

Power Sharing

Question 1.

Which language was recognized as the only official language of Sri Lanka in 1956? (2012)

Answer:

Sinhala

Question 2.

Apart from the Central and the State governments, which is the third type of government practised in Belgium? (2012)

Answer:

Community government

Question 3.

Define majoritarianism. (2013)

Answer:

Majoritarianism is rule by majority community by disregarding the needs and wishes of the minority community.

Question 4.

What measure was adopted by the democratically elected government of Sri Lanka to establish Sinhala Supremacy? (2014)

Answer:

- In 1956, an Act was passed to make Sinhala the official language.
- The government followed preferential policies favouring Sinhala applicants for University positions and government jobs.

Question 5.

What is the language spoken by the people residing in the Wallonia region of Belgium? (2014)

Answer:

People residing in Wallonia region of Belgium speak French.

Question 6.

What is meant by the system of 'checks and balances'? (2015)

Answer:

The horizontal distribution of power ensures that power is shared among different organs of government—the legislature, executive and judiciary. It allows different organs of government placed at the same level to exercise different powers. The horizontal distribution of power is also called a system of checks and balances. This system ensures that none of these organs can exercise unlimited power. Each organ checks the other.

Question 7.

After independence, Sri Lanka witnessed the supremacy of which community? (2015)

Answer:

Sri Lanka emerged as an independent country in 1948 and the democratically elected government adopted a series of measures to establish Sinhala supremacy.

Question 8.

Define the term 'Ethnic'.

Answer:

Ethnic means a social division based on shared culture and common descent. People belonging to an ethnic group need not have the same religion or nationality.

Question 9.

What is vertical division of power?

Answer:

When power is shared among governments at different levels, i.e., the Union or the Central Government, the State Government and the Municipality and Panchayat at the lower level. This division of power involving higher and lower levels of government is called the vertical division of power.

Short Answer Questions (SA) 3 Marks

Question 10.

Compare the different ways in which the Belgians and the Sri Lankans have dealt with the problem of cultural diversity. (2012)

Answer:

Both Belgium and Sri Lanka are democracies, yet they have dealt with the problem of cultural diversity very differently.

Belgium:

1 Leaders realised that for the unity of the country it is important to respect the feelings and interests of different communities. The Constitution prescribes that the number of Dutch and French speaking people shall be equal in the Central Government.

2 Both Dutch and French communities share power on an equal basis at the Centre. Along with the State Government, both communities have a third kind of Government called 'Community Government' which decides on cultural, education and language related issues.

3 Between, 1970 and 1993, the Constitution was amended four times to enable all linguistic groups to live together within the same country.

Sri Lanka:

1 In Sri Lanka, there are two major communities, the Sinhalese speaking (74%) and Tamil speaking (18%). The majority community, the Sinhalese have forced their domination over Tamils, refusing to share power.

2 Both communities have lived in tension as the Sinhalese have denied political, educational, religious, employment and economic rights to the Tamils leading to Civil War.

3 In 1956, the Government passed an Act to recognise Sinhala as the only official language, thus disregarding Tamil.

Question 13.

Why is the ethnic composition of Belgium complex?

Answer:

Belgium is a small country in Europe, having a population of a little over one crore.

- 59 per cent of the country's total population lives in the Flemish region and speak Dutch language.
- Another 40 per cent people live in Wallonia region and speak French. Remaining one per cent of the Belgians speak German.
- Whereas in the Belgian capital, Brussels, 80 per cent of the population is French-speaking and 20 per cent is Dutch-speaking.

Question 14.

How is Belgium's power-sharing path different from any other country?

Or, Explain the four elements in the Belgian power-sharing model.

Or, Why do we find the Belgian model very complicated? How has it helped to prevent conflict and division of the country on linguistic lines?

Answer:

The power-sharing arrangements made by the Belgian leaders were different and more innovative than any other country. To recognise the existence of regional differences and cultural diversities, they amended their Constitution four times between 1970 and 1993.

The major 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. No single community can take decisions unilaterally.
- 2 The State Governments are not subordinate to the Central Government.
- 3 Brussels, the capital, has a separate government where both the communities have equal representation.
- 4 A third kind of government, 'Community Government', is elected by people belonging to one language community — Dutch, French and German speaking — no matter where they live. This government can decide on cultural, educational and language related issues.

Question 15.

What is majoritarianism? Is it wrong if a majority community in a country rules? Give reasons to justify your answer.

Answer:

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 is majoritarianism.

Yes, it is wrong if a majority community in a country rules.

- The very idea of power-sharing has emerged in opposition to the notions of undivided political power.
- A positive attitude towards diversity and willingness to accommodate it, is good for democracy.
- Power in the hands of one community will make the other community feel marginalised, deprived and discriminated.
- The struggle against such inequalities sometimes takes the path of conflict and defiance of State power as in Sri Lanka.

Question 16.

Analyse how majoritarianism has increased the feeling of alienation among the Sri Lankan Tamils? (2014, 2015)

Or

Mention the measures adopted by the government to establish Sinhala supremacy.

Sri Lanka emerged as an independent country in 1948. The democratically elected government adopted a series of measures to establish Sinhala supremacy:

- 1 In 1956, an Act was passed to make Sinhala the official language.
- 2 The government followed preferential policies favouring Sinhala applicants for University positions and government jobs.
- 3 The Constitution provided for State protection and fostering of Buddhism.

The Sri Lankan Tamils felt that none of the major political parties led by the Buddhist Sinhala leaders were sensitive to their language and culture and the government policies denied them equal political rights which led to increased feeling of alienation among them

The Sri Lankan Tamils launched parties and struggles for the recognition of Tamil, for regional autonomy and equality of opportunity in every field.

Question 17.

“Power Sharing is the very spirit of democracy”. Justify the statement. (2015)

Answer:

1 A democratic rule involves sharing power with those affected by its exercise. Power sharing ensures that people have the right to be consulted and have equal participation in the government.

2 In a democracy, each individual has a say in governance through their elected representatives. This is the essence of power sharing that grants equal rights to each citizen.

3 Sharing of power ensures that respect for diversity and desire for living together becomes a shared ideal amongst different communities in a country. It actually makes the country united and the administration easier.

4 Prudential reasons stress that power sharing would bring out better outcomes by helping to reduce the possibility of any conflict between the social groups.

5 Power sharing is a good way to ensure the stability of political order through unity of the nation.

Question 18.

Describe the vertical and horizontal forms of power sharing exercised in India.

Answer:

Vertical distribution of power. Power can be shared among governments at different levels — a general government for the entire country and governments at provincial or regional level. This is the federal form of government.

When power is shared among governments at different levels, i.e., the Union or the Central Government, the State Government and the Municipality and Panchayat at the lower level. This division of power involving higher and lower levels of government is called the vertical division of power.

The Constitution clearly lays down the powers of different levels of government. This federal division of power involving higher and lower levels of government is also called the vertical division of power. Example: A key change in the Constitution of Belgium in 1993 was that the regional governments were given constitutional powers that were no longer dependent on the Central Government. Thus, Belgium shifted from a unitary to a federal form of government.

Horizontal distribution of power. Power is shared among different organs of government, such as the legislature, executive and judiciary. This is horizontal distribution of power. It ensures that power is shared among different organs of government—the legislature, executive and judiciary. It allows different organs of government placed at the same level to exercise different powers.

In a democracy, ministers and government officials exercise power. They are responsible to the Parliament or State Assemblies. The judges appointed by the executive can check the functioning of executive or laws made by the legislature. The horizontal distribution of power is also called a system of checks and balances.

This system ensures that none of the organs can exercise unlimited power. Each organ checks the other. This results in a balance of power among various institutions.

Example: In India the judiciary has an independent status. The Supreme Court is the apex court of justice. The Parliament is the legislative body where the laws governing the country are made and the Executive is the implementing body.