CHAPTER-II
CONCEPT OF CITIZEN’S CHARTER

Citizen’s Charter foreshadows different governing functions for the state, (a) delivery of public services in a manner similar to the private market (b) an accompanying change in orientation towards customer satisfaction. (c) a concept of citizenship based on rights and duties. It provides the opportunity to put in place a market system within the public services sector in the guise of empowering citizens.¹

Equality, universality, integration are constitutive elements of citizenship. Means as well as condition of freedom have been an enduring element of citizenship since classical times. Aristotle expressed the view that life in the city would become intolerable without the idea of sharing the life in common. The notion of the citizen captures the necessary duality as individual and as member of the community. At different moments in history, ‘becoming a citizen’ has involved either an extension of the status to more persons, or a liberatory dismantling of hitherto existing structures of oppression.²

The liberal view of citizenship, which was developed in the 19th century, emphasized the importance of rights for all citizens. In recent years, the debate over the citizenship rights has broadened to include recognition to a variety of groups, e.g., women, minorities, child, etc. Similarly, quasi-market mechanisms like citizen’s charter bestow a set of obligations and rights to the citizens enabling the empowerment of the citizens.

There can be little doubt that taken together these changes are revolutionary in terms of traditional function and the roles of government. It also seems clear that the citizen’s charter symbolises these changes, a fact borne out by the First Report in 1992 which devotes whole section to each of the phenomena outlined here. The

citizen is to be empowered, according to the official gospel, by each of these developments all of which working together will create a new relationship between the state and the citizen. This remains to be seen but there can be no doubt of the magnitude of the changes envisaged. They potentially amount to a new political settlement. But what is lacking is an accompanying constitutional settlement which provides the protection of the law in a clutch of respect and which reassesses political institutions to ensure that citizen rights and expectations are in fact protected and that a new relationship between citizen, community and state is mapped out.

Almost any concept of citizenship envisaged cannot be contained within a single frame of, ‘customer’ reference. Citizens have rights, a few of which have been merely touched upon here. But there is more besides. Already the language of duty is being spoken by some of our leading politicians, not least in the context of so called ‘work fare’, but also, for example, in relation to the moral education of the young. That development already outlined also depends increasingly on voluntary contributions, especially in relation to the caring agencies. A cluster of factors have led to the increasing use of volunteers. Yet it is only slowly that the realisation, that volunteering on the grand scale is incompatible with atomistic greed, has dawned.1

The market can provide free expression and choice but cannot carry the whole burden of living as a social being. Unfortunately the citizen's charter is lopsided in its attempts to reawaken a real form of citizenship. For all its merits, it is the product of stunted growth.2

In this era of liberalization, privatization and globalization, citizen’s charter is also a means to advocate continued commitment to privatization and competitions, the marketisation of public services and withdrawal of government and state from its unnecessary burden in the name of welfarism.

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Unlike the economically powerful countries in most third world countries, reforms were introduced under pressure of aid conditionalities imposed by structural adjustment programs of multilateral agencies. An increasing accent on liberalization, marketisation, privatisation and globalisation became characteristic of India as in the case of most other third world governments which were also under pressure exerted through structural adjustment program. Reforms which would facilitate these processes became the strategies as well as objectives of these programs. There has been a growing interference by the World Bank-IMF-WTO combine in the determination of state polices. The autonomy of states in shaping their economies or administration is fast disappearing. With the weakening of sovereign rights of the state in matters of policy there is a decline in the state capacity and legitimacy too. Questions of accountability too are acquiring new meanings because of the emergence of these institutions as all powerful in matters of policy making. A serious challenge is posed thereby to the very values of democracy and people’s right which form the core of liberal ideology that is still used to justify the present patterns of reforms.¹

In India, a wide range of changes have been attempted in the direction of increasing space for private sector and market mechanism. Significant responsibilities which hitherto lay under state jurisdiction have been transferred to private or non-governmental sectors. A major thrust area for reforms has been to create space for the growth of private sector and facilitate the operation of market mechanism in both public and private sectors by reducing the operation and intervention of the state. Many industries have been delicensed and deregulated to provide greater freedom to the private sector in taking investment and technology decisions. Trade has been liberalised considerably in order to promote free trade and meet the challenge of the globalisation process. Disinvestment of public sector equity is being attempted. State interference in the running of public sector entities is sought to be reduced.

Why Citizens Charter

Public administration is government in action to accomplish public well being. To be relevant the discipline needs to be sensitive to the burning issue of social change and socio-economic development. The citizen’s perceptions about the working of the system form a vital part of our understanding of public administration. It is a kind of training for citizenship, where the citizens need to be taught to differentiate between how the public administration system of the country is structured and how it operates in practice. The independent subject of public administration is worth promoting not simply as a matter of academic interest but because of the contribution it can make to the welfare of society”.

With increase in the aspirations of the citizens, the administration specially in developing societies are responsible for regulatory activities like infrastructure development and welfare activates ranging from building of roads, railways, management of resources, (land, water, forests) provision of food, housing , traffic, control prices of drugs, environment, social welfare legislations.

The current trend towards globalization has led to the growing importance of Non-state actors in administration and increasing global interdependence leading to more and more democratization and people’s participation. Public administration has to respond to the demands of new groups that look to government for protection and development. Tribal development, child labor, gender equity, human rights are some of the issues which public administration cannot afford to ignore today.

Administration cannot remain static in such a dynamic world situation. Today citizens are aggressively vigilant demanding transparency in all administrative transactions. Corruption in administration in recent years, has taken a heavy toll of both efficiency and national morality. Ethical behaviour is what is expected of public administration more and more in the coming years. There is a resurgence of the people actor syndrome today to assert real popular control over government through decentralization, openness,transparency and accountability. Citizen’s Charter is a means to ascertain this accountability in administration.
Reasons assigned for the introduction of citizen’s charter are:-

(a) The onset of globalization led to opening up of economy leading to growing importance of Trans National Corporations.

(b) The domestic administration because of tough competition with its foreign counterparts, especially in sectors like banking, insurance, housing, was compelled to upgrade and develop itself.

(c) People’s belief in government and bureaucracy was eroded because the World Bank sponsored governance campaign altered the conventional approach to public administration by providing a critique of public bureaucracy. Bureaucrats have been defined as rent seekers charging a heavy premium for whatever tasks they are traditionally assigned as propounded by Public Choice Theorists.

The civil service must change its present attitude of aggrandizement, arrogance and aloofness, and become really civil in its dealings with the citizens and service to the society. It must inculcate fanatic integrity in the work and behavior. In short, it must consciously set out to professionalize and humane itself.¹

(d) The above viewpoint of the General Public regarding the Bureaucracy got a further impetus by scholarly works during early Nineties. Of them special mention should be made of the work Reinventing Government by David Osborne and Ted Gaebler, and works by Tullock, Nikanen, Vincent Ostrom.

(e) The citizen today due to rule of law and democracy expects the public servant to be impartial, honest, responsive, fair and competent in the performance of his official duties. Democracy demands that the citizen’s voice be heard and taken note of in the delivery of services by government agencies. Administration has to understand and not avoid citizens, their demands, hopes

and aspirations, and develop the capacity to cope with citizen’s expectations. Administration cannot remain static in such a dynamic world situation.

Citizen’s Charter is perceived as an instrument that could be used to chisel out the possibilities of a healthier relationship between the service provider and the user. In India it was also seen as a vehicle for building greater awareness about the mutual responsibilities of both the government and the citizens. Thus, the establishment of Citizen’s Charter would help:

a) Revamping people’s faith and confidence in the administration and the political executives by providing effective channels for redress of citizen’s grievances. Such faith and fair amount of satisfaction with the administration are of utmost importance for the success of Indian democracy.

b) It will ensure speedy and cheap remedy to the aggrieved. Writ petitions and other judicial proceedings are costly and cumbersome. Justice delayed is justice denied and the cost of it is ruinous. Justice through judicial instruments is very expensive, dilatory, and inconvenient, therefore citizens in majority donot approach courts for action, they find it cheaper and less humiliating to suffer wrongs than approach the courts.

c) Various administrative arrangements made in the departments of government have not satisfied the citizens. Nor have the various administrative tiers and hierarchies proved adequate for the purpose. Therefore, the very existence of the citizen’s charter would act as a deterrent to the acts of maladministration.

Concept

The latest in government citizen relationship is the concept of citizen’s charter. The idea behind the charter is tapping citizen’s responses to the actual working of government organizations. Normally, the charter would cover all public services and aim at demanding from the government and services organizations (like post-office, railways etc. for instance), accountability, transparency, quality and choice of services provided by them to the people.
Charter is generally defined as a written document delivered by the sovereign or legislature. A citizen’s charter is a micro-concept in the sense that it is invoked by an organization. **Secondly**, it is as a rule, proclaimed by an organization having its day-to-day dealings and contacts with citizens. These organizations could be local governments, subordinate offices of the government, banking and financial institutions, public utilities etc. **Thirdly**, all these organizations promise rendering of services to the citizens within a specified time-frame and conforming to a certain standard. One aspect of citizen’s charter is particularly noteworthy. The sanction behind the citizen’s charter is moral and nothing else. The proclaiming agency makes it absolutely explicit that it is not justifiable: a citizen cannot sue an organization for not abiding by its self-proclaimed standards of services embodied in a citizen’s charter. The charter may thus be seen as only emphasizing the moral dimension of civil service accountability.\(^1\)

Citizens Charter was first introduced in UK in 1991 to streamline the administration and also make it citizen friendly. The charter is a significant influence in the latest efforts undertaken by the Government of India to make the administration citizen friendly, open, transparent, sensitive and accountable. It is based on the recognition that all public services are paid for by individual citizens, either directly or through taxes. Therefore they are entitled to expect high quality services, responsive to their needs, provided efficiently at a reasonable cost.

The charter is definitely, an innovation which impinges directly on the relationship between the citizens and the state. Primarily an adaptation of the UK model, the Indian citizen’s charter has an additional component of “expectation from the clients” or in other words obligation of the users. The involvement of the consumer organizations, citizens groups and other stockholders in the formulation of the citizens’ charters is emphasized to ensure that they meet the needs of the users. What is unique about the charter is that it is based on techniques and principles opposed to traditional ‘administrative law’ concerns with courtlike adjudication and

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legal remedies. It tends to avoid the administrative pathologies imputed by the authors of the reform program to ‘law-bound’ approaches.

The idea of Citizens Charter often referred to as “Charterism” has intended to bring about cultural changes in public service organization. It emphasizes the use of market mechanism as administrative technique, which is a more flexible, cost conscious and decentralized style of public service management. It emphasizes upon consumer populist variant in which individual service users exert pressure on public service managers and professionals to raise standards through the exercise of informed choice.

The real issues referred to are about distinctive mechanics employed by “Charterism” to implement this agenda in the bestowal of non-justifiable public service consumer rights. Citizens Charter is a voluntary commitment by the service organization for the citizens of the country.

The main structural elements of charter reforms are:-

(a) marketization- introducing market type competition into public services production;

(b) disaggregating (‘corporatization”)- breaking up integrated bureaucratic hierarchies into managerially autonomous units; and

(c) incentivization- increasing pay differentials and linking both personal and organizational incentive more closely to performance, so as to foster entrepreneurial attitudes and focus managerial attention on cost-cutting and organizational efficiency.

This is part of a wider ‘state and the citizen’s agenda, whose key theme is to extend the choice exercised by consumers of public services. In turn, this is one of the several (different) underlying central government agendas:-
(a) ‘constraining bureaucracy’ agenda (privatization, market testing and contracting out),

(b) the ‘new management’ agenda (minimizing the constraints imposed by rules and regulations on managers and allowing them a wider degree of local discretion about the means of providing services) and

(c) the ‘cost-cutting’ agenda’

The Citizen’s Charter program is explicitly designed not to establish a spider’s web of new justiceable rights. Three broad policy developments are of particular importance in this respect.

(a) One is the general shift in welfare policy away from a courts-based approach to reliance on statutory rules and formalized procedures.

(b) The second policy development is the emergence of new regulatory regimes such as now applied to the privatized utilities.

(c) The third policy development is the expansion of internal or bureaucratic regulation. This can be broadly defined as encompassing the range of processes by which standards are set, monitored and / or enforced by bureaucratic regulators who are distanced from units or bodies with direct operational or service delivery responsibilities.¹

Part, but only a part of these movements has been in a celebrated and influential American book by Osborne and Gaebler. The thesis is simple but far reaching. The state (central or local) cannot govern effectively by becoming involved in the minutiae of service delivery. What it must do instead is empower a myriad of providers to compete and innovate in delivering on politics/ mission statements

chosen by the state whose task is the task of governance rather than governing. Government, to use their striking phraseology, must steer rather than govern.

This commitment leads to choice through multiple providers, something of a separation between purchaser and provider, competition and an emerging value of citizen as a volunteer. The multiple providers may be the public sector, the private sector, the third force or voluntary movement and/or public/private partnerships.

In an event, if improved public services are to be provided by the market one way or the other or in market-mimicked fashion, then a considerable burden can be seen to be placed on the framers or makers of policy. This might not at first sight appear to be connected but the value of the whole citizen charter impetus necessitates reforming policy communities. They should also be intended to achieve clear objectives.1

Like other areas in social sciences, even in public administration we have been passive recipients of the borrowed ideas from the West. Similar is the case of citizens charter, the idea has been taken from the U.K. Since the time of Margaret Thatcher as the PM in 1970’s, the Government of Britain had introduced the idea of rolling back the frontiers of state as a means of reducing unnecessary burden of state in the name of “welfarism”. By early 1980’s the government was seeking ways of improving quality of public services without adding to their costs. It was the Next steps Program which provided the foundations from which the citizen’s charter was launched. It was Prime Minister John Major who launched the strategy of the citizen’s charter in 1991.

The key aspect of the charter is its requirement that public agencies publish commitments to standards of service, that there be independent monitoring and publication of standards achieved, and that mechanisms be established through which the “customer” can achieve satisfaction when standards are not met. It was envisaged that the details of the standards regime and the mechanisms available to the customer would be tailored to specific services and that particular agencies would publish their

own charters. The charters include various forms of compensation and alternative arrangements for service-provision where agencies do not live up to their promises.

For example, the passenger’s Charter for British Rail describes ex-gratia systems of refunds and vouchers for delayed and cancelled trains. British Telecom’s customers can now claim compensation if telephone lines are not installed within two working days of the agreed date. The Council Tenant’s charter allows to execute repairs where the local authority has not done so and to charge the authority for the work.¹

In India, the concept of Citizen’s Charter was pushed forward by the Consumer Coordination Council (CCC) and its associate the ‘Common Cause’ headed by H.D. Shourie in association with the Cabinet Secretariat.

**Recommendations of Chief Secretaries Conference 1996**

Sharing the concern for ensuring responsive, accountable, transparent and citizen-centric administration at all levels, and with the objective of restoring faith of people in administration against the prevailing dissatisfaction, the then Prime Minister of India, had inaugurated a conference of the Chief Secretaries in 1996 to develop an effective and responsive administration and to make public services more efficient. The Conference of Chief Secretaries in India suggested several corrective steps widely known as Civil Services Reforms. The conference recommended that accountability should be interpreted in a larger sense in relation to public satisfaction and responsive delivery of services and phased introduction of citizen’s charter for as many service institutions as possible.

**Important Aspects Mentioned** were (a) Administration is not people sensitive or citizen’s friendly, (b) urgent need to make the administration people sensitive, efficient and cost effective, (c) for public satisfaction and responsive delivery of services, a phased introduction of citizen’s charter for as many service insti-

institutions as possible by way of citizen’s entitlement to public services, and (d) governing conceived as governance with possibilities of inclusion of other actors such as citizens, consumer groups, elected local bodies or those who are linked with administration in some way or the other.

As a result of the above recommendations, the department of administrative reforms and public services in 1997 evolved an “action plan on effective and responsive administration” based on the responses received from experts, officials, media, voluntary agencies etc. The three main areas of action plan that were discussed in the conference of Chief Ministers on May 24, 1997 were to (a) make the administration accountable and citizen-friendly, (b) ensure transparency and right to information and (c) adopt measures to cleanse and motivate civil services.

An implementation committee was set up under the Chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary to formulate ways and means to implement the above stated concerns of the Action Plan. Among the various steps taken in this respect, a core group was formed under the Chairmanship of then Secretary (Personnel), for monitoring the formulation of the citizen’s charter, and identifying the Ministries/Departments with substantial public interface to assist them in finalizing the Charter.

To begin with, the charter was not proposed to be made justifiable; it is a moral commitment of the government. It is a part of a wider state and citizen agenda whose key theme is to extend the choice exercised by consumers of public services. The sanction behind the citizen’s charter is moral and nothing else. The proclaiming agency makes it absolutely explicit that it is not justifiable: a citizen cannot sue an organization for not abiding by its self proclaimed standards of service embodied in a citizen’s charter. The charter may thus be seen as only emphasizing the moral dimension of civil service accountability. Citizen’s charter helps to present a complete manifesto. If not satisfied they can go to the consumer protection court. Although not justifiable but these charters aim at affirming the commitment of an organization to the people that it will deliver its particular services promptly, maintain quality and that redressal machinery will be available where this service is not of the standard which it is committed to maintain. At present the only option that the citizen who
suffers loss or hurt has is to take the matter to the consumer court for award of compensation.

Under the charter, citizens have been brought at the centre of all government activities changing the prevalent concept of treating the citizens as passive recipients of Government service.

The Citizen’s Charter sees public services through the eyes of those who use them. For too long the provider has dominated and now it is the turn of the user. The principles of the Citizen’s Charter, simple but tough, are increasingly accepted. They give more power to the citizens and more freedom to choose.

The Charter is not a list of new principles of governance; instead, it has merely reiterated those norms which ideally should constitute the foundations of public administration. It is an attempt to bring back the basic values of public administration that have eroded due to various reasons. Citizen’s perceptions about the working of the system form a vital part of our understanding of public administration.

Thus, we find that the concept of citizen’s charter was first adopted in Great Britain from where it spread to different parts of the world including India. In the third world situation, we have always been passive recipients of borrowed ideas from the west. But it is not an entirely new concept for the Indian system, and neither is the means to implement it. It has already been existing in the system, in a rudimentary form which can be traced to decentralization, community living, power to people, etc. found in the writings of various Indian thinkers.

In India, one of the major decisions taken at the Chief Minister’s Conference in 1997 was that the central and the state governments would formulate citizen’s charter starting with those sectors that have large public interface like railways, telecommunications, postal services, etc.

In order to emphasize concerns for citizen’s expectation of improved services from the state where it is not privatized, there is an attempt to reintroduce citizen’s charter in various ministries/departments/organizations. The charter is expected to
incorporate the citizen’s entitlement of public service, wide publicity of standards of performance, quality of services, access to information, simplifying procedures for complaints, time bound redressal of grievances and a provision for independent scrutiny of performance. Ministries/departments have been asked to evolve a plan containing both, long term and short term moving targets for improved public satisfaction and efficient performance through systems of improvement, technology and information inputs, staff orientation, work place changes, use of alternative providers, citizens partnership etc. Inbuilt machinery for system audit and periodic monitoring of performance with reference to charter principle is expected to be put in place. Not much progress has been made in this direction though citizen's charter has been adapted by a large number of ministries/departments/organizations at the central level, including public sector banks. Scores of charters have been adopted in various states so far.

An important question in assessing the direction of reforms which requires careful analysis is the propriety of applying private sector management techniques to processes of public agencies. It is important to consider if public sector management can be run along the lines of private sector at all or if this will lead to serious costs in certain contexts. As Haque argues, “in the name of streamlining the allegedly expensive and inefficient state bureaucracy, the public sector has been restructured in favour of vested business interest without much reduction in its size and scope. The basic norms of public service such as neutrality, impartiality, accountability, representativeness, equality, justice, integrity and commitment are being replaced by pro-market values like competitiveness, efficiency, productivity and profitability”.¹

The debate in this regard has been actively pursued and studies point towards the limits in this perspective. It is worthwhile to draw lessons from these. To assign supremacy to the private sector value of profitability and define public interest in terms of that value alone while overlooking its implications for pursuing social concerns is questionable. Cost inflicted by it may threaten the very legitimacy of the

organization or service offered, hence it cannot be easily justified. There is a tendency to go back to neo classical economics for justifying private interest as the constitutive element of ‘collective’ or ‘public interest’.

The charter will have the following elements:

(a) Details of business transactions by the organizations,
(b) Details of clients,
(c) Details of service provided to each client group,
(d) Details of grievances redressal mechanism and how to access it.
(e) Expectations from the clients

The six principles of the citizen’s charter are as under:

1. Standards- Specify what to expect and how to act if standards are not met.
2. Quality- Improving the quality of services
3. Choice and consultation – Wherever possible
4. Transparency- Rules/ Procedures/ Schemes/ grievances
5. Accountability- Individuals and organizations
6. Value for money- For the tax payers money

**Comparative Studies**

The International Scene:-

The UK’s citizen’s charter initiative aroused considerable interest around the world and several countries implemented similar programmes, e.g. Belgium (Public Service Users’ Charter, 1992), France (Service Charter, 1992), Spain (The Quality Observatory, 1992), Malaysia (Client Charter, 1993), Portugal (The Quality Charter in Public Services, 1993), and, Carta Dei Servizi in Italy (1993), Canada (Service Standards Initiative, 1995) and Australia (Service Charter, 1997).

The Government of Malaysia issued guidelines on the Client’s Charter in 1993 to assist government agencies to prepare and implement a client’s charter, which is ‘a
written commitment by an agency to deliver outputs or services according to specified standards of quality’ (Government of Malaysia, 1998). The Malaysian system of client’s charter closely follows the UK model. A distinction is made between agency-wise and unit charters. The concept of ‘service recovery’ enjoins taking steps to restore the trust and confidence to the client in a proactive manner when things go wrong.

The Commonwealth Government of Australia launched its Service Charter initiative in 1997 as part of its on-going commitment to improve the quality of service provided by agencies to the Australian community by moving the government organization away from bureaucratic processes to customer-focused outcomes. Service charters are considered a powerful tool for fostering change and require the organization to focus on service delivered, to measure and assess performance, and to initiate performance improvement. Centrelink is a one-stop shop that provides access to Australian government services for over six million customers. Centrelink has adopted one-to-one service, treats customers with respect and consistency and takes the complexity out of dealing with government.

In 1995 the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat started a Service Standard Initiative which took its cue from the citizen’s charters of the United Kingdom but enlarged its scope considerably. This Service Standard Initiative in Canada was started against the backdrop of citizen expectations relating to friendly, respectful and courteous service; faster response times; extended hours at government offices; and ‘one-stop-shopping’. At the same time there was a need to reduce the deficit and provide value for money through more efficient use of resource (Treasury Board of Canada, 1995).¹

In New-Zealand reform process started with corporatization and privatization and many government enterprises were sold off into private ownership. At the same time principles of private sector organisation, efficiency and market competition were applied in public sector. A new system of financial system was put in place. Ministers were required to enter into contracts with departmental chief executives, specifying the desired output and the price that had to be paid. Chief executives are taken on a five year contract. They in turn have full power to hire and fire their staff and fix their salaries in relation to their performance.

In Italy, the Carta dei servizi was launched in 1993. Under the law, the first public sector to introduce Carta dei servizi was the national healthcare system, the second was the educational system.

Carta dei servizi has been a basis for experimenting with the evaluation of quality standards and polices, sometimes with the participation of consumer associations. Nonetheless, the Carta dei servizi evaluation experience has been sporadic and generally restricted to certain sectors.¹

Contracting out is also part of the set of core values with which the charter movement is imbued. The claims made for the process includes greater efficiency and greater savings.

Alongside this there is encouragement of joint public/private initiatives, already very fashionable in the United States, particularly on infrastructure projects.

United Kingdom

In the UK, efforts at civil services reforms started in 1989. Efficiency unit was created in the prime-minister’s office. Several flaws in the civil service which were revealed by the scrutiny exercises were sought to be remedied through financial management initiative. Government departments were allowed to manage their own budgets and managers were made personally accountable for results. This was followed by Next Step Study which resulted in ‘agencification’ or the creation of executive agencies. In the year 1991, the government launched Citizens Charter a ten year program designed with the objective of raising standards of public services. Privatization has been the key strategy used to promote fair competition between public and private sector and aimed at giving value for money to the tax payer and user.

The concept was first articulated and implemented in the UK by the Conservative Government of John Major in 1991 to improve continuously the quality of public services for the people of the country so that these services respond to the needs and wishes of the users. The program was re-launched in 1998 by the Labour Government of Tony Blair which re-christened it as Services First.

In the UK, in the context of the Next steps/ Modernizing Government initiatives, citizen’s charters have acquired a service quality face for delivery of public services. The quality tools adopted for improving public services include the Business Excellence Model, Investors in People, Charter Mark, ISO 9000 and Best Value (UK Government, 1999).

Few components which are identified to have contributed to the formulation of effective citizens’ charter in England are:

1. A committee was constituted under the chairmanship of the then Prime Minister John Major, comprising people from various backgrounds, like industry, academic world and national consumer council. The office of the Prime Minister took personal interest in having such a committee and enforced its functioning.
2. The Prime Minister’s Office was continuously regulating and pushing other ministers in UK as to how and in what manner the progress of citizens’ charter is taking place.

The most important innovation was that after the citizen’s charter was formulated, every year the Prime Minister submits a report to the Parliament about the progress of the charter formulated by respective ministers in a comparative manner.

Citizens’ charter is a voluntary commitment by the services organizations for the citizens’ of the country. As far as complaints are concerned they can easily avail the Complaint Book Services, provided on all the tables’ at all important places in the office. Investigations of the complaints are done by an official from outside the department of the concerned ministry. In the UK, former chairperson of the National Consumer Council, Billcox, was appointed to look after the system and the procedures as to how the complaints were to be investigated.

The Charter marks are to be awarded to the personnel of various organizations who perform efficiently in satisfying the public, as recognition to their services, the nominations are to be sent by the citizens who avail the services. The photographs of the recipients of Charter mark awards are exhibited in office receptions, as a mark of honor for the services rendered by them. In UK, if the standards are not maintained or if there is any delay on the part of authorities, the concerned department has to pay compensation ranging from pounds 5 to 75 for not honoring the commitment. The citizens’ charter is published in all the languages which the citizens understand. In England, citizens’ charter is available in English, Gurmukhi, Punjabi, Gujarati, Bengali, Hindi, Chinese, and Vietnamese which means that all the minorities dwelling in the country are equally represented and provided with the information of their rights in the language they understand.

The Citizen’s Charter is not what it started out to be. Its tentacles are extending to areas previously unconsidered when the idea was first mooted. It is now becoming part of both a philosophy of government and a means of government.
Taken together these may in future be seen as a constituting a real break from the past. It may even be viewed as a new way of governing.

A congeries of developments is occurring which for a while appeared to be looking for a philosophy. That philosophy is now, perhaps, discernible. The Citizen is now enmeshed with the Next Steps program, the continued commitment to privatization and competition, the marketization of public services and the withdrawal of government to an empowering fortification. These are indeed significant moves. They foreshadow different governing functions for the state.

There is nothing in any of the charter documentation which appears to recognise the problem. If there are presently any plans to monitor developing world of government by contracting then they have so far been very well concealed.

Privatisation and competition are core elements of the new state forms. However, given that privatisation has not always taken place in the most rational fashion or with sufficient regard for competition, the regulation of a number of industries has been put in place and will continue for the foreseeable future. It is hoped that eventually a sufficient degree of competition will occur to render regulation unnecessary. However, at the moment this appears to be a long way off. The regulators are given statutory duties to promote competition in their industries and to protect the interest of consumers. Competition and choice for domestic customers is being phased in. For example, in many areas of the country, competition now exists to supply telephone services to the residential markets, and the domestic electricity markets will be open for competition from 1998.

In fulfilment of its citizens’ charter commitment, the government has legislated to bring the powers of all the utility regulators up to the level of strongest. Thus, the regulators set and monitor service standards, inform customers of their rights, improve company complaints procedure, encourage more competition and resolve disputes between utility companies and their customers.
However, the lack of legislative backing for such procedures must still be regarded critically. Not only would legislation dignify the development and indicate genuine commitment but it would make ‘back-sliding’ that much more difficult. It is also regrettable that a root and branch review of the ombudsmen system has not been announced.

All experience indicates that only judicially enforced legislation will work at the end of the day. It is remarkable to many that ‘the ‘quietest revolution’- viz. Next Steps- has taken place almost entirely without legislations and indeed with precious little debate in the house. ¹

**Various other means of citizens’ friendly administration**

**Citizen’s Charter and Right to Information (RTI)**

The RTI bill was passed by the parliament on May 11-12, 2005 and received the Presidential assent on June 15, 2005 The RTI Act, after notification in the Gazette of India, came into force on Oct 13, 2005.

The major purpose of the Act is fourfold- (i) informed citizenry (ii) transparency of information which is vital to its functioning (iii) necessary information to contain corruption and (iv) to hold government and its functionaries, instrumentalities accountable to the governed.² It includes the right to (a) inspect works, documents and (b) take notes, extracts of certified copies of documents or records, (c) take certified samples of material, (d) obtain in form of printouts, diskettes, floppies, tapes, video cassettes or in any other electronic mode or through printouts.

Without information people cannot adequately exercise their rights as citizens or make informed choices. It is suggested that the Department of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pension, Government of India which is the nodal agency for the RTI

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Act, also bring out such easy, useful and citizens-friendly guides and handouts in English and in all local languages on how to access the RTI Act.

This Act has given access to the documents and files related to a large field of public administration, including the file notings on all issues except those of sovereignty and integrity of India; national security; strategic, scientific or economic interests of the State; relation with foreign states; or incitement to an offence. The other reasons for exemptions include contempt of court, breach of parliamentary privileges, commercial interest, trade secrets intellectual property rights, cabinet papers and purely personal information. As required by the RTI Act, the Central Government has constituted the Central Information Commission consisting of the Chief Information Commissioner and some other (not more than ten) Information Commissioners appointed for a term of five years on recommendations of a committee comprising the Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha and Union Minister nominated by the Prime Minister. In a blow to its claims on transparency, the second UPA government has proposed amendments in the RTI Act, exempting all file notings except those dealing with social and development issues. It has also restricted access to pending policy decisions, cabinet documents and examination-related items. The proposed amendments also envisage increasing the RTI fees substantially in order to discourage chronic and motivated information seekers.

There is a view in the government that the citizen should be made to pay for the salary of the officers working on the RTI, besides the amount for the photocopying or accessing the information sought. Another amendment is aimed at granting anonymity to officers in case where the file notings can be accessed. Considering the public outrage, sustained agitations and protests from several quarters the Union Government decided not to proceed with the proposed amendments for the time being.

**Bhagidari**

From its very inception, government has sought to devise institutional forms of citizen-government partnerships and increase the efficacy of existing
representational forms of participation. The edifice of our governance rests on this sturdy foundation: Peoples’ Participation. The latest development in citizen-government partnership is “Bhagidari” that is the citizen’s partnership in governance. It is a means for (a) facilitating citywide changes in Delhi, (b) utilizes processes and principles of multi-stakeholders (citizen groups, NGOs, the government …) collaboration, (c) applies the method of large group interactive events, (d) aims to develop ‘joint ownership’ by the citizens and government of the change process and (e) facilitates people’s participation in governance.

In line with this ideological heritage, on assuming power in December 1998, NDA Government outlined a philosophy for governance – that is responsive and participative. This has specifically stemmed from the belief that Government must work in partnership with the people. Citizens must feel that successful and meaningful governance cannot be achieved without their involvement and without their role. In view of this the concept of ‘Bhagidari’: The citizen – government partnership was evolved and the ‘My Delhi – I care’ drive initiated.

To evolve a mechanism for putting the concept of Bhagidari into practice, wide consultations were initiated with various citizen groups-the Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs), the Market and Traders Associations (MTAs) and other NGOs. Discussions were also held with Municipal Corporation of Delhi, Delhi Development Authority, New Delhi Municipal Council, Delhi Vidyut Board, Delhi Jal Board and Delhi Police and the Department of Environment and Forest. These departments subsequently became the participating Departments in the Bhagidari Programme.

It has taken up simple and common issues that have an impact on the citizen’s everyday life. For example, not burning crackers during Diwali, discussing the content of the syllabus of the tenth and twelfth class with the parents of the students. These are issues that are amenable to simple solutions. The idea is to build up on these first successes and to take the movement forward to addressing more complex matters.
Survey of Literature

Survey of Literature forms an important part of any research. Though limited but my research also included consulting of books, articles, newspapers on the subject. A few of them have been mentioned below:-

A very useful insight into the functioning of the Charter is provided by Norman Lewis. It discusses at length that citizen’s charter is not what it started out to be. It has encroached into areas which were not considered to be its domain previously. Thus, it can be viewed as a new way of governing but it is based on the British experiences only1.

Bruce Stone begins with an account of changing notions of administrative accountability. He points out five types of accountability and analyses the factors leading to the introduction of citizen’s charter in UK. He has undertaken a critical analysis of the charter2.

Though, important and significant yet the subject of citizen’s charter remains unexplored. Mohit Bhattacharya, in his study critically analyses the evolution of public administration including the recent developments3.

C.N. Ray while giving examples of the working of Citizen’s Charter in UK, Northern Ireland and New Zealand, discusses about the basic concerns of Citizen’s Charter in India, its role, basic principles. He discusses citizen’s charter which is operational at the national level. He concludes by pointing out certain grey areas. However, the functioning of the Charters has been taken up collectively rather than analyzing the charter of each organization separately4.

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Maheshwari provides a brief insight of the concept that is Charter Mark scheme and challenges facing citizen’s charter. The author also mentions about the charter of two organizations very briefly (a) New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) and (b) Delhi Development Authority (DDA).  

Luca Lo Schiavo, in great detail, has provided an account of Citizen’s Charter in UK and Italy. A comparative study of the Citizen’s Charter in the two countries, especially in two sectors—health and education, has been analyzed in detail. The study provides a very useful insight in the functioning of the Charters in these two sectors of both the countries.

Bidyut Chakraborty and Mohit Bhattacharaya, in their study trace the history of public administration and also presents updated theoretical advances and key issues in the field. They discuss the concept of citizen’s charter as one of the steps which public administration takes into account to attain the objectives of good governance. Citizen’s charter will help to attain transparency, openness and accountability in administration. However, functioning of the citizen’s charter is not dealt with.

R.B.Jain reflects on those concerns which in recent times have attracted the attention of the academicians and policy makers as crucial for the practitioners of the public administration. The introduction of the concept of citizen’s charter as a means to secure public accountability of public services in the Indian context is carefully assessed.

The author has discussed about the key elements, the factors responsible for the introduction of the concept in UK and India and also gives his own assessment of Citizen’s Charter.

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R.B. Jain’s book consists of various articles contributed by renowned scholars to provide answers to two questions, firstly how globalization has affected governance and secondly, what kinds of policy and reform innovations may be required for dealing with the challenges of globalization. The contributors of the essays in this volume seek to reflect on some viable alternative packages of constructive reforms towards good governance in the globalized world polity. It forms an essential reading as it was in this context of Liberalization- Privatization- Globalization (LPG) that citizen’s charter in UK and India was conceptualized. This book is helpful as far as knowledge regarding globalisation and governance discourse is concerned. These developments initiated the discussions on “retreat of State”, popularity of non-state actors, ultimately compelling the administration to be accountable and citizen friendly1.

Bidyut Chakraborty in the Chapter on good governance and civil service reforms in India, argues that the primary issue is to restore the “publicness” of public administration. The charter is a significant influence in the latest efforts undertaken by the government of India to make administration accountable, open transparent and citizen friendly2.

S.L Goel, explains that good governance does not merely exhaust itself by just analyzing how excellence can be ensured within the sphere of governmental administration. It is here that the author’s integral approach is meaningful. He analyzes and argues that a combination of citizen’s charter and RTI would ensure greater accountability3.

Ramesh K.Arora’s, book is a collection of essays by eminent scholars. The volume is full of analysis of various issues which have emerged in recent years. But

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the detailed analysis of citizen’s charter is missing, a brief reference of which is found in the essay by Dolly Arora.¹

The above literature looks at the introduction of the concept, basic elements, assessment but charterism as a movement in India and its functioning has not been studied in detail. It is necessary to critically look at the functioning of the citizen’s charter in different settings. The account of the literature mentioned above is inadequate in terms of analysis of consumer’s feedback, functioning and implementation of citizen’s charter in India. This is the reason that my research, which is based on interview of all the stake holders involved in the formulation and implementation of citizen’s charter in various organisations will be more apt.

For reasons of time and space, the study is restricted to four organizations based in Delhi, namely, (a) Oriental Bank of Commerce (banking), (b) Punjab National Bank(banking), (c) Delhi Development Authority (DDA-provides housing in Delhi and which is under the Ministry of Urban Development) and (d) MCD–urban local self government.

Methodology

Survey of literature and field work like visiting the organisations helped me in the collection of the data; therefore, primary source has been supplemented with secondary source in data collection.

Data for the study was collected by the perusal of published/unpublished literature in the field and interviews conducted with the help of a questionnaires in each of the four organizations with stakeholders; elected representatives, nodal officers, and citizens .Three sets of questionnaire were prepared and distributed among:

(a) Elected Representatives - 3
(b) Nodal Officer - 4
(c) Customers referred to as citizens - 400

There were few who preferred to fill up the questionnaire themselves but most of the respondents were open to interview method.

**Hypothesis to be tested** is - Citizen’s Charter has been a milestone in the development of citizen friendly administration in India.

The central question of research is, “**Has Citizen’s Charter proved to be a milestone in the development of Citizen Friendly Administration in India?**”

**Related questions are:** -

(a.) If not why?

(b.) Suggestions for making Citizen’s Charter more effective and citizen-friendly