



Institute of Social Sciences



CENTRE FOR MULTILEVEL FEDERALISM
Institute of Social Sciences
8 Nelson Mandela Road, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi

Special Lecture Series: 98

The Right to Information Act from a Federal Perspective

Accountability at the state and local levels

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Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2017 | Time: 11 a.m. | Venue: Seminar Room | Chair: Balveer Arora **

Abstract: The Right to Information Act (RTI), promulgated in 2005, sets out a practical regime for seeking and accessing information under the control of public authorities and extends to the entire country (except for the state of Jammu and Kashmir). This paper examines the extent of institutional change in terms of its progression and deepening. By studying the implementation of RTI in the eastern state of Bihar, this paper reveals that institutional progression is inextricably linked to change in the political regime and the resultant shifts in policy priorities. This paper shows that RTI has opened a new space for accountability between state and society. A field study of Bihar demonstrates that RTI use is linked to local politics and has created a new form of elite agency, whose practitioners we categorise as ‘agents of accountability’.

* Himanshu Jha is a lecturer and Research Fellow at the Department of Political Science, South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University, Germany. Jha’s most recent research explored the processes of institutional change by examining the evolution of Right to Information Act in India as a case of institutional change. He has taught courses on South Asian politics and economics at the National University of Singapore. Jha holds a PhD in Political Science (South Asian Studies) from National University of Singapore (NUS). He has an M. Phil in Public Policy from the Australian National University, Masters in Political Science from Jawaharlal Nehru University and Bachelor with Honors in History from University of Delhi. While at the NUS he held prestigious research awards such as the president’s fellowship and NUS research scholarship. Prior to his academic engagement, he was working in developmental sector in India, where he served as the national coordinator of the policy think tank Social Watch.

**Dr Balveer Arora is Research Professor Emeritus and Chairman, Centre for Multilevel Federalism, Institute of Social Sciences. He was earlier Professor of Political Science and Rector, Jawaharlal Nehru University.

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