APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW WITH STATE CHIEF INFORMATION COMMISSIONER

Mr. K. S. Sripathi – State Chief Information commissioner.

Mr. K.S. Sripathi is the present State Chief Information Commissioner of Tamil Nadu. He served as Chief Secretary of the State. He was interviewed regarding the status and functioning of RTI in the State. His views on RTI are stated below:

1. Usage of RTI in Tamil Nadu

   RTI Act is being used by every state in a wide variety of cases, though there is a wide variation in the number of petitions received by each commission. Even among the larger states the number varies greatly. In Tamil Nadu it is as high as about 15000 to 20000 receipts in a year Maharashtra gets about 10000 to 12000 and the Chief Information Commission (CIC) alone gets about 13000 to 14000. In every state there is a large number of retired government servants using RTI to get their terminal benefits. Also the employees use RTI to know about the establishment. Most of the applications are populistic queries.

2. His views on coverage of RTI by media

   Media, as per the current trend are projecting the negative side rather than helping the system to improve. They indulge in mudslinging against the
public authorities and even the Information Commissions. Things are blown out of proportion by making a mountain of a mole hill. There is a surfeit of coverage with mushrooming of journals which mostly misguide the general public. The media ought to realize their responsibility in educating the people of the beneficial aspects of this Act. It is their duty to develop an informed citizenry for a democracy to be a strong one. For this, they must get themselves get into the nuances of the Act and then educate the masses by case citations, rather than continuously blaming the public authorities and the Information Commissions. Many of the reporters are opinion pieces and the reporters refuse to see the true picture. It is therefore necessary for them to first get themselves educated and then write or telecast. They have to get interviews from experts in the field.

4. **Awareness programme of the State Information Commission**

   As per the Act it is the duty of the State or Central Government to conduct awareness programs. Tamil Nadu Information Commission (TNIC), however, meets public authorities periodically to create awareness amongst them. It also delivers lectures in public forums.

5. **His suggestion for media**

   It will take a long time before settled law emerges on various aspects of the Act. There has to be a constant and continual upgradation of the information on the Act itself. Media has a major role to play. The government can go only to a certain extent in this aspect. It is for the law based institutions to carry forward. It is shocking to know that the awareness among the advocates themselves is abysmally low.