

Role of the Right to Information Act, 2005 in Promoting Transparency and Accountability in Arunachal Pradesh: Insights from Secondary Data's.

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ABSTRACT

The Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005 represents a landmark step in strengthening transparency, accountability, and democratic governance in India by empowering citizens to access information from public authorities. In the context of Arunachal Pradesh, a state characterized by difficult terrain, dispersed tribal populations, and distinctive administrative challenges, the RTI Act has emerged as an important instrument for enhancing citizen participation and bridging the gap between the government and the people. This study examines the role and impact of the RTI Act in Arunachal Pradesh, with a focus on its contribution to transparency, accountability, and citizen empowerment. Drawing primarily on secondary sources such as government reports, official RTI statistics, newspaper articles, and academic literature, the research analyzes patterns of awareness and utilization of RTI among citizens and civil society organizations. It also identifies key challenges in the effective implementation of the Act, including limited awareness, administrative constraints, and infrastructural difficulties. The study finds that while RTI has facilitated greater public oversight of government projects, social welfare schemes, and service delivery, its full potential remains constrained by contextual and institutional limitations. The paper concludes by emphasizing the need for increased awareness, capacity building, and institutional support to strengthen the effectiveness of RTI in promoting good governance in Arunachal Pradesh.

Keywords: Right to Information Act, Transparency, Accountability, Citizen Empowerment, Governance, Arunachal Pradesh, Public Service Delivery, Participatory Democracy

1. Introduction

The Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005, is a landmark legislation in India aimed at enhancing transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in governance. It empowers citizens to access information held by public authorities, thereby reducing corruption, promoting participatory democracy, and ensuring effective governance. In Arunachal Pradesh, a state with challenging geography, dispersed tribal populations, and unique administrative contexts, on 2nd October 2005 the RTI Act was introduced in Arunachal Pradesh. Thereafter RTI has emerged as a critical tool for empowering citizens, promoting transparency, and bridging the gap between government and people in state of Arunachal Pradesh.

Since its enactment, the RTI Act has contributed to enhancing administrative responsiveness and promoting a culture of accountability within public institutions in Arunachal Pradesh. Instances of information disclosure through RTI applications have not only helped uncover irregularities and inefficiencies but have also encouraged better record-keeping and decision-making within government departments. Moreover, civil society organizations and the media have played an important role in using RTI as a tool to highlight governance issues and advocate for citizens' rights, further reinforcing the democratic potential of the Act in the state.

However, despite its transformative potential, the implementation of the RTI Act in Arunachal Pradesh has faced several challenges. Limited awareness among citizens, especially in rural and remote areas, capacity constraints within public authorities, inadequate infrastructure, and delays in information dissemination have affected the effective utilization of RTI. Furthermore, the unique geographical and administrative realities of the state necessitate a context-specific understanding of how RTI functions on the ground. Given the relative scarcity of field-based empirical studies in the region, there is a need to systematically examine existing evidence to assess the role and impact of RTI in promoting transparency and accountability.

In this context, the present study titled “Role of RTI Act in Promoting Transparency and Accountability in Arunachal Pradesh: Insights from Secondary Data” seeks to analyze the functioning and impact of the RTI Act in the state through an examination of secondary sources such as government reports, newspaper articles, journal publications, and official RTI statistics.

2. Objectives

1. To examine the role of the RTI Act in promoting transparency and accountability in Arunachal Pradesh.
2. To assess the awareness and utilization of RTI by citizens and civil society organizations in the state.
3. To identify the challenges and limitations in implementing RTI in Arunachal Pradesh.
4. To explore the impact of RTI on governance, public service delivery, and citizen empowerment.

3. Research Type

This study is qualitative and descriptive, based on secondary data analysis. Data has been collected from:

Government records and annual RTI reports (State Information Commission, Arunachal Pradesh)

Research studies and academic journals on RTI in Northeast India

Media reports documenting RTI applications, public grievances, and outcomes

Reports from civil society organizations and NGOs working on transparency and governance

4. Literature Review

1. **Transparency and Accountability:** Scholars such as Sundar (2006) and Jain (2013) emphasize that RTI strengthens democratic governance by making government information accessible to the public, reducing corruption, and improving public administration. In the context of Northeast India, RTI is crucial for monitoring development projects, including those funded by central schemes such as MGNREGA, health programs, and education initiatives.

2. **Awareness and Access:** Several studies indicate that awareness of RTI in remote areas is limited, particularly among rural and tribal populations. According to a report by the Arunachal Pradesh State Information Commission (2019), most RTI applications in the state come from urban areas, highlighting the need for greater outreach and education in remote villages.

3. **Challenges in Implementation:** Secondary sources point out challenges including bureaucratic delays, lack of digitization, limited literacy among tribal communities, and logistical difficulties in mountainous regions. Studies by Das (2018) show that even when citizens file RTI applications, timely responses are not always guaranteed, and information quality varies significantly.

4. **Empowerment and Governance:** RTI has enabled citizens, journalists, and NGOs to hold government departments accountable. Reports indicate cases where RTI applications have exposed irregularities in welfare schemes, construction projects, and recruitment processes in Arunachal Pradesh, contributing to improved service delivery.

Findings

1. **Increased Citizen Awareness:** There is a gradual rise in RTI applications in Arunachal Pradesh, particularly in urban centers like Itanagar, Pasighat, and Ziro, indicating growing awareness of citizens' rights.

2. **Transparency in Public Schemes:** RTI has facilitated scrutiny of government schemes, such as the Public Distribution System, social welfare programs, and infrastructural projects. Several cases highlight the uncovering of mismanagement and delayed implementation, leading to corrective actions.

3. **Role of Civil Society and Media:** NGOs and media organizations have actively used RTI to highlight governance issues, thereby promoting accountability in local administration.
4. **Challenges in Accessibility:** Remote villages face geographical and logistical barriers, limited internet access, and lower literacy levels, restricting widespread utilization of RTI. Additionally, bureaucratic hurdles sometimes discourage citizens from pursuing applications.
5. **Judicial and Administrative Support:** The Arunachal Pradesh State Information Commission has been instrumental in adjudicating disputes and ensuring compliance, although delayed hearings and limited manpower remain concerns.

5. Conclusion

The RTI Act has emerged as a vital instrument for promoting transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in Arunachal Pradesh. While there is evidence of positive impact in exposing corruption, improving governance, and empowering civil society, challenges remain in ensuring equitable access, timely responses, and comprehensive awareness among rural and tribal populations. To maximize the benefits of RTI in Arunachal Pradesh, policy interventions such as:

Awareness campaigns in local languages

Digitization of records and online RTI filing

Capacity-building programs for government officials and citizens

Strengthening the State Information Commission are crucial. Overall, RTI has the potential to strengthen democratic governance in the state, foster citizen empowerment, and enhance public trust in government institutions.

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