



Power sharing

Notes 😊

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

Belgium and Sri Lanka:

1. Belgium is a small country in Europe.
2. It has borders with Netherlands, France and Germany.
3. 59% in the Flemish region speaks Dutch.
4. Another 40% people live in Wallonia region and speaks French.
5. Remaining 1% of the Belgians speak Germany.
6. In the capital city Brussels, 80% people speak French while 20% are Dutch – speaking.
7. The minority French – speaking community was relatively rich and powerful.
8. This was resented by the Dutch-speaking community who got the benefit of the economic development and education much later.
9. The tension between two communities was acuter in Brussels.
10. Like other nations in the south Asia region, Sri Lanka has a diverse population.
11. The Sinhala speaks are 74% and Tamil speakers are 18%
12. 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'**.

Majoritarianism in Sri Lanka:

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

9. The distrust between the two communities turned into widespread conflict. It soon turned into CIVIL WAR.

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

Accommodation in Belgium:

1. Belgium recognized the existence of regional differences and cultural diversities.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

Why is power sharing desirable?

1. Thus, two different sets of reasons can be given in favor of power sharing.

2. Firstly, power sharing is good because it helps to reduce the possibility of conflict between social groups.

3. 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 its effects.

4. Let us call the first set of reasons PRUDENTIAL and the second moral.

5. While prudential reasons stress that power sharing will bring out better outcomes, moral

reasons emphasize 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.

2. 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.

3. One basic principle of power sharing is that people are the source of all political power.

4. In a good democratic government, due respect is given to diverse groups and views that exist in a society.

5. Everyone has a voice in the shaping of public politics.

6. 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.

N.C.E.R.T QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

Question 1:

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

Answer 1:

Different forms of power sharing in modern democracies:

Horizontal division of power: It is the sharing of power among the different organs of government. The division of government into the executive, the legislature and the

judiciary is an example of horizontal division of power. In such a power sharing arrangement, different organs of government, placed at the same level, exercise different powers. This separation of powers ensures that no organ exercises unlimited power. Each organ checks the others, thereby putting in place a system of checks and balances. The division of power between the Council of Ministers headed by the Indian Prime Minister, the Parliament of India and the Indian Supreme Court is an example of this kind of power sharing.

Vertical division of power: It is the sharing of power among governments at different levels — a general government for the entire country and governments at the provincial or regional level. For example, in India, the Constitution defines the way power is to be shared between the Central or Union government and the various State governments.

There are certain matters on which only the Central government can take decisions, while there are others on which only an individual state government has an exclusive right for decision making.

Division of power among social groups: Power can also be shared among different groups which differ socially. The system of 'community government' in Belgium is an example of this type of power division. This government is elected by people belonging to one language community (Dutch, French and German-speaking), and has the power to take decisions regarding cultural, educational and language related issues.

The system of reserved constituencies in India is another example.

Division of power between political parties, pressure groups and movements:

Political parties are the organisations which aim to control power by contesting elections.

In a democracy, citizens have the freedom to choose among the various contenders for power (the different political parties or the different alliances comprising political parties). Such a freedom of choice entails competition among the different parties, which in turn ensures that power does not remain in one hand, and is shared among different political parties representing different ideologies and social groups.

Pressure groups and movements also share governmental power, either through participation in governmental committees or by influencing the decision-making process.

Question 2:

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

Answer 2:

A prudential reason for power sharing is that it leads to an avoidance of conflict between

social groups. Since social conflict often leads to violence and political instability, power

sharing is a good way to ensure the stability of political order. In India, seats have been

reserved in legislatures for the socially weaker sections keeping in mind this prudential

reason for power sharing.

A moral reason for power sharing is that it upholds the spirit of democracy. In a truly

democratic setup, the citizens too have a stake in governance. In India, the citizens can

come together to debate and criticise the policies and decisions of the government. This

in turn puts pressure on the government to rethink its policies and reconsider its

decisions. This active political participation is in keeping with the moral reason for power

sharing.

Question 3:

After reading this chapter, three students drew different conclusions. Which of these do

you agree with and why? Give your reasons in about 50 words.

Thomman – Power sharing is necessary only in societies which have religious, linguistic or ethnic divisions.

Mathayi – Power sharing is suitable only for big countries that have regional divisions.

Ouseph – Every society needs some form of power sharing even if it is small or does not have social divisions.

Answer 3:

Ouseph's statement is the most logical, and thus, should be agreed on. Power sharing not only prevents conflict between various groups in the society but it also inculcates a sense of worth in the citizens. The people will be more satisfied with the government if they have a say in the decision-making process.

Question 4:

The Mayor of Merchtem, a town near Brussels in Belgium, has defended a ban on

speaking French in the town's schools. He said that the ban would help all non-Dutch speakers integrate in this Flemish town. Do you think that this measure is in keeping with the spirit of Belgium's power sharing arrangements? Give your reasons in about 50 words.

Answer 4:

This measure is not in keeping with Belgium's power sharing arrangements. The arrangements seek to maintain peace between the French and Dutch-speaking communities. By banning French, the mayor will cause civil unrest. Both the languages should be made acceptable in the town's schools. This bilingual education system will be a better way to integrate the people of the town.

Thank you ☺ All the best...

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