

The Right To Decide





Elections in Sri Lanka have proven that at the end of the day it is the people's vote that matters. Therefore, no government is protected from the winds of change regardless of how strong it may be. A government that is considered dynamic and development oriented where peace, security and economic stability are ensured, can be removed due to the behaviour of individuals surrounding a person, thereby showing that no politician or official can treat this country as their personal property.

There are many lessons that the Sri Lankan politician needs to learn. While more experienced politicians show a great deal of maturity, understanding and patience, one tends to wonder whether those who are entering politics in the present day have the same dedication and motive to fulfill their responsibilities to the people. The Sri Lankan voter will not tolerate those entering politics for personal gain.

The presidential elections of 2015 revealed a different side of politics in Sri Lanka. It uncovered the darkness and also the reality, which the voter may not have realised before.

Sri Lanka is in a unique political situation where the incumbent President Maithripala Sirisena was elected as an independent candidate supported by the UNP, JHU and JVP amongst other national parties. However, he is currently the leader of the SLFP. The minority government of the UNP, is headed by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and consists of members of the SLFP. What is also peculiar is that those who supported Mahinda Rajapaksa at the presidential elections and were also critical of Maithripala Sirisena are either cabinet ministers or advisors. What is the reasoning behind this? The UPFA is in the Opposition with the constituent members being from the SLFP, MEP and other Left parties.

There is another political movement emerging, which is supporting former President Mahinda Rajapaksa. While the SLFP is both in the government and opposition, the internal divisions within the party are apparent because no one can say with clarity that the SLFP is in power.

The UNP though it has a clear vision and direction is limited in terms of their mandate to form a government. They require a majority in parliament to properly steer the government. The JVP has an innovative and new way of thinking with a vision to take the country forward. They no longer conform to traditional lines and for a vibrant economy to prevail it may be prudent for other national parties to also play an active role in the country's journey.

There is a general feeling that the economy is on auto-pilot without any new economic activity. It is necessary to dissolve parliament and proceed with an election so there can be a government with a good majority and mandate to drive the country forward. Currently Sri Lanka is experiencing a political tug of war, where each group is blaming the other. This has put the voter in great difficulty. Sri Lanka needs to remove itself from this cycle as a person may cast their vote for a particular candidate or party to find that person may have switched alliances, thereby making the voters' franchise redundant.

While the previous government provided a certain direction and stability that is currently lacking, the actions of certain individuals and the focus on the

Rajapaksa family itself created a situation where no one listened to any other voice. However, the question remains as to why the representatives of the people did not use the right given to them to rectify the situation at that time. No one can deny the immense contribution made to this country by the previous government. But it is apparent that the people need much more.

With the results of the presidential elections, many thought that the political force that was Mahinda Rajapaksa was no longer a possibility in Sri Lanka. However, he still has massive support from all levels of society and has arisen as a possible alternative to the UNP, SLFP and JVP. It still remains to be seen whether Mahinda Rajapaksa will come from the SLFP or as an independent candidate.

People still have hope that the UNP and SLFP will reach their full potential as they have done before and the JVP to be the critical voice that has ensured that the right thing is done for the country.

Who should take responsibility for the political situation in the country? Is it the politician or the voter? Has the time come for the main political parties to rethink their direction or will we see them fading into the night.

Democracy, gives us the right to select our leaders and government. It gives us the right to decide, then we should use that power wisely.