

# Public Facilities

## 1. WATER AS A PART OF THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT TO LIFE.

- The Constitution of India recognises the right to water as being a part of the right to life under Article 21.
- It is the right of every person, whether rich or poor, to have enough amounts of water to fulfil his/her daily needs at a price that he /She can afford. In other words, there should be universal access to water.
- There have been several court cases in which both the high courts and the supreme court have held that the right to safe drinking water is a Fundamental Right.

## 2. PUBLIC FACILITIES.

- Like water, there are other essential facilities that need to be provided for everyone. There are two other such facilities: healthcare and sanitation. Similarly, there are things like electricity, public transport, schools and colleges that are also necessary.
- These are known as public facilities.
- The most important characteristic of a public facility is that once it is provided, its benefits can be shared by many people.

## 3. GOVERNMENT'S ROLE.

- Public facilities are so important, someone must carry the responsibility of providing these to the people. This 'someone' is the government.
- One of the most important function of the government is to ensure that these public facilities are made available to everyone.
- Public facilities relate to people's basic needs. Any Modern society requires that these facilities are provided so that people's basic needs are met.
- The responsibility to provide public facilities, therefore, must be that of the government.

## 4. WATER SUPPLY TO CHENNAI: IS IT AVAILABLE TO ALL.

- While there is no doubt that public facilities should be made available to all, we see that there is a great shortage of such facilities.
- Water supply in Chennai, is marked by shortages. Municipal supply meets only about half the needs of the people of the city, on an average.
- The burden of shortfalls in water supply falls mostly on the poor. The middle class, when faced with water shortages, can cope through a variety of private means such as digging bore Wells, buying water from tankers and using bottled water for drinking.
- Apart from the availability of water, access to 'safe' drinking water is also available to some and this depends on what one can afford. People who can afford it have safe drinking water, whereas the poor is left out.

## 5. IN SEARCH OF ALTERNATIVE.

- The situation in Chennai is not unique. A similar scenario of shortages and acute crisis during summer months is common to other cities of India.
- The supply of water per person in an urban area in India should be about 135 liters per day – a standard set by the urban water commission. Whereas people in slums must make do with less than 20 liters a day per person, people living in luxury hotels may consume as much as 1,600 liters of water per day.

Public facilities are the facilities provided to the people by the government. They are important to sustain and lead a comfortable life.

### **Water and the People of Chennai:**

- Mr. Ramgopal lives in Anna Nagar, Chennai. This area looks lush and green with lawns maintained by generous spraying of water.
- Likewise, in an apartment where Mr. Subramaniam lives water supply is inadequate. They have to spend Rs 500-600 per month to buy water.
- Siva lives in Madipakkam, Chennai. She gets water once in 4 days. For drinking, she buys bottled water.
- Water as a public utility is available in different quantity to different people.
- Safe drinking water comes under the fundamental right of an individual and it is the responsibility of government to avail it to its citizens.

### **Water as Part of the Fundamental Rights to Life:**

- Water is essential for life and for good health.
- India has one of the largest numbers of causes of water-related diseases such as diarrhea, dysentery, cholera. More than 1600 Indians, mostly children below the age of five die every day because of water-related diseases.
- The Constitution of India recognizes the right to water as being a part of the Right to Life under Article 21. That means there should be “universal access” to water.
- The High Courts and Supreme Court have held that the right to safe drinking water is a Fundamental Right.
- Verdicts given by courts make it as the responsibility of government to ensure the supply of fresh drinking water.

### **Public Facilities:**

- Things like electricity, public transport, schools, and colleges, etc. which are necessary for survival are known as public facilities.

- Public facilities are provided so that its benefits can be shared by many people.
- This is the responsibility of government to make public facilities available to every individual and no one should be discriminated just on the basis of social or economic division.

#### **The Government's Role:**

- One of the most important functions of the government is to ensure that these public facilities are made available to everyone:
  - Making provision for education & setting up of schools & colleges.
  - Improving health & sanitation facilities.
  - Ensuring equal distribution of food throughout the country.
  - Improving the means of transport
  - Maintenance of public utility works like post offices, railways and roads
- Private companies operate for profit in the market. Public facilities are related to people's basic needs.
- The main source of revenue for the government is the taxes collected from the people and the government is empowered to collect these taxes and use them for such programmes.
- For instance, to supply water, the government has to incur costs in pumping water, carrying it over long distances, laying down pipes for its distribution, treating the water for impurities and finally collecting and treating wastewater.
- It meets these expenses partly from the various taxes that it collects and partly by charging a price for water. This price is set so that most people can afford a certain minimum amount of water for daily use.
- One of the most important tasks of government is to ensure the availability of resources to everyone.
- By making the administration strict and effectively implementing the schemes government can help underprivileged.
- The government by utilising the revenue collected in better social schemes and using the resources in better manner can ensure the well being to maximum of the population.

#### **Water supply to Chennai: is it Available to All:**

- Water supply in Chennai is marked by shortage. Municipal supply meets only about half the needs of the people of the city, on an average.
- The burden of shortfalls in water supply falls mostly on the poor.
- In search of Alternatives, the scenario of shortage and acute crisis during the summer months is common to other cities of India.
- A shortage of municipal water is often taken as a sign of failure of the government.
- Throughout the world, water supply is the responsibility of the government. There are very few instances of private water supply.

- In this era of industrialisation, water pollution has become a major problem.
- To avail the clean drinking water to a large population can be done through the technology advancement which needs investment by the government.

**Conclusion:**

- Public facilities are related to our basic needs and the Indian Constitution has recognised the right to water, health, education, etc. as being a part of the Right to Life.
- The major role of the government is to ensure adequate public facilities for everyone.
- Public facilities provided to everyone give rise to better living indices and help any country to get recognised at international level in terms of development.
- The success of any government is also acknowledged through the facilities and basic needs provided to all the individuals.
- These facilities finally become the building blocks of the development of a nation.