

Write TWO Essays, choosing ONE from each of the Section A and B, in about 1000-1200 words each: 125 x 2 = 250

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SECTION A

1. Transparency and 10 Years Of RTI as a Democratic Right
2. Whistleblowers- A New Age Of Freedom Fighters
3. Indian Education from Mediocracy To Meritocracy
4. 40 Years Of Emergency: Is India Emergency Proof?

SECTION B

1. "It is not necessary and hardly feasible to change the people to change nations and institutions. Change the way people work and think, and institutions and nations will change."
2. "Beyond the Earth: Our Future In Space"
3. The Arab World: From Spring To Uprising
4. Freedom of Expression and Increasing Religious Intolerance

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Transparency and 10 years of
RTI as a democratic
right.

It is the month of May, year 1996, where a renowned lawyer is addressing a small crowd of a small village in Rajasthan. He shouts, "These people will never let their rot come out in open!"

We fast forward to year 2015 and read in newspapers about exposing of 2G scam, CWC scam, powerful ministers behind bars, things which we could not even imagine a decade back.

What has brought this ~~change~~ change? The answer is - "RTI - Right to information". A simple law, which was seen as a tool of "Transparency" has brought revolution at the grassroot level.

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Transparency, which simply means "openness"; openness in Administration, openness in project implementation, decision making is the most difficult thing to "earn". It took centuries for people to get this "openness".

Sweden was the first country in 1700s to ensure that "Transparency is a rule, and not exception". However, it took almost 300 years to travel this idea to the far away lands of "India".

The philosophy of "People are the king, or ultimate masters" lies at the very core of Transparency and its tool - "RTI". And, it took a strong struggle by NAO MKSS (Mazdoor Unan Shakti Sangathan) to transform this philosophy into

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actual practice. It was their brazenness
struggle, along with globalization
forces and proactive government
which gave the tool - "RTI" its
edge and made it a law in 2005:

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But it is not to be said
that our constitution makers were unaware
of it, they mentioned and granted it
as a right "implicitly" in Article 19
freedom of speech and expression in our
constitution. Even our judiciary in
Indira Gandhi v. Raj Narain case
mentions it. But, it was later
on H.D. Deve Gowda Committee which
gave critical inputs for "RTI-ashaw"

Today, it's almost a
decade ~~and~~ the law has passed
and thus, it is the right time
to evaluate whether RTI has

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served its purpose? - Is it now a
democratic right which it was
envisaged? Has it brought
"Transparency" and good governance?

Accountant
is ~~not~~ man
covered.

The journey of 10 years has
been a mixed bag, it has seen
many challenges, successes, failures.
The very fact that yearly 40-50
lacs RTI applications are filed
under RTI, itself speaks volumes
about the law. The law, was created
fear among the corrupt which
has resulted in death of 45-50
RTI activists. This substantiates the
fact that, Law is having an
impact on society.

Thanks to RTI, big scams
like 2G, coal gate, CWG etc. are
unearthed. Even the scams at

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village level - like in U.P - where Road / construction mafia is rampant scams, and corruption has been come into light.

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Not only corruption, but this "instrument" of transparency has now become an "institution" which "empowers" the people. especially women, who take great advantage of this law to open schools in village, construct drainage which till now existed only on paper! In these 10 years RTI has become a "movement". It is now seen as a "democratic fight" which has strengthened the democracy and enhanced democratic credentials of our country worldwide.

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However, devil lies in the detail. Apart from its successes, if we closely analyse, we'll find that mostly applications are filed for general information which public authorities, without any hesitation gives like - Tracking of passport application. etc

still, due to lack of awareness and inertia/resistance from the part of bureaucracy the "institutional information" is not provided. Some times even the information provided is of poor quality, or fragmented in nature. still only 5-10%. Public officials use RTI to improve governance.

Here also, we find gender disparity as, it is the

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male who ask for information as compared to female.

Much of the information is still concealed on the pretext of "security" under section 8 of Act. The definition of Public authority is vague in the act, which gives the scope for misinterpretation. Also, judiciary has "stonewalled" itself from RTI. The most crucial section - "4" which calls for summary disclosure of information is rarely used. The post of CIC has vacant for months, increasing the pendency of cases. The lack of PIOs further impedes the effective implementation.

There has been attacks / deaths of RTI activists like Satyendra Dubey / M. Shanmugan.

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Despite all these challenges, RTI Act's popularity is growing. As social capital is increasing, people are demanding rights, they are now asking "Questions" to government and people in power.

Because of this, Political Parties too were asked to come in its ambit, by CIL however they refused. Had they would've accepted it, it would have set the right precedence. The activists like "Sukesh Agrawal" are the foot soldiers of RTI who are aggressively using the tool to exact accountability and transparency not only from Political parties but Government authorities as well.

There is urgent need to spread the awareness, and strengthening RTI to ensure that

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this "democratic right" - to get the information and "To know" gets deeply entrenched / ingrained in all the processes.

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But, in this endeavour, we should not forget that with "greater power comes greater responsibility". The citizen definitely has a "tool" to enact transparency and accountability from Public authorities, but it simultaneously has responsibility to act as a "Benign Brother" of government, Public authorities.

People should not file frivolous complaints or blackmail officials. RTI should not be used as a "verb" to harass people / officials; neither the higher officials should use RTI, to

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coerce their subordinates. The file ratings should not become the cause of "Policy paralysis".

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If we are able to bring the attitude / behaviour change among the people who file RTI and officers who implement RTI we can overcome the challenges like delay, fear etc. Because, when we are honest in our decisions, work we should have no fear of any law like RTI. In fact RTI, will expedite the decision making process and give confidence to honest officials and courage to refuse illegal and unlawful orders.

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Today we see a monument in the village, where movement for RTI was started. Let's hope that in future, when we fast forward our picture to 2026 we can proudly revere this monument and hope that this "monument" becomes an epitome of "Transparency, empowerment, and Accountability" just like the way our "Parliament" which is a symbol of India's vibrant and dynamic "democracy".

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(B)

The Arab world : from Spring to uprising

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"Bagar manthan" - the churning of ocean, which found mentions in Indian texts is very much under progress in contemporary times in the Arab world.

The only difference that instead of elixir of life, it is churning out poison. Poison of instability, terrorism, humanitarian crisis which has tuned.

Arab spring to an uprising.

The "hope" of a democratic world order, has been shattered to the atmosphere of gloom and despair.

Turmoil in Arab world (middle east / west Asia) is nothing new. even during 12th - 13th century AD

there were crusades, Turmoil but it resulted in more or less a stable world order for at least few centuries.

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However, the roots of present uprising can be traced back to 2011, when an unemployed youth in Tunisia burned himself.

The flames of which were so intense that it engulfed whole Arab world in it and changed the geopolitics, geo economics of the global world order.

In Arab world, almost all the countries are "monarchies". There is peculiar combination of majority minority ruler and ruled for instance - Saudi Arabia - Sunni majority ruling over Shia minority, or Syria - where Shia minority ruling over Sunni majority.

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This combination played a crucial role in starting of "democratic" movements. These movements, gained momentum, after the uprising in Tunisia in 2011. These movements spread all over the Arab world in Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria etc.

This, giving a glimmer of hope that now, the oppressive regimes / dictators who are ruling these monarchies will tumble one by one and a new peaceful, stable and an egalitarian world order will be established.

Chimera = False hope
Utopia
"Spring turned to uprising"
unrealistic
ideal

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Why except Tunisia a western African nation, none of the country where Arab Spring took root couldn't sustain? Why it turned into a chaotic civil war? ~~Whether~~ in Syria / Libya?

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It is rightly said that "when at source, the spring can be turned with a twig, but when it grows into a mighty river, not even an elephant can cross it".

When, the "Arab Spring" started and it was in nascent stage, due to the parochial, vested interests of "west"; which wanted to install a puppet regime in these countries to exploit the resources (hydrocarbon) of these countries, the antisocial elements were provided with arms which prevented any sort

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of democratic government to take root
for ~~eg. ex~~ example - In Egypt
the military was supported;
and the muslim brotherhood
elected president was ousted.
Then, in Libya, the country was
plunged into civil war. Further
with the objective to ouster
elected President in Syria, the
arms were supplied to opposition
which resulted in rise of
"Daesh" / ISIS.

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Season beginning the "Spring at the source"
was polluted.

However, West cannot
be solely blamed for every failure
of Arab world. The Arab countries

themselves were not prepared for such "radical change". The institutional frame work to sustain the uprising, to channelize it in the correct direction was absent.

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Further, there was lack of leadership, as well as leaders who could have guided the masses. We must not forget that India, during its freedom struggle, produced many leaders like Gandhi, Nehru, Patel etc who not only provided leadership, but also controlled the mob and channelized their energy, and its result is in front of the world - "India - a united and democratic country with multi religions, linguistic & ethnic society."

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The multiple ethnic groups, sectarian identities (Shia / Sunni / Wahabites / Salafists) instead of becoming the strength of the "spring" created "fractures" in the movement which lead to the degeneration of Spring.

The Arab countries too with their parochial aim to dominate the region, or to maintain their hegemony in the region suppressed the Spring, or supported anti democratic forces.

These factors, which acted in simultaneous manner contributed towards the instability turmoil in the region which has become a "new normal".

However, in today's interconnected world it had

serious implications on world's geopolitics, geo economics and geo cultural landscape.

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This "churning" of Arab world, is spawning out terrorism in the form of IS/DAESH, which has become a global threat. It is more brutal and vulgar than Al-Qaeda. and recent ferocious terrorist attacks are its evidence.

An atmosphere of fear / suspicion has been created. The refugee crisis which is the direct outcome of "Arab uprising" has reached epic proportions which is putting pressure on EU. is becoming difficult to tackle. As, due to suspicion of terrorists among refugees border controls has been strengthened.

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Even in India, the domestic policies for internal security in view of radicalization is being revamped.

The foreign policy is now in flux, there is pressure on the government to evacuate its people who are in these countries.

The prices of oil have dropped, which has resulted in the consumption of fuel oil, further aggravating the climate change.

The already unstable countries of Asia like Afghanistan / Pakistan have become vulnerable.

Now, the single most crucial job at hands of for the global community is to set the house in order in Arab world. After all we all

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are family. - "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam"

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Though, it's an arduous task, but if countries around the world come together and decide that they'll rise above their "parochial" & "narrow" self interests and will cut the supply lines of terrorist funding, stop distinguishing between good and bad terrorists will facilitate talks, stop interfering in the local conflicts & giving them sectarian colour we can hope that things will improve.

Further it is the responsibility of the Arab countries too, that like Tunisia which gradually transformed to a democracy with the joint efforts of citizens

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and achieved Nobel peace prize '15) they should also try to reach a ~~thru~~ solution, through dialogue. They should take up process which is "led by them, owned by them" and international community should help them in achieving this.

Then only we can hope that the "matthan of the Arab world" will ~~result~~ ^{bring} out "climate of peace & stability"

and definitely, there is every chance that "uprising can be turned to Spring again" After all, there is always tomorrow and, when there is tomorrow there is "HOPE"

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+) Introduction
into with
Conclusion
+) Conclusion
to remember