



Modern Validity of Historical Factors on Voter Intention and Its Basic Patterns in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Sri Lanka is a democratic country with universal franchise and a representative government. The election system was introduced to this nation during British colonial rule. Apart from education and elitism, the main factors considered in nominating natives by the English rulers to the legislative council were race, religion, family, and caste. Due to this, ethnicity, religion, family, and caste emerged as historical factors affecting voter intention. The purpose of this study is to identify the modern validity of those historical factors and their basic patterns. The study employed the library survey method. Qualitative data obtained from primary, secondary, and literary sources were examined through content analysis. The study sample was the 16 main national elections held in Sri Lanka from 1947 to date. The analysis found that the historical factors of ethnicity, religion, family, and caste that affected the intentions of Sri Lankan voters in the first national election in 1947 still have modern validity 75 years later. In the data analysis, it was further revealed that Sinhala in the ethnicity factor, Buddhism in the religion factor, the Senanayake, Bandaranaike, and Rajapakse family trio in the family factor, and the Govigama caste in the caste factor all affect voter intention of Sri Lanka. Thus, the fact that Sri Lankan voters consider the factors of ethnicity, religion, family, and caste that were considered for voting in 1947 even after 75 years is a matter that should be taken into consideration with a deep subject approach. It shows that Sri Lankan voter intention has not reached the developmental stage regarding quality. Accordingly, it is recommended in this study that appropriate strategies should be identified and launched to improve the political literacy of Sri Lankan voters to free them from such backward electoral motives.

Keywords: *Election; Voter Intention; Historical Factors; Ethnicity; Religion; Family; Caste*

Introduction

Elections are key mechanisms for collective decision-making (Nellis, 2023). Elections provide the mechanism needed for the system to select the individual or group of individuals to exercise the

political power of the people, which is the key to democracy (Ahmad et al., 2022). Election is key to selecting the most competent politicians, regardless of their characteristics (Glanell, 2022). The election is the heart, backbone, and safeguard of democracy (Wouters, 2023; Biswas, 2018). The behavior of the people during an election is known as electoral behavior. Electoral behavior is one of the political actions of the people. It is considered an indicator to determine the extent of their political participation in the social system (Karimi, 2023). Electoral behavior has many components, and voter behavior is one of the main ones.

Behavior and intention are substantially correlated (Shahzalal & Adnan, 2022; Morwitz & Munz, 2020; Mittelman & Rojas-Méndez, 2018). Literature shows intention may be the main and best predictor of any behavior (Kumar et al., 2022) Peña-García et al., 2020). An intention is an individual's anticipated or planned future behavior. (Swan, 1981; Lam and Hsu, 2006). It represents individual expectations about a particular behavior in a given setting (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, 1977). In marketing approach, intention is defined as the possibility of buying the products or experiencing services (Haque et al., 2020). In this sense, voter intention is defined as a possibility of vote or not.

Voter intention is a psychological expectation or mental blueprint. Voter behavior is a physical condition. Voter intention governs their actions during the voting process. The voter intention is a vibrant substance of the country's demography that determines the behavioral and normative beliefs of an individual's mind and tendencies. Voter intention may in fact be short-lived and hence tend to overestimate actual voting processes (Cantarella et al., 2023; Chiang and Knight, 2011; Gerber et al., 2009). Individual voting intention is influenced by predictors such as social tendency understanding, political party credibility, and an informed psychological decision to vote. Thus, voting is a planned action (Saleem et al., 2021). Manipulation of numerous aspects by various parties in order to affect this planned action is a common feature of elections. It is a common feature of elections as a marketplace to influence the voter intention in various ways with the goal of persuading the voter to a favorable voting behavior (Rupasingha, 2016; Evans, 2004)

Political parties and candidates often use "war-like strategies" to win votes in elections. Those strategies are the main focus of the advertising process. Many countries have a well-established professional approach involving professional campaign strategists and consultants to efficiently manage and monitor the campaign process (Sarma & Hazarika, 2023). One of the primary objectives of that professional campaign strategist is to handle and highlight various factors that affect voter intention in an election.

There are many factors that influence voter behavior and voter intention in an election (Bora, 2022; Evans, 2004; Rupasingha, 2016). For ease of study, these factors are classified as individual factors, social factors, institutional factors, media factors, etc. Social factors are further subdivided into historical factors and modern factors. Historical factors affecting voter intention vary from country to country and society to society. The historical circumstances that led up to it were likewise varied. The main objective of this study was to reveal which historical factors affect voter intention in the Sri Lankan context and to identify their modern validity and basic patterns. Several empirical studies have been undertaken to identify historical factors influencing voter intention in Sri Lanka; however, academic studies to determine their modern validity are very rare. Therefore, this study fills a knowledge gap related to voter intention. It makes it possible to develop the specialized expertise required to draft the rules for holding free and fair elections while maintaining the viability of representative democracy.

Literature Review

The election is the manifestation of people's political rights. Political participation is essential to exercising people's political rights. Political participation is defined as an activity or movement of citizens

who actively participate in political life (Failasopa et al., 2022). Historically, citizens in many countries did not have political participation rights. It is the same in Sri Lanka. Ancient Sri Lanka was ruled by kings. The citizens did not have the right to choose the king. The kingship was transferred from brother to brother or father to son. The entire island was ruled under the king's rule. The social system was based on the caste system that the king fostered. Individual social mobility was completely stifled in ancient Sri Lankan society based on caste. It was the nobles of the upper castes who enjoyed the land and social privileges. Political decisions were made based on the interests of the king and the high nobility.

Three caste systems coexist in Sri Lanka. The Sinhala caste system, the Sri Lankan Tamil Hindu caste system, and the Indian Tamil Hindu caste system are such caste systems (Katz, 2019; Silva and Thanges, 2009). In this, the Sinhala caste system is different from the Indian caste system. The Indian caste system is based on religion (Chaudhary, 2023, Sharma, & Sharma, 2022; Chalam, 2020). The Sinhalese caste system was built on occupation and land inheritance (Jayarathne and Wijethunga, 2020, Gunasekera, 2020).

Table 1. The Sinhalese Caste Structure in ancient Sri Lanka

Rank	Caste Name	Occupation(s) of Caste	Estimated Share of Population (%)
01	Govigama		
	I. Radala	Aristocracy	0.001
	II. Govi	Cultivators or free peasants	49.000
	III. Patti	Herdsmen	0.001
02	Karawa	Fishermen / Maritime industry	5.000
03	Salagama	Cinnamon workers	3.000
04	Durawa	Liquor-makers	2.000
05	Hunu	Limestone workers	0.002
06	Achari/Galladu/Navandanna	Smiths	0.500
07	Hena/Rada	Dhobi workers (Laundry)	3.000
08	Vahumpura/Hakuru	Sweet/Jaggery makers	12.500
09	Kumbal/Badhala	Pottery makers	2.500
10	Dura		0.001
	I. <i>Welladura</i> / Bodhi	Guardian of Bo Tree	
	II. Pannadura	Royal herdsmen/Mahouts	
11	Nakati/Berawa	Drumming/Dancing	3.000
12	Bathgama/Padu	Servants/Porters	18.000
13	Gahala	Dead drumming	0.001
14	Kinnara	Mat weavers	0.300
15	Rodi	Beggars/Broom makers	0.001
	Other*		1.193
	TOTAL		100.000

Note. Other smaller and geographically scattered Sinhala castes include Porowakara, Oli and Gattara. Source: (Jiggins, 1979; Jabbar, 2005; Silva & Thanges, 2009; Gunasekera, 2020).

Since the time of the monarchy, the caste system has been controlled by a system called "Baddha sanwidhanaya" (Gamage, 2016). The Sinhala caste system consisted of approximately 15 castes. The Sinhalese caste system is divided into the up-country and the low country based on region. The superior caste in both these divisions was the Govigama caste (Jayarathne and Wijethunga, 2020; Charles and Bogle, 1971).

The supremacy of the Govigama caste is challenged to some extent by the European conquest of Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka was conquered for the first time by the Portuguese in 1505 AD, ending the era of independent state rule that lasted for many centuries (Bandhuthilaka, 2002). When the Portuguese invaded Sri Lanka, there were three administrative units in Sri Lanka. These administrative units are Low Country (Southern Sri Lanka), Up County (Central Sri Lanka), and Vanniya (Northern Sri Lanka). From those areas, the Portuguese and the Dutch conquered only the low country's coastal areas of Sri Lanka. The up country continued to be as an independent state. The Portuguese and the Dutch introduced new social reforms and political reforms limited to the control of the low country. The fathers of Sri Lanka's modern constitutional traditions were the British who spread the ruling power in Sri Lanka in the twentieth century (Munasinghe, 2014).

The British Empire first conquered the coastal areas of Sri Lanka in 1796. In 1815, the British conquered the entire island (Andagama, 2021). The British conquered the whole of Sri Lanka by driving out the then-King "Sri Wickramasinghe Rajasinghe" of the upcountry with the help of the upcountry aristocrats who held positions of authority (Jayawardena, 2008). The upcountry aristocrats belonged to the Govigama caste. The upcountry aristocrat supported the British Empire in driving out the king, hoping to take over the power of the up country king with the help of the British Empire. But British colonial rule did not fulfill the expectations of the upcountry aristocrats. The administration of the upcountry was placed under the same governor who had been appointed to the low country at that time. However, the upcountry aristocrats rejected the governor's executive rule. Its decisive turning point was the Independence Rebellion of 1818 (Silva, 2019).

The independence rebellion of 1818 was led by the up country aristocrats, who were angry at not getting the expected reward. The suppression of the rebellion was very brutal. The victorious British Empire's rule abolished all the positions of authority and privileges of the upcountry aristocracy. The "Mudali position" was newly introduced for administration. The Mudali position was a colonial title that was part of the native headman system. Chief among the Mudali was the "Gate Mudali." The head of the Gate mudali is the maha mudali. The aristocrats of the low country Govigama caste, who embraced the English religion and became slaves of the British Empire, were appointed to the positions of Mudali, Gate Mudali, and Maha Mudali (Gamage, 2016; Silva, 1998). Under the political reforms introduced by the British, the caste-based social system was later abolished, but the privileges granted to the aristocrats of the low-country Govigama caste were not lost. The majority of members nominated to the Legislative Council and the Council of State, which introduced state governance under the political reforms, were aristocrats from the low-country Govigama caste. From 1833 until 1878, the six Sinhalese MPs elected to the Legislative Council were high-ranking aristocrats from the Govigama caste. They are extremely close relatives from the same family cartel known as "Mudali Pelanthiya." The English rule, which adopted the divide-and-rule system, often allowed the Low Country Govigama caste to take over commercial enterprises (Ivan, 2021). Because of this, when the first parliamentary election was held in 1947, the economically powerful low-country Govigama caste claimed political power in Sri Lanka. In that election, the Sri Lankan voters worked to elect an aristocratic government as the first government in Sri Lanka.

Table 2. 1947 Parliament Election – All Island Result

Political Party	Vote	Percentage	Seats
United National Party	751,432	39.8	42
Lanka Sama Samaja Party	204,020	10.8	10
All Ceylon Tamil Congress	82,499	4.4	7
Ceylon Indian Congress	72,230	3.8	6
Bolshevik–Leninist Party	113,193	6.0	5
Communist Party of Ceylon	70,331	3.7	3

Ceylon Labour Party	38,932	2.1	1
United Lanka Congress	3,953	0.2	0
Swaraj Party	1,393	0.1	0
Independents	549,381	29.1	21
Total	1,887,364	100.00	95
Registered voters	3,048,145		
Votes cast	1,701,150 (55.95)		

(Source: Election Commission of Sri Lanka (b), 2023; 2021; Bandhuthilaka, 2002).

In the 1947 parliamentary election, the Senanayake family's United National Party won the largest number of seats. The victorious United National Party formed the government as a coalition with the All Ceylon Tamil Congress of the Ponnambalam family, belonging to the Vellalar caste. The Vellalar caste is the socially, economically, and politically privileged and dominant endogamous group of Tamil society in northern Sri Lanka (Kuganathan, 2020). The ministers and officials of the coalition government supported by the nobles of the Vellalar caste were elites such as knights, moneylenders, and foreign scholars. Thus, in the 1947 parliamentary election, the Sri Lankan voter's intentions, whether unconsciously or consciously directed, were directed toward electing an aristocratic government and an aristocratic parliament (Gamage, 2016). The majority of the members of the Sri Lankan government were Sinhala Buddhists. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of the Sinhalese MPs belonged to the Govigama caste. Sixteen percent (16%) belonged to the Karava caste. Six percent (6%) belonged to the Salagama caste, and another three percent (3%) belonged to the Bathgama caste. The Durava, Hinna, Hena, Nakathi, and Hunu castes were elected as one representative (Ivan, 2021, Coomaraswamy, 1998). The lower caste representatives had less power in the parliament. The representatives of the Govigama caste had more power. A member of the Govigama caste was also chosen as Sri Lanka's first head of state. His name was D. S. Senanayake. Thus, Sinhala by ethnicity, Buddhism by religion, Senanayake, Bandaranaike, and Rajapakse families by family, and Govigama caste by caste have been established as historical factors that affect voter intention in Sri Lanka.

Table 3. Historical factor effect on voter intention in Sri Lanka

Ethnicity	Sinhala
Religion	Budhist
Family	Senanayake/Bandaranayake/Rajapakshe
Caste	Govigama

Developed by the Researcher

The establishment of ethnicity, religion, family, and caste as historical factors affecting voter is a prevalent aspect of the Asian region. Ethnicity can sometimes affect the voter in European nations and the Middle East. The fourth table displays some current empirical studies that have been conducted to assess the modern validity of those historical factors. However, such empirical studies have not recently been done at a significant level in Sri Lanka. This study indicated a research gap in this field. As a result, the major goal of this research is to close the above research gap by investigating the modern validity and pattern of historical factors that impacted voter intention in Sri Lanka.

Table 4. Empirical studies of voting

Factor	Focused on	Author/s	Country
Ethnicity	Ethnicity and voter Preferences	Kim, 2022	Nairobi, Kenya
	ethnic voting and regime change	Sanneh, A. B. (2022)	Gambia
	Ethnicity/ race and voting preferences	Chirco, 2022	US
	Ethnicity, Religion and voting behavior	Zeib et al, 2022	Pakistan
	Caste and voting behavior	Biswas, 2022	Bihar State - India
	Ethnicity, Religiosity and voting intention	Saleem et al., 2021	Pakistan
	Ethnicity, gender, and intention to vote	Dinesen et al., 2021	Denmark
	Ethnic voting and ethnic voting and ethno federalism	Bluhm, et al., 2021	Kenya
	Ethnicity, gender and vote	Bejarano et al., 2019	US
Religion	Religion and vote, election	Hamid & Zawawi, 2023	Indonesia
	Religion and vote	Hidayati, Handoko, 2022	Indonesia
	Religion and vote, election	Yang, 2022	Korea
	Religion and voter preferences	Lestari & Arumsari, 2022	Kudus regency - Indonesia
	Religion identity and voting	Hayat, & Nurhakki, 2022	Indonesia
	Religion, Ethnicity and voting intentions	Sandi, 2021	Indonesia
	Religion and voting behavior	Said et al., 2021	Pakistan
	Religious affiliation (sect) and Voting Behavior	Ahmad, et al., 2020	Pakistan
	Religion and voting behavior	Dar & Awan, 2019	Pakistan
	Religion and voting behavior	Hazarika, 2015	India
Family	Legislative elites and election	Abu-alhaj & Khwaileh, 2021	Jordan
	Political families and dynastic democracy	Chambers, 2022	Thailand
	Elite family and election	Tuhulele, 2023	Indonesia
	Political clientelism and family power	Kelihu, 2022	Indonesian
Caste	caste, religion and vote, election, politics	Raj, Vipan. 2022	India
	Caste system and vote	Rehman & Alqama, 2022	Pakistan
	Personal experience with caste discrimination and support for women candidates	Hankla et al., 2022	India
	Caste alliance, religious sentiments and vote	Biswas et al., 2022	Uttar Pradesh - India
	Caste and electoral Competition	Aggarwal et al., 2022	India
	Surnames with cast and vote	Glanell, 2022	Swedish
	Caste and political leader	Leghari et al., 2020	Pakistan
	Caste and election	Esler, 2020	Sri Lanka
	Caste system and voting behavior	Haider, & Ali, 2020	Pakistan
	Caste and politic	Hossain, 2020	India
	Caste and voting behavior	Shah & Bakht, 2019	Pakistan
	Caste / Religion and Voting behavior	Biswas et al, 2018	West Bengal - India

Developed by the Researcher

Research Methods

This study is a qualitative research that examines the modern validity and patterns of the historical factors of ethnicity, religion, family, and caste that affect voter intention in Sri Lanka. Qualitative research is used for identifying the social or community problem among individuals or groups (Okoko et al., 2023; Aliyu, 2021; Hennink et al., 2020). Qualitative research is prone to be more exploratory and useful in deriving an understanding of people's perspectives of their universe (Azam et al., 2021). Qualitative research has the ability to gain a deep, authentic, and fundamental understanding of the observed phenomenon (Fahlevy, 2022). For these reasons, a qualitative approach was used for this study.

The data analysis method used in this study is the library survey method with a literature review of national journals, articles, and the database of the Election Commission of Sri Lanka. As per the recommendation of Azam et al. 2021, the following essential steps are followed in this study: (a) Identify or formulate generic research questions. (b) Select the relevant populations, sample and sites for the study. (c) Collect the relevant data according to the research design as agreed. (d) Analyze and interpret the data collected, and identify the outliers as well. (e) Follow the theoretical and conceptual work. (f) Document the findings and the conclusions of the study.

The main foci of this study are secondary data. The data that is identified is qualitative data. Qualitative data was examined using content analysis techniques. This research paper is theoretical and utilizes the secondary electoral data derived from the Election Commission of Sri Lanka. In addition, other archival literature sources related to election data were also examined in this study. The archival sources are other means that helped form arguments and articulation related to the electoral campaign and mass mobilization. Qualitative data was examined using content analysis techniques. Biswas has studied electoral patterns and voting behavior in Bihar, India, in 2022 with this similar data analysis method. The Biswas' study confirms that this method is a successful method for qualitative data analysis. Biswas examined electoral data from three consecutive assembly elections in Bihar: 2010, 2015, and 2020 (Biswas, 2022). Using it as a model, this study looked at the consecutive main national elections that were held between 1947 and 2022.

The electoral map of Sri Lanka is prepared for the presidential election, parliament election, provincial council election, and local government election (Election Commission of Sri Lanka (a), 2023). Of these, the presidential and parliamentary elections are national elections. The priority of those national elections has changed from time to time. Before 1977, the main national election was the parliamentary election. The Prime Minister, who was the state's leader, was elected in a parliamentary election. After 1977, the main national election was the presidential election. The executive president, who was the leader of the state, was elected in the presidential election (Secretariat of Parliament, 2023). The number of parliamentary elections held from 1947 to 1977 is eight. Eight presidential elections have been held from 1977 to 2022 (Election Commission of Sri Lanka (b), 2023, 2021). These sixteen main national elections were selected as the sample for this study.

The primary focus of data collection in the study was on the heads of state-appointed in the sixteen main national elections. The Prime Minister was elected as the head of state in parliamentary elections. In the presidential election, the executive president was elected as the head of state. From 1947 to 2022, sixteen (16) state heads have been elected (Secretariat of Parliament, 2023). Their ethnicity, religion, family, and caste were tabulated in the analysis, and patterns were discovered. All the data needed to discover the patterns were obtained from secondary data under the library survey method.

Results and Discussion

The election is part of the people's process of electing the leaders of the country (Mirza et al., 2022). The authoritative body in Sri Lanka conducting this process of electing the state leader through the representation system is the Election Commission of Sri Lanka (Jayakumar, 2023). The number of main national elections that this authority has conducted so far is sixteen (Before 2015, this was known as the Department of Elections). There, except in 1947 (56.2%), the overall voter turnout in parliamentary elections exceeded 70% (1947: 56.2%; 1952: 70.7%; 1956: 69.0%; 1960 March: 77.6%; 1960 June: 75.9%; 1965: 82.1%, 1970: 85.2%; 1977; 86.7%). In all but one presidential election since 1977, the percentage of votes cast has exceeded 70%. Only the 1988 presidential election saw the lowest percentage (55.3%) of declared votes (1982: 80.1%; 1988: 55.32%; 1994: 70.5%; 1999: 73.3%; 2005: 72.91%; 2010: 74.50%; 2015: 81.52%; 2019: 83.27%). The fact that the 1947 parliamentary election was the first experience with parliamentary elections may have decreased voter turnout. Due to Tamil terrorism in northern Sri Lanka and the Sinhalese revolution in southern Sri Lanka, voter turnout was low in the 1988 presidential election. Thus, this demonstrates that, with the exception of a few exceptions, voter intention to vote in Sri Lanka is strong. Table 6 illustrates the pattern of voter intention in the selected sixteen elections from the data analysis.

Table 6. Result of data analysis

National Election * ¹			Ethnicity	Religion	Family	Caste
Election	Victorious candidate					
	1947	D. S. Senanayake	Sinhala	Buddhist	Senanayake	Govigama
	1952	Dudley Senanayake	Sinhala	Buddhist	Senanayake	Govigama
	1956	S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike	Sinhala	Buddhist	Bandaranaike	Govigama
Parliament Election	1960 March	Dudley Senanayake	Sinhala	Buddhist	Senanayake	Govigama
	1960 June	Sirima Bandaranaike	Sinhala	Buddhist	Bandaranaike	Govigama
	1965	Dudley Senanayake	Sinhala	Buddhist	Senanayake	Govigama
	1970	Sirima Bandaranaike	Sinhala	Buddhist	Bandaranaike	Govigama
	1977	J. R. Jayewardene	Sinhala	Buddhist	Senanayake	Govigama
	1982	J. R. Jayewardene	Sinhala	Buddhist	Senanayake	Govigama
	1988	Ranasinghe Premadasa	Sinhala	Buddhist	Senanayake* ²	Rada* ³
Precedential Election	1994	Chandrika Bandaranaike	Sinhala	Buddhist	Bandaranaike	Govigama
	1999	Chandrika Bandaranaike	Sinhala	Buddhist	Bandaranaike	Govigama
	2005	Mahinda Rajapaksa	Sinhala	Buddhist	Rajapaksa	Govigama
	2010	Mahinda Rajapaksa	Sinhala	Buddhist	Rajapaksa	Govigama
	2015	Maithripala Sirisena	Sinhala	Buddhist	Senanayake* ²	Govigama
	2019	Gotabaya Rajapaksa	Sinhala	Buddhist	Rajapaksa	Govigama

Note. *¹ The Prime Minister in the parliamentary election and the Executive President in the presidential election are indicated.

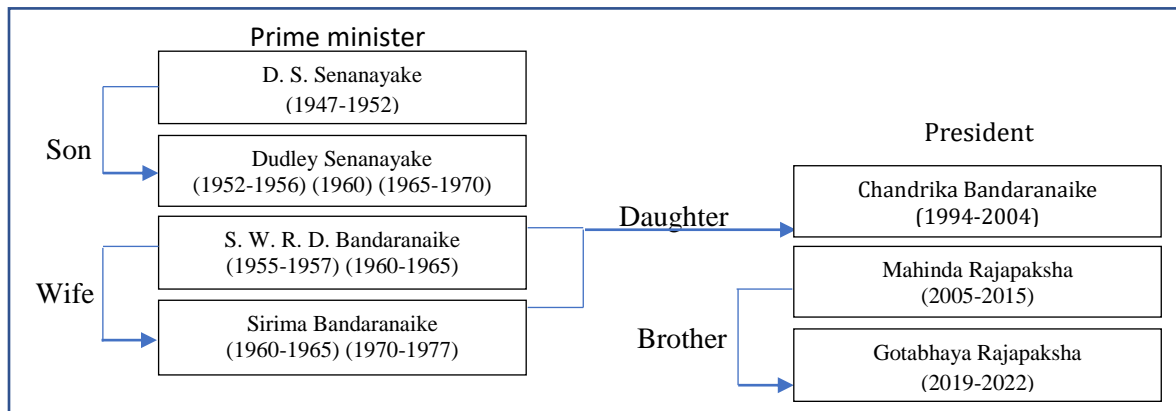
*² Ranasinghe Premadasa and Maithripala Sirisena were not members of the Senanayake family cartel. They were contesting the elections as representatives of the Senanayake family cartel.

*³ Some sources indicate that Ranasinghe Premadasa's caste is not the Rada caste. Those sources further indicate that Premadasa belongs to another lower caste. That caste is lower than the Rada cast, also, as those sources said. However, there is no credible evidence to confirm this. Ranasinghe Premadasa was

accused of concealing, with the use of state power, all sources exposing his caste's identity. This accusation was also mentioned in the impeachment proceedings against President Premadasa in 1991. Developed by the researcher

In 1947, three family cartels claimed political supremacy in Sri Lanka. These are the Senanake, Bandaranaike, and Rajapaksa families. All the prime ministers who were elected from 1947 to 1977 and all the other presidents who were elected from 1977 to now, except on two occasions, belong to these three families. Les outside of these three families, the two elected presidents of Sri Lanka were Ranasinghe Premadasa in 1988 and Maithripala Sirisena in 2015 (Election commission of Sri Lanka (b), 2023). However, Ranasinghe Premadasa became President in 1988 from the United National Party, which belonged to the Senanayake family (Election Commission of Sri Lanka (b), 2023). In 2015, Maithripala Sirisena is contesting the presidential election from the coalition called the new democratic front led by the United National Party, which also belonged to the Senanayake family (election commission of Sri Lanka, 2023; Joshi, 2019; Malith, 2016). The above evidence makes it clear that the intention of the Sri Lankan voters has not shifted away from the Senanayake, Bandaranaike, and Rajapaksa families in electing the presidents of Sri Lanka. At present, the Rajapaksa family clan dominates Sri Lanka's politics (DeVotta, 2021; Wickramasinghe, 2021).

Diagram 01. Family rule in Sri Lanka



Developed by the Researcher

In the context of modern Sri Lanka, there is a tendency not to consider the caste factor in social action. However, analyzing the election results in Sri Lanka shows that the caste factor has not been abolished yet in the election context. The two main parties, in particular, used caste divisions within Sinhalese electorates to broaden their electoral bases (Peiris & Lecamwasam, 2020). In the 1947 parliamentary election, the first national election, the voters of Sri Lanka chose a nobleman from the Govigama caste as the prime minister. In terms of caste, the Govigama caste still dominates the political context since then. All the prime ministers elected from then until 1972 belonged to the Govigama caste. All but one of the presidents elected from 1977 to date are from the Govigama caste. Ranasinghe Premadasa was the only one who became president from a low caste outside of the Govigama caste (Somasundaram, 2020). Ranasinghe Premadasa belonged to a very low caste and was marginalized in society. His presidency is an exception in the current political context (Jeyaraj, 2017).

The 1988 presidential election, in which Ranasinghe Premadasa was elected, was held amidst an insurgency that was initiated throughout the island by the youths attached to the JVP. Most of these insurgents belong to the lower castes and strata of society, and they were oppressed or suppressed. The insurgency terror in the South was an armed terror perpetrated by the oppressed caste youth against the Govigama elites. The armed wing of the JVP, which led to terror, killed most of the elites of the

Govigama caste (Balasooriya, 2016). Also, JVP issued an order to boycott the 1988 presidential election (In addition, Tamil Tiger terrorists in northern Sri Lanka also launched a poll boycott). JVP also announced that the first person who casts his vote will be killed. Fearing that order, the voters of Govigama did not come to the polling station. Due to this, in the 1988 presidential election, the number of votes cast by the Govigama caste was very low. Ranasinghe Premadasa would have lost the presidential election if the total number of votes from the Govigama caste had been declared. This makes it clear that Ranasinghe Premadasa's victory in the 1988 presidential election was a coincidence and an exception in the prevailing political context. Ranasinghe Premadasa being from a very lower caste as well as not being a member of a dominant political family further confirms that exception. However, Jeyaraj admits that it occurred with the assistance of the Govigama caste (Jeyaraj, 2021).

Ranasinghe Premadasa's election as president was also supported by the Senanayake family, led by the Govigama caste. Ranasinghe Premadasa was the candidate of the United National Party, which belonged to the Senanayake family. Accordingly, it seems that the voter intention in the 1988 presidential election in Sri Lanka was centered on the dominant Govigama caste that seized power in 1947. It is a common feature seen in all main national elections in Sri Lanka. It is similar to the socioeconomic situation in colonial Asian nations such as India and Pakistan. In those countries too, the caste system is dominated by the nobles, who were prominent in the colonial era. Table 7 shows the identified modern patterns of historical factors that affected voter intention in Sri Lanka based on the points discussed so far.

Table 08. Voter Intention and Historical Factors in Sri Lanka)1947-2022(

Historical factor	Race	Religion	Family	Caste
Pattern	Sinhala	Buddhist	Senanayake Bandaranayake Rajapaksha	Govigama

Developed by the researcher

Conclusion

In ancient Sri Lanka, the government was based on the monarchy. The people did not have the right to elect their own ruler. It was British colonial rule that abolished the ancient social system of feudalism based on caste and land inheritance and introduced modern democratic political reforms to Sri Lanka for the first time. The formation of the legislative council was its primary step. However, British colonial rule followed a policy of "divide and rule" in appointing natives to the legislative council and Council of State. Because of this, ethnicity, religion, caste, and family have emerged as historical factors affecting Sri Lankan voter intention. Another crucial factor in the emergence of these historical factors affecting voter intention during this period was that Sri Lanka, unlike India, never developed a mass anti-colonial movement around a common nationalist cause to forge a Sri Lankan identity and unite the island's different ethnic communities (Kadirgamar, 2020).

The first parliamentary election in Sri Lanka was held in 1947. From then until 1977, the main national election was the parliamentary election. After the current constitution was introduced in 1977, the main national election was the presidential election. Eight parliamentary elections were held from 1947 to 1977, and eight presidential elections were held after 1977. The total number of main national elections is 16. This study analyzed the effect of historical factors such as ethnicity, religion, caste, and family in shaping voter intention in those 16 elections. Thus, it can be finally concluded that the historical factors of ethnicity, religion, family, and caste that affected the Sri Lankan voter's intention in the 1947 parliamentary election, the first national election, are still valid after 75 years. Also, it can be concluded that Sinhalese as the ethnicity factor, Buddhism as the religious factor, Senanayake, Bandaranaike, and

Rajapaksa family trio as the family factor, and Govigama caste as the caste factor have been historical factors that affected the voter intention of Sri Lanka.

Social consciousness is the philosophical, political, spiritual, aesthetic, and other views of a certain society. Social consciousness originates from the material life conditions of society and the form of the economic system (Khudaikulov, 2022). During the British colonial era, Sri Lankan social consciousness was shaped by elite pilgrimage. During this period, ethnicity, religion, caste, and family shaped the social consciousness of the Sri Lankan voter under British colonial rule. However, in the modern social context, 75 years after independence from colonial rule, the impact of those factors on voter intentions is a subject that needs to be deeply explored.

In social science subjects, ethnicity, religion, family, and caste factors are exclusionary backwardness factors in communities (Das, 2023; Raja, 2023). Making decisions on the basis of ethnicity, religion, family, and caste factors or treating individuals unequally on the basis of those factors is also not allowed in modern democracies. In many countries in the special European region, the effect of race, religion, family, and caste on voter intention, voting behavior, and politics is gradually diminishing. The caste factor is not found in Europe. The class factor is found in Europe. However, in modern times, the effects of the class factor on European electoral politics are also decreasing. In Europe, family politics is almost non-existent. The number of "no religion" people in the UK has increased by 12.0 percentage points to 37.2% (22.2 million) from 25.2% (14.1 million) compared to 2011. In England and Wales, 10.1% (2.5 million) of households had members who identified with two or more different ethnic groups. In 2011, that amount was 8.7% (2.0 million) (Census of UK, 2021). However, the fact that Sri Lankan voters consider the factors of ethnicity, religion, family, and caste that were considered for voting in 1947 even after 75 years is a matter that should be taken into consideration with a deep subject approach. It shows that Sri Lankan voter intention has not reached the developmental stage regarding quality. It is a common backwardness compared to neighboring country like India. India is a country that shows many backward factors in politics. (Ray, 2023; Raja, 2023). The main reason for this backwardness is that political literacy is low compared to basic literacy.

Elections aim to ensure that societal ideals and objectives are met (Suatmiati et al., 2023). The main factor in determining the quality of that ensure is political literacy. Political literacy is related to the political knowledge possessed. It is a factor in community participation in the elections (Widhiasthini, 2022). According to the 2023 UNESCO Institute for Statistics – UIS report, the literacy rate in Sri Lanka is 92 percent (UNESCO Institute for Statistics – UIS, 2023). However, the study conducted by Madhushan in 2022 revealed that the level of political literacy in Sri Lanka is very low. A low level of political literacy is an obstacle to the emergence of intelligent voting intentions and behaviors among Sri Lankan voters (Madhushan, 2022). The Election Commissioner of Sri Lanka has also accepted that (Punchihewa, 2022). Therefore, the researcher suggests that the political literacy of the Sri Lankan voter should be developed in order to liberate the Sri Lankan voter from the effect of backward historical factors such as ethnicity, religion, family, and caste.

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