

Chapter 9 Public Facilities

1. Why do you think there are so few cases of private water supply in the world?

Answer: Water is a basic necessity, hence, universal access to safe drinking water is necessary for quality of life. It needs to be provided to all either free of charge or at affordable rates. But, as private companies work for one objective that is maximum profits, in cases where the responsibility for water supply was handed over to private companies, there was a steep rise in the price of water, making it unaffordable for many. Cities saw huge protests, with riots breaking out, forcing the government to take back the service from private hands. Therefore, only a few cases of private water supply exist in the world.

2. Do you think water in Chennai is available to and affordable by all? Discuss.

Answer: Water is not equally available to all the citizens in Chennai. Water in Chennai is supplied by the municipality which fails to meet 100% of demand. Some areas get regular water supply while many areas get erratic supply of water. People from the middle class and upper class buy packaged drinking water or water from tankers. The burden of water supply shortage falls mostly on the poor as they cannot afford the expense of tanker or packaged water. Those who live close to the storage points get more water while colonies further away receive less supply.

3. How is the sale of water by farmers to water dealers in Chennai affecting the local people? Do you think local people can object to such exploitation of groundwater? Can the government do anything in this regard?

Answer: Due to shortage of water, private companies have got an opportunity and are providing water to cities by buying it from places around the city. In Chennai, water is taken from nearby towns like, Karungizhi Palur, and Mamandur from villages to the north of the city using a fleet of over 13,000 water tankers. Every month the water dealers pay an advance to farmers for the rights to exploit water sources on their land. This way the water that is taken away is not just creating a deficit for agriculture purpose but also increasing the shortage of drinking water supplies of the villagers. As a result, the level of Ground water have dropped drastically in all these towns and villages.

4. Why are most of the private hospitals and private schools located in major cities and not in towns or rural areas?

Answer Most of the private schools and hospitals are located in the cities rather than in towns or villages because their sole motive is maximum profit, the services they offer are costly and are affordable only by the affluent dwellers of the city.

5. Do you think the distribution of public facilities in our country is adequate and fair? Give an example of your own to explain.

Answer While there is no doubt that public facilities should be made available to all, in reality we see that there is a great shortage of such facilities. The distribution of public facilities in our country is neither adequate nor fair. For example, the Delhites avail all public facilities like healthcare and sanitation, water, electricity, schools and colleges, public transport. But if we go to places a few kilometers away such as Mathura or Aligarh people have to face grave crises for these facilities. Water shortages and Electricity cut-off are the normal routine of life. Public transport is also not properly developed. Compared to the metros and large cities, towns and villages are under-provided. Compared to wealthy localities, the poorer localities are under-serviced. Handing over these facilities to private companies is not an answer. The important fact is that every citizen of the country has a right to these facilities which should be provided to all in an equitable manner.

6. Take some of the public facilities in your area, such as water, electricity, etc. Is there scope to improve these? What in your opinion should be done? Complete the table.

	Is it available?	How can it be improved?
Water		
Electricity		
Road		
Public Transport		

Answer

	Is it available?	How can it be improved?
Water	yes	Constructing separate water tanks and making available water supply 24 hour.
Electricity	yes	Making available 24 hours electricity supply by keeping a check on electricity theft and its conservation
Road	yes	No improvement needed but if there is no proper roads then construction of new roads, more flyovers, and highways will be of help
Public Transport	yes	Public transport is good, but better connectivity with some more areas of the city can be done by introducing new buses and increasing the frequency of running buses

7. Are the above public facilities shared equally by all the people in your area? Elaborate.

Answer No the above mentioned facilities are not shared equally in the areas. Water supply is not shared equally by all the people. The slum dwellers have to manage with a single water tap where each house in a middle class locality has separate connection for water. When people of middle class homes buy water from tankers to meet their needs, those in slums cannot afford it. However, other facilities, like electricity, road and public transport are shared equally by all.

8. Data on some of the public facilities are collected as part of the Census. Discuss with your teacher when and how the Census is conducted.

Answer Students have to do this under the guidance of their teacher.

9. Private educational institutions – schools, colleges, universities, technical and vocational training institutes are coming up in our country in a big way. On the other hand, educational institutes run by the government are becoming relatively less important. What do you think would be the impact of this? Discuss.

Answer Education is a basic need and there should be universal access to education. But, as the main motive of private education institutes is earning profits, they charge high fees which are affordable only by the affluent section of the society, thus the right to quality education is the right only for the rich class. Similarly if government education institutes are not upto the mark then weaker sections are again deprived of quality education. This in turn results in disparity of quality education between rich and poor.

