

Invitation for the launch of the book
“The RTI Story: Power to the People”

Dear fellow travellers of the RTI movement, and other democratic and human rights campaigns,

The Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), in conjunction with the people of Beawar and Roli books, has immense pleasure in inviting you to the first part of the launch of a book that chronicles the story of the MKSS and peoples’ struggles during the Right to Information (RTI) campaign. The historic 40-days dharna for the RTI began on the 6th of April 1996, a watershed in the birth of the movement for the RTI in India. The people of Beawar participated and owned the RTI, and commemorated it with a memorial in 2016 at the Chang Gate. It is appropriate therefore that “The RTI Story” is launched from Chang Gate in Beawar, on the 6th of April 2018 at 05:00 PM.

When a struggle turns into a movement, and then a law, most often the focus shifts to governments, well-known “leaders” and parliament. This book celebrates the sung and unsung heroes of the struggle and counter the narratives which highlight single leaders and individuals. The RTI campaign could not have succeeded, but for the many people’s campaigns, the unforeseen coming together of different skeins of interest in national politics and governance, and the empowerment of people through participatory democratic processes. This book celebrates the contribution of ordinary people and the determined anonymous collective, in shaping the RTI law.

An unusual part of the RTI campaign was its attention to writing and record keeping. The demand for transparency imposed an equal obligation to honour transparency and accountability through the course of the campaign. The interest of journalists, jurists and researchers, to mention a few kept the writing in focus. The MKSS, along with others acknowledged in the book, collected and stored these records, which form an important source for the book.

Struggles and Campaigns are repositories of innumerable detailed stories where thought meets action. The idea of this chronicle emerged out of the many debates during 2011 on the nature of information, transparency and accountability. Over-stressed activists, were reluctant to make time to write. But the persuasiveness of the publisher pushed us into tentative acceptance. It galvanised a small team to the much-needed tasks of organising archival material, trawling through dusty stacks of papers and looking through old photos and videos. The RTI is a celebration of collectivism in its best interpretation and definition. We hope this chronicle captures that spirit in the story of a long people's struggle to change the balance of power between the state and citizen.

This unusual 'book launch', will be followed by book launches through the month of April, in Jaipur on the 7th, in Delhi on the 9th April at the Gandhi Peace Foundation, 10th April at the Indraprastha College for Women and on the 13th April at the India International Centre and in many places across India in the days to come. We hope to be able to acknowledge and establish the immense contribution of innumerable people working collectively, in the building of policy and a peoples' law.

As a friend and co-campaigner of the MKSS and the struggle for the Right to Information for many years now, your presence is important for us in the launch of this book. Please join us at one, or all of the events. The details are:

Beawar

Date: April 6th, 2018

Time: 05:00 PM

Venue: Chang Gate, Beawar, Rajasthan.

Jaipur

Date: April 7th, 2018

Time: 05:30 PM

Venue: Madhyavarti, Jawahar Kala Kendra, Jaipur, Rajasthan.

Delhi

Date: April 9th, 2018

Time: 06:00 PM

Venue: Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi

Date: April 10th, 2018

Time: 01:30 PM

Venue: Indraprastha College for Women, New Delhi

Date: April 13th, 2018

Time: 06:30 PM

Venue: Multi-purpose Hall, India International Centre, New Delhi

The events will include songs, street theatre, short film clips and discussions on the RTI and the book.