Poverty Line) applicants are typically exempt.

Timeline: Public Information Officers (PIOs) are legally required to provide a response within 30 days of receiving the request. If the information concerns the life or liberty of a person, the response time is reduced to 48 hours.

How to File Online: Use the official RTI Online Portal to file applications for central government departments. For state-specific bodies (like local municipal corporations or state police), use regional portals like the RTI Karnataka Portal.

Offline: If the target public authority is not onboarded online, you can submit a physical application (in hard copy) to the concerned PIO along with the requisite fee or postal order.

RTI AND DIGITAL GOVERNANCE

Digital governance (or e-governance) refers to the use of technology, internet services, and digital platforms by the government to provide public services and share information with citizens.

It includes:

1. Online government portals
2. Digital records
3. Online RTI filing systems
4. Mobile applications
5. Electronic databases
6. Digital communication systems

The aim is to make governance faster transparent, citizen-friendly and efficient.

With the growth of digital governance, RTI filing has become easier through online portals.

Citizens can now:

- File RTI applications online
- Track application status
- Receive digital responses
- Digitalization has improved accessibility and transparency in governance.

HOW DIGITAL GOVERNANCE SUPPORTS RTI

1. Online RTI Filing

Citizens can now submit RTI applications through online portals from anywhere.

Benefits:

- Saves time and travel costs
- Easy access for people in remote areas
- Faster submission process

Example: The Central Government RTI online portal allows citizens to file applications digitally.

2. Digital Record Management

Government departments now maintain records electronically.

Benefits:

- Easier storage and retrieval of information
- Reduces loss of records
- Faster response to RTI applications
- Better organization of data

3. Transparency Through Websites

Many government departments upload information on their official websites.

This includes:

- Budgets
- Reports
- Tenders
- Policies
- Welfare schemes
- Recruitment notices

As a result, citizens often get information directly without filing RTI applications.

4. Tracking RTI Applications

Digital governance allows applicants to track the status of their RTI requests online.

This creates: Accountability, transparency and better communication between citizens and authorities

5. Faster Communication

Digital platforms enable quicker communication between Public Information Officers (PIOs) and citizens through emails, SMS alerts, online responses and digital documents. This reduces delays in information sharing.

CONCLUSION

“Transparency is the foundation of democracy, and the Right to Information Act gives citizens the power to seek truth, demand accountability, and participate actively in governance.”

The Right to Information Act, 2005 is one of the most significant laws for strengthening democracy and empowering citizens in India. It has transformed the relationship between the government and the public by promoting transparency, accountability, and openness in administration. Through RTI, citizens are no longer passive observers but active participants in governance.