

₹ 200

ISSN - 2249-555X

Volume : 1

Issue : 7

April 2012



Journal for All Subjects

www.ijar.in

Listed in International ISSN Directory, Paris.



ISSN - 2249-555X

Indian Journal of Applied Research

Journal for All Subjects

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RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT AND THE ROLE OF PRESS, MEDIA & NGO'S

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ABSTRACT

The right to information is implicit in the Constitution of India, even so the dominant culture of the executive has been one of the secrecy and resolute denial of access of information to the citizen. Citizens groups The reverberations of this struggle led to a nationwide demand for a law to guarantee the right to information to every citizen, with widespread support from social activists, professional, lawyers, and persons with in the bureaucracy, politics and the media, who are committed to transparent and accountable governance and people's empowerment. The detrimental denial of transparency, cumbersome and confusing procedures, proliferation of mindless controls, and poor commitment at all levels to reality results of public welfare. The media have a major professional role stake in the right to information because it would greatly aid the investigation of executive action. This paper will attempt to outline firstly the significance of the right to information, particularly in empowering ordinary citizens to combat state corruption. It will describe in some detail about the role of press, media and Ngo's active participation in the right to information.

Keywords : right to information, role of press media, social activist Transparency, etc.

INTRODUCTION

India is not a nation, it is a civilization. Being a democratic form of Govt. the publicity is a powerful weapon in democracy- no democracy can survive without accountability and transparency. When abuses are exposed the ways and means for their remedial measures are also thought by the agencies of democracy. The "Right to information" is embodied in Article 19(1) (a) of the constitution of India and universal declaration of human rights; recognize this right as a sine qua non for democracy. When journalists purvey news and information it sometimes results in violation of others fundamental human right- the right to privacy contained in Article 21. In a large number of cases, exercise of the right to information by the majority (represented by journalists who are supposedly the eyes and ears of the populace) infringes the right to privacy of the minority. In the space of less then a decade the burgeoning movement for the right to information in India has significantly sought to expend democratic space, and empower the ordinary citizen to exercise far grater control over the corrupt and arbitrary exercise of state power. It is humbly submitted that no right can be absolute. If that were so, it would degenerate into license.

The moment for the right to information has caught the imagination of disparate sets of people. It has touched their middle classes as well as the poor, because of the despair of their unending interface with a corrupt and unaccountable bureaucracy. It has also reached the middle classes through the consumer and environmental movements. The media have a major professional stake in the right to information because it would greatly aid the investigation of executive action. For sub-stained, information and vigilance advocacy for the passage of such legislation, a National Campaign committee for the people's right is constituted. In order to provide effective framework for effectuating the right to information recognized under the Article 19 of the Constitution of India. Government of India passed the Right to Information Act, 2005 which received the assent of the President on 15th June, 2005. In our Orissa the information and public relation department notification 1st October 2005, in exercise of the power conferred by section 27 of the Right to Information Act. No 22 of 2005. The State Govt. (Orissa) implemented the rules from 12th October 2005 to enforce the law in right direction. In the quest for systemic answers to this chronic malaise, it is important to iden-

tify the sources of corruption inherent within the character of the state machineries. These include a determined denial of transparency, accessibility and accountability, cumbersome and confusing procedures, proliferation of mindless controls, and poor commitment at all levels to real results of public welfare can be brought to light.

Such a law must secure every citizen the enforceable right to question, examine, adult, review and assess government acts and decision, to ensure that these are consistent with the principles of the public interest probity and justice. The right to information is available under Article 19. The arena of right to information has been hidden in Article 19(1)(a) of the constitution of India, which also covers the following perceptions :

- (1) It helps an individual to attain self-fulfillment.
- (2) It assists in discovery of truth.
- (3) It strengthens the capacity of an individual in participating in decision making.
- (4) It provides a mechanism by which it would be possible to establish a reasonable balance between stability and social change.

The right to know is safety valve. People of India also ready to know / accept the decision go against them. It facilitates the exposure of error in Governance and administration of justice. The draft legislation laid down penalties for defaulting providing information, in the form of fine as personal liability on the person responsible for supplying the information. The most important feature of this act is that remedies are available under this Section 20 of the act for violation of the provisions. Section 20 provides for punishment to the officer who fails to give information in time. This paper will attempt to outline firstly the significance of the right to information particularly in empowering ordinary citizens to combat state corruption. In my opinion, media such as press plays a vital role for exposure of the secrecy and awareness among the people. The media is able to serve the very purpose of the human rights.

ROLE OF PRESS:

The freedom of press is essential for smooth functioning of a democratic form of Government. Democracy and freedom of press are two sides of a coin which cannot be separated. Just as fish cannot live without water, democracy without freedom

of press is beyond imagination. Its freedom can be used to create a brace new world or to bring about a universal catastrophe. Freedom of Press means right to print and publish without any interference from the state or any public authority, except in so far as authorized by the constitution and by the laws which are constitutionally valid. The constitution in one side has given freedom of press which is included in the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression, on the other side, the constitution has given wide power to Parliament and State Assembly under Article 105 & 194 to punish for breach or contempt of its privilege to any person or press. It is the fourth limb of democracy.

RIGHT TO PUBLICITY:

It is submitted that anti-thesis of the right to privacy is the right to publicity. This particular right was once defined as follows: The distinctive aspect of the commercial value has the picture or representation of the picture or representation of prominent person or performer and protects his reputation or person.

This was laid down in *Ali v. Playgirl Inc.* it is submitted that the right to publicity should be deemed to be part of Article 19(1) (a). Hence, under the umbrella of this Article, (1) Freedom of the press (2) Right to Information and (3) Right to publicity is included.

FREEDOM OF PRESS:

This freedom, like other freedom, cannot be absolute but subjected to well known exceptions acknowledged in public interest, which in India are enumerated in Article 19(2) of the Constitution. The result was that the press could not be subjected to any restrictions by making a law unless that law itself was constitutionally valid, i.e. consistent with clauses (2) of Article – 19. The immediate gain under the constitution, in short, was that while in England, the press could not claim any right or privilege that was denied by any statute in India, the validity of that statute become open to challenge.

The constitution of India has not put freedom of Press on a higher footing than Freedom of expression enjoyed by a Citizen in his individual capacity. Since freedom of expression includes the freedom to propagate one's own views as well as others and to communicate them to others, it follows that the freedom of press includes the right (subject to such restrictions, imposed by the State, as are constitutionally permissible)-

- a. To print & publish news and views.
- b. Such views or openings may be those of the editor or author but also those of other people, printed under his direction.
- c. To distribute or circulate such printed matter to any other party.

It is now clear that the fundamental right of freedom of speech and expression is not applicable to parliamentary privilege. There are number of instances where the breach of parliamentary privilege is used against the press and punishment is awarded. Which raised a conflict between two pillars of democracy i.e. parliament and press.

THE ROLE OF N.G.O'S.:

The disclosers of information shall not prejudicially affect the sovereign and integrity of India. The responsibility of information is also to provide on demand related to NGOs. Parliamentary privilege is very essential for the discharge of function of efficiently and fearlessly which the constitution imposes on Parliament. The Right to Information Act defines public authorities more narrowly to exclude the private sector and all NGOs. It must bring within its purview the judiciary and legislature, while making government explicitly responsible to supply information to the citizen on demand related to corporate sector and NGOs. The NGO's have played a very prominent and positive role in this development and with the vast proliferation of NGO's, a pressing need is felt for a greater cooperation and coordination between these organizations as the same was hitherto largely haphazard and ad-hoc..

In the areas of information gathering and dissemination, NGO's are confronting the need to take advantage of the new sophisticated technique such as computer networks; electronic mail, etc. in the areas of management of information there is a related problem with others for the various reasons. This aspect is required to be looked into in detail as such the people's right to information. However as a important part of a larger movement for equity and people's empowerment.

CONCLUSION:

The sovereignty in our country rests with the people. In a democracy freedom of expression is indispensable as all men are entitled to participate in the process of formulation of common decision. Indeed, freedom of expression is the firm condition of liberty. It has been truly said that is the right to speak which is the mother of all other rights and has to be truly defended. The role of media and N.G.O in creating awareness is of greater importance. In the interest of human right the media has to play a constructive role only. The newspaper can have open public counter where people can inform the society through press about infringement of their human rights. Last but not the least is the issue of the sufficient funds being make available from the functioning of NGO's have an independent funding source which is generally derived from membership. The problem of non-availability of sufficient funds is particularly seen in the NGO's in the Third World Organization.

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