

Citizens' Charter_Governance

The Citizen's Charter

- A charter is in general a document which declares a set of rights.
- Similarly, a citizen's charter is a document that outlines the commitment of the public body towards the standards, quality and time framework of service delivery along with grievances redressal mechanism.

The Citizens' Charter is an instrument which seeks to make an organization transparent, accountable and citizen friendly. A Citizens' Charter is basically a set of commitments made by an organization regarding the standards of service which it delivers.

- It is an initiative in order to solve common problems faced by citizens while they interact with public bodies in their everyday life.
- The concept of a citizen's charter evolved in the UK in 1991 which aimed at improvement of public services. The programme of citizen's charter was launched by the labour government in 1998. The basic slogan of the UK PM Tony Blair was "service first."
- the labour government of UK defined 9 principles of service delivery namely standard of service, open and full information, consult and involve, encourage access and promotion of choice, treat all fairly, put things right when they go wrong, use resources effectively, innovate and improve and finally work with service providers.

Goals and Objectives of Citizen's Charter

The basic objective of a citizen's charter is to empower citizens in relation to public service delivery.

Principles of Citizen's Charter

The citizen's charter movement which is also called accountability movement outlines 6 principles.

- quality of public services.
- increase the number of choices.
- Specify the expectation of citizens and how this expectation can be fulfilled by laying down adequate standards.
- Value the taxpayers money.
- accountability.
- openness and transparency.

Citizen's Charter in India

- In 1996, there was an evolution of a consensus that the Government should be responsible and accountable to the people.
- In 1997, a conference was held in Delhi attended by all chief ministers of states and it was presided by PM. The PMO issued an action plan for effective and responsible government.
- The department of administrative reforms and public grievances initiated the task of coordinating, formulating and operationalising citizen's charter.
- It issued guidelines regarding citizen's charter and a list of do's or don'ts.
- 3 national banks initiated the pilot study namely PNB, Punjab and Sindh bank and OBC bank in the year 2000.
- The DARPG also initiated awareness among people about their rights.
- The DARPG has also given special training to employees at all levels of above 3 banks for the implementation of citizen's charter.
- In 2005, the central government formulated a citizen's charter for various departments and at the same time various state governments also formulated citizen's charter in their respective states. All together, there are 600 citizen's charter in various states of India.
- till now, there is no legal law for citizen's charter.

The Rising Inclination of Government towards the Executive in Recent Times

The government here refers to the parliamentary form of government which is there in our nation. It consists of 3 organs namely executive, legislature and judiciary. The reasons for rising inclination of government in recent times towards executive include the following.

- creation of NITI Aayog in 2015 by executive resolution.
- rising number of ordinances in recent times.
- decline of private member bills.
- rising influence of governors in opposition ruling states in the form of delaying state legislature bills.

Significance of Citizen's Charter

- a citizen's charter makes the public authority more transparent and accountable.
- It can be an effective tool to engage civil society groups and activists to curb corruption.
- the citizen's charter aims at enhancing standard, choice and quality of service delivery.
- It also aims at effective and efficient government.
- It makes the government inclusive and responsive.
- It enhances people's participation in the governance process and increases credibility of the government.

Sevottam Model of Governance

- The second ARC recommended the **Sevottam model of governance**. It is based on the the Customer Service Excellence Model of the UK. As the name suggests, the model refers to seva that is service and uttam that is one with quality and standard. It hence means that the government must provide standard and quality services.
- This model consists of 3 dimensions namely 1. citizen's charter , 2. public grievance redressal and 3. service delivery capability.
- Each component has three further sub components.
- The citizen's charter consists of three sub-components namely implementation , monitoring and review. This component insists on better implementation of service delivery and the monitoring of the entire process so that citizens can receive better services. In addition, review is the process through which one can evaluate the service delivery.
- The public grievance redressal further has three sub-components namely receipt , redress and prevention. It refers to documentation of the grievance redressal mechanism. It intends to redress all the grievances of citizens. In addition, it also aims to prevent anomalies in service delivery.
- The service delivery capability also has three sub-components namely customers, employees and infrastructure. The sevottam model targets to fulfill the customer's expectations. It tends to have responsible and accountable employees. Also, there should be adequate infrastructure for the entire sevottam model of governance.

In the Sevottam Model, each organization should follow a step by step approach which would help it in becoming increasingly more citizen centric. the Second ARC Seven Step Model for Citizen Centricity:

- a. **Define** all services which you provide and identify your clients.
- b. **Set standards** and norms for each service.
- c. **Develop capability** to meet the set standards
- d. **Perform** to achieve the standards
- e. **Monitor** performance against the set standards.
- f. **Evaluate** the impact through an independent mechanism.
- g. **Continuous improvement** based on monitoring and evaluation results.

The Issues with Citizen's Charter in India

- it has no legal backing. It means that a citizen's charter is not legally enforceable.
- The citizen's charter in India has poor design and framework. Its content is also poor. There is no provision to hold public officials accountable in india.
- There is a lack of consultation. When a citizen's charter was framed, the government should have consulted citizens, civil society groups and voluntary organizations so that a proper citizen's charter could be framed.
- There is a lack of public awareness. Most of the people are not aware of citizen's charter and the government has also not taken effective steps to spread awareness regarding the same. The citizens must be educated about their rights.
- There is resistance to change. The public officials have vested interest and they are not willing to change which makes citizen's charter toothless.

The Way forward for Citizen's Charter

- there should be a legal backing for the citizen's charter. The parliament introduced the rights of citizens for time bound delivery of goods and services and redressal of their mechanism bill 2011 in the past but the government did not pass it.
- one size does not fit for all. Each government department should have a separate citizen's charter.
- There should be wider consultation with civil society groups and citizens regarding effective citizen's charter.
- A wide awareness of citizen's charter is the need of the hour.
- Public officials should be trained in such a manner so that there is some behavioral change in their attitudes.