



Mains Practice Question

Q. The Right to Information (RTI) Act is considered a cornerstone of transparency and accountability in democratic societies. Discuss the ethical implications and utility of RTI in promoting good governance and social justice. Analyze with suitable examples. (150 words)

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Approach

- Start your answer by introducing RTI act.
- Discuss the ethical implications and utility of RTI act.
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction

- The Right to Information Act, 2005 mandates **timely response to citizen requests for government information.**
- The basic corruption and the Right to Information Act is to **empower the citizens, promote transparency and accountability** in the working of the Government, contain corruption, and make our democracy work for the people in a real sense.

Ethical Implications of RTI

- **RTI act vs Right to Privacy:**
 - The Right to Information and the Right to Privacy can be **in conflict when personal information is sought to be disclosed.**
 - Government collects information from the citizens for different purposes like for tax evaluation, Identification Proofs, now, **if any citizen or private organisation files for access to the records**, then it can be in contradiction with citizens' right to Privacy if right to Information is followed.
- **RTI act vs Official Secrets act, 1923:**
 - The right to access sensitive information is another ethical implication of RTI. **National security and public safety can be threatened by the public disclosure of classified information.** Balancing the right to information with the need for confidentiality is crucial to ensure public safety.
 - Whenever there is a conflict between the two laws, the **provisions of the RTI Act override those of the OSA.**

Utility of RTI

- RTI promotes **good governance and social justice** by empowering citizens to hold public authorities accountable.
- **Transparency and accountability** are encouraged, and corruption can be combated through the act. It also **improves decision making by public authority** by removing unnecessary secrecy.
- Access to information **can empower the poor and the weaker sections of society to demand and get information** about public policies and actions, thereby leading to their welfare.
- Successful **cases of exposing corruption and malpractices** in government institutions have

been reported.

- For instance, RTI played an important role in uncovering scams like **2G spectrum and commonwealth scam**.

Conclusion

- The Right to Information Act is **key to people centric governance**. While there are ethical implications associated with it, the act promotes good governance and social justice.
- When the question of harmonising the contradicting rights arises, it should **give justice to the larger public interest** and advance public morality.
- Similarly, in case of RTI act's conflict with Official secrets act, **proactive disclosure should be followed but not at the cost of national security and interests**.

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