

Chapter – 7: Public Facilities

- Amu and Kumar – travelling through bus – Chennai
- They observe – water facilities – different parts of Chennai –
 - Anna Nagar – a family washing their car – open pipe – lots of water used
 - Saidapet – 2 women – waiting in line – common (public) tap
 - Madipakkam – 20 litre water bottles – supplied in the homes
 - Mylapore – people struggling – lines for drinking water – water tanker

Water and the People of Chennai

- Senior govt. officials – Mr. Ramagopal – Anna Nagar, Chennai
- This area – lush and green – lots of water sprayed – maintained lawns
- Bungalows – tap water – almost all day
- Days – water supply – not proper – Mr. Ramagopal – call senior official – municipal board – water tanker – arranged easily
- Subramanian's apartments – Mylapore – water shortage
- This area – municipal water – once in 2 days
- Private borewell – meets – some residents' needs – BUT – this water – not fit for humans – people use it in toilets and for washing
- Other uses – water – purchased from tankers – Rs. 500-600 per month
- Drinking water – people – installed water purifying systems
- Siva – lives on rent – 1st floor – Madipakkam – water once in 4 days
- Shortage of water – major reason – Siva's family – cannot come to Chennai
- Drinking water – Siva buys – bottled water
- Padma – works in Saidapet – domestic helper – lives in nearby slum
- She pays – Rs. 650 rent for her hut – no bathroom – no tap connection
- Per 30 huts – 1 common tap – water comes – 20 minutes – twice in a day
- Per family – 3 buckets allowed – used for washing and drinking
- Summers – water scarcity (shortage) – wait long hours for water tankers

Water as Part of the Fundamental Right to Life

- Water – imp. for life and health – helps us meet daily needs – BUT ALSO – safe drinking water – prevents water-related diseases
- India – largest number of cases – diarrhea, dysentery, cholera
- Over 1600 – most below age 5 – die every day – water-related diseases
- These deaths – prevented – access to safe drinking water
- Constitution – recognises – right to water – part of Right to Life – Article 21
- Right of every person – rich or poor – access to sufficient amounts of water – fulfill daily needs – affordable price
- Several cases – both Supreme and High Court declared – right to safe drinking water – Fundamental Right
- 2007 – Andhra Pradesh High Court – restated above statement – hearing a case – letter written by villager – Mahbubnagar district – contamination of water

- Villager's complaint – textile company – dumping poisonous chemicals – into nearby stream – contaminating ground water – source of irrigation and drinking water
- Judges ordered – Mahbubnagar district collector – supply 25 litres of water – every villager

Public Facilities

- Like water – other facilities – imp. – need to be provided to everyone
- Last year – 2 such facilities – healthcare and sanitation
- Other facilities – electricity, public transport, schools, colleges, etc – public facilities
- Imp. characteristic – public facility – once provided – benefits shared by everyone
 - School in village – many children – get educated
 - Supply of electricity – useful for everyone
 - Farmers – operate pumps – irrigate fields
 - People – operate small workshops
 - Students – helps in study

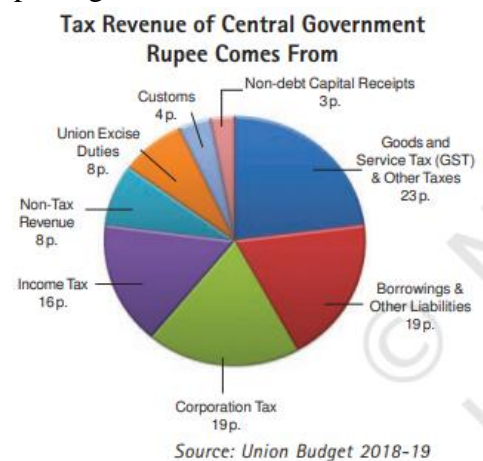
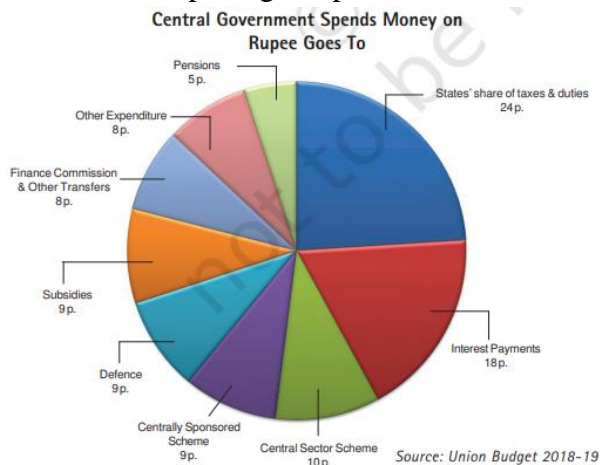
The Government's Role

- Public facilities – too imp. – someone's responsibility – provides these facilities – government
- Most imp. function of government – ensure – public facilities – provided to all
- Why should government only handle this responsibility?
- Private companies – work for profit – 'story of shirt' – class VII
- Most public facilities – no profit –
 - Keeping the drain clean – no profit
 - Running anti-malaria campaign – no profit
- Private companies – not interested – such work
- BUT – other facilities – schools, hospitals – private companies – interested – many examples – large cities
- In cities – private companies – supply – water – tankers – drinking water – sealed bottles
- Such cases – private companies – provide public facilities – price – not affordable by all
- If people – get as much facility as they pay – many people – cannot pay – no facilities
- This option – not acceptable – public facilities – people's basic needs
- Modern society requires – facilities are provided – basic needs are met
- Right to Life – for all persons – responsibility to provide facilities – government must take
- Amu notices – roads in Saidapet – bumpy, without streetlights
- Kumar says – what more to expect in a slum
- Amu replies – there should be public facilities in slums
- Kumar says – public facilities – for people – living in colonies – they pay taxes
- Amu angry – why would you say so? – slum people – also citizens
- Kumar replies – government will go bankrupt this way
- Amu explains – govt. – find a way – these facilities – provided to all

Where does the govt. get money for public facilities?

- Every year – govt. – presents budget in Parliament – how much to spend in the coming year

- In budget – govt. also declares – source of its income
- Main source of revenue – taxes collected from people
- For example – govt. provides clean water – charges for it – pricing – affordable to all



Water Supply to Chennai – is it Available to All?

- Public facilities – should be provided to all – BUT – great shortage of these facilities
- This chapter – supply of water – public facility – great imp.
- Water supply in Chennai – lots of shortages
- Municipal supply – covers only half of the city's needs
- Some areas – more regular supply – close to the storage points
- Burden of shortage – falls on poor
- Middle class people – face shortage – use private methods – digging borewells, buying from tankers, bottled drinking water
- Apart from this – safe drinking water – available to some – who can afford
- Wealthy people – more options – bottled water, water purifiers
- In reality – only rich people – right to water – far from – universal access

Taking water from farmers

- Shortage of water – new opportunities – private companies
- Private companies – provide water to cities – buying from nearby places
- Chennai – water taken from nearby towns – Mamandur, Palur, Karungizhi – fleet of 13,000+ water tankers – every month – water dealers – pay farmers – use water sources on their land
- This water – taken away from agriculture – AND – drinking water supplies of villagers
- Ground water level – dropped too much – in these towns and villages

In Search of Alternatives

- Chennai situation – not unique – similar shortage – exist in other cities
- Shortage in municipal water – compensated (filled in) by private companies – selling water for profit
- Supply of water per person – urban area – 135 litres (7 buckets) per day – standard set by Urban Water Commission
- Slum areas – people receive 20 litres (1 bucket) per person per day – BUT – people in luxury hotels – receive 1600 litres (80 buckets) per person per day

- Shortage of municipal water – sign of failure of government
- People think – govt. – unable to supply water – many municipal departments – running at loss – private companies – better at this task
- Consider the facts –
 - Throughout the world – water supply – work of govt.
 - Some areas – public water supply – universal access
 - Few cases – responsibility – handed over to private companies – fast increase in price of water – lots of protests – Bolivia – forced govt. – take back the control
 - Within India – several cases – success of govt. water departments – BUT – limited in number –
 - Mumbai – enough money through water charges – cover expenses of water supply
 - Hyderabad – increased coverage – improved performance – revenue collection
 - Chennai – several initiatives – use rain water – increase ground water level
 - Also used the services of private companies – transporting and distributing water – BUT – govt. – decides the rates – they are called ‘on contract’