

1. Discuss three factors that determine the outcomes of politics of social divisions.

Ans. (i) First of all the outcome depends on how people perceive their identities. If people see their identities in singular and exclusive terms, it becomes very difficult to accommodate. For example: As long as people in Ireland saw themselves as only Catholic or Protestant, their differences were difficult to reconcile. It is much easier if the people see that their identities are multiple and are complementary with the national identity.

(ii) It depends on how political leaders raise the demands of any community. It is easier to accommodate demands that are within the constitutional framework and are not at the cost of another community.

For example: The demand for 'only Sinhala' was at the cost of the interest and identity of the Tamil community in Sri Lanka.

In Yugoslavia, the leaders of different ethnic communities presented their demands in such a way that these could not be accommodated within a single country.

(iii) It depends on the how the government reacts to demands of different groups. As we saw in the examples of Belgium and Sri Lanka, if the rulers are willing to share power and accommodate the reasonable demands of minority community, social divisions become less threatening for the country.

2. When does a social difference become a social division?

Ans. (i) Overlapping social differences very often create possibilities of deep social divisions and tensions. Dalits are usually poor and land less. They often face discrimination and injustice.

(ii) The blacks and the whites in United States have become a social division because the blacks tend to be poor, homeless and discriminated against. These social differences overlap each other and lead to social division.

3. How do social divisions affect politics? Give two examples.

Ans. (i) Social division affects voting pattern in most of the country. People from one community tends to prefer some party.

(ii) But it is natural that politics will be based on social division. Political parties will promise different things to different communities.

- (iii) In many countries there are political parties that focus on only one community. But its outcome may be good or bad depending on many factors.
- (iv) Take the case of Northern Ireland that we referred to above. This region of United Kingdom has been for many years the site of a violent and bitter ethno-political conflict. Its population is divided into two major sects of Christianity: 53 per cent are Protestant, while 44 per cent Roman Catholic.

4. _____ social differences create possibilities of deep social divisions and tension _____ social differences do not usually lead to conflicts.

Ans. Overlapping differences, Cross-cutting difference.

