

CIVICS CHAPTER-2

CLASS-7

ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT IN HEALTH

INTRODUCTION

- In a democracy people expect the government to work for their welfare. This could be through the provision of education, health, employment, housing or the development of roads, electricity etc.
- In this chapter we shall examine the meanings and problems related to health.

What is health?

- Health means our ability to remain free of illness and injuries. But health isn't only about disease.
- Apart from disease, we need to think of other factors that affect our health. For example, if people get clean drinking water or a pollution free environment they are likely to be healthy.
- On the other hand, if people do not get adequate food to eat or have to live in cramped conditions, they will be prone to illness.
- It isn't healthy to be dull, inactive, anxious or scared for long stretches of time. We all need to be without mental strain.

Healthcare in India

- There has been a phenomenal advancement in medical sciences.
- However, the second column points out how poor the health situation in our country is. With all the above positive developments we are not able to provide proper healthcare facilities to people.
- This is the paradox – something that is contrary to what we would expect.

India has the largest number of medical colleges in the world and is among the largest producers of doctors. Approximately 15,000 new doctors qualify every year.	Most doctors settle in urban areas. People in rural areas have to travel long distances to reach a doctor. The number of doctors with respect to the population is much less in rural areas.
Healthcare facilities have grown substantially over the years. In 1950, there were only 2,717 hospitals in India. In 1991, there were 11,174 hospitals. In 2000, the number grew to 18,218.	About five lakh people die from tuberculosis every year. This number is almost unchanged since Independence! Almost two million cases of malaria are reported every year and this number isn't decreasing.
India gets a large number of medical tourists from many countries. They come for treatment in some of the hospitals in India that compare with the best in the world.	We are not able to provide clean drinking water to all. 21 per cent of all communicable diseases are water borne. For example, diarrhoea, worms, hepatitis, etc.
India is the fourth largest producer of medicines in the world and is also a large exporter of medicines.	Half of all children in India do not get adequate food to eat and are undernourished.

Healthcare in India

- In order to prevent and treat illnesses we need appropriate healthcare facilities such as health centres, hospitals, laboratories for testing, ambulance services, blood banks, etc., that can provide the required care and services that patients need.
- Our country has the money, knowledge and people with experience but cannot make the necessary healthcare available to all

Healthcare Services in India

- Public Healthcare
- Private Healthcare

Public health services

- The public health service is a chain of health centres and hospitals run by the government.
- They are linked together so that they cover both rural and urban areas and can also provide treatment to all kinds of problems – from common illnesses to special services.
- At the village level there are health centres where there is usually a nurse and a village health worker.
- They are trained in dealing with common illnesses and work under the supervision of doctors at the Primary Health Centre (PHC).

Public health services

- The health service is called 'public' for many reasons. In order to fulfil its commitment of providing healthcare to all citizens, the government has established these hospitals and health centres.
- The resources needed to run these services are obtained from the money that we, the public, pay to the government as taxes. Hence, such facilities are meant for everyone.
- One of the most important aspects of the public health system is that it is meant to provide quality healthcare services either free or at a low cost, so that even the poor can seek treatment.

Private health facilities

- There is a wide range of private health facilities that exist in our country. A large number of doctors run their own private clinics.
- In the rural areas, one finds Registered Medical Practitioners (RMPs). Urban areas have large number of doctors, many of them providing specialised services.
- There are hospitals and nursing homes that are privately owned.
- There are many laboratories that do tests and offer special facilities such as X-ray, ultrasound, etc. There are also shops from where we buy medicine.

Private health facilities

- Today the presence of private facilities can be seen all around.
- In fact now there are large companies that run hospitals and some are engaged in manufacturing and selling medicines.
- As the name suggests, private health facilities are not owned or controlled by the government. Unlike the public health services, in private facilities, patients have to pay a lot of money for every service that they use.

Is adequate healthcare available to all?

- In India, we face a situation where private services are increasing but public services are not. What is then available to people are mainly private services.
- These are concentrated in urban areas. As these services are run for profit, the cost of these services is rather high.
- Medicines are expensive. Many people cannot afford them or have to borrow money when there is an illness in the family.
- For those who are poor, every illness in the family is a cause of great anxiety and distress.

Is adequate healthcare available to all?

- Those who are poor are in the first place undernourished. These families are not eating as much as they should. They are not provided basic necessities like drinking water, adequate housing, clean surroundings, etc.
- Sometimes it is not only the lack of money that prevents people from getting proper medical treatment. Women, for example, are not taken to a doctor in a prompt manner.
- Many tribal areas have few health centres and they do not run properly. Even private health services are not available.

What can be done?

- There is little doubt that the health situation of most people in our country is not good.
- It is the responsibility of the government to provide quality healthcare services to all its citizens, especially the poor and the disadvantaged.
- However, health is as much dependent on basic amenities and social conditions of the people, as it is on healthcare services.
- Hence, it is important to work on both in order to improve the health situation of our people. And this can be done.

The Kerala experience

- In 1996, the Kerala government made some major changes in the state. Forty per cent of the entire state budget was given to panchayats.
- They could plan and provide for their requirements. This made it possible for a village to make sure that proper planning was done for water, food, women's development and education.
- This meant that water supply schemes were checked, the working of schools and anganwadis was ensured and specific problems of the village were taken up.

The Costa Rican approach

- Costa Rica is considered to be one of the healthiest countries in South America.
- The main reason for this can be found in the Costa Rican Constitution. Several years ago, Costa Rica took a very important decision and decided not to have an army.
- This helped the Costa Rican government to spend the money that the army would have used, on health, education and other basic needs of the people.
- The Costa Rican government believes that a country has to be healthy for its development and pays a lot of attention to the health of its people.

Thank you