Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

“The Right to Information Act is not all about citizens’ empowerment alone, it essentially redefines the concept of accountability. Discuss.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2018	GS - IV	Ethics & Morality

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Transparency; citizen empowerment; answerability; public records; social audits; deterrence of corruption; proactive disclosure; implementation challenges

Model Answer

Introduction

The Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005, enables citizens to access information held by public authorities. Beyond empowerment, it transforms accountability by making government decisions more open to public scrutiny.

How RTI Redefines Accountability

1. **Answerability:** Officials must respond to lawful information requests within prescribed time limits, subject to statutory provisions and exemptions.
2. **Transparency:** Access to files, records and decisions helps citizens understand how public resources are used.
3. **Deterrence of corruption:** The possibility of disclosure discourages arbitrary decisions, favouritism and misuse of authority.
4. **Participatory governance:** Citizens can scrutinise welfare delivery, public works and local expenditure.
5. **Institutional accountability:** Information Commissions provide an appeal mechanism and can impose penalties in specified circumstances.

6. **Evidence-based scrutiny:** Journalists, civil society organisations and citizens can use official records to expose implementation gaps.

Challenges

Delays, vacancies in Information Commissions, inadequate record management and limited awareness weaken effectiveness. Poor protection for applicants and misuse of exemptions may also discourage disclosure.

Way Forward

Strengthen Information Commissions, digitise records, protect applicants, improve proactive disclosure under Section 4 and build a culture of openness among public authorities.

Conclusion

RTI shifts accountability from internal administrative supervision towards public answerability. Its full potential depends on timely disclosure, effective appeals and institutional commitment to transparency.

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