

CH-1 POWER SHARING

- With this chapter, we resume the tour of democracy that we started last year.
An intelligent sharing of power among a legislature, executive and judiciary is very important to the design of a democracy.
- We start with two stories from Belgium and Sri Lanka.
- Both these stories are about how democracies handle demands for power sharing.

1. BELGIUM AND SRI LANKA

- Belgium is a small country in Europe.
It has borders with Netherlands, France and Germany.
- 59% in the Flemish region speaks Dutch.
Another 40% people live in Wallonia region and speaks French.
- Remaining 1% of the Belgians speak Germany.
The capital city Brussels, 80% people speak French while 20% are Dutch – speaking.
- The minority French – speaking community was relatively rich and powerful.
- This was resented by the Dutch-speaking community who got the benefit of the economic development and education much later.
- The tension between two communities was acuter in Brussels.
- Like other nations in the south Asia region, Sri Lanka has a diverse population.
- The Sinhala speaks are 74% and Tamil speakers are 18%

Among Tamils, there are two sub groups, Tamil natives of the country are called “Sri Lankan Tamils”; the rest whose forefathers came from India as a population workers during the colonial period, is called 'Indian Tamils'.

2. MAJORITARIANISM IN SRI LANKA

- Sri Lankan emerged as an independent country in 1948.
- The leaders of the Sinhala community sought to secure dominance over the government by virtue of their majority.
- In 1956, an Act was passed to recognize Sinhala as the only official language, thus disregarding Tamil.
- A new constitution stipulated that the state shall protect and foster Buddhism.
All these coming measures, coming one after the other, gradually increased the feeling of alienation among the Sri Lankan Tamils.
- As a result, the relations between the Sinhala and Tamil communities strained over time.
- The Sri Lankan Tamils launched parties and struggles.
But their demand for more autonomy to provinces populated by the Tamils was repeatedly denied.
- The distrust between the two communities turned into widespread conflict. It soon turned into CIVIL WAR.

The civil war caused a terrible setback to the social, cultural and economic life of the country.

3. ACCOMMODATION IN BELGIUM

- Belgium recognized the existence of regional differences and cultural diversities.
- Between 1970 and 1993, they amended their constitution four times so as to work out an arrangement that would enable everyone to live together within the same country.
- Here are some of the elements of the Belgian model:

- a. Constitution prescribes that the number of Dutch and French-speaking ministers shall be equal in the central government.
 - b. Many powers of the central government have been given to states government of the two of the regions of the country.
 - c. Brussels has separated government in which both the communities have equal representation.
 - d. Apart from the central and state government, there is a third kind of government. This is community government.
- In Belgium, the leaders have realized that the unity of the country is possible only by respecting the feelings and interests of different communities and regions.
 - Sri Lanka shows us a contrasting example. It shows us that if a majority community wants to force its dominance over others and refuses to share power, it can undermine the unity of the country.

4. WHY IS POWER SHARING DESIRABLE?

- Thus, two different sets of reasons can be given in favor of power sharing.
Firstly, power sharing is good because it helps to reduce the possibility of conflict between social groups.
- There is a second, deeper reason why power sharing is good for democracy. Power sharing is very spirit of democracy.
- A democratic rule involves sharing power with those affected by its exercise, and who have to live with it effects.
- Let us call the first set of reasons PRUDENTIAL and the second moral.

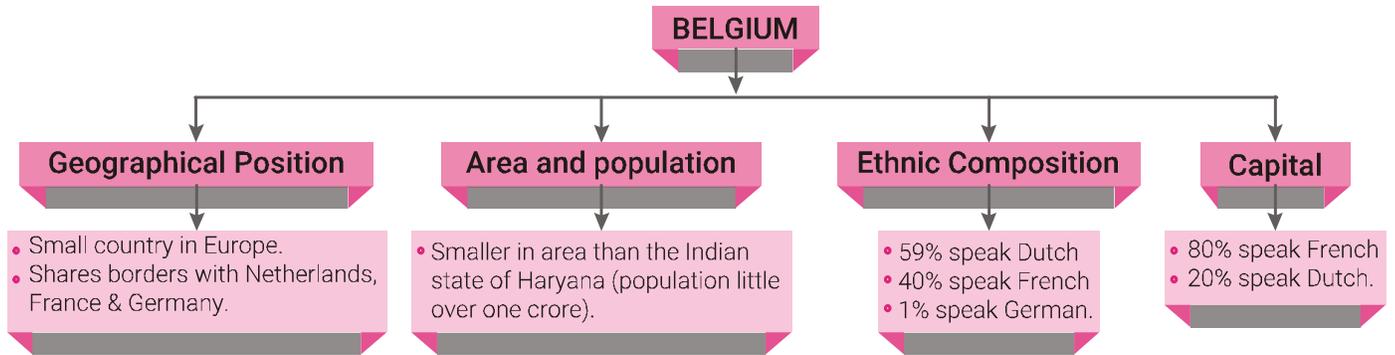
While prudential reasons stress that power sharing will bring out better outcomes, moral reasons emphasizes the very act of the power sharing as valuable.

FORMS OF POWER SHARING

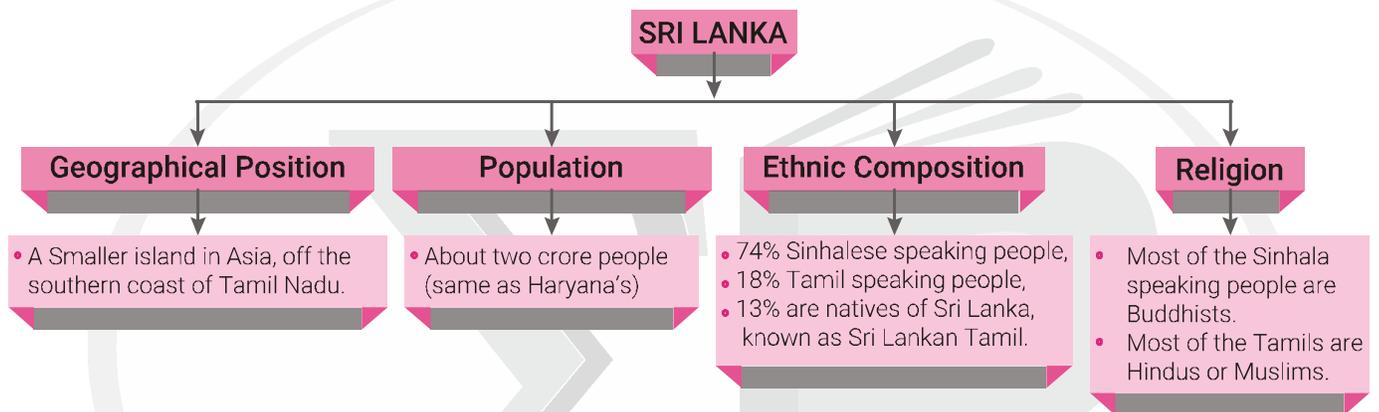
1. The idea of power sharing has emerged in opposition to the notions of undivided political power. For a long time, it was believed that all power of a government must reside in one person or group of a person located at one place.
2. One basic principle of power sharing is that people are the source of all political power.
3. In a good democratic government, due respect is given to diverse groups and views that exist in a society.
4. Everyone has a voice in the shaping of public politics.
5. Therefore, it follows that in a democracy political power should be distributed among as many citizens as possible.

Let us look at some of the most common arrangements that we have or will come across.

1. Power is shared among different organs of the government, such as the legislature, executive, and judiciary. Let us call this horizontal distribution of power because it allows different organs of the government placed at the same level to exercise different powers.
2. Power can be shared among governments at different levels – a general government for the entire country and governments at the provincial or regional level. The division of higher and lower levels of government is called the vertical division of power.
3. Power may also be shared among different social groups, such as the religious and linguistic groups. 'Community government' is a good example of this arrangement.
4. Power sharing arrangement can also be seen in the way political parties, pressure groups and movements control or influence those in power.

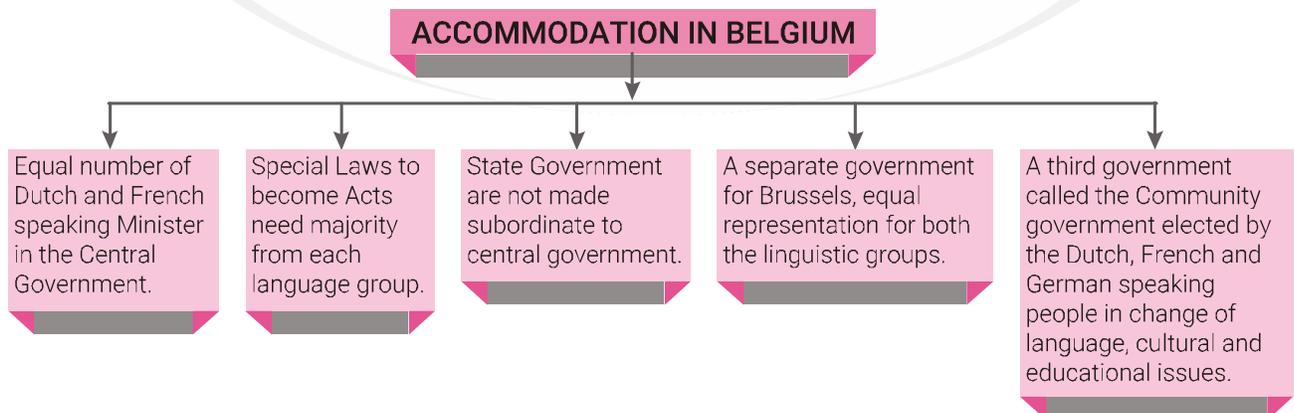


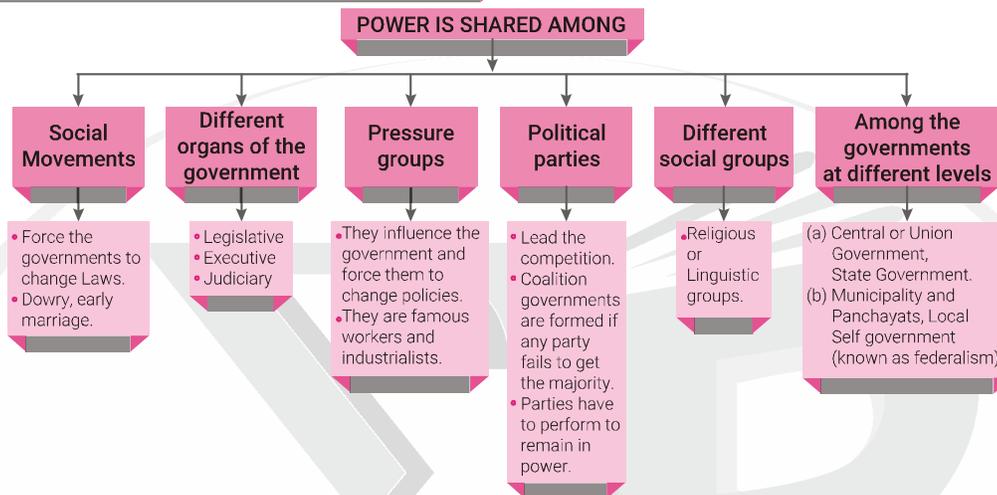
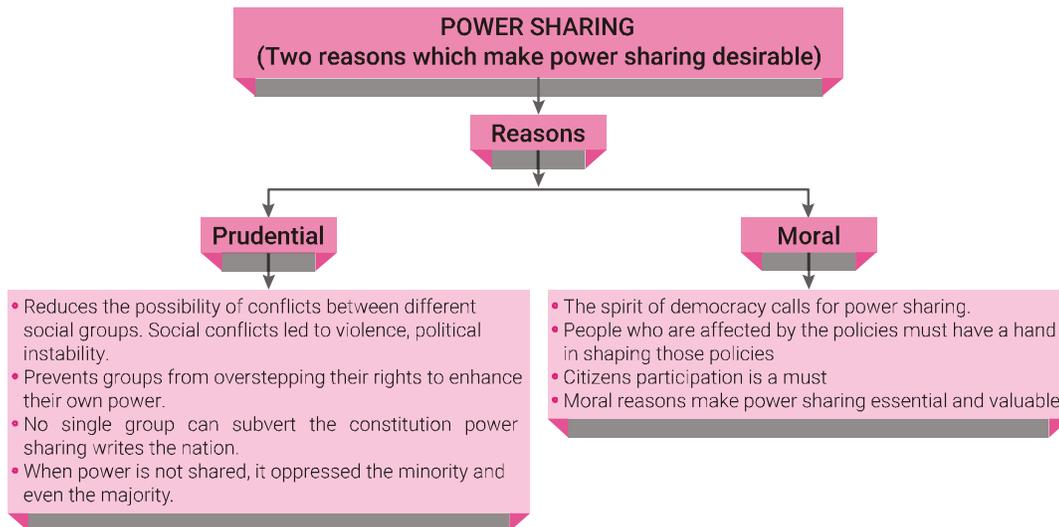
Note: In Brussels, the Dutch –speaking people are in minority, which is opposite of the rest of the country, where they are in majority.



Note: Majoritarianism in Sri Lanka

A belief that only the majority community should circle a country, make laws for everyone and with total disregard to the wishes and needs of the minority.





ASSIGNMENT

SOLVED NCERT QUESTIONS

1. What are the different forms of power sharing in modern democracies? Give an example of each of these.

Ans. In modern democracies, the people rule themselves through institutions of self-governance, where the idea of power sharing has emerged in opposition to the notions of undivided political power. The different forms of power sharing in modern democracies are:

- a. Power is shared among different organs of government such as legislature, executive and judiciary in the form of horizontal distribution of power. Each organ exercises different powers and checks and balances the power of others.
- b. Federal division of power, where power is shared among different levels of government such as Central, State and Municipal in form of vertical division of power. In India, the Union Government, State government, Municipality and Panchayats form such a structure.
- c. Community governments, where power is shared among different social groups such as religious or linguistic groups. In Belgium, French and Dutch speaking people are accommodated by given a fair share of power in government.
- d. Political parties, pressure groups and movements influence those in power by taking part in coalition governments or participation in political committees. UPA and NDA Union government are a form of power sharing among various political parties in India.

2. State one prudential reason and one moral reason for power sharing with an example from the Indian context.

Ans. Tyranny of the majority undermines the unity of the nation therefore power sharing helps to reduce the possibility of conflict between social groups and ensures stability of the political order. This is a prudential reason for power sharing. In India, seats in panchayat elections are reserved for those from marginalized communities to ensure they have a stake in the political order.

Those who are affected by the exercise of power have the right to be consulted and acquire a stake by sharing that power. This is the moral reason for power sharing. In India, the policy of reservation in government recruitment ensures marginalized communities are given means to become part of the structure of government.

OTHER IMPORTANT QUESTION

ONE MARK QUESTIONS

1. What kind of government was adopted by Sri Lanka?

Ans. Sri Lanka emerged as an independent country in 1948. The leaders of the Sinhala community sought to secure dominance over government by virtue of their majority. As a result, the democratically elected government adopted a series of majoritarian measures to establish Sinhala supremacy.

2. Why has the idea of power sharing emerged?

Ans. The idea of power sharing has emerged in opposition to the notions of undivided political power. For a long time, it was believed that all powers of a government must reside in one person or group of persons located at one place. It was felt that if the power to decide is dispersed, it would not be possible to take quick decisions and to enforce them. But these notions have changed with the emergence of democracy.

3. What does 'Ethnic' mean?

Ans. A social division based on shared culture. People belonging to the same ethnic group, believe in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of culture or both. They need not always have the same religion or nationality.

4. What does 'Majoritarianism' mean?

Ans. It means 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, e.g., Sri Lanka opted for majoritarianism, in which majority Sinhala rule the country.

FIVE MARKS QUESTIONS

1. What was the ethnic composition of Sri Lanka?

Ans. a. The major social groups of Sri Lanka are: the Sinhala speakers (74 per cent) and the Tamil speakers (18 per cent).

b. Among Tamils there are two sub-groups: Tamil natives of the country are called 'Sri Lankan Tamils' and the rest, whose forefathers came from India as plantation workers during colonial period are called 'Indian Tamils'.

c. Sri Lankan Tamils are concentrated in the north and east of the country.

d. Most of the Sinhala-speaking people are Buddhists, while most of the Tamils are Hindus or Muslims. There are about 7 per cent Christians, who are both Tamils and Sinhala.

2. "Existence of Dutch and the French speaking people in Belgium created an ethnic tension." Elaborate the statement.

Ans. Causes of conflict in Belgium:

a. The minority French speaking community was relatively rich and powerful.

b. This was resented by the Dutch speaking community, who got the benefits of economic development and education much later.

c. This led to tension between the Dutch and French speaking communities.

3. "Power sharing is the very spirit of democracy." Justify the statement with four suitable points. OR Why is power sharing desirable? Give any three prudential reasons.

Ans. a. Power sharing helps to reduce the possibilities of conflicts between various ethnic groups living in a society.

- b. It helps in ensuring political stability, since a country can be run by all the communities without giving preference to any majority community.
- c. It also reduces violence and linguistic problems. In India, there is diversity in language but our constitution gives equal weightage to all the languages.
- d. Power sharing is actually being called the true spirit of democracy. It helps in bringing political, economic, social and cultural stability to the nation.

4. Explain the two main reasons why power sharing is important in a democracy.

Ans. The two main reasons are:

- a. **Prudential Reasons:** These lay emphasis on better outcomes of power sharing.
 - Power sharing helps to reduce the possibility of conflict between the social groups. Thus, it ensures the stability of political order.
 - Its absence results into imposition of will by majority community, which undermines the unity of the nation.
- b. **Moral Reasons:** These stress on power sharing as a valuable act because
 - It is the very spirit of democracy.
 - A democratic rule involves it with those affected by its exercise and who have to live with its effects.
 - A legitimate government is the one where citizens acquire a role in the system through participation.

5. “Power is shared between different social groups.” Comment on this statement with the help of an example.

- Ans.**
- Power may be shared among different social groups, such as the religious and linguistic groups. In some countries, there are constitutional and legal arrangements whereby socially weaker sections and women represent in the legislatures and administration.
 - There is a system of ‘reserved constituencies’ in our country. This type of arrangement is meant to give space in the government and administration to diverse social groups who otherwise would feel alienated from the government. This method is used to give minority communities a fair share in power.
 - There is a government called “community government” in Belgium. This government is elected by the people, belonging to one language or community—Dutch, French and German speaking, no matter where they live. This government has the power regarding to culture, education and language issues.
 - These arrangements help to avoid civic clashes and animosity between the two major communities and possible division of the country on linguistic lines.

6. Evaluate the steps which turned out to be milestones to establish majoritarianism in Sri Lanka.

- Ans. a.** Sri Lanka emerged as an independent country in 1948. The leaders of the Sinhala community sought to secure dominance over government by virtue of their majority.
- b. As a result, the democratically elected government adopted majoritarian measures to establish Sinhala supremacy.
 - c. In 1956, an act was passed to recognise Sinhala, as the only official language, thus disregarding Tamil.
 - d. The government followed policies that favoured Sinhala applicants for university positions and government jobs.
 - e. With a new constitution, Buddhism was adopted as a state religion.

7. What factors led to a civil war in Sri Lanka?

- Ans.**
- Measures taken in majoritarianism gradually increased the feeling of alienation among Sri Lankan Tamils.
 - They felt that the constitution and government policies denied them equal political rights, discriminated against them in getting jobs and other opportunities and ignored their interests.
 - As a result, the relations between Sinhala and Tamil communities got strained over time.
 - The Sri Lankan Tamils launched parties and struggles for the recognition of Tamil as an official language, regional autonomy and equality of opportunities in getting education and jobs.
 - By the 1980s, several political organisations were formed demanding an independent Tamil Elam (state) in northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka.
 - The distrust between the two communities turned into widespread conflict. It soon turned into a civil war. As a result, thousands of people of both the communities were killed.