

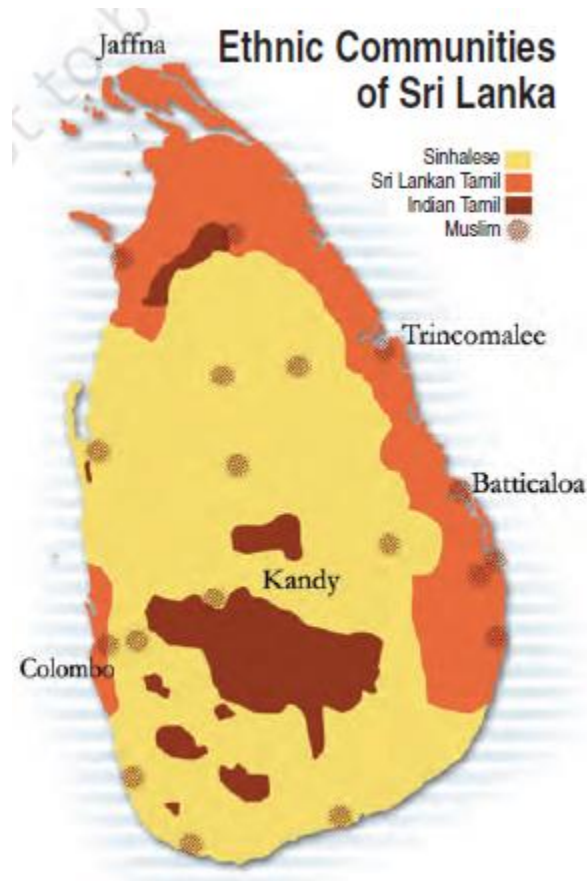
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Ch:POWER SHARING(Notes)

Story of Sri Lanka

Now, let's take the situation of another country, Sri Lanka. It is an island nation having a population of 2 crores, about the same as in Haryana. Sri Lanka has a diverse population. The major social groups are the Sinhala-speakers (74%) and the Tamil-speakers (18%). Among Tamils, there are two subgroups, "Sri Lankan Tamils" and "Indian Tamils". You can see the map below to know the population distribution of different communities of Sri Lanka.



In Sri Lanka, the Sinhala community enjoyed the bigger majority and imposed its will on the entire country.

Majoritarianism in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka emerged as an independent country in 1948. The Sinhala community was in the majority so they had formed the government. They also followed preferential policies that favoured Sinhala applicants for university positions and government jobs. These measures taken by the government gradually increased the feeling of alienation among the Sri Lankan Tamils. Sri Lankan Tamils felt that constitution and government policies denied them equal political rights, discriminated against them in getting jobs and other opportunities and ignored their interests. Due to this, the relationship between the Sinhala and Tamil communities became poor. 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. But their demand was repeatedly denied by the government. The distrust between the two communities turned into widespread conflict and turned into a CIVIL WAR. As a result, thousands of people of both the communities have been killed. Many families were forced to leave the country as refugees and many more lost their livelihoods. The civil war ended in 2009 and caused a terrible setback to the social, cultural and economic life of the country.

What have you learned from the Stories of Belgium and Sri Lanka?

- Both countries are democracies but they dealt differently with the concept of power sharing.
- 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. This resulted in mutually acceptable arrangements for sharing power.
- Sri Lanka shows 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.

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