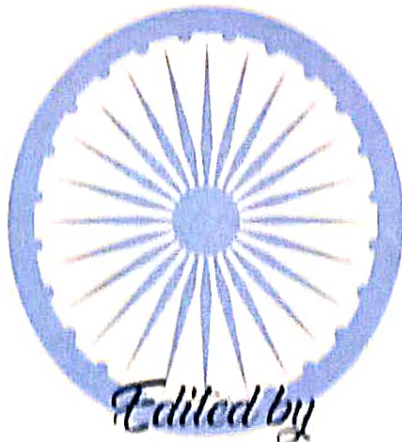




**Good Governance  
and  
Notion of Developed  
INDIA**



**Nand Lal Bharti**

## **Citizen's Charter as an Instrument of Good Governance: A Study with Special Reference to India**

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### **Abstract**

The Citizen's Charter, as an instrument of good governance, plays a crucial role in enhancing transparency, accountability, and responsiveness within public administration and efficiency in public service delivery, thus fostering good governance. Introduced as part of administrative reforms, the Citizen's Charter seeks to make government institutions more citizen-centric, ensuring that service delivery mechanisms are more responsive and accountable to the needs of the populace. It sets clear expectations for public service delivery, ensuring that citizens are aware of the standards they can expect from government agencies. This paper explores the conceptual framework of the Citizen's Charter, its evolution in India, and its role in promoting good governance. The paper also examines key challenges, case studies of successful implementations, and suggests measures to improve its effectiveness. Through case studies and policy reviews, and this paper discusses the role of Citizen's Charters in strengthening democratic governance in India.

**Keywords:** Citizen's Charter, good governance, public service delivery, accountability, transparency.

### **Introduction**

Governance is the process by which decisions are made, and public resources are managed in a way that promotes accountability, transparency, efficiency, and inclusiveness. The concept of "good governance" emphasizes these principles, seeking to ensure that governance systems are responsive to citizens' needs. Good

governance has become an integral part of policy discussions worldwide, as it is considered essential for sustainable development and citizen welfare. The principles of good governance transparency, accountability, efficiency, responsiveness, equity, and inclusiveness are critical in ensuring that governments meet the needs of their citizens effectively. One of the administrative mechanisms designed to promote these principles is the Citizen's Charter.

Good governance is often seen as a cornerstone of effective public administration, emphasizing accountability, transparency, and service delivery to citizens. The Citizen's Charter, introduced in various countries, including India, is a strategic tool designed to enhance the relationship between the government and its citizens. By laying down the rights of citizens, outlining service standards, and establishing mechanisms for grievance redressal, the Citizen's Charter aims to improve public services and enhance good governance.

In India, the Citizen's Charter was introduced in 1997 as part of administrative reforms aimed at improving service delivery in various public sectors. It is a written, voluntary declaration by a government agency about the standards of service it aims to provide to its citizens. This paper seeks to explore the significance of the Citizen's Charter in promoting good governance by analyzing its implementation, challenges, and outcomes, with a specific focus on India.

### **Concept of Good Governance**

Good governance emerged as a key concept in the late 20th century, particularly in the fields of international development, human rights, and public administration. It refers to governance practices that are transparent, accountable, equitable, participatory, responsive, and rule-based (World Bank, 1992). Good governance focuses on improving the quality of governance to achieve sustainable development, reduce poverty, and promote democratic principles. Good governance refers to the responsible, transparent, and accountable functioning of government institutions to serve the public's best interest. The World Bank identifies eight major characteristics of good governance: participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, and accountability. The Citizen's Charter fits within this framework as it promotes several of these

characteristics, particularly transparency, accountability, and responsiveness.

The World Bank and other international organizations have been central in promoting good governance as a prerequisite for effective development. In its landmark 1992 report, the World Bank identified several key principles of good governance: **accountability**, **transparency**, **participation**, **rule of law**, and **efficiency** (World Bank, 1992). These principles are intended to ensure that governance processes are inclusive, equitable, and focused on meeting the needs of all citizens, particularly marginalized and vulnerable groups.

1. **Accountability:** requires that decision-makers in government, the private sector, and civil society are answerable for their actions and a decision, ensuring that power is exercised responsibly.
2. **Transparency:** involves the openness of government processes, enabling citizens to access information and hold officials accountable for their actions.
3. **Participation:** refers to the involvement of citizens in the decision-making processes, ensuring that policies reflect the interests and needs of the broader society.
4. **Rule of law:** emphasizes the importance of laws being fairly applied and enforced, ensuring justice and equality before the law.
5. **Efficiency:** highlights the need for governance to maximize the use of resources to meet societal goals in a cost-effective manner.

These principles are now widely recognized as benchmarks for assessing the quality of governance in both developed and developing countries.

### **Conceptual Framework of Citizen's Charter**

The Citizen's Charter is a voluntary and written document that spells out the service provider's efforts taken to focus on their commitment towards fulfilling the needs of the citizens/customers. It also includes how citizens can redress any grievances. It includes what the citizens can expect out of the service provider. The concept is that the charter preserves the trust between the service provider and the citizens/users. The Citizen's Charter was first introduced in early 1990's; they represented a landmark shift in the delivery of public services. It emphasized on citizens as customers by ensuring that public services are responsive to the citizens they serve. Basically a set of

commitments made by an organization regarding the standards of service which it delivers. It comprises of the Vision and Mission Statement of the organization, stating the outcomes desired and the broad strategy to achieve these goals and outcomes. Clearly states what subjects it deals with and the service areas it broadly covers.

The Citizen's Charter is a written declaration by public service providers, setting out the standards of service they pledge to provide. It typically includes details about the services offered, the time frames within which the services will be delivered, the redress mechanisms in case of grievances, and the responsibilities of citizens in availing these services. The concept of the Citizen's Charter was first introduced in the United Kingdom by Prime Minister John Major in 1991 to improve public service quality. Its primary aim was to make public services more responsive to the people they served by setting clear standards of service and establishing mechanisms for complaints and redressal. It was based on the principles of transparency, choice, standards, and value for money, and accountability.

**The essential components of a Citizen's Charter include:**

1. **Service Standards:** Clear descriptions of the services provided and the time frames within which they will be delivered.
2. **Transparency:** Providing clear information on the services delivered the timeframes, and the process of availing them.
3. **Accountability:** Holding service providers accountable for any failure in service delivery, often through grievance redress mechanisms.
4. **Responsiveness:** Ensuring that services are delivered in a timely and efficient manner, responsive to the needs of the citizens.
5. **User Involvement:** Encouraging citizen participation in improving the quality of services through feedback mechanisms.
6. **Grievance Redressal Mechanism:** Accessible systems through which citizens can file complaints if services do not meet expected standards.

**The Evolution of Citizen's Charter in India**

In India, the concept of the Citizen's Charter was first adopted in 1997 following the recommendations of the Conference of Chief Ministers on "Responsive Government." Since then, several central and state government departments and public sector undertakings have adopted

Citizen's Charters to enhance service delivery and make administration more people-centric. The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) was entrusted with overseeing the implementation of these Charters. The adoption of the Citizen's Charter in India was driven by the broader objectives of administrative reforms, focusing on reducing inefficiencies, curbing corruption, and ensuring that government services meet the expectations of the citizens. Over the years, Citizen's Charters have been introduced in various sectors, including health, education, public utilities, and municipal services.

India's experiment with the Citizen's Charter began with the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) initiating the framework in various central and state government agencies. The aim was to introduce a more citizen-centric approach to governance and establish accountability in public service delivery.

**The key features of Citizen's Charters in India include:**

- **Proactive Disclosure of Information:** Charters outline the services provided, timelines for service delivery, and the contact information of the concerned officials.
- **Service Guarantees:** Charters guarantee certain services and provide compensation mechanisms in cases where service standards are not met.
- **Inclusion of Citizen Feedback:** Public agencies are encouraged to involve citizens in revising and updating the Charters.

However, in many other cases, the Charters are not widely publicized or well-understood by the citizens, leading to limited engagement. A study conducted by the Second Administrative Reforms Commission in 2008 revealed that many Citizen's Charters in India remained ineffective due to the lack of awareness among the public, non-enforceability of service standards, and inadequate grievance redressal mechanisms.

The surveys conducted the world over to know the expectations of citizens reveal need of friendliness, respectful approach, courteousness, faster response time, extended hours of work in government offices and single window clearances. In 1997 GOI formally directed to formulate citizens charters, starting with

departments like Railway, P&T, PDS, etc. which have a large public interface, to include standards of service, avenues of grievance redressal and time limits for service delivery. Up to the year 2014-15, 137 charters by Central Ministries and 829 by State Govt. departments have been formulated and a comprehensive website by the GOI has been developed to give publicity to these charters. In the process of evaluating the effectiveness of citizen's characters the need for creation of databases on consumer grievances and redressals was felt together with initiating a process of consultation both with employees and dealing public. Need for setting up of IFC's was felt to provide information to citizens about programmes, procedures, status of cases pending, the actions taken on complaints made as a physical manifestation of the citizens character. Charter Mark scheme has been introduced world-wide as well as in India for recognizing and encouraging excellence in public service. This is proposed to be awarded after due assessment, by independent panel of judges, the performance by an organization with reference to its commitments notified in the citizens character. The evaluation process for granting charter mark will concentrate on the organizations performance against the criteria of excellence including: Information and opinion, Choice and consultation, Courtesy and helpfulness, Value for money, User satisfaction, Service quality, planned improvements and innovations.

A citizen's character of an organization is therefore a tool kit of initiatives and ideas to raise the level of standards and service delivery, increase public participation, ensure transparency and accountability, all aiming to deliver good governance if implemented vigorously by the government departments. A model citizen charter shall essentially include: A statement of objectives of organization; Details of business transaction centers; Detail of services provided with procedure as well as the time frame; Grievance redressed Mechanism in place; Feedback Mechanism to know the public satisfaction levels, and review as need arises; A tacit approval and training/motivation of the staff offering various services, and consumer Helpline.

Evaluation mechanism of citizens' character shall include internal assessment of grievances and complaints reported and their disposal and whether these are on an increase or are decreasing. The external assessment shall be by asking for sample survey of the response collection of the dealing public through an independent monitor/NGO.

The organization has the obligation to inform the complainants of the action taken as well as compensate for the loss, if any, sustained by the citizens owing to quality problem in the services rendered.

Introduction of Management Information System and computerization of data at various levels will help collect and store information collected in respect of various services in relation to the time within which these are offered so that an evaluation of the effectiveness and the promptness with which the services are offered vis-à-vis the demand and the capacity of the organization to offer such services is made. An organization therefore needs to devise requisite formats to collect this information and software to store the same. For better management of its services and their distribution in a time saving and people friendly manner all the organizations to have receptionist desks May I help you counters: Consumer help lines; Facilitation counters; to disseminate information among the dealing public so as to increase the value of their services.

In any nation, there is a need of good governance for sustainable development, both economic and social. The three major aspects highlighted in good governance are transparency, accountability and responsiveness of the administration. Citizens' Charters initiative is a response to the mission for solving the problems which a citizen meets, day in and day out, while dealing with the organizations providing public services.

The charter is the declaration of commitment to superiority in service to customers of the department. The citizen charter declares the standards for various services offered. It includes expectations of the Organization from the Citizens for fulfilling its commitment. Citizen charter is available on India post website. The concept of Citizens' Charter protects the trust between the service provider and its users. Citizens' Charter was first expressed and implemented in the United Kingdom by the Conservative Government of John Major in 1991 as a national programme with aim to constantly improve the quality of public services for the people of the country so that these services respond to the needs and wishes of the users. Since many years, in India, noteworthy progress has been made in the field of economic development. This, along with a considerable increase in the literacy rate, (from 51.63% to 74.04% in the last decade) has made Indian citizens increasingly aware of their rights. Citizens have become more articulate and expect the administration not merely to respond to their

demands but also to anticipate them. It was in this climate that since 1996 a consensus had evolved in the Government on effective and responsive administration.

Guidelines for formulating the Charters as well as a list of do's and don'ts were communicated to various government departments/organizations to enable them to bring out focused and effective charters. For the formulation of the Charters, the government agencies at the Centre and State levels were advised to constitute a task force with representation from users, senior management and the cutting edge staff.

Principally, an adaptation of the UK model, the Indian Citizens' Charter has an additional constituent of 'expectations from the clients'. Involvement of consumer organizations, citizen groups, and other stakeholders in the formulation of the Citizens' Charter is highlighted to confirm that the Citizens' Charter fulfills the needs of the users. Regular monitoring, review and evaluation of the Charters, both internally and through external agencies, are commanded. Till April, 2006, 111 Citizens' Charters had been articulated by the Central Government Ministries/ Departments/ Organizations and 668 Charters by various agencies of State Governments & Administrations of Union Territories. Most of the national Charters are posted on the government's websites and are open to public scrutiny. The organizations with Citizens' Charters are advised to give publicity to their Charters through such means as print/ electronic media and awareness crusades.

**Guidelines for the Citizens' Charters in India:**

1. List all Offices according to type of services they provide to public – Indicate their location, areas they cover, type of services being rendered to public, and phone numbers.
2. There should be a separate Citizens' Charter (i.e., Local Citizens' Charters) for each office covering the services they provide. For example, there should be a separate Charter of the Directorate, its subordinate offices, Hospitals, Schools, etc. according to the particular services they provide.
3. Mention Service Standards Step-by-step-Procedure based on 'Where to go; how to proceed', simple and easy to fill-in Forms, specimen of duly-filled in forms, documents, fees, etc. required, reasonable time schedule, Do's & Don'ts, etc., names, addresses

and Tele. Nos. of concerned Officials, his alternate for each service, etc.

4. Minimum documentation, self-attestation and self-declaration.
5. No duplication: In case desired information and document submitted earlier like proof of residence (if there is no change), birth certificate, etc., it should not be asked again.
6. If promised services are not provided as per specified time schedule, an effective grievance redressed mechanism (including the provision of compensation to the concerned citizen in order to introduce accountability) should be introduced.
7. Provision of TATKAL (Immediate) Services if somebody is in urgent need (as in the case of Passport, Railways, etc.) to avoid touts, bribery, etc.
8. Simultaneous changes in the Performa and other requirements to be effected along with the changes made in the Citizens Charter.
9. Database of frequently required information, like ownership of property, vehicle, etc., tax and dues paid or pending, etc.
10. If possible, the services and their related information may be presented in a tabular form.
11. Salient features of each service should be prominently displayed in simple and easy language at all places likely to be visited by the service seekers.

#### **Citizen's Charter as an Instrument of Good Governance**

The Citizen's Charter contributes to good governance in several key ways:

1. **Transparency:** By specifying service standards and expected outcomes, Citizen's Charters promote transparency in the functioning of public agencies. Citizens are better informed about what they can expect from government services, reducing the asymmetry of information between citizens and public servants.
2. **Accountability:** The Citizen's Charter establishes a contractual relationship between the government and its citizens, thereby ensuring that public servants are held accountable for their performance. The grievance redressal mechanism, in particular, empowers citizens to demand accountability if services are delayed or substandard.

3. **Promoting Efficiency and Responsiveness:** Citizen's Charters lay down specific timelines for service delivery, compelling service providers to be more efficient in their operations. In sectors like healthcare, education, and public utilities, this has led to improved responsiveness and a reduction in bureaucratic delays.
4. **Fostering Citizen Engagement:** By involving citizens in the governance process through feedback and grievance redress mechanisms, the Citizen's Charter enhances participatory governance. This allows for continuous improvement in service quality based on the needs and preferences of the public.
5. **Strengthening the Rule of Law:** The Citizen's Charter reinforces the principle that citizens have legal and enforceable rights to public services. This strengthens the rule of law by ensuring that government agencies cannot arbitrarily deny services or act in a discriminatory manner.
6. **Reducing Corruption:** By making the process of service delivery more transparent and setting clear standards for performance, the Citizen's Charter reduces opportunities for corrupt practices, such as bribery or favoritism.
7. **Participatory Governance:** The involvement of citizens in creating and revising Citizen's Charters ensures that governance becomes more participatory. Feedback mechanisms built into the system help public agencies evolve their service standards in line with citizens' expectations.
8. **Grievance Redressal Mechanism:** A key feature of the Citizen's Charter is the institutionalization of a grievance redressal system, where citizens can voice their complaints and receive timely responses. This aligns with the governance principle of responsiveness.
9. **Improved Service Delivery:** By specifying clear service standards, the Citizen's Charter acts as a performance-monitoring tool for public services, pushing agencies to be more efficient.

#### **Case Studies of Citizen's Charters in India**

1. **Delhi Jal Board:** The Delhi Jal Board introduced a Citizen's Charter with a focus on water supply and sanitation services. The Charter clearly specifies the time frame for service delivery, such as the installation of new water connections or redressal of

complaints. While the initiative has increased transparency, challenges remain regarding the responsiveness of services during emergencies like water shortages.

2. **Indian Railways:** Indian Railways implemented a Citizen's Charter to improve service delivery related to train schedules, ticketing, and complaint redressal. Despite initial successes in areas like online grievance handling and real-time information, the sheer volume of passengers often results in backlogs, impacting service standards.
3. **Maharashtra Electricity Distribution Company:** The company's Citizen's Charter guarantees specific time frames for new electricity connections, bill payments, and redressal of grievances. This has led to improvements in service delivery, particularly in rural areas, where access to electricity has traditionally been limited.
4. **Bangalore One: Citizen-Centric E-Governance**

One of the success stories of the Citizen's Charter in India is the "Bangalore One" initiative. Launched by the Government of Karnataka in 2005, Bangalore One is a one-stop integrated citizen service center where various government services are provided under one roof. The Citizen's Charter for Bangalore One clearly outlines the services available, the timeframes for service delivery, and the mechanisms for grievance redress.

The initiative has greatly improved service delivery in Bangalore by reducing bureaucratic hurdles and ensuring faster and more efficient services. It has also made government services more accessible to citizens by providing both online and offline service options.

#### **Challenges in the Implementation of Citizen's Charters**

Despite the benefits, several challenges hinder the effective implementation of Citizen's Charters in India: Some of the major hurdles include:

1. **Lack of Awareness:** Many citizens are unaware of the existence of Citizen's Charters or the rights and entitlements outlined in them. This lack of awareness diminishes the effectiveness of the Charters, as citizens cannot hold service providers accountable if they do not know their rights.
2. **Weak Enforcement Mechanisms:** In many cases, the enforcement of the Citizen's Charter is weak. While the Charters

outline service standards, there are often no significant consequences for failure to meet these standards, leading to a lack of accountability.

3. **Political and Bureaucratic Resistance:** Implementing a Citizen's Charter requires a shift in the administrative mindset towards greater accountability and citizen-centric service delivery. However, resistance from political and bureaucratic actors, who may see such reforms as a threat to their control over resources, has often impeded effective implementation.
4. **Lack of Monitoring and Evaluation:** Many government departments and agencies that have adopted Citizen's Charters do not have robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in place to assess their effectiveness. Without regular assessments and feedback loops, it is difficult to make the necessary adjustments to improve service delivery.
5. **Inadequate Grievance Redress Mechanisms:** While the Citizen's Charter often includes provisions for grievance redress, in practice, these mechanisms are often slow, ineffective, and difficult to access, further discouraging citizens from seeking accountability.
6. **Non-binding Nature:** The Citizen's Charter in India is not legally enforceable, which reduces its efficacy. Since there are no penalties for non-compliance, public agencies often fail to meet the service standards outlined in their Charters.

#### **Recommendations for Improving the Effectiveness of Citizen's Charters**

To enhance the effectiveness of Citizen's Charters as an instrument of good governance, the following measures should be considered:

1. **Awareness Campaigns:** Governments should launch awareness campaigns to educate citizens about their rights and entitlements under the Citizen's Charter. Information should be disseminated through multiple platforms, including social media, community centers, and public service announcements.
2. **Strengthening Enforcement Mechanisms:** There must be clear penalties for service providers who fail to meet the standards outlined in the Citizen's Charter. This could include financial

penalties, disciplinary action against responsible officials, or incentives for good performance.

3. **Improving Grievance Redress Mechanisms:** The establishment of more efficient and accessible grievance redress mechanisms is essential. These mechanisms should be user-friendly and capable of resolving complaints quickly to restore public confidence in the system.
4. **Building Institutional Capacity:** Government departments and agencies must build their institutional capacity to implement the Citizen's Charter effectively. This includes training staff, improving infrastructure, and adopting digital technologies to streamline service delivery.
5. **Regular Monitoring and Evaluation:** A system of continuous monitoring and evaluation should be put in place to assess the performance of the Citizen's Charter. Feedback from citizens should be systematically collected and analyzed to make necessary improvements.
6. **Technology Integration:** Digital platforms can be leveraged to streamline grievance redressal mechanisms, making it easier for citizens to report and track their complaints in real-time.
7. **Periodic Review and Updates:** Citizen's Charters should be regularly updated to reflect changing service standards and to incorporate feedback from citizens.

### **Conclusion**

The Citizen's Charter has emerged as a crucial tool for improving public service delivery and promoting good governance in India. By enhancing transparency, accountability, and citizen participation, the Charter has the potential to transform the relationship between the government and its citizens. However, for the Citizen's Charter to realize its full potential, significant improvements are needed in areas such as public awareness, enforcement mechanisms, and grievance redress. As India continues to pursue administrative reforms, the Citizen's Charter must remain central to efforts aimed at creating a more responsive, accountable, and citizen-friendly government. It is to conclude that Citizen's Charter is an essential tool to ensure that the citizen is always the priority of any service delivery mechanism. It indirectly strengthens the protection of fundamental rights by making

those rights more visible and more explicit for citizens through its provisions. A Citizens' Charter denotes the promise of an organization towards standard, quality and time frame of service delivery, grievance redressal mechanism, clearness and accountability. Based on the foreseen expectations and aspirations of public, Citizens' Charters are to be drawn-up with care and concern for the concerned service users. They allow the service seekers to avail the services of the government departments with minimum inconvenience and maximum speed.

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