

POWER SHARING

Political Science Class-10

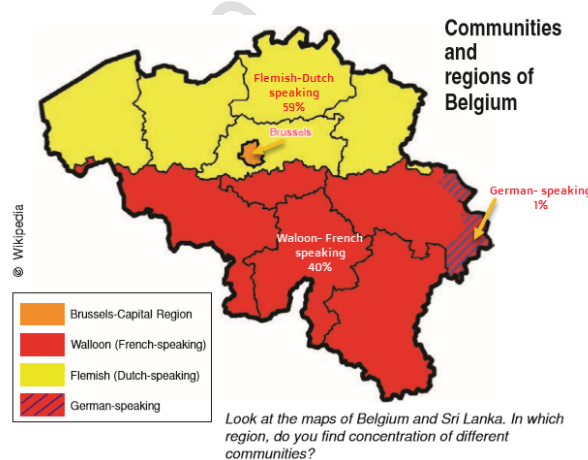
Power Sharing: It can be simply defined as distribution or sharing of power from a single source (constitution) among different organs of government, different segments of society and other stake holders, to accommodate diversity of the nation or simplify the administration.

The Case of Belgium

Ethnic Composition

- 59% Dutch-speaking community living in Flemish region
- 40% French-speaking people live in Wallonia region
- 1% German-speaking live in Wallonia region
- Capital City Brussels- 80% French-speaking and 20% Dutch-speaking people

Board Questions
How is the ethnic composition of Belgium very complex? (2015, 17)



Reasons of Conflict between the French and the Dutch speaking people

- Belgium got its freedom in 1830 and since then the French-speaking community had been politically and socially more dominant in the country.
- They were more qualified, educated, relatively rich and socially and politically powerful.
- The Dutch-speaking community got the benefit of economic development and education much later.
- This gap of prosperity and development created tensions between the two communities during the 1950s and 1960s.
- This tension was more visible and more acute in Brussels where the country wise majority Dutch-speaking community was in minority.

Board Questions
Describe the tension that existed between the Dutch and the French-speaking people in Belgium. (2015)

Policy of Accommodation in Belgium

The Belgium constitution was amended four times (between 1970 to 1993) to accommodate the regional differences and cultural diversity. It was done so to keep the country united and check any division on linguistic basis.

The Belgian model of accommodation is unique and innovative. It comprises three types of governments- central govt. (federal govt.), state govts. and community govts.

Central Government: The number of ministers from French-speaking and the Dutch-speaking community are equal in number. It looks after the entire nation and has the powers over the matters of national importance like defence, foreign policies etc.

State Governments: Both, the Flemish and the Walloon region

have their regional governments. These state governments are not subordinate to the Central govt. The state governments have power over matters relating to agriculture, transport, education etc.

Brussels government: Like in the central govt. the number of ministers from the French and the Dutch speaking communities are equal. The majority of the French-speaking community accepted this equal representation in Brussels because the majority Dutch-speaking community in the country accepted equal representation of the French-speaking community in the central government.

Community Governments: The Dutch, French and the German speaking people elect their Community Governments. In all there are three Community governments. The community govts. Have powers regarding cultural, educational and language related matters.

Board Questions

1. Explain any three elements of Belgium model of power sharing. (2013, 14)
2. Highlight the measures adopted by the Belgian Constitution for the prevention of conflicts in Belgium. (2012)

Success of the policy of accommodation

- It has helped avoid civic strife between the two major communities of Belgium.
- Has checked any division of the country on linguistic lines.
- Belgium was chosen the headquarters of the European Union formed in 1993.

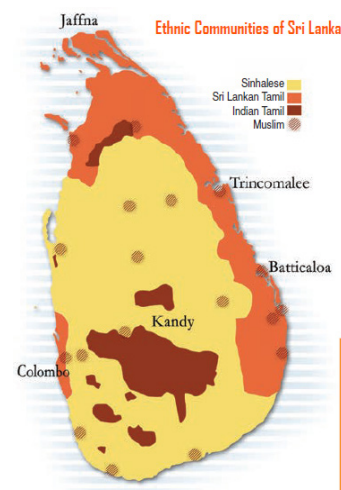
The Case of Sri Lanka

The major social groups in Sri Lanka

Sinhala-speakers (74%): Majority 74% speak Sinhala language and mostly follow Buddhism

Tamil-speakers (18%): Native Tamils are 13% and 5% are Indian Tamils whose forefathers came in Sri Lanka as plantation workers during colonial period and settled there. They are mostly Hindus or Muslims

Christians (7%): They come from both Sinhala and Tamil communities.



Majoritarianism: A belief that the majority community should be able to rule a country in whichever way it wants, by disregarding the wishes and needs of the minority.

Policy of Majoritarianism in Sri Lanka

The earlier name of Sri Lanka was Ceylon. It got freedom in 1948. Unlike Belgium, the Sinhala community leaders adopted majoritarianism in Sri Lanka. They tried to secure dominance over government and force their will on the other communities.

- The govt adopted series of measures to establish Sinhala supremacy.
- An Act in 1956 was passed to recognise Sinhala as the only official language disregarding Tamil.
- Preferential policies were adopted to give Sinhala applicants university positions and govt. jobs.
- Provisions were made in constitution to protect and foster Buddhism as state religion.

Feeling of alienation among Tamils

The majoritarian measures taken by the Sinhala dominated govt. increased the feeling of alienation among Sri Lankan Tamils.

- Tamils felt that none of Sinhala dominated major political parties was sensitive or pathetic to Tamil language and culture.
- They also felt that constitution and the government policies discriminated against them in favour of Sinhala people.
- They were denied equal political rights, no equal opportunities in getting jobs and their interests were ignored.
- Govt. was practicing religious discrimination.
- This feeling alienation strained relations between the Sinhala and Tamil communities.

Board Questions

1. What were the majoritarian measures taken in Sri Lanka to establish Sinhala supremacy? (2010, 12)
2. Describe any three provisions of the Act which was passed in Sri Lanka in 1956 to establish Sinhala supremacy. (2012)
3. What were the reasons for the alienation of Sri Lankan Tamils? What was the effect of this on the country? (2010, 11, 12)

Note: While answering the question of alienation, include the points of majoritarianism also. For effect, use the topic 'Consequences of majoritarianism' and 'Civil war'.

Consequences of Majoritarianism: (Organisation of Tamils and their demands)

Sri Lankan Tamils started organising them by launching parties and several political organisations were formed by 1980s. Their demands included:

- Recognition of Tamil as official language
- Equal opportunities for Tamils in government jobs and educational institutions.
- Regional autonomy in provinces dominated by Tamils.
- By 1980s the demand for independent Tamil State increased in the North and eastern part of Sri Lanka.
- Ultimately the distrust between the two communities led to conflicts and finally turned into a Civil War.

Board Questions

1. Explain any three consequences of the majoritarian policies adopted by the Sri Lankan Government. (2012, 2017)
2. Mention any three demands of Sri Lankan Tamils. (2012)

Civil War (1983 to 2009)

- LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam) was the most furious of the Tamil political organisations.
- The Civil War killed thousands of people of both the communities.
- Many left the country as refugees and many lost their livelihoods.
- The war proved as a terrible setback to the social, cultural and economic life of the country.
- The war ended in 2009 with the killing of LTTE leader Prabhakaran.

Power Sharing is Desirable

Power sharing among different organs and different levels of govt. and between different social groups is desirable due to following reasons:

Prudential Reasons:

- It helps to reduce the possibility of social conflict between social groups
- It ensures stability of political order and reduces chances of civil war like situations.
- Power sharing is supposed to bring better outcomes as in Belgium.
- Majoritarianism may appeal for temporary gains but it undermines unity of the country in the long run as in Sri Lanka.

Moral Reasons: (Importance of power sharing)

- Power sharing is the spirit of democracy and should be distributed among as many citizens as possible.
- People are the source of political power and they must be consulted and have a say in the decision-making process.
- Power is shared between the rulers (who exercise power) and the ruled who have to bear the effect of the use of power by the rulers.

Board Questions

1. "Power sharing is the very spirit of democracy". Justify the statement with three suitable points. (2012)
2. Why power sharing is necessary in a democracy? Explain. (2011, 14)
3. Give reasons why power sharing is desirable. (2011)
4. Why is power sharing desirable? Give moral reasons in this regard. (2012)
5. "Sharing of powers makes a country more powerful and united". Do you agree with this statement and why? (2017)

- Legitimate govt. is one that empowers citizen to participate and acquire stake in the system.
- Power sharing is also a means to respect the diverse social groups.
- So, power sharing is desirable & necessary as it is valuable to and is the core of democracy.

Forms of power sharing

The idea of power sharing is just opposite to the notion of undivided political power that rests in the hands of a central authority. The supporters of undivided political power contended that division of power would delay the decision making and enforcing it. But the rise of democracy has changed this notion undivided central power.

Some Common Forms of Power Sharing

1. Horizontal Power Sharing (at same level)

- The power is shared among different organs of government. Different organs exercise different powers.
- Generally, power is shared among three organs- legislature, executive and judiciary and these organs are placed at the same level.
- **Separation of Powers:** Different organs have different separate powers to exercise. Such separation of powers ensures that none organ becomes too powerful.
- **System of Checks and Balances:** Each organ checks the other from going unlimited and unchecked.
- The executive (ministers and govt. officials) is accountable to the Parliament and State Assemblies.
- Judges are appointed by the executive but judiciary has the power and jurisdiction over laws passed by the Parliament
- This system of checks and balances ensures balance of power among the three organs.
- This balance of power is a main feature of the American Constitution.

Board Questions

What is horizontal distribution of power? Mention its any two advantages.
(2012)

2. Vertical or Federal division of Powers (at different levels)

- Power is shared among governments working at different levels.
- The constitution clearly lays down the division of powers of different levels of government.

- In India, the federal division of powers works at three different levels.
 1. **Central Government:** The government for the entire country. It is also called Union or federal government in other countries.
 2. **State Government:** It is responsible for administration of states. It is also called provincial or regional government in other countries.
 3. **Municipalities and Panchayats:** These are the self-governing institutions. It is third and the lowest level of government in India. Municipalities work at city level and panchayats at village level.

Board Questions

1. How can power be shared among government at different levels? Explain. (2014)
2. Explain the vertical division of power giving examples from India. (2012)

Example: Belgium adopted federal division of power but Sri Lanka refused to do so

3. Power Sharing among different Social Groups

- It refers to accommodating social diversities by giving space in government and administration to diverse social groups like the ones based on language, weaker sections of society, minorities and women.
- The marginalised people or the minority don't feel alienated if they get fair share in power.
- Constitutional and legal arrangements give weaker sections and women representation in legislatures and administration. In India women are given 1/3rd reservation in panchayat elections.
- In India there are 'reserved constituencies' in assemblies and parliament. In future the women may get 1/3rd reservation in the parliament of India.

4. Power sharing among political parties, pressure groups and movements

- **Political parties:** The competition among different political parties ensures that power does not remain in one hand. In elections people give chance to other parties also. In the long run other parties representing different ideologies and social groups can form government and thus share power. If it is a coalition government then more than one parties share power in running the government. Example- Atal Bihari Bajpayee govt
- **Pressure groups:** In a democracy different interest groups come into existence to look after, promote, advance the interests of their respective groups like interest groups of traders, businessman, industrialists (e.g. FICCI) farmers (e.g. All India Kisan Sabha), students (ABVP). Pressure groups influence the decision-making process at government level. The pressure or influence is created either by being member of government committees or from outside.
- **Movements:** people or their leaders adopt different methods of agitation like strikes, dharnas, processions, signature campaign, fasts etc to make government listen to their demands. It represents the power of masses that government sometimes cannot ignore in a democracy. In India we witness such agitations from time to time.

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