CHAPTER – XII
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

I – Introduction:

The study analyzed and documented the past and present of Rural Development and identified the issues or to say hurdles of Rural Development. The history and concepts of rural development are reviewed in detailed to understand different approaches, strategies and methodologies of rural development adopted from time to time. The current scenario of rural development has been explained in detailed with an intention to develop the understanding about the ongoing programmes of various ministries mainly Ministry of Rural Development and Ministry of Panchayati Raj. It has been also attempted to detail out the implementation mechanism of each organization with an intention to understand the governance system of rural development. As an ultimate outcome to the review of rural development scene a whole chapter concerning emerging issues of rural development has been presented which served as background of this study since the basic aim of this study is to assess the role of RTI in addressing these issues. Then there is a review of emergence of the Right to Information Act, presented the act in historical perspective to understand the roots of it in Indian governance. A brief overview of the Right to Information act existing all over the globe is presented with an angle to assess its importance over the globe. The movement behind the act has also been described in detail because it exposes the potentials of RTI in resolving the issues of rural development governance. Analytical assessment of the act with special reference to its legislative features has also become a part of this study. Then there is an attempt to present the justification in the form of possible usages of this revolutionary act in resolving the issues of rural development. The study has also covered the actual usages of the act in the form of case studies wherein the RTI is used to
address different issues of rural development and it has been attempted to relating the same with common larger issues of Rural Development Governance and to bring it out as remedy to the issue. Along with the usages attempt has also been made to understand the misuses of the act. Perception analysis of the actors involved in it i.e. citizens from rural areas and government officers involved in implementation of Rural Development programmes has also become a part of the study. Reviewing and Analyzing all these and attempt has been made in the form of a whole chapter to bring out the recommendations and suggestions to make the use of RTI more meaningful in reforming the governance of rural development.

The present chapter is an attempt to present the summary and conclusions of the present research study. It gives overall idea of the whole study including its objectives and methodology with which the study is undertaken. It also gives chapter wise summary, conclusions as well as learning.

II – Chapter wise Summary and Conclusions:

A) Chapter – I : Introduction and Methodology

This chapter contains a brief evolutionary history of Right to Information to justify the rational of the study since the roots of RTI movement lies in the rural development struggle. This has been briefed with the National Campaign for Peoples Right to Information (NCPRI) coupled with landmark Supreme Court judgments and Governmental efforts in enacting the RTI. Then there is a brief note on the implications of Right to information act. It is followed by brief description of major issues of rural development because of which the real poor are excluded and non poor are included in the rural development programmes.
With this background here is a detailed note regarding significance of the study, the major point of justification for this study is changing face of governance from colonial to centralized, centralized to federal, from federal to decentralized and from decentralized to participatory. The participatory governance is a major concern for effective rural development governance and this is impossible without the Right to Information for the citizen which also ensures their right to participate.

This chapter includes the presentation of research statement, objectives, hypothesis, methods for data collection and expected usages of the study. It also mentions the limitations of the study. And chapter plan of the study.

**B) Chapter – II : Historical Background of Rural Development in India**

This chapter takes Historical review of rural development that gives us idea not only about different programmes of past but shows us the whole idea of changing and emerging concepts, approaches and strategies or its implementation. It becomes clear through this chapter that the concept of Rural Development is interwoven in the heritage of Indian culture; it is as old as mankind. It dates back to seventeenth century with some voluntary efforts the from Quaker movement to freedom movement of India and other movements like Srinikiten, Martandum, Gurgaon Experiment, Baroda Experiment. The policies and programmes during and after the period of Gandhiji are highly influenced about his ideas and philosophy of Sarvodayas, Village Development, All round Village services, Samagra Gram Seva, Panchayati Raj and non-violent economy etc. After independence the rural development has taken shape of well planned professional shape from voluntary kind of approach. It has become government affair with taking place in planning by planning commission. There is presentation about five year plans and rural development, the review of first to eleven five year plan gives an idea of the importance and concern given to rural development. Various programmes and policies for rural development are introduced. Thus it
has been understood that Rural Development was, is and will going to be a major concern for development policy, planning and implementation. Volunteered efforts before independence paved basis for concrete policies for rural development, be it creation of separate ministry, separate department in planning commission, legal framework, political will and one of the important national agenda today.

C) Chapter – III : Administration and Management of Rural Development in India

This chapter gave an idea of how the Rural Development is being carried out in India. There is a detailed description of the major actors involved in Rural Development. The very first part covered Ministry of Rural Development and its various departments, like Rural development department, Department of Land Resources, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation. Major schemes implemented by these departments along with their administrative structure are explained in this part. Then there is coverage on Ministry of Panchayati raj wherein its administrative structure has been explained. Its style of functioning from planning and implementation to monitoring and evaluation is described. There is detailed presentation on planning commission especially the role of planning commission as constitutional body in accelerating the process of rural development. Then there is a note on functioning of NIRD which is functioning with an object of training research and documentation in the area of rural development. Considering NABARD as an important actor its role in rural development especially in providing the credit, loan and promotion of SHGs and agriculture is brought out. CAPART has also been covered focusing its objectives organizational structure and its various divisions engaged in rural development are covered.

After reviewing the functioning of major actors of rural development a descriptive is there under the subtitle Management of Rural Development which covers the
whole description of how the whole system works how the conceptualization, policy formulation, Organization, Integration, Coordination, implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation is being done. In short it gives the whole idea of how the system of Rural development works.

It becomes clear that that there are many actors involved in rural development in India. Ministry of Rural Development and Ministry of Panchayati Raj are major actors of rural development. Ministry of Rural development implements various programmes for betterment of rural poor while Ministry of Panchayati Raj is devoted to strengthen governance at local level. In a way both the ministries are complementary to each other. Under the ages of these ministries many programmes are implemented. NIRD functions as training institute devoted to training and research in rural development. Place of rural development wing in planning commission shows the importance rural development has gained in the national priority.

D) Chapter – IV : Rural Development Scene of Gujarat

One of the purposes of this study is to understand the scenario of rural development, what it is, how it is being administered and managed from nation to village level. In this regard chapter III and chapter IV both are very important since chapter III described the national scenario to describe the state level scenario Gujarat has been chosen as one example of a state to exhibit the state level authorities and channel of rural development from state to village level. In Gujarat at state level there are two major actors; a) Commissionerate of Rural Development and b) Department of Panchayat Rural Housing and Rural Development. The office of the Commissionerate of rural development is mainly responsible for implementing the programmes of National Ministry of Rural Development along with its own few initiatives it is being assisted by DRDAs at district level for implementation of its programme. While the Department of Panchayat Rural Housing and Rural Development deals with strengthening rural
local governance by promoting gram sabha mobilization and strengthening PRIs. This department also implements number of schemes of state funds. District panchayats, taluka panchayats and Gram Panchayats are its organs to implement its programmes. One of the interesting things to note especially in Gujarat is adoption of corporate approach or to say professional approach in rural development like other sectors the examples of which are shown in the form of WASMO and GSWMA. This chapter covered the description about how the DRDAs are functioning. The last part of this chapter impact assessment has been presented in terms of Rural Poverty, Rural Employment, Food Security and human development.

E) Chapter – V : Emerging Issues in Rural Development

This chapter is gist of chapter II, III and chapter – IV, these chapters dealt with the whole scenario of rural development. In this chapter the emerging issues of rural development are identified with the help of studies in earlier chapters and described in this chapter. The issues are classified in several broad categories like a) Policy and Planning Level Issues, b) Management Related Issues, c) Implementation Level Issues and d) Program specific issues. Since the basic purpose of the study is to assess the role of RTI in resolving the problems of rural development governance this chapter is very important in the sense that it provides the basis of analysis and direction to carry the study further. As the further study is based on assessing the role RTI is playing in resolving the issues identified in this chapter.

Thus it has been learned though this chapter that the rural development suffers from number of such issues and problems. These issues with various dimensions are complex. The study is aimed at assessing the potentials of RTI in resolving these issues hence the attempt has been made in later chapters to assess the RTI from the angle of solving these issues.
F) Chapter – VI : International Perspective of Emergence and Adoption of Right to Information Act

This chapter covered the overview of RTI around the world. It has been learned that the vast majority of countries that have adopted laws are northern and industrialized, the rest of the world is also moving in the same direction. In Asia, nearly a dozen countries have either adopted laws or are on the brink of doing so including India and Pakistan, which adopted laws in 2002. In South and Central America, half dozen countries have adopted laws and nearly a dozen more are currently considering them. The issue is starting to emerge in Africa, South Africa enacted its law in 2001 and many countries in southern and central Africa, mostly members of the Commonwealth, are following South Africa’s lead. Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya are likely to enact legislation in the near future. In addition, countries have also adopted other laws that can provide for limited access including data protection laws that allow individuals to access their own records held by government agencies and private organizations, specific statutes that give rights of access in certain areas such as health or the environment, and codes of practices.

The major factors responsible behind adoption of RTI all over the globe because Civil societies recognize that individuals and groups must have the right to access information held by their government, its agencies and other public bodies, which relates to matters of public interest and affects people in general. Without such information, governments cannot be held to account and there can be little shared understanding between the government and citizens regarding what the government is or should be doing. In the course of its work the government collects a lot of information regarding its citizens, the state of the country, the activities to be undertaken and how to spend public money. Even number of international bodies with responsibility for promoting and protecting human rights have authoritatively recognized the fundamental and legal nature of
the right to freedom of information, as well as the need for effective legislation to secure respect for that right in practice.

This chapter also covered a brief comparison of RTI laws over the globe and the point worth noticing with this regard is that most RTI laws around the world are broadly similar. In part, this is because only a few countries' laws have been used as models. The US FOIA has probably been the most influential law. Canada's and Australia's laws have been prominent with countries based on the common law tradition.

Over fifty countries now have adopted comprehensive laws to facilitate access. In just the past few years, six countries have adopted laws and over thirty more are in the process. The laws are broadly similar, allowing for a general right by citizens, residents and often anyone else to demand information from government bodies. There are exemptions for withholding critical information and appeals processes and oversight.

However, the battle is far from over. Many of the laws are not adequate. In some countries, the laws lie dormant due to a failure to implement them properly or a lack of demand. In others, governments to prevent their embarrassment abuse the exemptions. New laws promoting secrecy in the global war on terror have undercut access. International organizations take over national government roles and have not subjected themselves to the same rules. These problems need to be addressed by all of the participants. Access ebbs and flows at any given time in any country but the transformation have begun and it is no longer possible to tell citizens that they have no right to know.

**G) Chapter – VII : Historical Review of Right to Information in India**

This chapter presented the History of Right to Information in India. It has been understood through this section that the history of RTI in India lies in the History
of Rural Struggle for transparent, corruption free and participatory governance system. The movement of RTI is nothing but a movement of for and by rural India.

The most important feature that distinguishes the movement for the people’s right to information in India from that in most other countries, whether of the North or the South, is that it is deeply rooted in the struggles and concerns for survival and justice of most disadvantaged rural people. The reason for this special character to the entire movement is that it was inspired by a highly courageous, resolute, and ethically consistent grassroots struggle related to the most fundamental livelihood and justice concerns of the rural poor.

Other organizations like Parivartan and Mahiti Adhikar Gujarat Pahel also played crucial role in pressuring the government through advocacy and dialogue. We get several examples of initiatives of bureaucracy wherein without the existence of this law several initiatives were taken.

The contribution of courts especially the path breaking judgments of Supreme Court with broad interpretation of constitutional provisions had played great role in enacting the present law.

Several states had already taken initiative to enact this law prior to enactment of the national law. Tamilnadu was the first state to implement this law along with this several other states like Goa, Karnataka, Delhi, Rajasthan and Maharastra have also enacted his law which gave a pioneering effect in enactment of national law.

The national government and political parties have also taken several initiatives to Breach the Official secrecy act and enact the right to information.
It can be understood such law was due from long but it has been enacted after lost of struggles when the movement created the will of all concerned actors including political will. The story of movement is a story of success especially of legislation through social action.

H) Chapter – VIII : Analytical Assessment of Legislative Features and Procedures of Right to Information Act in the Context of Rural Development Governance

The first part of in this chapter described the legislative features of Right to Information Act. The objective of right to information is mainly to empower the citizens by providing them the right to ask for the information. The definition of the information under this act, roles of different authorities under this act mainly PIO, APIO and Information commissioner. Attempt has been made in this part to describe the whole process the citizen has to follow in getting the information. Information exempted under this act, certain features of the act like period of information, assistance to the applicant etc. are presented in this part of the chapter.

The second part dealt with the theoretical implications of RTI for Rural Development. In India RTI has born out of rural development practice so there is a basic link between the methods of rural development practice and Right to Information. Theory of participation is at core of rural development and without information participation is not possible, thus this is the basic link between the two. A range of factors – some of them contradictory – have pushed it to the centre of contemporary Rural Development debates. For instance, the concern with transparency is a reaction against both the arbitrary decision-making found in state-dominated Rural Development approaches and the often secretive processes by which participatory Rural Development policies are introduced. The link between transparency and the cognate concept of accountability is, on an abstract plane, unassailable. In operational terms, however, the connection is far
from obvious. Transparency does not automatically result in accountability. Moreover, neither term on its own is self-explanatory. Transparency is often conceived of in terms of making procedures clear and removing discretionary control, but without a corresponding elaboration of the preconditions necessary for making clarity produce the desired results. The relation of RTI with basic practices and principles of Rural Development are well established in through his chapter.

The third part of the chapter dealt with clarifying and describing the importance of RTI in the context of rural development. In this part a detailed list of information that can be asked under to make the rural governance efficient and corruption free are described in details. This is really a very exhaustive list that can make wonders if asked under RTI especially to monitor the rural development process. In the concluding part of the chapter points of excellence and points of concerned are presented. RTI helps the citizens of the country in enjoying their rights given by the constitution of the country. It promotes the culture of vibrant democracy. The act has potential not only that of transparent governance but that of participatory governance also. It establishes that in democracy information belongs to the people and not to the government. Along with these areas of appreciation there are several areas of concern like village level institutions have not appointed PIOs. As far as the rural poor are concerned it is meaningless for them even they have not to pay any fees because they can’t afford for appeal and complain up to information commission level. The level of awareness and capacity to interpret and analyze the information is another challenge for rural poor and hence area of concern. One more issue of concern is chances of the act being misused by the persons having malafied intention.
Chapter – IX: Analytical Assessment of Operational System of RTI in Rural Development Governance

We have presented cases covering different areas of rural development governance. The case shows that RTI can have meaningful intervention in each and every issue of rural administration and management of rural development.

Each and every case mentioned in this chapter is significant not only because it describes the solution of particular problem but also it reveals the potentials lied in this revolutionary act to reform the governance system. It is through RTI that people can participate in the planning process and can know exactly how things are being done. They not only can participate but can review whether certain plans and schemes are useful for them or not, people can get sufficient information about the nature of the projects and programmes. This ultimately enables them to give their opinion well in time for required changes or modifications. This will reduce project costs and will increase project outputs manifold. A Right to Information ensures that people can hold public bodies accountable on a regular basis, without having to lay the entire burden on their elected representatives who are themselves often unable to get the information sought in spite of all the resources at their command.

Mentioned cases also describe how RTI can bring about transparency and Transparency help people to hold the officials accountable for their mishandling of public time and money. Transparency helps to expose the corrupt and allowing the honest to do their jobs without fear or favor. The right to information is important to check abuse of administrative discretion and to ensure fair process. The right to information is essential for protecting liberties of citizens by making it easier for civil society groups to monitor wrongdoings. In rural areas, numerous schemes for providing food, housing, employment and education are run by the central and State government. These schemes meant for the poorest of the poor in the rural areas are routed through the network of government setup. There is
wide spread criticism that these funds have been routinely misappropriated or misused on a large scale. In most cases, people do not know about the existence of these schemes, even if they know they do not their entitlements under the scheme, paving the way for them to accept less than their allocation. Furthermore, records are often tampered because no one outside the administration has access to them. By providing entire information on these schemes to the public would make the administration more accountable.

The areas of corruption/inefficiencies were known earlier in the Government, but citizens especially rural citizens could not take recourse. However with the advent of the RTI Act, citizens have found a tool to bring in transparency and accountability at all levels of Governance. In particular, the RTI Act has a much higher impact on the quality of life of the poor and marginalized section of the society.

Chapter –X: Stakeholders Perception Analyses

This chapter dealt with the assessment of stakeholders’ perceptions pertaining to the use and misuse of the act and their suggestions to improve the act. The actual cases wherein people used this act was discussed and analyzed in previous chapter, this chapter is an attempt to get the feel of what the different stakeholders involved in implementation of this act perceives about this act. From the review and analysis of the perceptions it can be understood that people have faith in RTI as an important instrument which can definitely be helpful in solving the problems especially related to governance of rural development. The important observations can be listed as follows:

1. The general perception about RTI is very positive since most of the respondents believe that RTI act is useful in redressing grievances related to Rural Development.
2. RTI is just a very effective means and not an end. There is no doubt about that if RTI is used as effective mean supplemented by other existing grievance redressal mechanism RTI has potentials to be used as tool of intervention in each and every problem.

3. The tool of RTI can be used but it requires certain kind of skills, knowledge and attitudes if the common rural citizens don’t have these they themselves cannot use it. It may be possible that activists, or NGO dedicated to rural development may address such issues and the masses can get the benefits in general or even they can solve individual problems also but if capability of citizen’s themselves is missing it is very difficult to get the result desired from RTI.

4. The act provides for the free information to BPL but only the information is free for a rural poor citizen it is very difficult to bear other costs involved in it. More submission of application is not an end he / she need to go to inspect the documents, in case information is not provided or the provided information is incomplete, false or misleading the poor applicant has to go for appellate authority and then to Information Commission which is generally located in state capital. So even if the information is not charged the poor applicant has to pay a lot i.e. more then he/she can afford.

5. The misuse of the act is a matter of concerned as suggested by many of the respondents. The general view is to propose amendment in the act especially in the provision wherein the authority cannot ask for the reason from the applicant.

6. Another matter of concerned is the awareness of rural citizens, not only the awareness but capacity building if spoken comprehensively. Because rural masses are required to be equipped with knowledge, skills and attitude with which they can file RTI application understands and analyses the information received and use the same for redressing the grievance they are facing.

7. There is no doubt that awareness generation is one of the lacunas. But looking from another direction RTI itself is an instrument of awareness
generation since it spreads awareness of govt. schemes among people of rural areas. This can be considered as one of the major contributions of this act as far as rural development is concerned because one of the major lacunas of successful implementation is people’s awareness.

8. One major change what is required is of widening its scope from only government sector to corporate sector and even NGOs because in the era of globalization and privatization corporate sectors plays very important role in the life of people including the rural people.

9. It is very right to point it out here that "The use of Right to Information Act is very objective and productive in the development activity", "The instrument of Right to Information Act has provided an excellent opportunity to the beneficiaries for the direct and decisive participation in rural development ", The Right to Information Act has played a vital role in containing corruption in the rural development at all the stages and helped promotion of transparency in the process of rural development, and "The BEUROCRATIC perception of the use of information act is very right in view of the irresponsible use of information act interrupting the very process of effective efficient and rapid rural development "

Chapter –XI: Policy Alternatives and Remedial Measures for the objective use of Right to Information Act in General and Rural Development in Particular

This chapter attempted to suggest the measures to make the act more meaningful in solving the problems of rural development and management. The recommendations are categorized under the following categories:

1. Recommendations regarding proper implementation of existing provisions
2. Recommendations to fulfill legal gaps i.e. making new provisions in the act.
3. Administrative measures to make the act more meaningful
4. Recommendations pertaining to capacity building of different groups
5. Educational measures and awareness generation
6. Measures for discouraging the misuse of the act, and
7. Other measures

From the detailed presentation it can be concluded that fundamental change in attitude is necessary within the bureaucracy to enable it to comply with the Act in letter and in spirit. It is the responsibility of the respective Governments to inculcate in the bureaucracy a respect for citizen’s right. For the RTI Act to be an instrument of accountability and transparency especially in the governance of rural development, political and administrative support is required. The quality of leadership in supporting necessary reform measures and in enabling effective compliance is the need of the day. All the major actors i.e. government, NGOs, Media and Civil Society organizations have to play crucial role in making RTI an effective instrument to be used in accelerating the rural development process by creating transparent, accountable and participatory governance of rural development and management.

III – Concluding Note:

Thus the study has accessed the present status of rural development from the historical perspective as well as from the angle of present arrangements of rural development focusing on various programmes as well as administrative and management mechanism of rural development. The issues related to management of Rural Development are examined and analyzed. Right to Information is also reviewed from historical perspective, global perspective and detailed analysis of its legislative features. The research study has accessed the potentials of Right to Information Act to rectify and resolve the rural development management by reviewing the performance of RTI in terms of its usages in addressing the problems of rural development. The study also covers the
recommendations for the objective use of RTI in general and rural development in particular.

The study claimed to be utilized for the following purposes:

1. Training Programmes: this research document can be used during training programmes on Role of RTI in Rural development especially the analytical assessment of case studies could become the matter of presentation before the trainees as there is description of actual usages of RTI in addressing the issues of rural development governance, inclusion of such session in a training session helps in inculcating the belief of participants with regard to relevance of RTI. In case the participants are potential users of the act they can be motivated to use RTI in the similar kind of issues disturbing them.

2. Will be helpful in suggesting broad policy interventions; (Policy of implementing RTI as well as Rural Development): the study includes details of suggestions and recommendations bases on the learning of this research can definitely be helpful in reforming the existing policy of RTI as well as Rural Development. Even in chapter of recommendations there are certain issues listed which need immediate attention wherein there is not any need to go for the process of amending the policy but taking due care and implement what exists or to say not doing the different things but doing the things differently.

3. Will be useful for carrying out larger projects etc. in the areas of Rural Governance: this research document can serve many actors interested in this issues which may include students, academicians, government organizations, NGOs, Media and organizations of CSR to take up larger projects of research, or larger projects of Right to Information as well as Rural Development.
4. The study has come up with a document regarding RTI as an instrument to help the people of rural areas in helping themselves in solving their problems. And this way can help anyone committed to rural development in addressing the areas of concern of rural development through RTI.

From the whole research exercise it is learned that the use of Right to Information Act is very objective and productive in the development activity. RTI has provided an excellent opportunity to the beneficiaries for the direct and decisive participation in rural development. The Right to Information Act has played a vital role in containing corruption in the rural development at all the stages and helped promotion of transparency in the process of rural development. Even then there is a tremendous scope of improving the qualitative use of the instrument of Right to Information Act with an appropriate policy changes and educational spread among the users.