

## The voting behaviour of youth in Sri Lanka

Anton Piyaathne<sup>1</sup>

Under the established democracy throughout the world voting plays a significant role. Voting behaviour among the different groups in society is dissimilar. The intention of this paper is to discuss some aspects of voting behaviour of the Sri Lankan youth based on a study conducted by the author. There is no need to mention the vitality of the political behaviour of youth, as the problems of disintegrated youth of the main democratic system had already shown at two youth insurrections in 1971, and 1988-1989. No one would disagree that there is a strong rejection of the existing Sri Lankan political system even in the LTTE movement. According to Chari (1994) electoral process is one of the areas among the other four areas which are very much vital in institutionalising democracy in India. Citizen involvement in decision making, system of representation, electoral system-majority rule are some of the important principles associated with democratic institutions of a country.

Against the above backdrop, a study had been carried out in 22 districts including 692 Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim young persons. In addition to the main questionnaire method, 110 in-depth interviews were also conducted. For the purpose of simplicity, the study defined youth as unmarried persons who belong to the age group between 18 and 32 years. Those who participated for the study have a reasonable knowledge on politics in the country in general. Nearly 92% of young persons believe that the politicians of the country are excessively privileged. And more than the half of the respondents of the sample have further said that it is very difficult to communicate their needs to the politicians of the country. Young people believe the elections in Sri Lanka are "somewhat fair" and most of them had the opportunity in using their votes at elections without disturbances. They are not sure that the elected politicians care their needs. When it comes to the voting more than 80% of the sample has never voted for the same party to which their parents supported. Finally more than 50% of the youth have not seen a meaningful consequence of their voting. Most of them do not believe that always the representative from the well to do families well represent the desires of the voters. The study shows that the young people are not interested in actively involve in the present elections as it has become a game of people without a sense of decency.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Sociology, The Open University of Sri Lanka