

Revision Notes
Class 8 Political Science - Civics
Chapter 09 – Public Facilities

In today's world, water shortage is a significant issue. The rich people get access to municipal water regularly, and the water tankers are affordable and accessible to them. Many middle-class people have their own bore wells. Borewell water is not suitable for consumption, so they use water filters. Once a week they get tankers. They don't have regular access to municipal water. The poor neither have access nor can afford regular and clean water supply.

Water as a part of the fundamental right to life:

Why is water an essential political concern?

1. Daily needs
2. availability of Safe and clean water
3. Good health- water-based diseases like diarrhea, dysentery, cholera are getting common in India.

India's constitutional laws for satisfying the above essentials for every citizen of India:

1. The Constitution of India recognizes water's right as a part of the Right to Life under Article 21 - establishes universal access. Ensure all people of the country irrespective of economic status to access water at an affordable cost to satisfy their daily needs. Both the high court and Supreme Court consider the right to water as a fundamental right to life.
2. In 2007, the Andhra Pradesh High Court held a case based on a letter written by a Mahabubnagar district's villager. The villager brought to light the contamination of drinking water in that letter. The villager complained that a textile company was discharging poisonous chemicals into the stream in his village. As a result, the groundwater was getting contaminated, which was the source of irrigation and drinking water. Thus, affecting the overall livelihood of the villagers. The judges lead the Mahbubnagar district collector to supply at least 25 liters of water to every individual in the village.

Public Facilities:

What are the public facilities?

Other than water, the public would need healthcare, sanitation, electricity, public transport, schools, and colleges. These are called public facilities. Why is that the establishment of public facilities important?

- A community can share it.
- example:
 1. School - establishments of government schools can make education accessible for the children in our community.
 2. Electricity - establishing an electric power supply may facilitate the following:
 - Farmers can use more electricity-powered machines like a motor pump to irrigate their fields.
 - Students can get access to education through the internet only if electricity is accessible.

The Government's role:

The Indian government is responsible for making public facilities available to all its citizens.

Why is the government responsible?

If privatized, all the private organizations and companies only work for profit, and no company would be interested in investing in the public's sanitation or conducting free campaigns. Although the supply of water, education can be a place of interest for the private companies, which are already established in cities, consequence, they are not affordable for the needy.

How does the government afford it?

The government plans the yearly budget in the parliament meeting. The taxes collected from the citizens are the income of the government. To supply water, the government has to invest a certain amount of money to extract and transport water. The government charges the citizens a small percentage of their income

as tax. Taxes are not liable for poor people. This money is used to enable everyone to get access to a regular and clean water supply.

Is water supply available to all?

- There is a significant shortage of providing public facilities to everyone.
- Shortage - Municipality satisfies approximately only half the water needs of the area.
- Unequal access - Area nearer to the water storage points have better access to water than the farther ones.
- Poverty - The poor are the ones who are the most affected. Whereas the middle class manages by digging bore wells, buying water from tankers, and using bottled water for drinking.
- Availability of safe water - only a few can afford to have access to safe and clean water.
- Taking water from farmers - The private companies, to satisfy the increasing water takes water from agricultural lands. Mostly from the villages nearby to metropolitan cities. The farmers are paid every month authorizing the company to exploit the water from their land. The problem is when private companies extract water from about 13,000 water tanks draining the water in that area. This doesn't only affect the farmers but the villagers altogether. As a result, Groundwater levels have dropped drastically.

In Search of Alternatives:

- Shortage of water during summers is common among most cities of India.
- The private companies have taken over the water supply chains as the municipality fails to meet the needs.
- According to the urban water commission, in cities, 135 liters (about 7 buckets) of water is consumed per person. In slums, the supply should be about 20 liters (one bucket) per person. At an equivalent time, hotels may consume about 1600 liters (about 80 buckets) per day.
- A shortage of municipal water is usually considered a sign of failure of the government.

1. Suggestion - Many suggest that private companies have to take over the water supply task as the municipality is running at a loss. They believe private companies may perform better.

Throughout the planet water supply is done by the government. Very rarely taken over by private.

Example: Porto Alegre, Brazil - The city water department has achieved universal water access.

- The average price of water is low, and the poor are charged at half the basic rate.
- The profit of the government is completely used for water supplies.
- The people get to have a say in the upcoming schemes and water projects.
- The government is completely transparent about the steps taken by the water department.

There was a steep rise in the water rates when handed over to private companies. This has made it unaffordable for many.

Example: In Bolivia, protests and riots broke when private companies were handed over the responsibility to supply water demanding the government to take over again.

Important Questions and Answers:

1. Who has good access to water?

Ans: The rich who reside in established municipalities get their water needs satisfied by proper government services. Poor people cannot get daily access to water, and some people in villages have to travel to faraway places to get water.

2. What is "on contract"?

Ans: The private companies transport and distribute water while the government water system department decides the speed for water tankers and then the government permits them. Hence, they are called 'on contract'.

3. What happened in Bolivia?

Ans: In Bolivia, protests and riots broke when private companies were handed over the responsibility to supply water demanding the government to take over again. As privatization of water supply happened, the water price rose steeply, making it unaffordable for many. This catalyzed the water shortage issue in many cities. Protests and riots broke out, asking the government to take back the water supply service from private hands.

4. How Porto Alegre, Brazil achieved universal water access?

Ans: The average price of water is often low, and the poor are charged at half the basic rate. The profit of the government is completely used for water supplies. The people get to have a say in the upcoming schemes and water projects. The government is completely transparent about the steps taken by the water department.

5. Explain how private companies exploit farmer's water.

Ans: The private companies, in order to satisfy the increasing water needs, take water from agricultural lands. Mostly from the villages nearby to metropolitan cities. The farmers are paid every month authorizing the company to exploit the water from their land. The problem is when private companies extract water from about 13,000 water tanks draining the water in that area. This doesn't only affect the farmers but the villagers' altogether. As a result, Groundwater levels have dropped drastically.

6. What symbolizes the failure of the government and why?

Ans: The shortage of municipal water symbolizes the failure of the government. As the shortage of municipal water means fewer water supplies to even a few people. This means failure to meet the government's responsibility to provide sufficient and clean water to the citizens.