Governance Class 08
21st February, 2024 at 9:00 AM

DISCUSSION OF LAST CLASS (09:03 AM)
CITIZEN CHARTERS (09:04 AM)   (Imp.)
Why Citizen Charters?

- India had opted for representative democracy after independence. In representative democracies, the participation of citizens is restricted only to voting in elections. India also continued with colonial bureaucracy after Independence.

- Colonial bureaucracy was characterized by High levels of secrecy and a complete absence of accountability. It has failed in ==development administration==. The centralized planning process and top-down approach to implementation also led to failure in welfare states.

- There was neither a participation of citizens nor accountability of administrators in the development process. ==Outlays== could not be transformed into outcomes.

- Development administration was also characterized by high levels of corruption. To overcome the weaknesses in development administration, citizen charters have come into existence.

- In Parliamentary democracies, bureaucracy is not directly accountable to the people. They are accountable to politicians and politicians in turn are accountable to people through the electoral process.
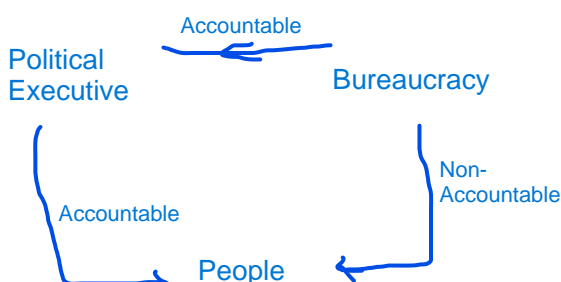
Evolution of Citizen Charters (09:31 AM)

- Citizen charters had their origins in the United Kingdom. John Major, the then Prime Minister introduced citizen charters in the British Administration in 1995 to ensure the participation of citizens in governance and also to fix accountability on the part of bureaucracy for their performance. *to people*

- They were highly successful in the United Kingdom.

- In 1997, a Chief Ministers' conference was held in Delhi to discuss the problem of corruption. The conference suggested the implementation of citizen charters to reduce corruption. to fix accountability on the part of the bureaucracy and also to improve the quality of service delivery mechanisms.

What is a Citizen Charter (09:35 AM)

- A Citizen charter is a ==voluntary commitment== made by bureaucracy towards the citizens regarding the services to be provided by them within a stipulated time period.

Principles Behind Citizen Charters (09:50 AM)

- 1) To transform representative democracy into participatory democracy.

- 2) To ensure the participation of stakeholders in governance.

- 3) To improve the quality of service delivery mechanisms.

- 4) To fix accountability on the part of the bureaucracy.

- 5) To ensure transparency in administration.

- 6) To shift from bureaucracy-centric administration to citizen-centric governance.

Political Executive — Accountable — Bureaucracy
Political Executive — Accountable — People
Bureaucracy — Non-Accountable — People

Steps involved in the formulation of Citizen Charters (09:53 AM)

- Once district administration receives information about finances to be spent on a particular scheme, it should immediately inform the ==stakeholders.==
- Social audit committees will be formed at the field level consisting of beneficiaries and ==other stakeholders.==
- District administration must formulate citizen charters in consultation with social audit committees.
- They provide information about:
- a) The amount of money to be spent;
- b) Assets to be created
- c) Services to be provided
- d) List of beneficiaries
- e) Benefits to be provided and also the quality of services
- f) Period during which beneficiaries can expect services.
- Once citizen charters are formulated, the bureaucracy takes responsibility for their implementation.
- After they are implemented, social audit committees (SAC) are expected to evaluate the performance of bureaucracy in terms of promises made in citizen charters.
- Social Audit Committees will then submit reports to the government.
- The government is expected to take action against bureaucracy on the basis of reports submitted by social audit committees.

Issues in Implementation of Citizen Charters (10:24 AM)

- **Lack of Awareness** - The success of any reform depends on the active participation of the stakeholders. Citizen charters have been a failure due to a lack of awareness amongst citizens about the benefits of citizen charters especially at the lowest level.

- As pointed out by the 2nd ARC, citizen charters have become misnomers. At best, they can be described only as bureaucratic charters i.e. bureaucracy-formulated citizen charters on their own without the active involvement of citizens. It defeated the very purpose of citizen charters.

- Citizen charters are only a voluntary commitment on the part of the bureaucracy. Since they are only a voluntary commitment, the bureaucracy never took the implementation of citizen charters seriously.

- The performance of bureaucracy in the implementation of citizen charters has no impact on their career advancement i.e. their promotions, transfers, postings, and suspensions do not depend on their performance in implementing citizen charters.

- Citizen Charter's formulation can be successful only with effective implementation of the Right to Information. Non-implementation of RTI resulted in more secrecy in administration, which has come in the way of implementation of citizen charters.

- Colonial Attitudes of bureaucracy - In the United Kingdom, citizen charters are successful because the bureaucracy considers themselves to be true servants of the people. Even though citizen charter is a voluntary commitment, they took it seriously and fulfilled the promise made in citizen charters.

- On the other hand, in India, the bureaucracy suffers from colonial attitudes. They could not understand the significance of citizen charters in empowering citizens.

- As pointed out by the 2nd ARC, citizen charters are nothing but **pious statements with noble intentions.** They do not have any practical significance because citizen charters never mention the services to be provided in quantifiable terms.

- Social Audit Committees which are expected to actively participate in the formulation of citizen charters could not do so as they consisted of mostly people from rural areas who lack knowledge and awareness about governance.

- Recommendations of Social Audit Committees are only advisory in nature. State governments did not implement these recommendations in most of the cases.

- There is no protection for whistleblowers. Those members of social audit committees who make the corruption of contractors public were killed to silence them. These members and hundreds of activists have been killed.

- There are no effective grievance redressal mechanisms if citizens fail to receive the services promised in citizen charters.

Recommendations to Improve Citizen Charters (11:10 AM)

- Creating awareness amongst citizens about the benefits of citizen charters.
- Media, civil society organizations, and government departments must play a very important role in creating awareness.
- It should be made mandatory for all departments and ministries to formulate citizen charters only in consultation with the stakeholders.
- Effective Implementation of Section 4 of RTI to ensure complete transparency in governance.
- Members of social audit committees must be given training in administration so that they can actively participate in the formulation of citizen charters.
- Citizen charters must mention the services to be provided in quantifiable terms so that performance can be evaluated objectively.
- Sensitivity Training must be provided to bureaucracy so that their colonial attitudes can be transformed into democratic values.
- Since the bureaucracy did not take citizen charters seriously, they should be made mandatory i.e. Performance of the bureaucracy in the implementation of citizen charters should be the basis of their career advancement. It means their promotions and transfers, postings and suspensions should be on the basis of citizen charters' performance.
- There must be effective grievance redressal mechanisms for citizens in case they fail to receive the services promised in citizen charters.
- Recommendations of Social Audit committees should be made mandatory. Social Aufdit committees should also be given legal status. Meghalaya had become the first state in the country to provide legal status to social audit committees.
- **Protection of whistleblowers** - The government must protect the identity of the members of NGOs, and other social audit committees.
- To improve the performance of Citizen Charters, the second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) has suggested the implementation of **the Sevottam model.**

Sevottam Model (11:22 AM) (i.e. Uttam seva)

- Sevottam Model has 3 Important components:
- 1) **Citizen charters -** They must be formulated only in consultation with the stakeholders and they should clearly specify the services in quantifiable terms.
- 2) **Capacity Building Mechanisms -** It is found that the bureaucracy neither possessed the necessary skills nor the barriers to ensure the successful implementation of citizen charters. Capacity-building mechanisms focus on imparting the necessary skills and values to make bureaucracy efficient and effective.
- Recently, the government has launched **Mission Karmayogi** in this direction.
- 3) **Grievance Redressal Mechanisms -** They are necessary to fix accountability and also to improve the quality of service delivery mechanisms.

SOCIAL AUDIT (11:52 AM)

- Auditing done by CAG has many weaknesses:
- It conducts an audit that is post-mortem in nature.
- CAG Audit is restricted only to ==legal and regulatory== aspects
- The recommendations of CAG are only advisory in nature
- Since India has mostly ==line-item budgets==, the CAG cannot conduct performance audits.
- CAG Act, of 1971 allows CAG only to conduct ==audits of the ministries and departments== and Public Sector Enterprises. CAG does not have the mandate to conduct audit of developmental and welfare schemes.
- Since 1991, as part of the welfare state, huge amounts of money have been spent on developmental and welfare schemes without any accountability.
- Auditin done by CAG is a bureaucratic exercise without the involvement of citizens.
- In order to overcome the weaknesses in the functioning of CAG, and also to realize the objectives of citizen-centric governance, social audits have come into existence.

TOPIC FOR NEXT CLASS - SOCIAL AUDIT CONTINUED AND SELF HELP GROUPS