


What Are Public Facilities?

Public facilities are services that everyone needs – like water, electricity, schools, roads, and public transport.





 Public Facility – A service that is provided to all people and shared by the community.

Without these, people cannot live a decent life. They are basic to development, health, and equality. The Constitution considers many of these (like water and education) as part of the Right to Life (Article 21).


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Water and Inequality in Chennai

Amu and Kumar travel through Chennai and observe how differently water is available:

-  Anna Nagar – Big houses, lawns, regular water. A phone call to a senior officer gets a water tanker.
-  Mylapore – Gets water once in two days. People use brackish borewell water and buy purified water.
-  Madipakkam – Water comes once in four days. Siva can't bring his family due to shortage.
-  Saidapet Slum – No taps in homes. One tap for 30 huts, water comes for 20 minutes. In summer, it's just a trickle.




 Why do some people get water easily while others struggle?

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Water = Right to Life

Water is essential for drinking, hygiene, and survival. India has high rates of water-borne diseases. Over 1,600 people (mostly children) die every day due to unsafe water.


 The Indian Constitution recognises the right to water under Article 21 – the Right to Life.

 2007: Andhra Pradesh High Court directed officials to supply safe drinking water to a village affected by industrial pollution.

More Examples of Public Facilities

Other important public facilities include:


- Healthcare and sanitation
- Education (Right to Education is also a Fundamental Right)
- Electricity and roads
- Public transport

 Important Point – A public facility benefits many at once. A school or water pipe serves an entire locality.

Why Must the Government Provide Them?

Public facilities are essential, but they may not be profitable. So private companies are usually not interested (e.g., cleaning drains or anti-malaria campaigns).

Some private companies do provide services like bottled water or private schools – but only to those who can afford them.

 If facilities depend on your ability to pay, poor people will be excluded. That is unfair in a democracy.

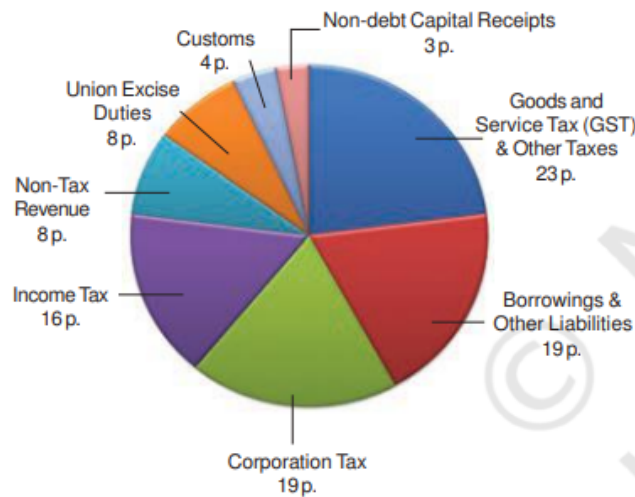
Who Pays for Public Facilities?

The government funds them using:

- Taxes (income tax, GST, corporate tax)
- Budget planning
- Sometimes a small user fee (e.g., ₹2 for Sulabh toilets)

 Example – Water supply involves costs: pumping, treating, laying pipes, and waste treatment.

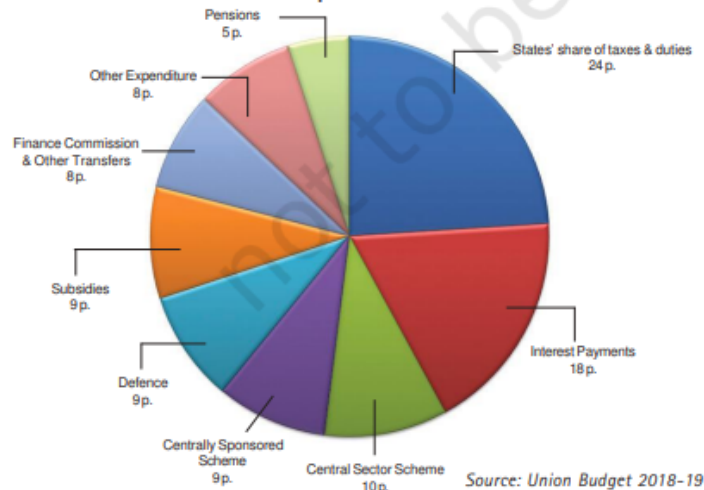
Tax Revenue of Central Government Rupee Comes From



Source: Union Budget 2018-19

Fig. – Rupee comes from (Budget chart)

Central Government Spends Money on Rupee Goes To



Source: Union Budget 2018-19

Fig. – Rupee goes to (Government spending chart)

🚌 Transport: A Public Good

Buses are the lifeline of working people. But bus services haven't kept pace with urban growth.

- Metro rail costs ₹11,000 crore in Delhi
- People ask: Why not invest that money in better buses for the poor?

📖 Good public transport helps workers, students, and the environment.

💧 Is Water Shared Fairly?

In reality:

- Wealthy people have options: bottled water, filters, tankers
 - Middle class use borewells or buy tanker water
 - Poor people rely on limited municipal supply, or shared taps
 - In rural areas, water often comes from private wells and handpumps
- 📘 Result – The poor get much less, and often unsafe water

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🌿 Water Dealers and Farmers

In cities like Chennai, water is purchased from nearby towns and villages. Farmers are paid to allow water extraction from their land.

📘 Problem – Groundwater drops. Villagers lose drinking and irrigation water. Local people suffer.



📷 Fig. – Tankers extracting rural water for city use

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🌍 Should Water Be Privatised?

Some say the government can't manage water well – so private companies should take over.

BUT:


1. Globally, most water supply is handled by governments
2. Where private firms took over (e.g., Bolivia), water prices skyrocketed → riots
3. Poor people cannot afford high prices
4. Public departments like in Mumbai and Hyderabad have improved performance

📘 Example – Porto Alegre, Brazil:


- Water for all, even the poor pay half
- Profits reinvested to improve service
- Citizens vote on water projects

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Public Sanitation: Still a Challenge


 Only 53% of Indian households had sanitation by 2011

 Sulabh (NGO) builds toilets for poor communities

- Over 8,500 public toilet blocks
- 1.5 million household toilets
- ₹2/user system keeps it affordable
 -  Poor sanitation impacts health and affects women and girls more severely



 Fig. – Sulabh toilet in cities

 Gandhi's words – “Latrines are for big people?” – shows the neglect of poor people's dignity

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Conclusion

Public facilities are basic human rights:

- Water, sanitation, education, healthcare, electricity
- Constitution treats them as part of Right to Life
- Government must ensure they are accessible to all – not just the rich

 Privatizing everything will exclude the poor

 Democracy demands universal access, fairness, and equality

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Glossary

Term	Meaning
Public Facility	Services needed by all (e.g. water, transport)
Sanitation	Safe disposal of human waste
Universal Access	Everyone can use and afford a facility
Basic Needs	Essentials like food, water, housing, education
Company	Business owned by private or public body