

Chapter 1: Power Sharing

❖ Belgium: A Model of Power-Sharing

- **Population:** Over 1 crore; complex ethnic makeup.
 - **Ethnic groups:**
 - **Dutch-speaking (Flemish):** 59% - live in the Flanders region.
 - **French-speaking:** 40% - live in Wallonia.
 - **German-speaking:** 1%.
 - **In Brussels (capital):** 80% speak French, 20% speak Dutch.
 - **Conflict roots:**
 - French-speakers were once economically dominant.
 - Dutch-speakers resented this inequality.
 - **Solution: Power-sharing**
 - Equal representation in the government.
 - Separate governments for each community (community government).
 - Regional autonomy for Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels.
 - **Result:** Belgium avoided civil strife and kept the country united.
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❖ Sri Lanka: A Case of Majoritarianism

- **Population:** About 2 crore.
- **Ethnic groups:**
 - **Sinhala-speaking:** 74% - majority, mostly **Buddhists**.
 - **Tamil-speaking:** 18% - mostly **Hindus or Muslims**.
 - **Sri Lankan Tamils** - native.
 - **Indian Tamils** - brought by the British.
 - **Christians:** Around 7%, both Sinhala and Tamil.
- **Conflict roots:**
 - Post-independence, **Sinhala majority imposed its will**.
 - Policies like "**Sinhala Only**" Act, preference in jobs and education.
 - Tamils felt discriminated and excluded.
- **Result:** Ethnic tensions escalated into **civil war**, demands for Tamil Eelam (separate state).

Majoritarianism in Sri Lanka

LK Background:

- Sri Lanka became **independent** in 1948.
 - The majority community, **Sinhalese (74%)**, began to **dominate** politics and governance.
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What is Majoritarianism?

Majoritarianism is a belief that the **majority community** should be able to rule a country in **its own interest**, **ignoring** the needs and rights of minorities.

Majoritarian Measures in Sri Lanka:

1. **1956**: Sinhala declared the **only official language**, ignoring Tamil.
 2. **Government jobs and university admissions** began to favour Sinhala speakers.
 3. **Buddhism** was given **special status** in the constitution — state promised to "protect and foster Buddhism".
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Impact on Sri Lankan Tamils:

- Felt **discriminated** against in:
 - Language,
 - Education,
 - Employment,
 - Religion.
 - Became **increasingly alienated**.
 - No major political party led by Sinhala Buddhists addressed their concerns seriously.
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Tamil Response:

- Formed **political parties** and launched **struggles** to:
 - Recognize **Tamil** as an official language.
 - Achieve **regional autonomy**.
 - Gain **equal access** to education and jobs.
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Escalation:

- Demands for autonomy were **ignored repeatedly**.
- By the **1980s**, some Tamil groups began to demand a **separate independent state** (Tamil Eelam).
- This led to **civil war**, which lasted for decades and caused massive suffering.

❖ **Accommodation in Belgium**

BE A Unique Approach to Unity in Diversity

Belgium faced **regional and linguistic tensions**, especially between the **Dutch-speaking Flemish** and **French-speaking Walloons**. Instead of enforcing majoritarian rule, **Belgian leaders chose accommodation**—a model of **power-sharing and respect for diversity**.

❖ **Key Features of the Belgian Model (1970–1993)**

Between 1970 and 1993, Belgium **amended its Constitution four times** to build a system where **no community dominates the other**. This power-sharing model has several innovative features:

1. Equal Representation in Central Government

- The Constitution **requires equal numbers** of Dutch- and French-speaking ministers in the **central government**.
- **Special laws** can be passed only with the support of a **majority from each linguistic group**.
- ➤ **No single community can impose decisions unilaterally.**

2. State Governments with Real Power

- **Powers of the Central Government** were transferred to **State Governments** representing different regions.
- These State Governments are **not subordinate** to the Central Government.
- ➤ **Federalism in action**, respecting regional autonomy.

3. Brussels: Equal Representation

- Brussels, the capital city, has a **separate government** where **both Dutch and French speakers have equal power**.
- The French accepted equal representation in Brussels because the Dutch accepted it at the national level.
- ➤ **Mutual respect and compromise.**

4. Community Government

- A third type of government exists: **Community Governments**.
- Elected by people of the **same language group** (Dutch, French, or German), **regardless of where they live**.
- They manage **language, education, and culture** for their community.
- ➤ Ensures **cultural rights and identity** are protected.

✓ Results of the Belgian Model

- Though **complex**, the model has:
 - **Prevented civil conflict**,
 - **Protected minority rights**,
 - **Preserved national unity**,
 - **Made Brussels the headquarters of the European Union**.

What Do We Learn from Belgium and Sri Lanka?

Both **Belgium** and **Sri Lanka** are **democracies**, yet they handled the issue of **power sharing** very differently:

BE Belgium: A Model of Power Sharing

- Belgian leaders **respected differences** among communities.
- They created **mutually acceptable power-sharing arrangements**.
- As a result, Belgium remained **united, peaceful, and democratic**.

LK Sri Lanka: A Case of Majoritarianism

- The Sinhala majority tried to **impose its dominance** on minority Tamils.
- Refused to share power or recognize minority rights.
- This led to **conflict, civil war, and national disunity**.

Lesson:

Respecting diversity and **sharing power** are essential to **national unity and stability**.
Imposing majority rule can lead to **division and violence**.

Why is Power Sharing Desirable?

There are **two types of reasons**: **Prudential** and **Moral**.

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- ♦ **1. Prudential Reasons (Practical Benefits):**

- Power sharing **reduces conflict** between social groups.
- Prevents **violence, instability, and civil war**.
- Ensures **better governance** by including different voices.
- **Tyranny of the majority** harms not only minorities but **also the majority** in the long run.

➔ **In short:** Power sharing helps to **keep the country stable and peaceful**.

♦ 2. Moral Reasons (Democratic Principles):

- Power sharing reflects the **true spirit of democracy**.
- People have the **right to be consulted** in how they are governed.
- A **legitimate government** is one where people **participate** and **feel represented**.
- It gives citizens a **stake in the system**.

➔ **In short:** Power sharing is **ethically right** and necessary in any **real democracy**.

✅ Conclusion:

- ❖ Power sharing is **not a weakness**, but a **strength** of democracy.
It ensures **justice, representation, and unity** — key elements for any **peaceful and prosperous nation**.

❖ Why Should Power Be Shared?

- In a **democracy**, power **must not be concentrated** in one person or group.
 - Instead, it should be **shared among as many citizens and institutions as possible**.
 - Power sharing:
 - **Strengthens democracy**
 - **Respects diversity**
 - **Prevents domination**
 - **Ensures fair participation for all groups**
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📁 Forms of Power Sharing

There are **four main types** of power sharing:

♦ 1. Horizontal Distribution of Power

- Power is shared among different organs of government:

- **Legislature**
- **Executive**
- **Judiciary**
- Called **horizontal** because all organs are at the **same level**.
- Each organ has its own powers and **checks the others**.
- Ensures a **system of checks and balances**.

Example: Judges can declare a law unconstitutional; Parliament holds ministers accountable.

♦ 2. Vertical Division of Power

- Power is shared among **different levels of government**:
 - **Central/National government** (Union Government in India)
 - **State/Provincial governments**
 - **Local governments** (Municipalities, Panchayats)
- Called **vertical** because it flows from **top to bottom**.

Example: In India, the Constitution divides powers between the Union and State Governments.

Belgium followed this; Sri Lanka did not.

♦ 3. Power Sharing Among Social Groups

- Power is shared among **different communities** (religious, linguistic, caste-based, etc.).
- Aims to **include minorities** and **weaker sections** in governance.
- Done through:
 - **Community governments** (e.g., Belgium)
 - **Reserved constituencies** for women, SCs/STs in India

Example: Belgium's community governments for Dutch, French, and German speakers.

♦ 4. Power Sharing Among Political Parties and Pressure Groups

- Power is shared through **competition and cooperation** among:
 - **Political parties**
 - **Coalitions**
 - **Interest and pressure groups**

- Ensures **no one party or group dominates** all the time.
- Citizens choose among **different ideologies** and **representatives**.

Example: Coalition governments in India, farmer associations influencing policies.

2 Mark question answer

1. Why is power sharing desirable in a democracy?

Answer: It reduces conflicts among communities and ensures political stability and unity.

2. What is the system of 'checks and balances'?

Answer: It is a system in which each organ of government (legislature, executive, and judiciary) checks the others to prevent the misuse of power.

3. Mention one prudential reason for power sharing.

Answer: It helps to reduce the possibility of social conflict and civil war.

4. Name the ethnic communities of Belgium.

Answer: Dutch-speaking, French-speaking, and German-speaking communities.

5. What percentage of the population in Belgium speaks Dutch?

Answer: 59%

6. What percentage of Sri Lanka's population is Sinhala-speaking?

Answer: 74%

7. What was the majoritarian measure adopted in Sri Lanka in 1956?

Answer: The Sinhala language was declared the only official language.

8. Define horizontal distribution of power.

Answer: Power shared among different organs of government like legislature, executive, and judiciary.

9. Define vertical division of power.

Answer: Power shared among different levels of government — central, state, and local.

10. What is community government?

Answer: A government elected by people of one language community in Belgium, with powers over cultural, educational, and language-related matters.

11. In which part of Belgium do the French-speaking people live?

Answer: Wallonia region.

12. Which community was economically and educationally backward in Belgium?

Answer: Dutch-speaking community.

13. What is the moral reason for power sharing?

Answer: Power sharing is the true spirit of democracy; people have a right to be consulted in governance.

14. Mention any two forms of power sharing in modern democracies.

Answer:

1. Power sharing among organs of government (horizontal).
 2. Power sharing among different levels of government (vertical).
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15. Why did the Sri Lankan Tamils feel alienated?

Answer: Because of discrimination in education, jobs, and language policy by the Sinhala-majority government.

16. How did Belgium accommodate regional differences?

Answer: By constitutional amendments, giving equal representation to all communities and establishing separate governments.

17. Which form of power sharing exists in India among SCs, STs, and women?

Answer: Power sharing among social groups through reservation of seats in legislature and local bodies.

18. Which country adopted majoritarianism in post-independence period — Belgium or Sri Lanka?

Answer: Sri Lanka

19. What lesson do we learn from the power sharing model of Belgium?

Answer: That respecting the interests of different communities helps in maintaining national unity.

20. What was the demand of Tamil-speaking people in Sri Lanka?

Answer: Recognition of Tamil as an official language, regional autonomy, and equality in jobs and education.

Power Sharing - 3 Mark Questions and Answers

1. Why is power sharing desirable in a democracy? (3 Marks)

Answer:

Power sharing is desirable in a democracy for the following reasons:

1. It helps to reduce the possibility of conflict between social groups.
 2. It ensures political stability and peace, preventing civil wars.
 3. It is the true spirit of democracy, as it allows people to participate in decision-making and governance.
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2. Explain the horizontal distribution of power with examples. (3 Marks)

Answer:

Horizontal power sharing means power is shared among different organs of government—legislature, executive, and judiciary.

- Each organ checks the others to prevent misuse of power.
- This ensures a system of **checks and balances**.

Example: In India, the judiciary can declare laws passed by the Parliament as unconstitutional.

3. What is the vertical division of power? How is it practiced in India? (3 Marks)

Answer:

Vertical division of power means the distribution of power among different levels of government:

1. Central Government
 2. State Government
 3. Local Government (Municipalities and Panchayats)
- In India, powers and responsibilities of each level are clearly mentioned in the **Constitution**, making it a **federal structure**.
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4. How is power shared among different social groups in Belgium? (3 Marks)

Answer:

Belgium has a unique system called **Community Government**, where:

1. Power is shared among **Dutch, French, and German-speaking communities**.
 2. Community government controls cultural, educational, and language-related matters.
 3. It allows all communities to have autonomy and prevents majority domination.
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5. Compare the power-sharing arrangements in Belgium and Sri Lanka. (3 Marks)

Answer:

Belgium:

- Adopted power-sharing among ethnic groups.
- Amended constitution to give equal rights and autonomy to all communities.
- Avoided civil war and maintained unity.

Sri Lanka:

- Followed majoritarianism, giving preference to the Sinhala majority.
 - Ignored Tamil demands for equality and autonomy.
 - Led to ethnic conflict and civil war.
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6. What is the system of checks and balances? Give one example. (3 Marks)

Answer:

The system of checks and balances ensures that:

1. No organ of government (legislature, executive, judiciary) becomes too powerful.
2. Each organ can check the functioning of the others.

Example: The judiciary in India can strike down laws made by the Parliament if they violate the Constitution.

7. Explain any three forms of power sharing in modern democracies. (3 Marks)

Answer:

1. **Horizontal sharing:** Among organs like legislature, executive, and judiciary.
 2. **Vertical sharing:** Among different levels—central, state, and local governments.
 3. **Social group sharing:** Among various communities like religious and linguistic groups.
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8. How did the Sri Lankan government try to establish Sinhala supremacy after independence? (3 Marks)

Answer:

1. **1956 Sinhala Only Act** made Sinhala the sole official language.
2. Gave **preferential treatment** to Sinhalese in jobs and education.
3. Declared Buddhism the state religion and promoted it.
These steps alienated the Tamil population.

Power Sharing - Top 20 Three-Mark Questions & Answers

1. Why is power sharing desirable in a democracy?

Answer:

1. It prevents the concentration of power in one hand.
 2. Reduces the chances of social conflict and civil war.
 3. It ensures stability and unity by accommodating diverse groups.
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2. What is the system of checks and balances? Give an example.

Answer:

1. It is a system where power is divided among various organs of government.
 2. Each organ checks the others to maintain a balance.
 3. Example: Judiciary can review laws passed by the legislature.
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3. What is horizontal distribution of power? How is it practiced?

Answer:

1. Power is shared among organs of government — legislature, executive, and judiciary.
 2. All organs are placed at the same level and have different responsibilities.
 3. Ensures one organ does not dominate the others.
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4. What is vertical division of power? Give an example.

Answer:

1. Power is shared among different levels of government.
2. Example: Central, State, and Local governments in India.

3. Each level has specific powers defined by the Constitution.

5. How did Belgium avoid civil war despite ethnic tensions?

Answer:

1. Belgium amended its Constitution four times.
 2. It gave equal representation to Dutch and French-speaking people.
 3. Created a community government to represent all language groups.
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6. How did Sri Lanka adopt majoritarianism after independence?

Answer:

1. Passed the Sinhala Only Act in 1956, ignoring Tamil.
 2. Gave preference to Sinhalas in jobs and education.
 3. Declared Buddhism as the state religion.
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7. How did majoritarianism affect the Sri Lankan Tamils?

Answer:

1. Tamils felt alienated and discriminated.
 2. Their demands for autonomy and equality were ignored.
 3. It led to civil war and deepened ethnic conflict.
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8. Explain any three forms of power sharing in modern democracies.

Answer:

1. **Horizontal** - among organs like legislature, executive, judiciary.
 2. **Vertical** - among central, state, and local levels.
 3. **Social groups** - among communities based on religion or language.
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9. What is community government in Belgium?

Answer:

1. Elected by people belonging to a language group (Dutch, French, German).
2. Deals with culture, education, and language.

3. Works across the whole country, not just one region.

10. Compare the power sharing approach of Belgium and Sri Lanka.

Answer:

- **Belgium:** Inclusive, gave equal rights to all communities, avoided conflict.
 - **Sri Lanka:** Majoritarian, ignored minority demands, led to civil war.
 - Belgium promoted unity, Sri Lanka created division.
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11. What is the moral reason behind power sharing?

Answer:

1. It upholds democratic values.
 2. People have a right to participate in decision-making.
 3. It ensures legitimacy of the government.
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12. What is meant by power sharing among political parties and groups?

Answer:

1. Power is shared through competition among parties.
 2. Coalition governments are formed when no single party gets a majority.
 3. Interest groups also influence policy decisions.
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13. Mention three features of federal division of power.

Answer:

1. Power is divided among central, state, and local governments.
 2. Each level has autonomy in its jurisdiction.
 3. Constitution clearly defines the powers of each level.
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14. Why is power sharing necessary among social groups?

Answer:

1. It ensures representation of minorities.
2. Prevents social exclusion and marginalization.

3. Promotes social harmony and equality.
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15. Give three examples of power sharing in India.

Answer:

1. Horizontal - Legislature, Executive, Judiciary.
 2. Vertical - Union, State, Local governments.
 3. Social - Reservations for SCs/STs and women in legislature.
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16. How is power shared in coalition governments?

Answer:

1. Formed when no party gets a clear majority.
 2. Parties share cabinet positions and responsibilities.
 3. Encourages dialogue and cooperation.
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17. How does power sharing reduce chances of conflict?

Answer:

1. Gives everyone a role in decision-making.
 2. Avoids domination by any one group.
 3. Encourages negotiation and respect for differences.
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18. What is the significance of power sharing in multi-ethnic societies?

Answer:

1. Prevents dominance of one community.
 2. Promotes inclusion and equality.
 3. Maintains unity in diversity.
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19. How does power sharing promote democracy?

Answer:

1. Encourages public participation.
2. Prevents concentration of power.

3. Builds trust among different groups.
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20. Explain the role of interest groups in power sharing.

Answer:

1. Groups like farmers, businesspeople, and workers influence policies.
2. They lobby the government to represent their interests.
3. Ensure that power is not limited to elected representatives only.