

# Citizen Charter

**Dr. Smita Nayak**  
**Associate Professor**  
**P.G. Department of Political Science**  
**Utkal University**

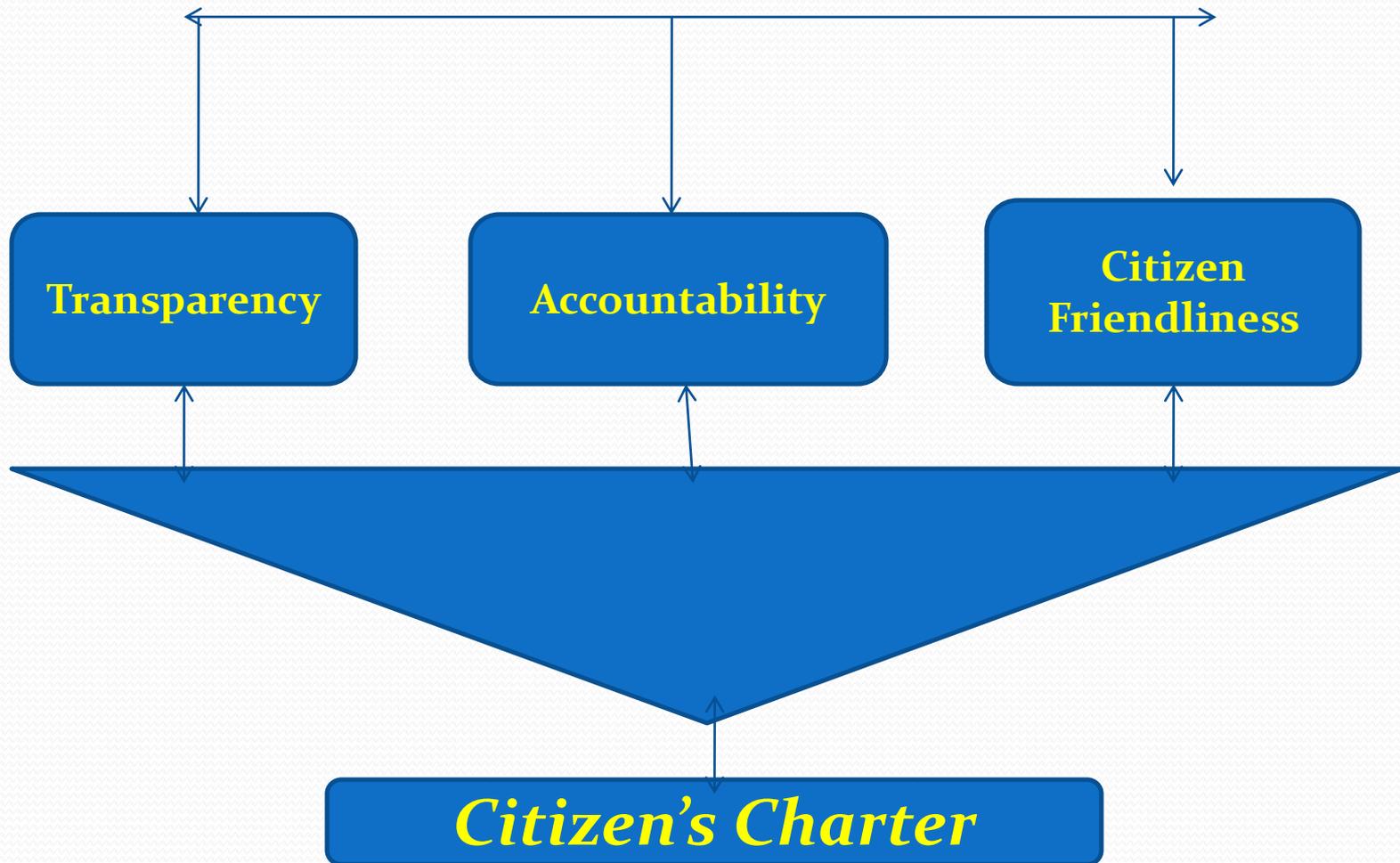
# *Mahatma Gandhi*

- The spirit behind the Citizen's Charter ----
- “A customer is the most important visitor on our premises.
- He is not dependent on us; we are dependent on him.
- He is not an interruption on our work; he is the purpose of it.
- He is not an outsider on our business; he is part of it.
- We are not doing him a favour by serving him; he is doing a favour by giving us an opportunity to do so”.

# Meaning:

- The citizen's 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.
- Every citizen's charter has several essential components to make it meaningful.
- The first being the Vision and Mission Statement of the organization.
- This gives the outcomes desired and the broad strategy to achieve these goals

# Good Governance is the Technology



**Citizen's Charter is the Tool**

# Basic Concept, Origin and Principles

- It has been recognised world over that good governance is essential for sustainable development, both economic and social.
- The three essential aspects emphasized in good governance are transparency, accountability and responsiveness of the administration.
- "Citizen's Charters" initiative is a response to the quest for solving the problems which a citizen encounters, day in and day out, while dealing with the organisations providing public services.

# Basic Concept, Origin and Principles

- The concept of Citizen's Charter enshrines the trust between the service provider and its users.
- The concept was first articulated and implemented in the United Kingdom by the Conservative Government of John Major in 1991 as a National Programme with a simple aim: to continuously 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.
- The programme was re-launched in 1998 by the Labour
- Government of Tony Blair which rechristened it "Service First".

- The basic objective of the Citizen's Charter is to empower the citizen in relation to public service delivery. The six principles of the Citizen's Charter movement as originally framed were:
  - I. Quality: Improving the quality of services;
  - II. Choice: Providing choice wherever possible;
  - III. Standards: Specify what to expect and how to act if standards are not met;
  - IV. Value: Add value for the taxpayers' money;
  - V. Accountability: Be accountable to individuals and organisations; and
  - VI. Transparency: Ensure transparency in
- Rules/Procedures/Schemes/Grievances.

- These were later elaborated by the Labour Government as following nine principles of Service Delivery (1998):
- Set standards of service
- Be open and provide full information
- Consult and involve
- Encourage access and the promotion of choice
- Treat all fairly
- Put things right when they go wrong
- Use resources effectively
- Innovate and improve
- Work with other providers.

# The International Scene

- The UK's Citizen's Charter initiative aroused considerable interest around the world and several countries implemented similar programmes e.g.,
- Australia (Service Charter, 1997),
- Belgium (Public Service Users' Charter 1992),
- Canada (Service Standards Initiative, 1995),
- France (Service Charter, 1992),
- India (Citizen's Charter, 1997),
- Jamaica (Citizen's Charter 1994),
- Malaysia (Client Charter, 1993),
- Portugal (The Quality Charter in Public Services, 1993),  
and
- Spain (The Quality Observatory, 1992) (OECD, 1996).

- The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat started a Service Standard Initiative in 1995 which took its cue from the Citizen's Charters of the United Kingdom, but enlarged the 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 resources (Treasury Board of Canada, 1995).
- Other key common elements are conformance to standards, stakeholder involvement and continuous improvement.

# Principles of Character of Citizen Charter:

- The charter concept empowers the citizens in demanding committed standard of service.
- Thus, basic thrust of citizen's charter is to make public service citizen centric by ensuring that these services are demand driven rather than supply driven.
- In this context, the six principles of the citizens.

# The Indian Scene

- Over the years, in India, significant progress has been made in the field of
- economic development. This, along with a substantial increase in the literacy rate, (from 51.63% to 65.38% 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.
- In a Conference of Chief Ministers of various States and Union Territories held on 24 May, 1997 in New Delhi, presided over by the Prime Minister of India, an
- "Action Plan for Effective and Responsive Government" at the Centre and State levels was adopted.

- One of the major decisions at that Conference was that the Central and State Governments would formulate Citizen's Charters, starting with those sectors that have a large public interface (e.g., Railways, Telecom, Posts, Public Distribution Systems).
- These Charters were required to include standards of service and time limits that the public can reasonably expect avenues of grievance redress and a provision for independent scrutiny with the involvement of citizen and consumer groups.

- **Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances in Government of India** (DARPG) initiated the task of coordinating, formulating and operationalising Citizen's Charters.
- Guidelines for formulating the Charters as well as a list of do's and don'ts were communicated to various government departments/organisations 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.

- **The Charters are expected to incorporate the following elements :**
- **-(i) Vision and Mission Statement;**
- **(ii) Details of business transacted by the organisation;**
- **(iii) Details of clients;**
- **(iv) Details of services provided to each client group;**
- **(v) Details of grievance redress mechanism and how to access it; and**
- **(vi) Expectations from the clients.**

- Primarily an adaptation of the UK model, the Indian Citizen's Charter has an additional component of 'expectations from the clients' or in other words 'obligations of the users'.
- Involvement of consumer organisations, citizen groups, and other stakeholders in the formulation of the Citizen's Charter is emphasized to ensure that the Citizen's Charter meets the needs of the users.
- Regular monitoring, review and evaluation of the Charters, both internally and through external agencies, are enjoined.
- As on March, 2005, 107 Citizen's Charters had been formulated by the Central Government Ministries/ Departments/ Organisations and 629 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 organisations with Citizen's Charters are advised to give publicity to their Charters through such means as print/electronic media and awareness campaigns.