

The Youth Uprising Movements in Sri Lanka in 2022

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ABSTRACT

Today Sri Lanka is facing a huge economic crisis and political crisis due to intemperate corruption. Ordinary people are not in a position to face this crisis. Therefore, to find a solution to this crisis, the youth population of Sri Lanka came forward. Still, they are playing a considerable role in Sri Lanka's political sphere. On the 1st of April 2022, the protest started at the president's residence in Mirihana. The protestors demanded the resignation of the president and Prime Minister from the government. They use slogans such as 'Go Home Gota, Government without Rajapakshas, and Give us our stolen money.' In this situation, three months ago, the youth population of Sri Lanka started a protest that is called 'Aadaraye Aragalaya.' This article enunciates the youth uprising movements in Sri Lanka and the objective of writing this article is to share the value of doing a democratic revolution to change world politics, especially in an undemocratic system. Sri Lanka used this democratic revolution to change the ruling system in 2022. The important fact is that for doing this protest, the population of youth is giving their support for a positive purpose. Therefore, this article intends to explore the definitions of youth and youth political participation, the youth uprising movements in world history, the History of the youth uprising movement in Sri Lanka, and finally cogitated the nature of the youth uprising movement against the Rajapaksa's regime in 2022.

Keywords: Sri Lanka, Youth Uprising Movements, Political and economic crisis, Protest, Youth Political Participation

Introduction

The world is changing breath-taking space. That changes are not always happening in positive ways. There are two ways it can happen: either positively or negatively. The world-changing duty is always associated with the youth in the world. They have so many abilities to do that. Therefore, the youth population plays a vital role in world politics. There is no universally agreed international definition of the youth age group.

The United Nations defines youth as 'those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by member states.' Further, according to the Collins dictionary, "youth is the period of their life during which they are a child before they

are a fully mature adult". From my point of view, someone who above the age of 15 years, we can be defined there are as youth generation. The reason for that is someone in this age period tries to stand up as an independent person in society. Generally, during the period of childhood, we have to depend on our parents. When we come to adulthood, we can make decisions about our lives. And otherwise, we have to recognize our responsibilities for doing to society as well. Above mentioned definitions highlighted that the youth is a kind of age group that is associated with independence.

Therefore, the development of youth is essential for every society. There are significant elements for positive youth development. Positive youth development is intentional. It is the combination of positive experiences, positive relationships, and positive environments. To develop the youth positively, there are four vital pillars as follows.

1. Belonging
2. Mastery
3. Independence
4. Generosity

What is Youth Political Participation?

According to Aristotle, he believed 'Man is a political animal.' Doing politics and political participation is a salient feature of any government. An active political society can create a well-organized society. Before defining the term youth political participation, we should clarify the meaning of political participation.

Jan W. Van Deth defines political participation as 'citizen's activities affecting politics ... The list of participatory activities has become virtually infinite and includes actions such as voting, demonstrating, contacting public officials, boycotting, attending party rallies, guerilla gardening, posting blogs, volunteering, joining flash mobs, signing petitions, buying fair-trade products and suicide protests (Verba, S. and Nie, N.H., 1972).

Political participation is a crucial part of liberal democracy. The level of doing politics helps to recognize the level of political culture in any society. Robert Longely defined, 'Political participation is any number of voluntary activities undertaken by the public to influence public policy either directly or by affecting the selection of the person who makes those policies. Though typically associated with voting in elections, political participation includes activities such as working on political campaigns, donating money to candidates or causes, contacting public officials, petitioning, protesting, and working with other people on issues (Longely, Robert. 2021).

For instance, the 1931 Donoughmore constitution was acquainted universal franchise for Sri Lankans. All citizens of Sri Lanka who have completed 21 years of age were granted the universal franchise in the year unless they were subject to any special disqualification. The age of the right to cast a vote was lowered from 21 years to 18, by the elections Amendment Act No. 11 of 1959. Universal Franchise has been a right constitutionally substantiated by the republic constitution of 1972 and the constitution of 1978. Article 3 of the constitution of 1978 states that sovereignty is in the people and is inalienable. In the same Article, sovereignty includes the power of government, and fundamental rights and franchises are included in sovereignty. Accordingly, the franchise is part and parcel of sovereignty. The legislative power of the people is exercised by parliament consisting of elected representatives of the people and

by the people at a referendum. The executive power of the people, including the defense of the country, is exercised by the president of the republic elected by the people, while the judicial power of the people is exercised by parliament through the court of law. It is deduced that the total system of administration, enactment of laws, the executive, and justice are exercised by people through the franchise.

In such kind of situation, youth participation in politics is one of the crucial parts of a democratic society, indeed, not only in Sri Lanka but also in every state. Therefore, for political systems to be representative, all parts of society must be included. When even one age level is disfranchised, it is affected the decision-making process. Significantly, the youth population of the country engages in politics. They have the right to influence the decision-making process by their voting. In the election, the youth can be recognized as an influential group among the voters. Indeed, young people's active contributions can bring democratic values to life, leading to the overturning of authoritarian practices. Moreover, the youth can be a creative force and a dynamic source of sustainable innovation. Apart from that, there are always facing barriers such as poverty, education, and limited employment opportunities. Generally, the youth have open-minded attitudes and their lives are always associated with innovation. Therefore, the youth can do considerable influence on all systems of government. Being a political animal in the modern country, the youth are automatically involved in the government process, and now they are turning to the online platform for expressing their ideas. In addition to that, the major advantages of youth participation in politics are:

1. From political engagement to civic engagement: Civic engagement is a border term than political engagement because it can include service to the community through involvement in health, education, and charity work.
2. Create a better citizen
3. Break the status quo: In countries of dictatorship, the younger generation's fresh ideas and new leadership can help to overcome authoritarian practices. The protest led by youth leaders can force autocratic leaders to step down from power, allowing these youth to become a part of formal decision-making.
4. Youth for youth: The youth face many issues in the world, but these issues go unheard. Since the youth would better understand other young people, the best way to improve this newer generation would be through politics which is a tool used to take action for development (Boutros, Christina,)

The youth uprising movement in world history

There are some significant youth uprising movements in world political history as follow, Vietnam War Protest; The Vietnam war was a long and costly conflict between North Vietnam and South Vietnam. North Korea, the Soviet Union, and China supported North Vietnam, and the United States, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand also were parts of the war as supporters of South Vietnam. More than 3 million people were killed in the Vietnam War including over 58,000 Americans, and more than half of the dead were Vietnamese citizens. Amid this situation, the American students were against the war in Vietnam in front of the American embassy in London. The protest was started by young people against the war.

Tiananmen Square: This movement emerged because the people of China demanded Democratic reforms and economic liberation as a solution to economic decline. In 1989 on

June 3rd and 4th who protested against the government were killed by soldiers, among them many activists were university students.

Arab Spring: The Arab Spring can be defined as one of the significant movements of participation of youth and social media played a core role in this war. The conflict of Arab spring started in Tunisia and then spread to other countries such as Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, and Middle East countries. The young people were gathered against the police corruption, economic woes, and human rights violation. Their organizing mechanism was social media. In addition to that,

1. Civil rights movement in 1965,
2. In 1968 roots of French social activism,
3. The Social Center Movement in Italy in 1970, also can be recognized as a youth uprising movement in Europe (Blakemore, Erin. 2018).

Brief History of the Youth Uprising Movement in Sri Lanka

The youth uprising movement is not a new phenomenon in Sri Lanka. The country has experienced religious, and political radicalization. When studying the history of Sri Lanka, there were significant youth radicalization movements as follows:

1. In the 1930s youth radicalization emerged with the rise of the workers' movement and the leftist movement.
2. The youth radicalization among the Tamils in the North and plantation areas from 1939 to 1940.
3. In 1956 and 1958 the negative youth radicalization is used for communal violence against Tamils and Muslim minorities by Sinhala Buddhist nationalists.
4. In 1971 Janatha Vikukthi Peramuna (JVP)' traditional left launched an armed struggle to capture the state power. According to K.M. De Silva mentioned that this is the largest youth revolt recorded in history.
5. The first trend was the emergence of LTTE during the period 1971-1994,
6. the Second trend was the re-emerging of the JVP as a more organized violent force in the mid80s.
7. the Third trend was the violence against the Tamil civilians by Sinhala Buddhist extremists. In 1982 one of the best libraries in Asia which is in Jaffna University library was burnt by supporters of the state.
8. The incident of the Black July in 1983,
9. During the period 1987 and 1989 the youth in the South started a non-violence campaign against the JVP violence. This campaign was started with a positive perspective, and they implemented non-violent methods such as 'Padayanthra and Sathyagraha' to promote human rights with the support of Non-Governmental Organizations.
10. After the post-war in Sri Lanka leaders of Sri Lanka are using Sinhala Buddhist extremism to gain and maintain powers since 1948.
11. The other crucial youth group consists of university students which called as Inter University Students Federation (IUSF). University students are engaged in the political

sphere of the country considerably and they can be identified as highly active people in the country since it started.

The Nature of the Youth Uprising Movements against the Rajapaksha's Regime in Sri Lanka in 2022.

Micaela Iron shell-Dominguez says, 'Youth are tired of thinking that doesn't have a future. In every society, the population of youth is playing a major role as a citizen. During this age period, they are trying to build up their future. That's why this period is important to young people. A citizen's life is related to state policies. The responsibility of the respective governments is to address the needs of every age group. If some governments implement failed policies, the largely victimized group is the youth. Because the present is always linked with the future. Therefore, if they think they don't have a future anymore, indeed they will try to change the existing process of the state.

In Sri Lanka, now we can see that situation. The protest against Rajapaksa's regime started due to this kind of situation among youth in Sri Lanka. Since the independence, the Sri Lankan economy and Political platform did not affect the international world political system or international market. During the British period, they introduced to Sri Lanka the colonial capitalist economy. They needed to function in Sri Lanka as a source of raw material for its industries and a supplier of agricultural consumption goods for its consumer. And also they wanted Sri Lanka to be a market for its manufacturing industry. Therefore, Sri Lanka joined the world economy as a producer of primary agricultural goods. The leaders of Sri Lanka did not need to change the economic policies implemented by the British authority.

According to world history, revolts have emerged because of undemocratic practices and economic declines. More than thousands of people were killed by the revolts in Sri Lanka. For example, in the 1971 insurrection,

'The official death toll was 1,200 but unofficial figures reliably estimated it to be around 4-5,000. There were even higher estimates. The population explosion, dysfunctional education, stagnation in the economy, rural poverty, and more precisely unemployment and graduate unemployment were highlighted as the salient socio-economic factors behind the uprising (Fernando, Laksiri. 2021).

However, the Galle face protest is different from the insurrections that happened before 2022 in Sri Lanka. The salient feature is that respect for the concept of Democracy. And another important fact is that more than thousands of youths came forward and got together without party politics, religion, ethnicity, and gender. The place where they stay together call as '*Gota Go Gama*' and this protest is also defined as '*Adaraye Aragalaya*' (Protest of Love). Indeed, this protest was peaceful and still, they are showing their democratic values to the international society. The reasons behind this protest are:

1. By the end of 2021, Sri Lanka's foreign currency reserves have virtually run dry.
2. The price of everyday goods has risen sharply,
3. The lack of medicine, and health facilities (Became a reason for to collapse of the health sector of Sri Lanka),
4. Wide-spread power cut,

5. Sri Lanka does not have enough fuel and gas for essential services, and fuel price has risen despite the world's fuel price law,
6. Collapsed public transport,
7. Closed the education institutions such as Universities and Schools,
8. Implemented organic agriculture policy at night,
9. All fertilizers imports were completely banned,
10. The government does not have sufficient money for paying salaries for public servants and so on.

Due to the above-mentioned reasons, the common people of Sri Lanka came out of their homes to the road and demanded solutions from the current government. Further, they are compelling the President and Prime minister to resign. On 9th May 2022, the Prime Minister resigned from his position and his alliance stated a black mark on Sri Lankan history because they attacked the common people who stayed at the Galle Face, the capital in Colombo. However, three months ago we were divided into groups based on ethnicity, religion, and gender. At that movement, we are in one flag without boundaries. Since 1956 with the Official Language Act commonly referred to as the Sinhala Only Act, we were divided based on ethnicity. This protest created a common citizen who has no ethnicity, no religion, and no gender. In the same vein, 9th July 2022 was also a significant date for Sri Lankan. In Sri Lankan history, social media was the platform that gathered scattered people. Unarmed civil people were attacked by the government and at the end of the day those people proved that to the entire world 'If you need to achieve something, Unity is the best thing than Separation'.

Former president Gotabhaya Rajapaksha and his government including the Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe imposed a curfew on Colombo district and emergency law across the country. People came to the capital of Sri Lanka, Colombo from their private vehicles, and trains obtained by force. More than a hundred people were injured and six media journalists working in 'Sirasa TV (Television Network in Sri Lanka) were assaulted by Sri Lankan forces. On that day, common people in Sri Lanka acquired the Presidential residence, President's Office, Temple Tree (The Prime Minister resident), and Prime Minister's Office. Further, the international media coverage is done by NDTV, Al Jazeera, and BBC News which gave the priority to Sri Lanka and broadcasted Sri Lanka as the headline. Because of these degrees, Gotabhaya Rajapaksha had to step down and the 14th of July in his position.

At that movement, we are seeking a new government with new hopes, and new plans. Significantly this protest is still active across the country. Spreading democratic values through a huge protest is not an easy task. As well as, through this dispute, people understood, 'People have sovereign power rather than politicians'. Moreover, changing the adult generation who supported party politics is also not an easy task. Party politics create a blind citizen. Hanging these types of people is also one victory. Otherwise, former President Mahinda Rajapaksha and his alliance needed to create a kingship in Sri Lanka. Now it has fallen. Their corrupted policies ruined the country. At present, we are struggling with inflation, malnutrition, and education issues. Former president Gotabhaya Rajapaksha decamped the country with his wife. Finally, when describing the nature of the July protest in 2022, there is another one that needs to be highlighted. That is this protest is not only done by Sri Lankan but also every citizen

everywhere the world joined the protest as Sri Lanka. Otherwise, this movement also breaks the Rajapaksha's kingdom and breaks the ethnicity-based politics.

Conclusion

Finally, according to my view, this youth uprising movement has become a landmark in Sri Lankan history. The basic thing that we can get from this protest is 'For winning the conflict/dispute or protest you do not need heavy weapons. If you need to win your game raise your voice, stand up with yourself, stand up with your people, and Respect each other who stands up with you. Unity can build a world, and separation can destroy the world. Gotabhaya Rajapaksha was one of the seventh executive presidents in Sri Lanka, but he had to step down because of the power of people's unity.

The youth of Sri Lanka was thrown the Rajapaksha's dictatorship to the ground, and as I mentioned earlier this will be a milestone in revolution history in world politics. Also, it will be a great lesson for rulers who exercise authoritarian powers. The incident of retrogression of Gotabhaya Rajapaksha will be written in history as a seventh executive president in Sri Lanka who came to power with the people's majority and only one president expelled by the people in Sri Lanka.

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