

## Department of Political Science

### **Right to Information a Viable Institution: the case of Bihar, India**

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Right to Information Act (RTIA), promulgated in 2005 sets out a practical regime of 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 RTIA in Bihar (a state in eastern India) this study reveals that institutional progression is inextricably linked to change in political regimes and the resultant shifts in the policy priorities. This paper shows that RTI has opened a new 'space for accountability' between state and society. The field work undertaken in the state of Bihar (in 2014 and 2015) demonstrates that RTI use is inextricably linked to the local politics and has created a new form of elite agency which this paper categorises as 'agents of accountability' (popularly known as RTI activists).



Himanshu 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. Jha's most recent research is to explore the processes of institutional change. His doctoral work examined the evolution of Right to Information Act in India as a case of institutional change. He wishes to strengthen and expand his research in the fields of institutions, institutional change, the Indian State and bureaucracy. He has previously taught courses on South Asian politics and economics at the National University of Singapore. Prior to his doctoral and academic engagement, he was working in developmental sector in India, where he served as the national coordinator of a policy think tank called Social Watch and has published numerous policy relevant papers.

**Date: Monday, January 9th, 2017**

**Time: 1600 hrs -1800 hrs**

**Venue: SAI, Room 316**

**All are cordially invited!!**