
Chapter 1

Power Sharing

❖ Power Sharing in Belgium

- Belgium is a small country in Europe.
- **Division of Population**
 - Flemish (Dutch speaking): 59%
 - Wallonia (French speaking): 40%
 - Remaining 1 % speak German.
 - In the capital city Brussels, 80% people speak French, while the rest speak Dutch.
- The minority French-speaking community is economically and educationally well-to-do in comparison to the Dutch-speaking majority.
- For accommodating the interests of the minority and the majority, Belgium adopted a unique system of power sharing.
- **The Belgian Model of Governance**
 - The French and Dutch-speaking ministers are in the central government.
 - Some special laws require the support of majority of members from each linguistic group.
 - Many powers of the central government have been given to state governments of the two regions of the country.
 - Brussels has a separate government in which both the communities (French and Dutch) have equal representation.
 - A 'community government' exists. It is elected by people belonging to one language community. This government engages with the cultural, educational and language-related issues.
 - This kind of governance has prevented a civil strife between the two different linguistic communities.

❖ Power Sharing in Sri Lanka

- Sri Lanka has a diverse population with 74% Sinhala speakers and 18% Tamil speakers. Among Tamils, 13% are called 'Sri Lankan Tamils' and the rest 'Indian Tamils'.
- Most of the Sinhala-speaking people are Buddhist, while most of the Tamils are Hindus or Muslims. There are about 7 % Christians, who are both Tamil and Sinhala.
- Sri Lanka emerged as an independent country in 1948.
- In 1956, Sinhala was recognised as the only official language of Sri Lanka; thus, disregarding Tamil.
- The governments followed preferential policies that favoured Sinhala applicants for university positions and government jobs. A new constitution stipulated that the state shall protect and foster Buddhism.
- A feeling of alienation was seen among the Sri Lankan Tamils.

-
- 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. This was denied by the Sinhala dominated government.
 - By 1980s, several political organizations were formed demanding an independent Tamil Eelam (state) in northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka.
 - These differences in the two different communities pushed Sri Lanka into the state of civil war.
 - In Sri Lanka, the idea of majoritarianism crumbled the country in a civil war.

❖ **Why Power Sharing is Desirable?**

- Power sharing helps reduce the possibility of conflict between social groups and brings about stability in political order.
- Power sharing is the very essence of a democracy as participation of citizens is an essential factor.
- An intelligent sharing of power among legislature, executive and judiciary is very important to the design of a democracy.

❖ **Forms of Power Sharing**

- The idea of power sharing has emerged in opposition to the notions of undivided political power.
- In modern sharing democracies, power sharing arrangements can take many forms such as:
 - Power is shared among different organs of government, such as the legislature, executive and judiciary. Each organ checks the others. This results in a balance of power among various organs. This is a horizontal division of powers, as it allows different organs of government placed at the same level to exercise different powers.
 - Ministers and government officials exercise power but at the same time they are responsible to the Parliament or State; and although the Judges are appointed by the executive, they can check the functioning of executive or laws made by the legislature.
 - Power can be shared among governments at different levels: a general government for the entire country and governments at the provincial or regional level. Such a government is called federal government. This is a vertical division of power, as the central government delegates its powers to the state governments and they in turn delegate it to the smaller governing bodies and institutions.
 - Power may also 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 are represented in the legislatures and administration.
 - Power sharing arrangements can also be seen in the way political parties, pressure groups and movements control or influence those in power. This way the power is shared among different parties that represent different ideologies and social groups. When two or more parties form an alliance to contest elections, this kind of power sharing can be direct. If their alliance is elected, they form a coalition government and thus share power.