



Power Sharing

Chapter Outline

Meaning of power sharing

Nature of power sharing

Forms of power sharing

- ✧ Meaning : Prudential and Moral reasons
Example of Belgium & Sri Lanka
- ✧ Steps taken by Belgian and Sri Lankan Govt. to accommodate the diversity.
- ✧ Forms of Power sharing :
 - Horizontal Division of power
 - Vertical division of power
 - Federal division of power
 - Power shared among social groups
 - Power shared among political parties and pressure group.

BELGIUM & SRI LANKA

Ethnic composition of Belgium :



It is a small country in Europe with a population of a little more than a crore, has an **ethnic** problem that is highly complex. It has border with Netherlands, Luxembourg, France & Germany.

The ethnic composition of this small country is very complex.

- (A) Of the country's total population, **59 %** lives in the **Flemish region** and speak **Dutch language**.
- (B) **40%** people live in the **Wallonia region** and speak **French**.
- (C) Remaining **1%** of the Belgians speak **German**.
- (D) In the capital city **Brussels 80 %** speak **French** while **20 %** are **Dutch speaking**.

Problems :

- (A) The minority French speaking community was relatively rich and powerful.
- (B) Dutch speaking people received benefits of economic development & education much later & this led to tension between the two groups during the 1950s and 1960s.
- (C) The conflict between the two communities was more acute in Brussels because the Dutch speaking people constituted a majority in the country, but a minority in the capital.



Ethnic composition of Sri Lanka



- (A) It is an island nation, just a few kilometers off the southern coast of Tamil Nadu.
- (B) It has a population of about 2 crore.
- (C) It has diverse population. The major social groups in Sri Lanka are -
1. Sinhala speakers which are 74 %.
 2. Tamil speakers are 18 %. Tamils are also divided in two groups -
 - I. Tamil natives of the country are called 'Sri Lankan Tamils' (13 %)
 - II. Rest are called Indian Tamil (Whose forefathers came from India as plantation workers during colonial period) are 5 %.
- (D) Sri Lankan Tamils are concentrated in north and east of the country.
- (E) Sinhala speaking people are Buddhists.
- (F) Tamils are either Hindus or Muslim.
- (G) About 7 % are Christians who are both Tamil & Sinhalas.
- In Belgium & Sri Lanka the majority community, i.e., Dutch speakers & Sinhala could take advantages of their numeric majority & impose their will on the entire country.

MAJORITARIANISM IN SRI LANKA

The leader of the Sinhala community dominated the government & adopted a series of majoritarian measures.

- (A) Sri Lanka become independent in 1948.
- (B) In 1956, an Act was passed to recognise Sinhala as the only official language, thus disregarding Tamil.
- (C) Sinhala applicants were favoured for university and government jobs.
- (D) The constitution gives special protection to Buddhism. It means submission of the minority group to the majority group for all the decisions affecting their lives. It often results in preferential policies being followed, favouring the majority group in university positions and government jobs and other opportunities and interests, thus denying the minority equal rights and opportunities.
- (E) Outcomes/Problems that emerged :**

Majoritarianism has increased the feeling of alienation among the 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. The relations between the Sinhala and Tamil communities strained over time.

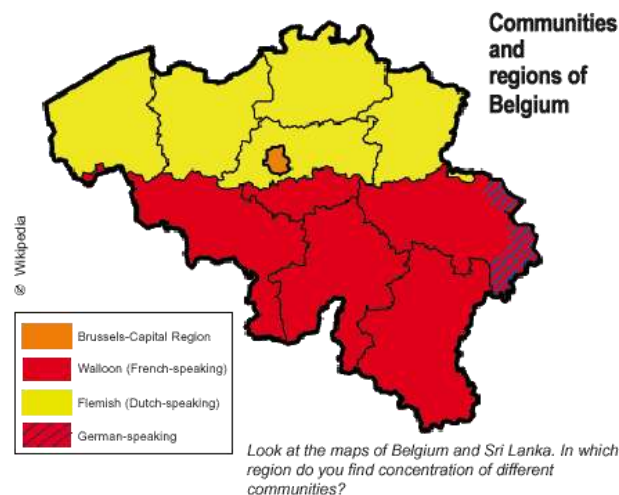
The Sri Lankan Tamils launched parties and struggles for the recognition of Tamil as an official language, for regional autonomy and equality of opportunity in securing education and jobs. By 1980s several political organisation were formed demanding an independent Tamil Eelam (state) in northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka. The distrust between the two communities turned into widespread conflict. It soon turned into a civil war (A civil war is a violent conflict between various groups in a country itself often due to undermining of a particular group's interests or sentiments by the other group.). The civil war has caused a terrible setback to the social, cultural and economic life of the country.



ACCOMMODATION IN BELGIUM

Belgium leaders recognised the differences that existed in the regional & cultural aspects. So between 1970 and 1993. They amended their constitution four times so as to enable everyone to live together within the same country. Some of the elements of the Belgian model are -

1. Constitution prescribes that the number of Dutch and French speaking ministers shall be equal in the central government.
2. Many powers of the central government have been given to state governments of the two regions of the country. The state governments are not subordinate to the central government.
3. Brussels has a separate government in which both the communities have equal representation. The French speaking people accepted equal representation in Brussels because the Dutch speaking community has accepted equal representation in the central government.
4. A third kind government called community government is elected by people belonging to one language community no matter where they live. This government deals with cultural, educational and language related issues.
5. These arrangements have worked well so far. They helped to avoid civic strife between the two major communities and a possible division of the country on linguistic lines. When many countries of Europe came together to form the European Union, Brussels was chosen as its headquarters.



Look at the maps of Belgium and Sri Lanka. In which region do you find concentration of different communities?

WHY POWER SHARING IS DESIRABLE



Comparison : In Belgium leaders realised that by a mutual arrangement for sharing power unity in the country was possible.

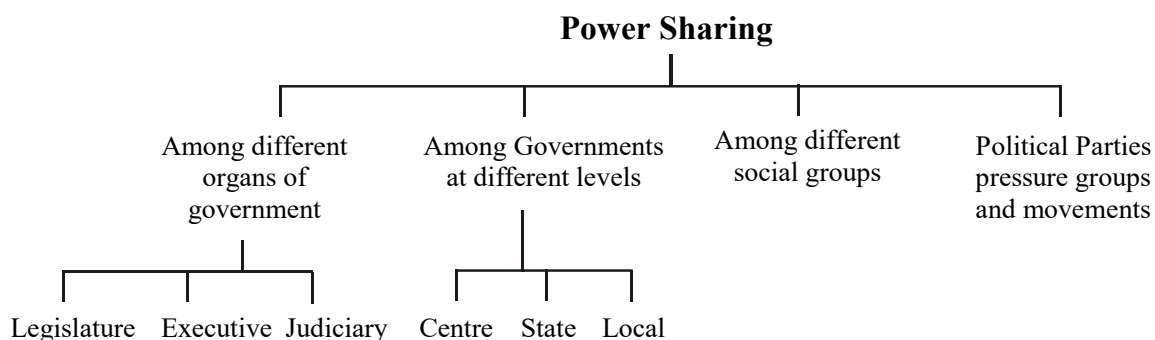
In Sri Lanka the majority community wanted to dominate & refused to share power. This hindered the unity of the country.

Power sharing is good because :

1. It helps to reduce the conflict between social groups.
2. It is a good way to ensure the stability of political order.
3. It is good for democracy. It is the spirit of democracy because people have the right to be consulted on how they are to be governed.
4. The first point is called **prudential** because it states that power sharing will bring out better outcomes.
5. Moral reasons emphasises the very act of power sharing as valuable.



FORMS OF POWER SHARING



Many people felt that if the power to decide is dispersed, it would not be possible to take quick decision and to enforce them.

One basic principle of democracy is that people are the source of all political power, & people rule themselves. In a good democratic government, due respect is given to diverse groups that exist in a society. Everyone has a voice in the shaping of public policies.

In modern democracies, power sharing arrangements can take many forms.

1. Power is shared among different organs of the Govt. It is also called the horizontal distribution of power.

- (A) In this form of distribution power is shared among different organs of government such as the legislature, executive and judiciary.
- (B) This type of distribution advocates separation of powers in which different organs of government at the same level exercise different powers.
- (C) Separation of powers ensures a check over the unlimited powers of each organs. This results in a balance of power among various institutions.
- (D) It is also called a system of “checks and balances”.

2. Vertical Distribution of Powers :

- (A) Under this form of power sharing arrangement, power is shared among governments at different levels. e.g. a general government for the entire country and a government at the provincial level.
- (B) A general government for the entire country is usually called Federal government. In our country it is called as central government.
- (C) In some countries like India & Belgium, the constitution clearly lays down the powers of the government at different levels. This is called the “Federal division of powers”.

All such division of powers involving higher and lower level of government is called vertical division of powers.

3. Power sharing among different social groups :

- (A) In another way power may also be shared among different social groups, such as the religious and linguistic groups.
- (B) 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.
- (C) This method is used to give minority communities a fair share in power.
- (D) **Community government** in Belgium and **Reserved constituencies in assemblies and Parliament** in India are the examples of this type of arrangement.

4. Power sharing among political parties and pressure groups :

Sometimes power sharing arrangements can also be seen in the way political parties, pressure groups and movements control or influence power because in a democracy the citizens must have a choice among various contenders for powers.



IMPORTANT TERMS

1. **Ethnic** : A social based division based on shared culture people belonging to 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.
2. **Majoritarian** : A concept which signifies a belief that the majority community should be able to rule a country in whichever way it wants is known as “Majoritarian”. In this type of rule they disregard the wishes and needs of the minority.
3. **Civil war** : A violent conflict between opposing groups within a country is known as civil war. Some times it becomes so intense that it appears like a war.
4. **Prudential** : Based on prudence, or on careful calculation of gains and losses. Prudential decisions are usually contrasted with those decisions, which are based purely on moral considerations.
5. **Moral** : It is a set of reasons which emphasise the intrinsic worth of power sharing.
6. **Community government** : A type of government which is elected by people belonging to one language community is called community government.
7. **Federal government** : It is a type of government in which powers are shared among the different levels.
8. **Power sharing** : It is the distribution of powers among the organs of the government at different level.
9. **Checks and Balance** : A system in which each organ of the government checks the others which results in a balance of power among various institutions.
10. **Sri Lankan Tamils** : Tamil natives of Sri Lanka are called Sri Lankan Tamils.
11. **Indian Tamils** : The Tamilians whose forefathers came from India as plantation workers during colonial period and settled in Sri Lanka are called Indian Tamils.