

Very Short Answer Questions

Q. 1. With which countries does Belgium share border?

Ans. Belgium shares borders with Netherlands, France, Germany and Luxembourg.

Q. 2. What is the ethnic composition of Belgium?

Ans. 59 per cent of the populations lives in the Flemish region and speak Dutch language, 40 percent live in the Wallonia region and speak French, remaining one percent of the Belgians speak German.

Q. 3. What is the ethnic composition of capital city Brussels?

Ans. In the capital city of Brussels, 80 percent people speak French while 20 percent are Dutch speaking communities.

Q. 4. Why was the tension more acute in Brussels between two communities?

Ans. There was more tension in Brussels because the Dutch speaking people constituted a majority in the country, but a minority in the capital.

Q. 5. What is the ethnic composition of Sri Lanka?

Ans. The Sinhala speakers are 74 per cent and Tamil speakers 18 per cent and among Tamils there are two sub groups—Sri Lankan Tamils and Indian Tamils.

Q. 6. Which religions are followed by Sri Lankans?

Ans. Most of the Sinhala speaking are Buddhists, while most of the Tamils are Hindus or Muslims and there are about 7 percent Christians, who are both Tamils and Sinhalas.

Q. 7. What could have happened if Dutch community had taken advantage of its majority in Belgium?

Ans. In Belgium, the Dutch community could have taken advantage of its numeric majority and force its will on the French and German speaking population. This would have pushed the conflict among communities further.

Q. 8. What kind of government was adopted by Sri Lanka?

Ans. Sri Lanka emerged as an independent country in 1948. The leaders of the Sinhala community sought to secure dominance over government by virtue of their majority. As a result, the democratically elected government adopted a series of majoritarian measures to establish Sinhala supremacy.

Q. 9. How did Sinhalese become the official language of Sri Lanka?

Ans. In 1956, an Act was passed to recognise 'Sinhala' as the only official language thus disregarding Tamil.

Q. 10. Which religion is adopted as the state religion of Sri Lanka?

Ans. A new constitution stipulated that the state shall protect and foster Buddhism.

Q. 11. Why did Sri Lankan Tamils feel alienated from Sinhalese?

Ans. They felt that the constitution and government policies denied them even political rights, discriminated against them in getting jobs and other opportunities and ignored their interests.

Q. 12. What were the demands of Political organisations of Tamils in Sri Lanka?

Ans. By 1980s, several political organisations were formed demanding an independent Tamil Eelam (state) in northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka.

Q. 13. What was the result of civil war in Sri Lanka?

Ans. As a result of civil war between two communities, thousands of people from both the communities were killed. Many families were forced to leave the country as refugees and many more lost their livelihoods.

Q. 14. What did Belgians do to bring the ethnic groups together?

Ans. The Belgian leaders recognised the existence of regional differences and cultural diversities. 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.

Q. 15. What was the division of power between Dutch and French speaking in Belgium?

Ans. The constitution prescribed that the number of Dutch and French speaking ministers shall be equal in the central government. Thus, no single community can make decisions unilaterally.

Q. 16. What was the division of power between Central and State governments of Belgium?

Ans. Many powers of the Central government have been given to State government of the two regions of the country. The State governments are not subordinate to the Central Government.

Q. 17. What kind of government is there in Brussels?

Ans. 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.

Q. 18. What is the concept of 'Community government' of Belgium?

Ans. The 'community government' is elected by the people belonging to one language community—Dutch, French and German speaking—no matter where they live. This government has the power regarding cultural, educational and language related issues.

Q. 19. How did Belgium's accommodation help to avoid civil war?

Ans. The new arrangements of the government helped to avoid civil strife between the two major communities and a possible division of the country on linguistic lines.

Q. 20. What is the similarity between Belgium and Sri Lanka?

Ans. The similarity between Belgium and Sri Lanka is that both are democracies.

Q. 21. How did Belgians tackle the problems of different communities?

Ans. In Belgium, the leaders have realised that the unity of the country is possible only by respecting the feelings and interests of different communities and regions. Such a realisation resulted in mutually acceptable arrangements for sharing power.

Q. 22. How was Sri Lanka different from Belgium in making the decisions of their communities?

Ans. Sri Lanka showed 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.

Q. 23. Which prudential reasons make power sharing desirable?

Ans. Power sharing is good because it helps to reduce the possibility of conflict between social groups. Power sharing is a good way to ensure the stability of political order.

Q. 24. What is the moral reason behind power sharing?

Ans. Power sharing is the very spirit of democracy. A democratic rule involves sharing power with those affected by its exercise, and who have to live with its effects. People have a right to be consulted on how they are to be governed.

Q. 25. What is the basic principle of democracy?

Ans. Basic principle of democracy is that people are the source of all political powers. In a democracy, people rule themselves through institutions of self-governance.

Q. 26. What is a good democracy?

Ans. In a good democracy, due respect is given to diverse groups and views that exist in a society. Everyone has a voice in the shaping of public policies.

Q. 27. What is the horizontal distribution of power?

Ans. The power is shared among different organs of government such as legislative, executive and judiciary.

Q. 28. Why is power sharing between different organs called horizontal distribution of power?

Ans. It is called horizontal distribution of power because it allows different organs of government placed at the same level to exercise different powers.

Q. 29. Why is horizontal power sharing also called a 'system of checks and balances'?

Ans. Each organ checks the other. This results in a balance of power among various institutions. In it, ministers are responsible to parliament or state assemblies and judges are appointed by executive but can check the functioning of executive or laws made by legislatures.

Q. 30. What is vertical division of power?

Ans. Power can be shared among governments at different levels—a general government for the entire country and government at the provincial or regional level. This is also called federal division of power as well as vertical division of power.

Q. 31. How is power shared among different social groups?

Ans. Power is also shared among different social groups, such as the religious and linguistic groups. Socially weaker sections and women are also represent in the legislatures and administration.

Short Answer Questions

Q. 1. What are the main principles of democracy?

Ans. One basic principle of democracy is that people are the source of all political power.

In a democracy, people rule themselves through institutions of self-governance.

In a democracy, due respect is given to diverse groups and views that exist in a society.

Everyone has a voice in the shaping up of public policies.

Q. 2. Why was the minority French speaking community relatively rich and powerful?

Ans. French speakers got the benefit of economic development.

They were well-qualified and educated.

Because of their qualifications and education, they were well-settled and thus, rich and powerful.

Q. 3. How did the Tamils make efforts to gain power in Sri Lanka?

Ans. (i) Sri Lankan Tamils launched parties and struggles for the recognition of Tamil as the official language.

(ii) They also made efforts for regional autonomy and equality of opportunity in securing education and jobs.

(iii) Several political organisations were formed demanding an independent Tamil Eelam (state) in northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka.

Q. 4. What is so special about the 'community government' in Belgium?

Ans. (i) Community government is elected by people belonging to one language community—Dutch, French and German speaking, no matter where they live.

(ii) This government has the power relating to culture, education and language issues.

(iii) This kind of government helped to avoid civic strife between the two major communities.

Q. 5. Why has the idea of power sharing emerged?

Ans. The idea of power sharing has emerged in opposition to the notions of undivided political power. For a long time, it was believed that all powers of a government must reside in one person or group of persons located at one place. It was felt that if the power to decide is dispersed, it would not be possible to take quick decisions and to enforce them. But these notions have changed with the emergence of democracy.

Q. 6. What does 'Ethnic' mean?

Ans. A social division based on shared culture. People belonging to the 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.

Q. 7. What does 'Majoritarianism' mean?

Ans. It means 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, e.g., Sri Lanka opted for majoritarianism, in which majority Sinhallas rule the country.

Long Answer Questions

Q. 1. What factors led to a civil war in Sri Lanka?

Ans. Measures taken in majoritarianism gradually increased the feeling of alienation among 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.

As a result, the relations between Sinhalas and Tamil communities got strained over time.

The Sri Lankan Tamils launched parties and struggles for the recognition of Tamil as an official language, regional autonomy and equality of opportunities in getting education and jobs.

By the 1980s, several political organisations were formed demanding an independent Tamil Elam (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. As a result, thousands of people of both the communities were killed.

Q. 2. How did the Belgium government solve its ethnic problem?

Ans. In Belgium, leaders recognised the existence of regional differences and cultural diversities. The Belgian government accommodated its diverse ethnic population in the following manner:

Constitution says that the number of Dutch and French speaking ministers shall be equal in the Central government. Thus, no single community can make decisions unilaterally.

Many powers of the Central Government have been given to the state governments, of the two regions of the country. The state governments are not subordinate to the Central government.

Brussels has a separate government in which both the communities have equal representation.

There is a third kind of government, called the 'community government'. This government is elected by the people belonging to one language community—Dutch, French and German speaking, no matter where they live. This government has the power regarding cultural education and language related issues.

These arrangements helped to avoid a civic strife between the two major communities and a possible division of the country on linguistic lines.

Q. 3. What was the ethnic composition of Sri Lanka?

Ans. The major social groups of Sri Lanka are: the Sinhala speakers (74 per cent) and the Tamil speakers (18 per cent).

Among Tamils there are two sub-groups: Tamil natives of the country are called 'Sri Lankan Tamils' and the rest, whose forefathers came from India as plantation workers during colonial period are called 'Indian Tamils'.

Sri Lankan Tamils are concentrated in the north and east of the country.

Most of the Sinhala-speaking people are Buddhists, while most of the Tamils are Hindus or Muslims. There are about 7 per cent Christians, who are both Tamils and Sinhalas.

Q. 4. What kind of power sharing problems were faced by Belgians and Sri Lankans?

Ans. In Belgium, the Dutch community could have taken advantage of its numeric majority and force its will on the Flemists and German-speaking population. This would have pushed the conflict among all these communities further. This could lead to a very messy partition of the country; both the sides would claim control over Brussels. In Sri Lanka, the Sinhala community enjoyed an even bigger majority and could impose its will on the entire country.

Hots (Higher Order Thinking Skills)

Q. 1. How is ethnic composition of Belgium very complex? Explain.

Ans. The ethnic composition of this small country is very complex. Of the country's total population, 59 per cent lives in Flemish region and speak Dutch language. Another 40 per cent people live in the Wallonia region and speak French. Remaining one per cent of the Belgians speak German. In the capital city Brussels, 80 per cent people speak French while 20 per cent are Dutch speaking.

Q. 2. What measures were adopted by the democratically elected government of Sri Lanka to establish Sinhala Supremacy.

Ans. (i) In 1956, an Act was passed to recognise 'Sinhala' as the only official language; thus disregarding Tamil.

(ii) The governments followed preferential policies that favoured Sinhala applicants for university positions and government jobs.

(iii) A new constitution specified that the state shall protect and foster Buddhism.

Q. 3. Evaluate the steps which turned out to be milestones to establish majoritarianism in Sri Lanka.

Ans. (i) Sri Lanka emerged as an independent country in 1948. The leaders of the Sinhala community sought to secure dominance over government by virtue of their majority.

(ii) As a result, the democratically elected government adopted majoritarian measures to establish Sinhala supremacy.

(iii) In 1956, an act was passed to recognise Sinhala, as the only official language, thus disregarding Tamil.

(iv) The government followed policies that favoured Sinhala applicants for university positions and government jobs.

With a new constitution, Buddhism was adopted as a state religion.

Q. 4. "Existence of Dutch and the French speaking people in Belgium created an ethnic tension." Elaborate the statement.

Ans. Causes of conflict in Belgium:

(i) The minority French speaking community was relatively rich and powerful.

(ii) This was resented by the Dutch speaking community, who got the benefits of economic development and education much later.

(iii) This led to tension between the Dutch and French speaking communities.

Q. 5. Why was Brussels chosen as the headquarters during the formation of European Union?

Ans. The Belgian leaders recognised the existence of regional differences and cultural diversities.

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.

This arrangement was different from any other country and was very innovative, such as they put the equal number of ministers in the central government from Dutch and French speaking both.

They formed a community government which would be empowered to take up cultural, educational and language-related issues of their community.

Q. 6. "Power sharing is the very spirit of democracy." Justify the statement with four suitable points.

Or

Why is power sharing desirable? Give any three prudential reasons.

Ans. Power sharing helps to reduce the possibilities of conflicts between various ethnic groups living in a society.

It helps in ensuring political stability, since a country can be run by all the communities without giving preference to any majority community.

It also reduces violence and linguistic problems. In India, there is diversity in language but our constitution gives equal weightage to all the languages.

Power sharing is actually being called the true spirit of democracy. It helps in bringing political, economic, social and cultural stability to the nation.

Q. 7. Both Belgium and Sri Lanka are democracies but they follow different systems of power sharing. Support the statement by giving these points of difference.

Ans. Both countries are democracies. Both have various ethnic groups living in their respective countries.

Differences

(i) In Belgium, the leaders have realised that the unity of the country is possible only by respecting the feelings and interests of different communities and regions. Such a realisation resulted in mutually acceptable arrangement for sharing the power.

(ii) 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.

Q. 8. Explain the two main reasons why power sharing is important in a democracy.

Ans. The two main reasons are:

(i) Prudential Reasons: These lay emphasis on better outcomes of power sharing.

(a) Power sharing helps to reduce the possibility of conflict between the social groups. Thus, it ensures the stability of political order.

(b) Its absence results into imposition of will by majority community, which undermines the unity of the nation.

(ii) Moral Reasons: These stress on power sharing as a valuable act because

(a) It is the very spirit of democracy.

(b) A democratic rule involves it with those affected by its exercise and who have to live with its effects.

(c) A legitimate government is the one where citizens acquire a role in the system through participation.

Q. 9. “Power is shared between different social groups.” Comment on this statement with the help of an example.

Ans. Power may 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 represent in the legislatures and administration.

There is a system of ‘reserved constituencies’ in our country. 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. This method is used to give minority communities a fair share in power.

There is a government called “community government” in Belgium. This government is elected by the people, belonging to one language or community—Dutch, French and German speaking, no matter where they live. This government has the power regarding to culture, education and language issues.

These arrangements help to avoid civic clashes and animosity between the two major communities and possible division of the country on linguistic lines.