
Extended Abstract

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Citizens' awareness of constitutional reform process in Sri Lanka since 2016 to present:

Reference to Ja-Ela and Maspotha divisional sectorial.

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1. Abstract

<p>The constitutions describe the basic principles of the state, the structure and the process of government and the fundamental rights of citizens in a higher law that cannot be unilaterally changed by an ordinary legislative act (De Silva, 1993). The present Sri Lankan constitution inaugurated on 7th of September 1978. It is officially recognized as the</p>
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<p>“Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka”. The inauguration of the Presidential system in February, 1978 was on the basis of the second amendment adapted to 1978 constitution. As of May 2015 it has been formally amended nineteen (19) times. There</p>
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are negative and positive criticisms about the state religion, state language, fundamental rights, national anthem and represented system prevailed by the 1978 constitution. Constitutional reform is a major component of the political agenda of the present President Maithripala Sirisena' and Prime Minister

Ranil Wickramasingha'. To fulfil this goal they have established public

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representations committee on constitutional reforms (PRC). The major objective of this paper is to find whether the Sri Lankan citizens are aware of the constitutional reform process in Sri Lanka. Other secondary objective is to find whether the citizens agree with a constitutional reform in Sri Lanka. This study is based on both primary and secondary data. Questionnaires were contributed to obtain primary data. Also the relevant books, articles have been referred to get secondary data. Through the random sampling method, 100 of citizens who visited to Maspetha divisional sectorial and Ja-ela divisional sectorial were selected for the study (50 respondents from each divisions). The collected primary data were analysed from the SPSS software and analysed data presented from bar charts and pie charts. This study concludes that most of the citizens are not aware of the constitutional reform process in Sri Lanka. As the recommendation, this study proposes that the media must conduct programmes to caution the citizens to be aware of the constitutional reform process in Sri Lanka.

2. Introduction and research problem/issue

In constitutional ideology, "to constitute" means "to make up, order or form; and, "a national's constitutional should pattern a political system". A further definition is, constitution may serve as a binding statement of a people's aspirations for themselves as a nation (De Silva, 1993). If we examined Sri Lankan constitutional history the main feature is Sri Lankan government has adopted new constitutions several times. Present Sri Lankan constitution adopted on 7th of September 1978 (Warnapala, 1993). Afterward, there have been many positive and negative criticisms built up in the society about the principles which were included in 1978 constitution. Therefore the Prime Minister

Ranil Wickramasingha appointed Public Representations Committee on Constitutional Reforms (PRC) on 2016 (Author not mentioned, 2016). The Committee comprised of experts from Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities. Within a short period of time, the committee managed to visit 25 districts and record more than 2500 representations. The mandate of the Committee was to gather public opinion and to

submit a report to the constitutional assembly with “recommendations” to reform the constitution. The committee has collected public opinion from contravention twenty subjects which were relevant to 1978 constitution: nature of the state, form of government (Presidential/ Parliamentary), basic structure of the constitution, citizenship, religion, fundamental rights and duties, language rights, legislature (unicameral/ bicameral), supremacy of constitution or parliament, separation of powers and powers of president under parliamentary system likewise (Public representations committee on constitutional reform visumpaya, 2016). Anyhow Public Representation Committee on Constitutional Reforms submitted the public opinion suggestions report with their recommendation on 31st of May 2016 to Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasingha. Presently the recommendations and the public opinion are considered by the cabinet sub-committee on constitutional reforms. The main objective of appointing Public Representation committee is to change the 1978 constitution according to public opinion. According to this kind of a backdrop it is important to find out the Sri Lankan society’s awareness about the constitutional reform process in Sri Lanka?

3. Research Methodology

The primary data were collected from the field survey via interviews and structured questionnaires. Also the secondary data collected from books, journal articles and from relevant reports. The area of the study is, Maspotha divisional sectorial in Kurunagaladistrict and Ja-ela divisional sectorial in Gampaha district. The reason for selecting two urban and countryside/rustic divisional sectorial as mentioned above is to compare the public awareness and public opinion of constitutional reform process in Sri Lanka. Through random sampling method selected 50 citizens who visited to get services from each divisional sectorial and statistically altogether the sample is consisted of 100 respondents from the population. SPSS/ statistical package for social sciences software used for analyze the primary data. The analysis data will present from bar charts, pie charts & tables. To find the relationship between citizen awareness and constitutional reform process of Sri Lanka, I have constructed two hypotheses as mentioned below:

H_1 = Citizens’ are aware of the constitutional reform process in Sri Lanka since 2016 to today

H_0 = Citizens’ are not aware of the constitutional reform process in Sri Lanka since 2016 to today

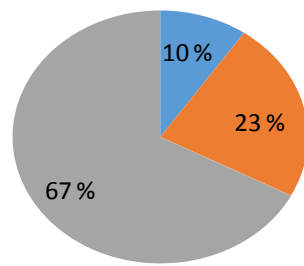
4. Results and findings

As per the survey in Ja-ela divisional sectorial, around 10% (5 respondents) of the respondents are extremely aware of the constitutional reform process in Sri Lanka, 24% (12 respondents) somewhat aware about it and 66% (33 respondents) are not

aware about constitutional reform process in Sri Lanka. According to the survey in Maspothadivitionalsectorial 2% (1 respondent) extremely aware about the constitutional reform process, 16% (8 respondents) are somewhat aware about it and 82% (41 respondents) are not aware about constitutional reform process in Sri Lanka. Below pie chart revealed it.

Graph 4.1: Citizen awareness of constitutional reform process of Sri Lanka, reference to

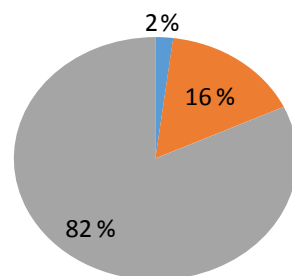
Ja-ela divisional sectorial



(Source: Field research, 2017)

Graph 4.2: Citizen awareness of constitutional reform process of Sri Lanka, reference to

Maspotha divisional sectorial



(Source: Field research, 2017)

The main finding of the study that revealed from the above statistics is that the citizens' awareness of constitution reform process depends on the regional fact. Citizens who live in urban areas are aware of the constitutional reform process than the citizens who live in countryside. Also the study found that the communication facility is the main reason creating that difference among urban and countryside awareness. Also the study observed citizens' awareness of Public Representations Committee on Constitutional Reforms (PRC) process from the citizens

who said that they are extremely aware and somewhat aware of constitutional reform process in Sri Lanka. From Ja-ela divisional sectorial out of seventeen (17) respondents only five (5) respondents were aware of Public Representations Committee on Constitutional Reforms (PRC). As a percentage it is 29.4%. Also 23.5% (4) of respondents were somewhat aware of the process and 47.05% (8) of

respondents were extremely unaware of the committee. In Maspotha divisional sectorial there was only one respondent who was extremely aware of Public Representations Committee on Constitutional Reforms (PRC). As a percentage it is about 11.1%. Also 11.1% (1) respondents were somewhat aware about it and 77.7% (7) respondents were extremely unaware of the committee (Field research, 2017). In this survey we examined the citizens who like constitutional reform in Sri Lanka. According to the survey result in Ja-el divisional sectorial 80% (40) respondents were interested in a constitutional reform, 2% (1) of respondents were not interested in a constitutional reform and 18% (9) of respondents didn't have any idea about it. Also in Maspotha divisional sectorial, 40% (20) of respondents were interested in constitutional reform and 60% (30) of respondents didn't have an idea about it. The major finding of this study is that the citizens' awareness of constitutional reform process is in a very poor level in countryside than the urban area. From the above analytical result, it rejects the H_1 hypothesis which illustrates that Citizens are aware of the constitutional reform process in Sri Lanka since 2016 to today & it accepts H_0 hypothesis which illustrates that citizens are not aware of the constitutional reform process in Sri Lanka since 2016 to today.

5. Conclusions, implications and significance

The study reveals that the citizens are not aware of the constitutional reform process in Sri Lanka since 2016 to today. Also the study result proved that the citizens' awareness of constitutional reform process in Sri Lanka depends on the regional fact. The citizens in urban area are aware of constitutional reform process in Sri Lanka than the citizens' in countryside. As a recommendation, the study proposes that the media must conduct programmes to caution the citizens about the constitutional reform process in Sri Lanka. Also the government must conduct programmes from ground level organizations to high level organizations to improve citizens' awareness of constitutional reform process in Sri Lanka.

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