

Right to Information (RTI)

Synopsis: India is a democracy and welfare State and yet without citizens' right to information. The lack of this right makes democracy and freedom less effective and successful. Access to an information and document is essential to reach the truth and its denial a gross injustice. In the absence of such a right there cannot be a truly responsive and representative government. Therefore, the Official Secrets Act 1923 and such other regulations should be immediately scrapped. It would help in the removal of corruption and underhand dealings and encourage transparency, accountability and responsibility in governance and administration. It is undesirable that any work of the government should be shrouded in mystery... Realizing all these facts and imperatives the Right to Information Bill has been recently drafted but analysts and experts are doubtful if it would be passed and made applicable in near future because of pressure from vested interest.

In the absence of right to information there cannot be truly representative government and a responsive administration... Emancipation from bureaucratic tyranny and baboon cannot be achieved unless this right to information is granted and it is implemented both in letter and spirit. Without an access to information to administration's procedure denatures of a case, the citizens can never truly participate in administration and governance of the country.

In many western countries this right to information already exists. It is there in the US under the "Sunshine Act" of 1976. According to this Act facts cannot be withheld on any pretext. The government agencies are bound to give information which is sought except regarding such matters as relate to national security and privacy of an individual. Such matters as relate to national security and privacy of an individual. In Canada there is Access to Information Act under which the information Commissioner has to reply a query within 30 days of a request.

According to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. Everybody is entitled to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media. The Fifth Pay Commission whose recommendations have been recently implemented was also critical of the official secrecy Act and it said. "The work of the government is shrouded in mystery and the Official Secrets Act gives the government a legal sanction. What is required is a Right to Information Act under which the citizens have a right to find out exactly what is going on, immediately

after a decision is taken. Trans [army also means that all decisions are reasoned and contain an innate logic.”

The Right to Information Bill has been drafted which auguries we have not been able to make any appreciable progress in literacy. The female literacy is below 40 per cent and it is only 20 per cent in Rajasthan. Among the scheduled tribes it is 29 per cent while in the scheduled castes it is 37 per cent. The rate of dropout at elementary level is very high. The Government's claim to achieve full literacy by the turn of the century looks too optimistic. During the Eighth Plan the government failed to utilize the whopping Rs, 252 crores of the amount earmarked for the National Literacy Mission (NLM).

The economic liberalization and opening up of the country's economy have started fielding dividends but the benefits so far have been confined to the upper middle class only. The reform process needs to be expedited and the circle of its beneficiaries widened. The country has yet to redeem its trust with destiny in respect of the poor, the deprived, the downtrodden, the weaker and vulnerable sections of the society.

It is natural that Jai Parkas Marian is not passionately remembered who was rightly regarded as the patron saint of India in the post-emergency days. In the concept of his total Revolution he had envisaged an India free from corruption and all other evils associated with it, among other things. His birth anniversary on 11th October almost passed unnoticed. He was a great crusader and social reformer, next to Mahatma Gandhi who wanted the public to participate in governance and administration at all levels so as to make democracy a real experience, exercise and meaningful in its truest sense. He had been instrumental in the installation of the Janta Party in power but its failures to fulfill the aspirations of the people soon disillusioned him.