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Interdependence of Right to Information and Information Literacy: An Indian Perspective

Ms. Anjali Gulati

Lecturer

Department of Library & Information Science

Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow

India

anjali.g1@gmail.com

Ms. Seema Dogra

Project Associate

Traditional Knowledge Digital Library

Industrial Toxicology Research Centre

Lucknow

India

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Abstract

In the present era, India is on the uppermost belt of all developing countries with its booming technology sector. To enhance this 'Tech-boom', government of India has recently enforced Right to Information Act (RTI). The paper discusses the know-how about Right to Information (RTI) Act. It will further highlight the concept of Information literacy, initiatives of Information Literacy by various Information kiosks in India such as Village Knowledge Centre project by the Swaminathan foundation, Tarahaat etcetera and initiatives of Information literacy taken by Government of India. Further paper discusses Public Library System in India (including statistical information), the role of Raja RamMohan Roy Library Foundation. Furthermore, the authors opines about the interdependence of Right to Information and Information literacy by elucidating the project of IIT Kanpur i.e. Info-Thela etc. The paper concludes with the suggestions and recommendations.

0. Introduction

India is a fastest growing economy in the world with a literacy rate of 64.8% (1), GDP growth rate of 8.1% (2) with 100-million telephone connections (3) and 50.6 million internet connections for its over one billion people (4). India, as the home to one of the world's most advanced computing and engineering sectors, is at the forefront of many such efforts; state and national governments, private concerns, and civil society are all involved in extending what they see as the promise of rapid development to their rural areas, as well as the cities. The Government of India (GoI) and many of the Indian states have invested heavily in IT; it is of sufficient importance that not only has the GoI instituted a Ministry of Information Technology (<http://www.mit.gov.in>), but a number of states have done so as well, all competing for a place in the sector. IT centers exist in the major cities of Bangalore (known as the "Silicon Valley of India"), Kolkata, Mumbai, and Chennai. Indeed, India is a major player in the global IT phenomenon (5). With the advent of information technology industry, the information is growing at the exponential rate and has been substantially contributing towards country's development. The growth of information has given rise to the need of information bill that was passed by parliament in December 2002 but it never came in to force. The nine states of the country (out of 28 States) namely Delhi, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Jammu & Kashmir, Assam, Goa, Madhya Pradesh already have laws on the right to information. Although these acts came into force but were not effective enough to take the country in its stride and thus the need was felt to establish the National '**Right to Information act**'.

1. Right to Information Act: Know-How

'**Information**' belongs to the public, generated with public money, served by public servants and paid out of public funds. Public participation in the democratic and governmental process is at its meaningful best when citizens have adequate access to official information. This access lays the foundation for good governance, transparency, accountability and participation. The fundamental right of freedom of speech and expression is meaningless without the requisite information about issues and subjects on which opinions are to be formed and expressed. The right to information, is, therefore, implicit in the right to free speech and is as much fundamental. Indian parliament has now enabled the citizens to exercise their fundamental right of free speech and right to information.

Therefore, there are reasons to cheer the passage of the much awaited Right to Information Bill – 2005, a landmark in the history of Indian democracy. The new legislation is a radical improvement on the relatively weak and ineffective statute to replace, the freedom of Information Act, 2002. It unequivocally confers on all citizens the right to access information and makes the dissemination of such information an obligation for all public authorities. It is in accord with both Article 19 of the Indian Constitution as well as Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It seeks to ensure – Maximum disclosure and minimum exemptions consistent with constitutional provisions, an effective mechanism for access to information and disclosure by authorities, an independent appeal mechanism, penalties for failure to provide information as per the law.

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh has described the Right to Information (RTI) Bill as a means to fight corruption and inefficiency in the government at various levels. It brings within its ambit Central and State administrations, panchayats, local bodies and even non-governmental organizations getting public funds. This is a passport for the citizen for unprecedented access to information including inspection of documents and extraction of data and marks a major milestone for Indian democracy (6).

2. What does Right to Information mandate says

The preamble of RTI Act states that it sets out to provide a “*practical regime of right to information... in order to promote transparency and accountability. Only citizens can request information from a ‘public authority’, defined as any body constituted under the Constitution or a law made by Parliament or any body owned or controlled by the Central Government*”. This definition does not include private bodies that perform public services. Broadly, the Act includes a right to copy and inspect records, take certified samples and inspect public works (7).

According to the mandate of ‘**right to information**’ it is said that Chief Information Commissioner (CIC), Information Commissioner (IC), Public Information Officer (PIO) should be appointed in all central government, ministries and departments and these have to provide required information to the public within the stipulated time. In the mandate, it is proposed that Central Chief Information Commissioner would be appointed by a committee consisting of the Prime Minister, leader of the opposition and a union minister nominated by the Prime Minister. Each state will also have its own Information Commissioner. Additionally, an officer at each sub-divisional level or other appropriate sub-district level shall be designated as Public Information Officer (PIO). The PIO shall receive all requests for information; pass them on to the designated authority for transmission to the relevant department or agency (8). To ensure that the information sought is provided quickly, the bill makes it obligatory for the Public Information Officer to provide the information requested for as permissible under the Bill, not later than 30 days. To ensure that the Government officials and all public authorities provide high priority to requests for information from citizens, deterrent penalties have been prescribed for failure to provide information in time or, for refusing to accept application for information or, for giving incorrect, incomplete or misleading information or destroying information and so on (9).

Although information is growing at an exponential rate but the million dollar question is ‘how to get the information’, ‘who will give the information’, ‘from where that information can be sought from’? Thus there is immediate need is to introduce and incorporate the concept of Information literacy ‘**in the newly formed RTI act**’.

3. Information Literacy

The information has its existence since the existence of human being. With the advent of ICT and computers, the delivery of information has become easy, inexpensive and every ones cup of tea. As information is increasingly codified in digital forms, new skills are needed to operate the technology to search for, organize, manage information and use it to solve problems and create new knowledge and cultural products. The greatest challenge for society in the 21st century is to keep pace with

the knowledge and technological expertise necessary for finding and evaluating information. Given the ever-expanding sea of information at our disposal, analysis of an information need, knowledge of resource types, evaluation of access tools, has given rise to the need of information literacy. Information literacy aims to develop *both* critical understanding *and* active participation. It enables people to interpret and make informed judgments as users of information sources; but it also enables them to become producers of information in their own right, and thereby to become more powerful participants in society. Information literacy is about developing people's critical *and* creative abilities (10).

Information literacy encompasses computer literacy as computer-literate person can manipulate electronic information tools to gain access to information. It also encompasses the ability to identify, locate, evaluate, organize and effectively create, use and communicate information to address issues or problems at hand. It is a prerequisite for participating effectively in the information society and part of the basic human right of life long learning (11).

Information literacy is part of the basic entitlement of every citizen, in every country in the world, to freedom of expression and the right to information and is instrumental in building and sustaining democracy. It, therefore, is a means of personal empowerment. It allows people to verify or refute expert opinion and to become independent seekers of truth. It provides them with the ability to build their own arguments and to experience the excitement of the search for knowledge. It not only prepares them for lifelong learning; but, by experiencing the excitement of their own successful quests for knowledge, it also creates in young people the motivation for pursuing learning throughout their lives (12).

Having stated about the basic concept of Information literacy, it is worthwhile to discuss various Information literacy initiatives such as initiatives by Information Kiosks in India and initiatives by government and private bodies etc.

4. Initiatives of Information Literacy

Information literacy competency ensures maximum utilization of the information resources as well as optimization of information handling capabilities. After Independence, India has experienced growing population of literate and educated citizens due to various efforts in universalisation of elementary education through programmes like, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), National Literacy Mission and so on. Books have been backbone of literacy program in India but invasion of TV and AV aids has changed this medium and can be very important tools for eradication of illiteracy and spreading information literacy. There are several initiatives taken by Information Kiosks for spreading information literacy in India as discussed below.

4.1 Initiatives by Information Kiosks in India

In India there are various Information Kiosks in rural areas which are working slowly towards spreading information literacy among common people. These Kiosks are:

- **Village Knowledge Centre (VKC) Project by the Swaminathan Foundation**

It is the largest global effort to reach information and communication technology [ICT] to the people. This project initiated the delivery of knowledge to the poor through connecting villages by PCs, telephones,



Fig 1 [13]

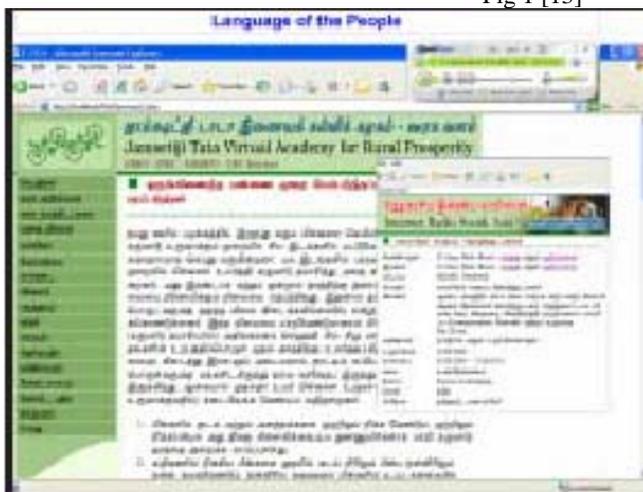


Fig 2 [14]

VHF duplex radio devices, e-mail to facilitate both data and voice transfer. The entire project draws its sustenance from the holistic philosophy of Swaminathan, which emphasizes integrated pro-poor, pro-women, pro-nature orientation to development and community ownership of technological tools against personal or family ownership, and encourages collective action for spread of technology. The local

volunteers gather information and feed it into an Intranet and provide access through nodes in different villages. E.g. In Veerampatinam village (in Pondicherry), a fisherwoman [Fig.1] downloads every day the weather data from the U.S. naval oceanographic office operated by the Department of Ocean Development gives information through satellite on the longitude and latitude of the place of fish schools. Now, these women have put up loudspeakers to announce the information. This is how they make poor people info-literate.

Information needs vary from village to village; for example, villagers in a fishing village are keen to get accurate forecasts of wave height and location of fish shoals, whereas people in an interior village may look for help in dealing with sugarcane rot. There are also gender differences in information needs. The women need more information on health related issues from women doctors. That is why it is important to provide timely locale-specific information and in local language and the information provided should be authentic and useful in the immediate context. While access to relevant information may be the key to development, mere provision of information is not enough. Information is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for empowerment. Information has to be linked to the means of using the information. Thus Packaging of appropriate content (e.g., in local languages [Tamil]) for specific community needs and choices is an important activity of the VKC [Fig 2]. For example, if older people are empowered with knowledge relating to cataract, they should know where the cataract eye surgery can be performed at low or no cost (in Pondicherry, the Aravind Eye Hospital kindly provides this facility) (14).

- **Tarahaat**

TARahaat Information and Marketing Services Ltd (TARahaat), is India's premier social enterprise, using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to deliver a broad spectrum of services and products designed for the rural and peri-urban citizens of India. Developed as a "**one-stop shop**" for India's rural community to access information on matters ranging from education to market prices, the TARahaat Web site has to cater to a widely diverse rural Indian community. TARahaat delivers its services through a network of franchised community and business centres owned by individual entrepreneurs. This project provides a bunch of services like employment, mandi-market, e-mail, weather, matrimonial, etc. to the village community to make people literate about the information of their various requirements. A layman can easily use the highly picturised interface. This provides training and management support to its network of franchised TARAkendras to enable them to provide standardized services and also acts as a central provider of the products and services needed, adapting them to meet the local needs of each region. TARAgyan's (TARahaat's educational wing) programmes are much sought after by the rural populace, primarily because its courses are specifically designed to meet the needs of the rural students and the demands of the present day job market. Growing numbers of young men and women are coming to TARAkendras for these courses. The instruction is mostly delivered in the local language with technical terms additionally provided in English. In the absence of required infrastructure to deliver the courses online, multi-media CD-ROMs and audiocassettes are used to supplement text-based instructions for the courses. All the courses are delivered by trained and certified instructors (15).

4.2 Initiatives by Private bodies/Government

- **SwiftJyoti**

This is a low cost training programme developed by NIIT for creating computer awareness. On World Literacy Day, December 2nd, National Institute of Information Technology (NIIT) with its 3800 Education Centres in India has launched computer literacy program since 2001. The program covers mostly under privileged school children. It has given a slogan **each one –reach one** with the aim to strengthen young minds with the light of computer knowledge and help them integrate into tomorrows IT savvy India. Targeted at the broadest section of society-from six to sixty year olds, programme has enabled a large number of citizens to experience their first brush with computers. The programme employs task-oriented techniques relevant to daily life, to make computer learning easy for the ordinary persons. The SWIFT Jyoti program is a complete portfolio of contemporary IT skill sets that enable learners to successfully use computers both at home and in the workplace. The course content covers the following areas: Word Processing, Spreadsheets, Presentations, Graphics and pictures, Internet browsing, online chatting etc (16).

A program called **Swift Jyoti for Women** (containing life-relevant content for women) forms part of a series of initiatives of NIIT. In this major initiative, NIIT intended to reach out to thousands of Indian women and has decided to dedicate the month of March (beginning with International Women's Day on March 8) to bringing women and computers together. Women, India's emerging talented workforce, still lag behind when it comes to computer awareness and proficiency. **The Swift Jyoti course has been altered to suit the needs, tastes and likings of women.** The course content has a lot of exercises that will take the learners into various women's sites on the Internet. In the process they will learn that getting tips on everything from entrepreneurship, financing to parenting is just a click away. The women registering for the program will receive support on NIIT's popular portal (swift.netvarsity.com). Yet another key incentive for women is the special facility called '**Ask Kusum**' which will be available to them once they log into swift.netvarsity.com. '**Ask Kusum**' is a forum especially dedicated to women and can be accessed in Hindi, Tamil, Bengali, and English to start with. This will ensure wider reach and participation from women (17).

- **Akshaya**

On 18th November 2002, H.E. the President of India, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, launched **Akshaya**, an initiative powerful enough to transform the lives of 65 lakhs in the state. This project, piloted in one of the backward districts - **Malappuram** - has evolved into one of the most dynamic interventions in public-private partnerships in the State. Under this project, one person in every family in Kerala will be familiarized with the basic use of computer and empowered to access innumerable services that Information and Communication Technology offers. The project involves setting up around 5000 **multi purpose community technology centres** called **Akshaya e-kendras** across Kerala. Run by private entrepreneurs, each e-kendra set up within 2-3 kilometres of every household, will cater to the requirements of around 1000-3000

families to make available the power of networking and connectivity to common man (18). Akshaya project's deliverables include (19):

- (i) Creating & expanding economic opportunities in the knowledge economy through e-learning, e-krisi.
- (ii) Empowering individuals and communities through enhanced access to information by capacity building programmes to citizens.
- (iii) Modernising and upgrading skill sets of ordinary citizens.
- (iv) Integrating communities through creation of e-networks.
- (v) Creating awareness of ICT tools and usage.
- (vi) Generating e-content useful to the common man in local language.
- (vii) Generation of service delivery points even in the remotest areas.
- (viii) Generating at least 15,000 job opportunities.
- (ix) Generating direct investment of over Rs. 500 cr

This project piloted in the district of Malappuram is being replicated all over the state in phases making Kerala the foremost knowledge society in the country and model in development for the whole world.

Although there are chain of Information literacy initiatives made by Information kiosks but missing link is 'Public Library' (The father), whose main aim is to contribute in life long learning process of an individual and Info literacy (Child) is small but significant component of public library.

5 Public Library system in India

Public libraries in India have a countrywide spread, consist of state central libraries in every state, district libraries, urban public libraries at the cities and rural public libraries at the villages. Public libraries are mainly supported by state governments and local authorities, and some times by the central government, developmental agencies, non-government organizations and private trusts (20). The Indian Public Library Act decrees that libraries are for everybody and that the service to the public shall be free of charge. Because Public libraries are accessible, open to the public and generally safe, can be uniquely comfortable places for local community to spend time without having to audition, apply, sign up or pay a fee. Public libraries ought to use new technologies to develop online world to transform the lives of unprivileged rural masses in India (21). Table 1 shows the number of different public libraries in India. Table data also indicates that there is lack of existence of public libraries in most of the villages even after 59 years of independence. The real catch of India's development lies in villages where focused spread of rural libraries can catalyze the diffusion of knowledge among rural masses. This effort needs to be the core of our social and rural development programmes as this has been untouched so far. Probably, this is one of the reasons of mass infectivity of literacy programmes and other development programmes envisaged for rural mass.

Table 1: Penetration of Public Libraries in India (22)

Demography of India	Number	Public Libraries	Number	Percentage covered
States and Union Territories	35	State Central Libraries	28	80%
Districts	592	District Libraries	451	76%
Talukas	3,987	Taluka Libraries	501	12.5%
Villages	587,226	Rural Libraries	28,820	4.9%

Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF) is the nodal agency of the Government of India to support public library services and system and promote public library movement in the country. The RRRLF undertakes different functions in each state and union territory through a State Library Planning Committee (SLPC) or State Library Committee (SLC). Its headquarters' is located at Kolkata and it has four zonal offices in Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai. RRRLF provides financial and technical assistance to public libraries and organizations engaged in the promotion of public library development through different schemes. Schemes of RRRLF broadly categorized as Matching Schemes and Non-Matching Schemes. Assistance under matching schemes is given from the resources shared on 50:50 matching basis with the state governments. Assistance under non-matching schemes does not have share of the state governments (23). Since independence The Foundation has covered, out of 60000 public libraries located in the country in a scattered way, more than 31000 libraries at different levels (24).

State Central Libraries	28
Divisional and District Libraries	451
Sub-Divisional/Taluka/Tehsil Libraries	501
Town & Rural Libraries	29820
Nehru Yuvak Kendras	272
Jawahar Bal Bhavans	49
Others	128
TOTAL	31249

Information literacy is a survival skill in the Information Age. Instead of drowning in the abundance of information that floods their lives, information literate people know

how to find, evaluate, and use information effectively to solve a particular problem or make a decision---whether the information they select comes from a computer, a book, a government agency, a film, or any number of other possible resources. Libraries, which provide a significant public access point to such information and usually at no cost, must play a key role in preparing people for the demands of today's information society (25). In addition to borrow books for entertainment and leisure, public libraries can also disseminate information on community development, best practices, literature, culture, trade, education etc., which may be further elaborated when needs arise. Information seekers may want consolidated or exhaustive information. To provide right information to the users, public librarians need to be trained to develop information literacy competency and should able to educate the user that will make user information literate.

As the feet needs a backbone to support human body so the information literacy (feet) needs Right to information (back bone) and vice-versa for actualizing the practical implementation of Right to information to make better informed society of the country. Thus the subsequent paragraphs would be highlighting the interdependence of right to information and information literacy and the role of public libraries which acts as catalyst between the relationship of right to information and information literacy.

5 Interdependence of Right to Information and Information Literacy

Information is indispensable commodity for the functioning of a true democracy. People need to be kept informed about national and global current affairs such as political, social and economic, etc. Free exchange of ideas and free debate are essential for the Government of a free country. In this information age, right to information is considered as a critical factor in socio-cultural, economic and political development. In a fastest developing country like India, it is utmost important that information should be available rapidly and in the simplest possible form. This is important because every developmental process depends on the availability of information. There is a strong relationship between the right to information, information literacy and the development of a country. A user must be information literate to search, analyse, interpret and use information. Right to information can be implemented effectively when person is info-literate i.e. when he knows the exact methods of extracting required information from the junk of information.

Information literacy facilitates '**access to information**' and has real impact on health, wealth and well being and thus information literacy is known to be human right issue. For example Health information is a unique axis for information literacy as illnesses are often a powerful motivation for families to become information literate. People can be made info-literate about various diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, dengue, etc. so that they can prevent themselves from these diseases and can play a part in preventing their continued spread. This is how they can use their right to information of health. For example, in India, **Infothela** (26) [Fig 3, Fig 4], a self-sustaining project aimed to deliver information and spread knowledge among poor masses. Infothela is a mobile unit, serve the purpose of education, entertainment, and provide agriculture based information, weather information, health care information, government

information, etc. Medical application of the Infothela is a comprehensive module to improve health standards in rural India.



Fig 3

Fig 4

The major objectives of **Infothela** are:

- To empower the rural women through information and understanding of health and disease related issues.
- Better, quicker, easily accessible, and cheaper diagnostic facility for treatment and aftercare.
- Improvement of health and hygiene of villages, preventing loss of man-hours due to disease and thereby improving their earning potential.
- Providing **Primary Health Screening** At the Doorstep.
- Educating villagers **about Microbes** responsible for various diseases.
- Providing disease and health related information is the first step in improving the health of the people through web site <http://bimarijankari.org/>. Information

is being made available about the existing government health programme, like pulse polio [fig 5] (27).



Fig 5

Besides health information, RTI also embraces Agricultural information, Educational Information legal information etc. To actualize the newly coined RTI, National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), Hyderabad is already working towards establishing two Public Information Kiosks (PIKs), which would bring new dimension to the working of a public library. Thus, these PIKs are the step forward towards making people info-literate about their requirements, so that they can use their right of information effectively. The objectives of the PIKs are:

- To prepare a resource inventory of the identified Mandal(Block) including population, ratio of male and female labour, literacy, land, water, irrigation facilities etc.
- To collect technical information relating to agricultural technology developments, cropping systems and patterns (such as information on important crops cultivated, crop-wise production figures), Agricultural marketing facilities, prices of various commodities, irrigation facilities.
- To collect utility information regarding health (such as no. of Primary Health and immunisation facilities, Addresses of blood bank etc), education (list of Colleges/ High schools/ Primary schools/ Polytechnic/ Vocational training institutions, types of scholarships available for the meritorious and poor students), employment, financial (List of banks/ Financial institutions, Types of credit schemes available for rural communities), legal and related topics using resources available from local, state, central and international agencies and networks (28).

Thus, these PIKs are the step forward towards making people info-literate about their requirements, so that they can use their right of information effectively.

At Global front also, libraries have been playing a significant role in providing health information to common public and hence establish a close link between right to information and information literacy. For example, in the Netherlands several public libraries have set up **Health Information Points** to inform citizens and patients. There has been a shift of focus within the medical sector from excessive regulation of

services to a more patient-driven and demand based health care which has given patients a stronger position in medical treatment and decision-making. *Part of this new paradigm is to inform people about their rights as patients and their right to information about their health, diagnosis and proposed treatment.* Patients have become more empowered and require better information services. Citizens in general need to have access to social and community information in order to orientate themselves in relation to health questions. Public libraries can provide such basic information and support specialised health services. In the ‘**health information point**’ all information and materials, which are available in the library, are concentrated physically and presented in an attractive way. The collection includes traditional materials such as encyclopaedia, books, magazines and brochures and new media like cd-roms and selected digital sources on the Internet. People can sit and study anonymously. They can also ask for help: to find information, to find answers or to find a reliable address for advice. The librarians in the front office have had training in health databases searching; they know medical jargon and the health care network. In order to inform various groups of the general public about old and new health-related topics, the libraries have set up series of lectures and structured regular exhibitions (29).

6. Recommendations

Some of the recommendations and steps to be taken and enforced by Government of India for the development of libraries which will work as a ripple effect on the implementation of Right to information Act are:

- Information literacy should be provided to common people by giving them the orientation on CD-ROM database searches, Internet searches, use of video-cassettes, floppies, retrieval of data from video-cassettes, etc. Information literacy may be initiated by educating common public about the various authentic sites of RTI like www.mit.gov.in/rti-act.pdf, www.righttoinformation.gov.in. (perhaps in local and regional languages also) through which they can be made aware about the place where they can log the complaint, who is to be contacted for specific kind of information etc.
- Public information and transparency fall within the scope of libraries’ expertise. This applies to the production of information and to its presentation and ensuring access to information and services. Thus the best public websites should be created by including librarians – who are, after all, professionals when it comes to organizing information – in design work. These sites should be developed as a ‘**one-stop shop**’ for India’s rural community to access information on matters ranging from education to market prices. Graphics, animation and voice-overs should be used to make user-friendly sites for audience who are illiterate, non-English or Hindi speaking and who have never used a computer before.

- Information literacy should be made an integral part of Education for All which can contribute in the achievement of the goal of development and respect for the universal declaration of human rights of which Right to Information is a part. It is urgently required to collaborate with education sector to ensure that information literacy is appropriately recognized within the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012), which is the new Information Literacy Programme of UNESCO has been recently launched during the 2004-2005. Educationalists should change their focus from information technologies to information (30).
- Public services such as health care, supply of water, power and transport, prison management should be privatized to make people able to get information from the bodies performing these services. Even where private bodies are not providing public services, their activities need to be open to public scrutiny if they affect people's rights. For example, the public should be able to access information on a factory's environmental management policies to ensure the factory is managing toxic waste appropriately and therefore, not diminishing their right to health (which is a part of right to information) (31).
- Public Information Kiosks should be developed in rural areas to work under **administration umbrella of public libraries**, to make people info literate about agriculture, health, jobs, education, financial/credit, legal, development programmes so that they can use their right to information. For example, the agricultural information should be provided such as important crops cultivated, crop-wise production figures, agricultural marketing facilities, prices of various commodities, storage facilities, agricultural credit cooperatives and irrigation facilities to make farmers info-literate about agriculture.
- Public library has an important role to play in the provision of health information and to implement right to information of health. Public libraries should be a key player by educating families about various diseases like HIV/AIDS and in preventing their continued spread. Public libraries situated in rural areas should play as powerful agencies for creating awareness and dissemination of relevant information among unprivileged masses about AIDS. As a matter of fact there should be paradigm shift in the policies and objectives of public libraries in India. Public libraries should set up mobile units which should carry reading material related to AIDS/HIV and distribute publicly. Public libraries based in rural areas should be provided with complete multimedia gadgets and libraries should explore the excellent medium like Digital TV, Information Kiosks which could be fruitful in disseminating information on HIV/AIDS programme being carried out by the government (32).

7. Concluding Remarks:

Human development can be described as a comprehensive economical, social, cultural and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals. The right to information as a human right is a result and/or product of the human development. However, human rights which protect our lives need to be protected by a full democracy in the country. If there is

not a full democracy, all members of the society can not participate in the decision making process and for this reason they need the right to information. Unless there is a true democracy in a country, the problem of the right to information can not be solved, fully. If we accept that a full democracy is a pre-condition for the right to information, it can be also said that developing countries do not have the chance to use the right to information wholly yet.

The phrase of the right to information does not have any meaning for a person who is hungry, who does not have enough money to live; who is not educated and who does not have freedom. In the same way, a country which has the problem of hunger, education, economic and politic freedom cannot give the priority to the right to information. Of course, information is a power which plays important role in solving these problems. But governments and individuals generally are not aware of this power, and say: first comes the right to eat, the right to work, the right to have a shelter, the right to have social security, in short the right to live and then the right to information (33). The right to access to information has not been realized by the majority of India's people. Rather than protecting citizen's right to information, India and other developing countries have created a **"poverty of information"** through sanctioning an official culture of secrecy. And the media in these countries has not done enough to counter this culture by procuring information and putting it in the public domain.

Libraries, especially public libraries, as information and cultural centers have important responsibilities in safeguarding the public's right to information. Libraries are a good answer to many of the challenges in the information society. It is now realized clearly that there is a strong relationship between the level of development and the use of public libraries. For the use of public libraries in a country there must be enough public libraries and educational facilities. Development is the foundation which increases the public library use and consequently the right to information. Further Library services, and of course the right to information can be thought as a part of the national information policy. However, most of the least developed and developing countries generally do not have national information policies. Lack of a national information policy in a country affects library services and the right to information negatively.

Public information and transparency fall within the scope of libraries' expertise. This applies to the production of information and to its presentation and the ensuring of access to information and services. The demand for libraries' expertise in modern society is quite clear. What is still unclear to many decision-makers is the wide range of functions that libraries can fulfill if they are asked to do so and supplied with adequate resources (34). Thus there is an urgent need to develop public policy in relation to IT and public libraries which should have definite clause on how information literacy skills can better aid and uphold the implementation of Right to Information Act. It should further enlists the guidelines on how each village / district/ rural library can strategically spread information literacy among the ruralites and further orient them to use information literacy skills for exploit their right to information which further can help them to improve their standard of living.

Notes:

1. Lakh = 10 to the fifth power, i.e. 100,000.
2. Crore (Cr) = 10 to the seventh power, i.e. 100, 00, 000

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