

Why IT returns of MPs/MLAs should be made public:

Going by the swelling in the pouches of our MPs and MLAs in the recently concluded elections, it is extremely desirable that their IT returns are made public. The recent increase in the assets of Members of Parliament portrays some figures which appear lopsided and doubtful. There are parliamentarians who have increased their assets more than one thousand times over while in Parliament. Furthermore, what is the foundation of this breeding money among the political parties, nobody knows.

According to the reports of ADR and NEW, for the Lok Sabha MPs(2004-2009) the average increase in the assets was 289% or 2.9 crores per MP within 5 years. As for the MPs from Rajya Sabha, BJP has 14 (88%) out of 16 candidates who are crorepatists, followed by INC with 12 (80%) crorepati candidates out of 15 candidates. There is also the issue of conflict of interest. 58% of Rajya Sabha members are “crorepatists” with flourishing professional practices, rumerutative dictatorships, shareholding in media, infrastructure, hospitality besides paid consultancy and other engagements.

Again in the analysis of the recent concluded elections in the five states, we found a considerable increase in the income of these MLAs.

State	Average asset in 2007	Average asset in 2012	Percentage
Goa	2.91 crores	7.65 crores	163%
Punjab	5.73 crores	9.17 crores	60%
Uttar Pradesh	98.05 lacs	3.10 crores	217%
Uttaranchal	83 lacs	2 crores	177%
Manipur	20 lacs	1 crore	492%

Political character of a country by and large effects its populace. Scores of twists, some exceptionally grave have slipped into the conduct of politicians as well as political parties spawning a deep anxiety among its citizens. It should be exceptionally fundamental for our Parliamentarians to declare their IT returns so as to check this budding corruption in our country. Furthermore, **such a transparency with respect to disclosure of income tax returns of the MPs will help in creating trust among the citizens and accountability among the parliamentarians.**

Owing to the outsized corruption amid these political parties ADR filed RTI with the PIO offices of the commissioners of income tax asking for the IT Returns of the MPs falling in their jurisdiction. ADR was

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refused for any such information point black and consequently, ADR filed first appeal and then second appeal. **The appeal was registered with the Central Information Commission on 9th September, 2010. This appeal had been hanging with CIC for the last 17 months till it was handed over on 8th December, 2011.**

Tax Returns of Parliamentarians are voluntarily being disclosed in countries like U.S. and U.K. Presidential tax returns in the United States are available online. Like all other citizens, U.S. Presidents also enjoy the protection of their privacy, but they chose to release their tax returns publicly. Tax returns of Barack Obama, George W. Bush and others are available online. **(Presidentsusa.net)**. Their tax returns are open for public scrutiny and such sort of a transparency is truly commendable. Our Parliamentarians should also do likewise as this will underline the faith of the citizens in the representatives chosen by them.

This without any reservation grips larger public interest as the citizens have the right to know about their elected representatives in order to make an informed decision. **Furthermore, it will act as a deterrent against corruption and will increase trust between public and its representatives. People have a right to know everything about their representatives. It is of a paramount magnitude and any malfunction in making the information accessible would be prone to prejudice citizen's efforts of clean governance.**