INTRODUCTION
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Democracy is no longer perceived as a form of Government where the participation of people is merely restricted to periodic exercise of the right to franchise, with the citizens retiring into passivity between elections. It has now evolved into a more positive and dynamic content with people having a say in how and by what rules they would be governed. Meaningful participation of people in major issues affecting their lives is now a vital component of the democratic governance and such participation can hardly be effective unless people have information about the way government business is transacted. Democracy means choice and sound – informed choice is possible only on the basis of knowledge and information. Information leads to proper decision making.

The original root of the word 'information' is the Latin word informare, which means to fashion, shape; or create, to give form to. The Black's Law Dictionary defines information as an accusation exhibited against a person for some criminal offence, without an indictment. (1) The Ballentine's Law Dictionary defines it in a clear manner as 'acquired knowledge or knowledging of facts which advise and lead to the acquisition of knowledge, in common parlance. (2)

The right to information is a means to empower the people. Information is a source of knowledge. A democratic government is supposed to rule by the consent of the people. The people have a right to know every public act, everything that is done in a public way by their
public functionaries. Free flow of information is a must for every democratic society. It makes the governance more participatory which is a vital component of successful democracy.

Democracy means Government by the people, of the people and for the people. But after freedom, the administration of the country is carried out by a politicians and bureaucrats who are just the representatives for their own interests and personal gains, maintain a veil of secrecy. The various policies carried out, the funds raised and their expenditure is all sealed up. This has lead to a lot of corruption, threat to democracy and hindered the development of our nation.

People's right to have access to official information was asserted by the United Nations in its first session. Resolution 59 (1) of the UN General Assembly held in 1946 states - "Freedom of information is fundamental human right and the touchstone of all the freedoms to which the UN is consecrated".

One of the significant objectives of the Indian Constitution, as envisaged in its preamble, is to secure liberty of thought and expression to the citizens of India. The fundamental right to speech and expression cannot be exercised unless one gets information on matters of public interests. The Right to Information is therefore held an inalienable component of the freedom of speech and expression guaranteed under Article 19 (1) (a) of the constitution of India. India being a democratic country, the Indians who are the source of the constitution must assert
their right to have a good government. The basic objective of the right to information is to provide freedom to every citizen to secure access to information under the control of public authorities, consistence with public interest, in order to promote openness, transparency and accountability in administration.

Selection of the Topic:

The title of the research undertaken is "A Study of Right to Information With Special Reference to Kolhapur City, Kagal and Radhanagari Taluka". Maharashtra Right to Information Act was passed in 2000. This Act being newly implemented and having a strong historical background has not yet been researched. It needs to be evaluated, as the pilot study pointed out that the implementation of Act, to achieve the basic objective of the Act, has a large number of loopholes and lacuna's. Hence it is considered that this Act has to be studied. It is studied from both legal as well as political perspective. Legal provisions of the Act, its loopholes and lacuna's are studied from legal perspective, while it seems that there has been a lot of political groups of the concerned area – against each other. Politics is power struggle and power relations and the Right to Information Act has been instrumental in the power struggle. Hence, the study has the political perspective also.

As the study is a case study, we have included in the study, Kolhapur City as a developed area and a very reformative and progressive area. Kagal Taluka is selected as a developed rural area and
Radhanagari Taluka as underdeveloped Taluka – based on the Industry, Education, Standard of living, Occupation, etc. Hence, the universe of study becomes representative. Maharashtra Right to Information Act 2000 was mostly in favour of government officials. An agitation was launched by a respected social worker Anna Hajare for the amendment of the Act. Then the Government of Maharashtra passed Maharashtra Right to Information Act 2002. The Central Government passed Right to Information Act in 2005 by which on 11th October 2005 Maharashtra Right to Information Act 2002 was repealed. Under the circumstances, the study extends to all these legislations.

**Objectives of the Study:**

People's demand for Right to Information is an ancient phenomenon. Freedom of Information would have ordinarily meant that a person can get information from wherever it is available. It does not oblige the other person to give information hence the study of the Right to Information become more important.

The main objectives of the work are –

1) to study the evolution and development of Right to Information.
2) to evaluate implementation of the Act – Legal and Political Perspective.
3) to examine the access rendered by the government and
4) to suggest the remedial measures for the improvement and effectiveness.
**Hypothesis:**

Hypothesis plays an important role in an empirical research work, which helps the researcher to proceed in a definite direction to achieve the cherished goal of the study.

1) It is due to the activist's approach of social workers like Aruna Roy, Anna Hajare etc. much attention of the legislature has been drawn towards the enactment of the Right to Information Act and its implementation. The role and contribution of these movements as pressure groups is important.

2) The Act is useful for good governance but the Government lags in implementation of the provisions of the Act properly.

3) The Right to Information Act has inadequacies and loopholes.

4) Lack of awareness of the Right to Information Act has been the cause of meager implementation of the Act.

5) Political groups and social activists are largely using the provisions of the Act. The Act has become a tool or instrument of politics.

6) Proper implementation of the Act by citizens would evolve a responsible and transparent system and a true democracy free from corruption.

**Methodology:**

The title of research thesis suggests that the study is an Empirical exercise on the legal political problems concerning the Right to Information.
The Primary data is collected through usual social techniques i.e. structured interviews of officials working as Public Information officers and appellate authorities, who possess experience and knowledge about the functioning of the Act. Awareness programmes on Right to Information were conducted in areas of study and the data collected through structured questionnaire by the participants and responsible citizens. The questionnaire was operated before and after the program, to study the impact of awareness programme. Administrative process, Registers relating to Right to Information Act maintained by various departments were taken into account. Data was also collected from the citizens who had used the Right to Information and also those who had not used the Right to Information, since the number of citizens who used this Act was small, data was collected by all, but in case of those who did not use the Act, the samples chosen was double the number and randomly selected.

Secondary data included published and unpublished material from the Government of India, Government of Maharashtra, contribution made by judiciary, academicians in this field, law journals, law reports, workshops, conferences, seminars etc. Newspaper - articles and reports concerning the Right to Information Act were also used. Important news relating to Right to Information were collected and studied and specified in the thesis by the researcher.
The study is divided into Six Chapters -

1) Historical Background of Right to Information.
2) Right to Information Movement in India.
5) Analysis.
6) Conclusion and Suggestions.

By way of 'Introduction', an attempt is made to spell out the significance of the problem, reason for selection of the topic, objectives of the study, Hypothesis and Methodology.

The first Chapter is devoted to Historical Background of Right to Information. It deals with the growth of liberal political tradition, contribution such as Magna Carta, petition of Rights, Bill of Rights, Declaration of the Rights of Man and Fundamental rights.

The Second Chapter focuses on the Right to Information Movement in India. The Judiciary is one of the pillars of the democratic system. In this Chapter, some decisions which are milestones in the pathway of Right to Information were discussed. Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sanghthan (MKSS) play an important role through this movement in Rajasthan was discussed. In history of India, the legislation for the right to information was the first, which came in response to the people's demand.

Chapter four throws light on the implementation of Right to Information – case study (2000-2006). The implementation of main provisions under Maharashtra Right to Information Act 2002 and Right to Information Act 2005 were discussed with case study.

Chapter five highlights the 'Analysis'. It presents a brief description of the locale of the study area. It also includes the Legal - Political approach. Opinions, Observations, Discussions with applicants, Public Information Officers and appellate authorities were focused.

Chapter six comprises of conclusion and suggestions.

References:
1. 5th Edn. St. Paul Minn, 1999, P.701
2. 3rd Edn. 1969, p.621.