

The Youth Uprising Movement in Sri Lanka in 2022 and New Trends of Sinhalese Perceptions of Minority Civil and Political Rights and Reconciliation

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ABSTRACT

This study examines new trends in the Sinhala community's perceptions of minority civil and political rights and reconciliation following the 2022 Youth Uprising in Sri Lanka. The understanding among the Sinhalese people of minority civil and political rights and reconciliation has played a crucial role in shaping the political landscape of Sri Lanka and fostering reconciliation or deepening divisions since the colonial era. However, previous research has paid minimal attention to Sinhalese perceptions of minority civil and political rights and reconciliation. Addressing this gap, the primary objective of this study is to examine the nature of Sinhala perceptions of minority civil and political rights and reconciliation. The sub-objectives included identifying attitudes within the Sinhalese community toward minority rights and reconciliation, and identifying the key forces shaping the Sinhala community's perception of minority civil and political rights and reconciliation. This study adopts a qualitative research methodology, and respondents for the study were selected through purposive sampling. This study selected only 28 respondents because this research primarily relies on secondary data sources, including social media videos, discussions, interviews, and discourses related to the 2022 youth uprising in Sri Lanka. The data collected in the study were analyzed through thematic analysis and conclusions were drawn. The 2022 youth struggle was an immediate response to Sri Lanka's economic crisis. The 2022 youth struggle has created positive perception within the Sinhala community regarding minority rights, and it has also created the need for reconciliation among all ethnic groups. It cannot be considered a comprehensive reconciliation mechanism because this perception emerged quickly with the youth struggle. However, it is important to create an effective mechanism to promote reconciliation between ethnic groups with these new trends. Therefore, it is important to create effective mechanisms to promote reconciliation among ethnic groups in line with new attitudinal changes.

Keywords- Ethnic relations, civil and political rights, public sphere, perception, reconciliation

INTRODUCTION

Human rights are a universal concept and every individual is entitled to human rights by birth. Simply, rights are the privileges, entitlements, and benefits enjoyed by individuals and social groups within various social systems and relationships (Uyangoda, 1997). These rights are based on the principles of justice and equality. However, disparities in rights based on racial or ethnic differences and discrimination are major factors that contribute to racial and ethnic crises. When the majority group in a country holds political power, policies are often established to meet their needs, while the rights of minority groups are frequently ignored (Ekanayake, 2004). This situation raises serious issues regarding the protection of minority rights. When there is no equality in access to justice and rights, minorities face oppression and are forced to resist (Gunasekera, 1990). Also, the feeling of insecurity among minority communities becomes a fundamental cause of ethnic crises (Dharmadasa, 2002). This insecurity has historically contributed to political instability in Sri Lanka's multicultural society.

However, there was a time in Sri Lanka's past when minority groups coexisted peacefully, and the protection of their rights came naturally. The breakdown of this cooperation began with the British colonial administration adopting the "divide and rule" strategy, which categorized people along ethnic lines

(Kamalaratne, 2009). These conditions created a mentality where each ethnic group viewed the others with suspicion.

During the colonial period, minority groups made various demands regarding their rights. In response, the British periodically increased minority representation in the legislature. A particularly notable example is the inclusion of provisions for the protection of minority groups in the 1947 Solebury Constitution, particularly through Articles 29 (2) and (3). However, disparities in rights based on ethnicity helped to further intensify racial divisions. After independence, Sri Lanka became a national state, when the Sinhalese majority came to power, many problems arose regarding the protection of minority rights. The concept of "nation" is a crucial element of a nation-state, but Sri Lanka has historically failed to integrate diversity and build a unified nation. The subsequent constitution enacted after independence did not pay much attention to minority rights. The best example is that the protections for minorities provided for in the Solebury Act were not included in the 1972 Constitution (Fazil, 2000). This neglect contributed to the emergence of numerous ethnic crises in Sri Lanka after independence, such as the brutal civil war that lasted from 1983 to 2009.

During the post-war period after 2009, certain peaceful conditions were created in the Sri Lankan Society but the mistrust of each ethnic group continues to operate invisibly in Sri Lankan society. In the present, with the intervention of religious extremist groups, the suppressed ethnic issue has been recreated in the context of religious conflict (Silva, 2017). Reconciliation is a long-term complex process of rebuilding broken social relations in multicultural societies. Effective reconciliation is the best guarantee that past violence will not return (Bloomfield & Barnes, 2003). Especially in a state where diversity is prominent, it can be practically recognized how the existing attitudes toward equal rights for all ethnic groups have a significant impact on socio-economic and political institutions. Although a mechanism of reconciliation was socialized in the post-war era and created fresh expectations of reconciliation in Sri Lankan society, the opportunities for ensuring reconciliation were not empirically created to alleviate the psychological breakdowns, socialized fear, suspicion, hatred, and mistrust created through past violence (Aliff, 2011). The resulting lack of reconciliation has seen many incidents in Sri Lankan society interpreted in an ethnically divisive manner. It has become a driving force associated with the political crises that have emerged in the Sri Lankan Social Context from the past to the present and are hidden in the mainstream.

In 2022, Sri Lanka experienced a youth-led uprising against government corruption and economic mismanagement, known as the "Aragala" (struggle). The protests, sparked by severe financial difficulties and political instability, began on April 1, 2022. The movement quickly gained momentum, with thousands of young people using slogans such as "Go home, Gota" and "A government without Rajapaksa" demanding that President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his government resign (Jayamaha, 2022). The protest site at Galle Face Square, called "Gota Go Gama", became a symbol of democratic resistance, uniting people across ethnic and religious divides. The uprising ultimately led to the resignation and exile of the president, and marked a significant moment in Sri Lanka's political history when youth activism reshaped the nation's governance through democratic means (Hemachandra and Shivasundaram, 2024). According to some critics, the youth uprising in Sri Lankan society in 2022 created a broader discourse on minority rights and reconciliation, and it led to a broad shift in Sinhala views on minority rights and reconciliation. Due to the lack of a deep understanding of this new perception, this study attempts to investigate new trends within the Sinhala community regarding minority civil and political rights and reconciliation during the 2022 Sri Lankan youth uprising.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ethnic Diversity And, The Nature of Ethnic Relations in Sri Lanka

To understand the diversity of the people living in Sri Lanka, it is not enough to talk only about the main ethnic groups that can be seen in Sri Lankan society. For that, attention should also be paid to small groups of people hidden from the mainstream (Bandara et al., 2007). But in Sri Lanka, the most prominent rights-related issues and conflict situations have been created based on the main ethnic groups of Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslims. Sri Lanka's ethnic diversity is linked to a number of historical causes. In particular, the origins of the people groups inhabiting Sri Lanka are linked to migration. Sri Lanka has been home to various migrant

groups from time to time. Historical sources reveal how the people who migrated to Sri Lanka later mixed into a homogeneous society (Bandaranaike, 1984).

The origin and development of the Sinhala folk consciousness took place in the early eras of Sri Lankan history. The idea that Sri Lanka is the country of the Sinhalese people of Arya origin has been nurtured and established in the mind of the people through the Sinhalese consciousness (Gunawardena, 1984). Some studies show that a long-standing Tamil cultural identity existed in Sri Lanka. According to those studies, the promotion of the Jaffna kingdom, and the further southward movement of the southern kingdoms resulted in two parallel units of Tamil and Sinhalese with separate cultures, languages, and administrative systems. Also, The Tamil consciousness that developed in the 19th and 20th centuries was being changed due to various influences, and the formation of a unique Dravidian linguistic and cultural identity for Sri Lanka by absorbing those influences is notable after the 19th century (Kailasapathy, 1994).

The Muslim community in Sri Lanka is also a group of traditional settlers in Sri Lanka with a long-standing religious and cultural identity (Ismail et al., 1990). Although they are the traditional heirs of Sri Lanka with a Sri Lankan identity inherited from their mother's side, the Muslim community is a community that has suffered injustice more than other groups due to various factors (Fazil, 1990).

When examining the nature of ethnic relations in Sri Lanka, the peaceful coexistence between the ethnic groups living in Sri Lanka in the past is remarkable. people in mixed-ethnic areas are used to respecting their own culture as well as other cultures. within regions created on the basis of ethnic coexistence, subcultures unique to those regions can be identified. These sub-cultural characteristics stand out in relation to the language, customs, customs, and beliefs existing among the ethnic groups. This situation is particularly noticeable in the Ampara district, which is a mixture of Muslim and Sinhalese mix (Gunasoma, 2008). In the study of Tamil culture in plantations in Sri Lanka, it can be recognized that there is a central relationship between Sinhala and Tamil cultures. The Sinhala and Tamil cultural fusion is noticeable in many areas such as religious customs, beliefs and rituals, caste system, etc. in the plantation (Dissanayake, 2009).

The colonial period was a period in which the historical ethnic harmony of Sri Lanka collapsed and the ethnic division intensified. Also, the nature of capitalism based on colonial policies has affected Sri Lanka's ethnic groups. In the late 19th century and early 20th century, class and ethnic sentiments were prominent in Sri Lanka. After independence, with the concentration of power on the majority Sinhala ethnic group, mistrust and fear about their future were generated in other ethnic groups. The Sinhala Buddhist identity created at that time also affected the Sri Lankan national movement not to be created on a broad basis (Jayawardena, 1984). Especially, The Sinhala Buddhist consciousness that was being created during the colonial period destroyed the harmony between the ethnic groups, and the Sinhala Buddhist group acted in opposition to the other minority groups, non-Buddhist groups, and caused pressures and conflicts between the ethnic groups. The transformation of Sinhala Buddhist consciousness into a narrow nationalism in the post-colonial society has intensified the loss of equality in the society (Jayawardena, 2000). The influence of the British administrative policies on the ethnic consciousness of Sri Lanka is remarkable. By manipulating legislative processes, the British fostered a hostile attitude among the major ethnic groups in Sri Lanka (Siriwardena, 1984).

Before the colonial period Sinhala and Tamil, the integration was done on the basis of caste. However, the Sinhala and Tamil divisions caused by the ethnic antagonism created by the British in Sri Lanka became more intense after the independence (Ekanayake, 2004). In the post-colonial period, Sri Lankan leaders were unable to establish an independent, formal system of governance to build national reconciliation. As a result, they depended on colonial rule. Therefore, in the first twenty-five years after the independence in 1948, Sri Lanka tended to an ethnic dominance method. Especially, The Sinhalese ruling party neglected minority rights in policy formulation was a notable phenomenon after independence. It created the basic foundation for conflict between the Sinhalese and Tamil ethnic groups over the concept of homeland (Bandara, 2001).

Also, the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka has also been affected by informal social processes. in particular, the concentration of people as ethnic groups was highly affected by ethnic issues. For example, the ethnic problem of the plantation was created based on the social gap created by the British of the ethnic principle, administratively and socially separating the plantation workers and the Sinhalese villagers in the plantation

society (Silva, 1986). The growing working class in the urban areas became victims of ethnic ideologies in the colonial era was an important situation. As a result, workers tended to maintain their ethnicity even during periods of economic crisis. It was a negative condition of the labour movement (Kuruppu, 1984).

Also, the ethnic and religious harmony and integration between the Sinhala Tamils and Muslims who lived in the Vanni, Eastern Coastal, and Northern regions of Sri Lanka have been remarkable since the past. But through the mechanism of displacement, the creation of a new concept of collective identity began to break apart ethnically and religiously mixed towns and villages (Senanayake, 2000).

Every minority group should be allowed to join the political sector of the state as equal to the majority community. but, after 1956, the state policies of the Bandaranayake period changed the situation, and the course of the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka tend to a new dimension (Uyangoda, 1994).

Ethnic Conflicts in Sri Lanka

In the early era Sri Lankan Society had a caste identity. changes in caste identity and the emergence of ethnic identity led to promote of ethnic conflicts instead of caste conflicts (Silva, 2005). Although there are several secular and religious dimensions of Sri Lankan society, the nature of the state providing more rights to the majority Buddhist community has been an adverse situation for the successful restructuring of ethnic security thinking (Ahmed, 1996). As a response to the growth of Sinhalese nationalism, the building of a common consciousness within the Tamil community that united despite all differences led to the Sinhala-Tamil ethnic struggle (Sivathambi, 1984).

Also, in the political sphere, the numerical representation of ethnic groups in political institutions, and regional voting patterns have created the basis of ethnic conflict (Oberst, 1987). Muslim identity has also had an impact on ethnic conflicts in Sri Lanka. Politicians, religious leaders, Sufis, etc. interpret Islam in ethnic, religious, and political terms in a variety of ways, leading to internal contradictions among Muslims and socializing on falsehoods about the Muslim community (Klem, 2011).

Nationalism and religiosity are crucial driving forces in Sri Lanka's ethnic conflicts. The relationship between nationalism and religiosity is complex. In some societies, nationalism and religiosity are contradictory. Many studies have considered religion as an antecedent of nationalism (Voicu, 2012). Over time, the nature of this significance changes according to the conflict context. The religious factor in ethnic struggles is prominent due to the gradual growth of religious violence in modern Sri Lanka (Fox, 2004).

Despite being a multi-religious society, religious harmony is a remarkable condition in the Sri Lanka context. But the Buddhist-Islamic multi-religious centers in Sri Lanka have been influenced by the Buddhist-Islamic fundamentalist tendencies to some extent.

Although that situation had some effect on religious harmony, those new religious movements have not been able to completely remove the religious coexistence and mutual trust that existed in Sri Lanka from the past (Silva, Niwas, and Wickramasinghe, 2017). Religion is the main reason for the internal division of the Muslim community in Sri Lanka. The minority Muslim community has been deeply divided over different interpretations, values, and practices of Islam in Sri Lanka (Fazlan and Vanniasingham, 2015). In particular, global Islamic ideologies such as Wahhabism can be identified in the Sri Lankan Muslim community. With that situation, the socialization of false ideas about the Muslim community has created problematic conditions for reconciliation.

Reconciliation Of Sri Lanka

The historical inability to integrate ethnic diversity is a major characteristic of Sri Lankan society. But in the per- colonial era, the rights of minorities were protected through ethnic harmony. During the colonial period and the post-independence period, the situation changed and the minority rights began to collapse. In the post-colonial period, efforts to reduce social divisions and achieve social harmony have failed and turned in a different direction, which has had a strong negative impact on reconciliation (Gunasekera, 2000).

Although there is a common mention of human rights and minority rights in the Sri Lankan context, the lack of formal, quantitative reference to ethnic issues or minority rights in responsible institutions is problematic (Rauter, 2012). It adversely affects the formal reconciliation mechanism.

Discrimination regarding minority rights leads to ethnic conflicts. Maintaining, reproducing and developing the culture of minority communities is necessary to establish trust and promote minority identity in order to preserve their identity within minority groups (Naranga, 2002). Socializing the concept of collective rights beyond the strong framework of individual rights, the legitimate and internationally promoted model of minority protection affects the effective implementation and promotion of reconciliation (Jovanovic, 2005). That foundation will also create the preconditions for reconciliation.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative research methodology to explore new trends in Sinhalese perceptions of minority civil and political rights and reconciliation following the 2022 youth uprising in Sri Lanka. The study relies primarily on secondary data sources, including social media videos, discussions, interviews, and public discourses related to the youth uprising. These various sources provide a broad understanding of how the perception of the Sinhala community has changed in response to the political and economic crisis. Also, purposive sampling was used to select twenty-eight respondents, including eight social media activists, five Tamil respondents, five Muslim respondents, and ten Sinhalese people, who could provide an in-depth understanding of the research problem. The collected data was subjected to thematic analysis and identified the key themes and patterns related to attitudes towards minority rights and reconciliation. By integrating multiple data sources and applying a rigorous qualitative framework, this study provides a critical investigation of new trends in Sinhala perceptions of minority rights and reconciliation within the youth uprising in Sri Lanka.

FINDINGS

New Trends of Sinhalese People's Perceptions of Minority Groups' Rights and Reconciliation

Promoting a mindset of enjoying diversity

The gathering of all ethnic groups from different regions in one place during the 2022 Youth Uprising helped create a situation where each ethnic group respected the different cultures, and the cultural relativist view of the cultures of other people groups was prominent in all the people groups. As a result, attitudes capable of promoting the mentality of enjoying diversity were created based on the struggle. The organized and active participation of Buddhist monks, Mawlavis, Catholic fathers, Sisters, and Tamil priests became the driving forces behind this.

All groups of people referred for All religious rites at the struggle place. The development of mutual harmony through cultural sharing between ethnic groups during the struggle, and the creation of positive attitudes towards other ethnic groups in the public space, the conditions that stimulated the emergence of the mentality of enjoying diversity. Especially in order to attract more audience, Various interviews, and videos related to harmony between minority groups and the Sinhalese community were rapidly released on social media. It was a new trend that emerged in connection with the struggle.

During the struggle, it was a remarkable situation that the previous hate speech related to minority groups, which intensified the rift between the ethnic groups through social media, underwent a change. It was highly influenced by the socialization of positive attitudes related to the need for reconciliation and minority civil and political rights. Circulation through social media of sermons delivered by powerful, popular religious leaders and priests who can have a special impact on the attitudes of their followers representing all religions during the struggle, Also, publishing the voice records by religious leaders for emphasizing the need for unity, and publishing the voice records emphasizing the need for all groups to contribute to the struggle together, were The mindset of enjoying cultural diversity has been further promoted.

It was also observed that some of the strugglers socialized their ideas by stating that the first victory of the struggle was to lay the foundation for ethnic harmony. Also, Buddhist monks and other religious leaders holding harmonious discussions and implementing various common religious programs in the area of struggle generated positive attitudes related to harmony. Especially since the need for a mechanism to promote reconciliation has emerged from the people themselves, It is notable that the struggle is recognized by names such as the struggle of love, the struggle of brotherhood, etc

In carrying out campaigns through social media constantly highlighting the need for an egalitarian society, there was a motivation to unite all people groups around the struggle. Also, those campaigns have strongly influenced the internalization of the need to promote harmony in public perception.

As a result, the anthropocentrism that was built in relation to their own cultures among the people underwent a significant change and it is possible to recognize the creation of neutral attitudes in relation to other cultures. But Some respondents were of the opinion that some parties strategically highlighted sensitive issues like reconciliation and coexistence at a time when the people were under intense pressure to prepare the necessary background for their political agendas. According to those respondents, it is problematic whether immediate attitudes about reconciliation and coexistence are real attitudes at the ground level, and the hidden conditions associated with it can change. But the new national thinking created in connection with the struggle greatly influenced the change of the previous negative attitudes toward minority groups in the perception of the Sinhalese people.

New trends of Sinhala Buddhist hegemony

The hegemonic attitude of the Sinhalese people toward their own identity is a major factor affecting the nature of the perception of minority rights within the Sinhalese community (Jayawardena, 2000). Since the Sinhalese have the attitude that Sri Lanka is the homeland of the Sinhalese, the attitude that the Sinhalese have more rights to Sri Lanka compared to other ethnic groups has been fostered. And since Sri Lanka is the only country where the Sinhalese ethnic group lives, the idea that it is important to protect the identity of the Sinhalese ethnic group is a traditionally prominent opinion (Bandara, 2001).

Especially in Sri Lanka, Sinhala Buddhist nationalist thought has developed based on the long-term and continuous history (Silva, Niwas, and Wickramasinghe, 2017). It is a remarkable situation to justify the Sinhala language as the state language and Buddhism as the state religion based on the Sinhala Buddhist hegemony that has been developed for a long time in the Sinhalese people.

Especially based on the struggle of 2022, some flexible changes in the previous Buddhist hegemony and the emergence of positive attitudes related to the protection of minority rights and the need for reconciliation are notable situations that can be observed in the public sphere. However, the image created through social media as a situation where the coexistence of people groups was prominent in the struggle area, does not show a complete suppression of Sinhala Buddhist hegemony.

According to some respondents, With the youth struggle of 2022 discussions regarding the change of the state religion and the state language were held in the struggle ground, especially the demands related to the singing of the national anthem in Tamil were included in the action plans presented. But, the majority of activists in the struggle have opposed this.

Also, that cannot be assumed as the general public opinion, and the contradiction in this regard was evident in the videos containing interviews with some of the activists involved in the struggle. In particular, some activists were of the opinion that changing the state religion, changing the state language, or singing the national anthem in Tamil does not confirm the rights of the minorities, and for that, a deep social reformation process is needed.

The major observation was that When the central committee of the struggle discussed changing Buddhism from the state religion, some activists rejected even the discussions and spread it as a tragedy through social media. Also, the discussion on changing the religion of the state was criticized by the respondents as an

attempt by some national and international forces to suppress the goals of the real struggle and highlight narrow religious and racist attitudes. This situation has led to the further development of Sinhala Buddhist hegemony in the public sphere. Through the statements of some Buddhist monks, opinions have been highlighted that the Buddhist monks did not have the initiative or power like other religious groups working in an organized manner in the struggle area. Such conditions have led to the emergence of Buddhist hegemonic ideas.

In particular, it can be recognized that the 2022 youth struggle has played a positive and negative role in changing Sinhala Buddhist hegemonic thinking. Also, due to the struggle situation, it can be recognized as a new dynamic that the previous ideas related to Sinhala Buddhist hegemonic ideas are built as somewhat flexible neutral ideas.

The creation of a neutral opinion in the Sinhala community regarding the rights of minorities due to the influence of social media

The impact of the public sphere created by social media as a tertiary socialization aspect is a unique impact on the perception of the Sinhalese people about the civil and political rights of minorities and reconciliation. According to the respondents, there is an image in society that the rights of minorities are being violated due to the activities of the Sinhalese. It can be recognized that the creation of the wrong attitudes in children during the socialization process by minorities, and external extremist intervention of certain minority groups led to this opinion. But social media-based hate speech and organized violence led by extremist groups based on social media influence have been a driving force for this opinion (Silva, Nivas, and Wickramasinghe, 2017).

The discourse on generational fear, suspicion, and mistrust and how those negative situations have been intensified through socialization was the major discussion of the public sphere. With the struggle of 2022, the damage done in many conflict situations that took communal aspect was highlighted through social media, and the need to reduce those negative situations was emphasized. In particular, social media users are not limited to the intellectual community. It is common for users who use social media without selective perception to be motivated by extremist ideas to hate speech.

With the 2022 struggle, in public opinion built through social media, these negative conditions had undergone a significant change. Among the remarkable situations are the development of broad discourses through social media about the rights of minorities and the need for reconciliation. According to the respondents, the ideas related to the historical failure to promote reconciliation and minority rights spread through social media stand out among the new dynamics created in the perception of the Sinhala people about the rights of minorities and reconciliation.

Demanding justice for all ethnic groups whose rights have been violated regardless of ethnicity

Demands for justice for all ethnic groups whose rights were violated, regardless of ethnicity, were prominent phenomena during the 2022 youth uprising. Particularly the rights of those who have disappeared and those who have been displaced as a result of war, and the spread of ideas that justice should be done to their family members was noticeable in the public sphere. Some scholarly discussions have highlighted the view that it is a precondition to ensure that previous violence does not recur in order to promote reconciliation. During the socialization process, the generation of estrangement in the new generation due to the generational fear and mistrust caused by wrong attitudes have led minorities to turn to extremism and to violate the rights of others. This attitude is an idea that has been highlighted more by social media activists. According to them, political parties spread this situation for their benefit. Therefore, the idea that the 2022 struggle should be made the turning point to remove such generational rifts was further highlighted. The prominent mainstream view was that justice should be achieved, especially for innocent victims of extremism. Due to the intervention of certain organized groups and extremist organizations based on political objectives, young people gather around those organizations and spread extremist ideas,

It was noticeable that some respondents justified the previous violence by stating that the development of impulsive ideas in the youth community on the basis of this unnecessary external intervention leads to violent

situations and violation of rights. Also, A key attitude identified in the study was that violent activities caused by extremist groups of people by becoming tools of political agendas led to the violation of the rights of all communities.

The extremists in the north turned their communities into human shields and fought for a border, resulting in serious violations of the civil and political rights of many ethnic groups (Rauter, 2012). Also, the country lost a large number of lives due to insurgencies since 1971 due to the uprisings in the South, and the Easter bombing claimed many lives. some respondents' idea was that the only way to resist the people who achieve political goals by creating such conflicts is through ethnic harmony. According to Some respondents, unity was a precondition for the disenfranchised to get justice, based on conflict situations.

Socialized counterarguments about the extremists' involvement

Instead of the extremist ideas circulating in social media, the circulation of ideas highlighting the need for reconciliation has significantly changed the ideas and attitudes of the minority civil and political rights within the Sinhalese ethnic group. The gathering of young people with some organizations that spread extremist ideas was the situation before the struggle. It continued with struggle further. There, the endorsement of extremist organizations was prominent. This situation was especially noticeable in the youth groups. That situation has contributed to fostering extremism. With the struggle, there was a shift away from extremist organizations as the main discourse, but it was not a real situation at the grassroots.

It can also be recognized how the extremist ideologies socialized through various media during the struggle affected the perception of the Sinhalese people about minority rights. The socialization of certain false ideas that create divisions between people through primary media such as remorse and social media such as Facebook, YouTube was the notable situation.

Criticisms about the churches sending their organized groups to the struggle on a daily basis and providing aid to the struggle area, Comments made during the struggle that certain extremist minority groups used funds for the struggle, The socialized idea that Buddhist monks were more repressed than other religious priests, And some ideas such as the ideas presented that the repression during the struggle was clearly an attempt to lay hands on the robe of Buddhist monk are ideas that created new dynamics in the public space.

Criticism of certain extremist organizations funding the struggle was a recognizable opinion in the public sphere. Also, there was general criticism that the struggle was being manipulated to achieve extremist aims, particularly ethnic and religiously extremist goals. But sufficient evidence could not be identified to confirm those conditions and there is a need for a deeper study.

comments regarding the absence of a reconciliation mechanism after conflict situations

The non-removal of the violent mentality that emerged from the conflicts after conflict situations is a factor that has led to the negative nature of the Sinhalese's attitudes regarding the rights of minorities. After ethnic conflict situations, instead of focusing on the root causes of the conflict and applying remedies, assessing the damage caused by disaster monitoring, and paying compensation, arresting the majority who were not involved in certain incidents, was the notable trend. Although the calamities that occurred during the conflicts are assessed and compensation is paid, none of the parties intervenes to rebuild the damaged relations, which creates the background for the activities of the extremists (Silva et al., 2020).

After conflict situations, efforts to reduce social divisions or to achieve harmony were seen in the society but usually, they moved in the opposite direction (Gunasekera, 1990).

This effect had a negative impact on the perception of the Sinhalese people about minority rights. During the struggle of 2022, a discourse was created about this to some extent, and an opinion that a mechanism for rebuilding the broken social relations was created through the nature of the struggle.

DISCUSSION

The hegemonic Sinhala Buddhist consciousness and the existing anthropocentric view of their culture among the Sinhalese is a driving force that further influences the attitudes of the Sinhalese people regarding minority rights. It is not established that a mindset of enjoying diversity has been created due to ethnic coexistence or the creation of unique subcultures in regions where ethnic mixing is prominent. Some Sinhalese people accept the need to protect the civil and political rights of minorities based on the positive effects of socialization.

But due to the socialization of generational fear, suspicion, and mistrust, the Sinhalese majority has been tempted to justify limiting the opportunities available to the minority groups to enjoy civil and political rights, regardless of how the minority groups deal with the Sinhalese community. The hegemonic Sinhala Buddhist mentality led to the motivation of minority groups to even struggle to protect their rights. It was against this background that the LTTE developed a perception of a historically created separate homeland, a separate language, rich tradition, and culture covering the northern and eastern provinces (Furkus and Klemm, 1990).

The Constitution has confirmed the right to live equally for all peoples, but the anthropocentrism in the people groups and the absence of a mentality of enjoying diversity in practice creates negative conditions of rights. This situation is confirmed by the various objections based on the hegemonic Buddhist mentality to the opinion that discrimination should not be done in obtaining the rights that emerged based on the struggle. Therefore, these kinds of situations should be taken into consideration in policy formulation and policies should be created for a long-term attitude transformation process to integrate diversity and build national harmony. Especially in the education system, a comprehensive social reformation process should be created by changing the outstanding conditions at the ground level, such as creating separate schools on the basis of ethnicity and religion.

When the main ethnic group of a country is in control of that country, the needs of the majority are often established legally without regard to the needs of the minority ethnic groups (Ekanayake, 2004). It is important to change these conditions that have caused fear and insecurity in the minority communities in Sri Lankan society and create a legal framework for the protection of minorities through constitutional reforms. There, do not give special privileges for minority groups, but everyone should be treated equally in getting rights. There should be no discrimination.

In cultural exchange and recognition of the values of other cultures, subcultures unique to those regions have been created in areas where there have been ethnically mixed conditions (Gunasoma, 2008).

However, changes in traditional cultures can be identified through the transformation of cultural traditions in some ethnic groups, and the emergence of hard-line people due to extremist influences. It can be recognized in Muslim society that young people are resorting to spreading the strict religious views of those countries in the society by going to work abroad in Middle Eastern countries or going abroad for higher education. (Silva et al., 2020). Those new cultural changes causing suspicion and fear of the Muslim community among other ethnic groups are a remarkable condition of Sri Lankan society.

With the intervention of some extremist organizations, young people have gathered around those organizations and spread extremist ideas. This situation led to the development of impulsive ideas in the youth community. In order to manage such situations, it is important to create a framework to promote reconciliation. Especially for that, culture-related knowledge and new trends should be socialized through the study of minority cultures in Sri Lanka.

The media of communication have a great influence on social existence. It is practically seen that certain social media encourage the receiver to analyse some simple events in an extremist face along with racial, social, political, cultural, and moral factors.

The ideas circulated through mass media are captured by the receiver based on their personal tastes, knowledge,

attitudes, beliefs, evaluations, and so on. Different receivers view the same event from different perspectives. Sometimes that view can be an extremist view. The result negatively affects the individuals well as the society. It is impossible to expect selective perception from many receivers (Atugala, 2003). Extremist ideas circulating through social media can be strong enough to socialize mistrust, changing the close relationships that existed in some communities. Therefore, Practical measures should be taken to reduce the abuse of the right to free expression.

Extremist incitement leads to huge violations of the civil and political rights of all groups. Extremist views have caused a change in the Sinhalese's perception of the rights of minorities in particular. Some extremist groups are tempted to interpret the rise of many minority groups as a release of pressures imposed on them by society for a long time. It creates the main condition to develop extremism.

Also, after conflicts between ethnic groups, it is imperative to apply remedies based on the results of the conflict. In cases of ethnic conflicts, social media has been censored and compensation has been given to the victims. But the notable phenomenon is the need for broader social reform was deliberately overlooked.

This situation has promoted conditions that negatively affect the perception of the Sinhalese ethnic group regarding minority rights as well as reconciliation. Therefore, the social breakdowns caused by conflict situations in the society, and the removal of violent impulsive mindsets, will be a basis for the current need to build a systematic reconciliation mechanism in Sri Lankan society.

CONCLUSION

Sinhala Buddhist hegemonic Ideas and attitudes have long adversely affected the Sinhala community's perception of the civil and political rights of minorities. Sinhala Buddhists spreading violence b against other ethnic and religious groups by destroying the coexistence between the ethnic groups has resulted in pressures and mistrust among the ethnic groups (Jayawardena, 2000). The nature of racist attitudes is to reject the identity of other ethnic groups (Klemm and Firks, 1990). It led to the emerging Ego through the rejection of the identities of other Ethnic groups. As a result, they are incentive to think only about the rights of their ethnic group. But As a result of the 2022 youth struggle, this situation underwent some change.

And the socialization of ideas about the need to protect the rights of minorities and the need to promote reconciliation is a notable new trend.

Also, it is a condition acknowledged by the Sinhalese people that many problematic situations regarding the rights of minorities have arisen due to the actions of political leaders to manipulate the identity concept of the Sinhalese for political agendas. The ideological facts that stood out were the ideas about the Sinhalese turning to look at the rights of minorities from a narrow racist perspective due to the deliberate creation of ethnic concepts in the Sinhalese by the politicians for the sake of their victories.

Thus, it can be concluded that the Sinhala Buddhist hegemonic thought, which had an impact on the personal security, political freedom, and religious freedom of the minority ethnic groups that emerged in Sri Lankan society, has become a neutral opinion.

But macro studies reveal that the mentality of Sinhala identity, which historically raised problematic situations regarding minority rights, has become the driving force of the recent crisis situations (Silva, 2020). As a result of the Sinhala Buddhist mentality, the norms, values, and social image created on it changed the dimension of coexistence and reconciliation, and it managed to redirect the feeling of reconciliation during the 2022 youth struggle.

In particular, every minority should be allowed to join the political union called the state as equals with the majority community (Uyangoda, 1994). But Government policies during the Bandaranayake period changed that situation and made Sinhala the state language and Buddhism the state religion. The resulting discrimination has led minorities to a path of struggle.

It is notable that action plans to change these conditions were created in association with the 2022 youth struggle. In particular, changing the policy of making Buddhism the state religion, and changing the policy of making the Sinhala language the state language was the main discourse of the action plan. They are implications about the creation of a mindset for enjoying diversity. But when looking at the contradictions related to such reforms, these discourses can be identified as strategies created by people associated with the struggle for various purposes to achieve those goals, and it cannot be concluded that it is the idea that existed at the grassroots level.

In the concept of Sinhala identity, a tendency to reject the identities of other ethnic groups can be identified (Furkus and Klemm, 1990). The attitude of the Sinhalese regarding the civil and political rights of minorities was that no matter how much the rights are protected, the minorities are motivated to struggle by creating an opinion that their rights will be lost due to selfish attitudes. especially, such negative attitudes have been built up about the Muslim race.

The extensive transformation of these earlier attitudes can be identified as a modern trend based on the struggle and the social relations developed on the basis of coexistence in the struggle ground have suppressed these extremist ideas.

During the socialization process, the fear, doubt, and mistrust that emerged from certain struggling situations were also generational and this situation has influenced the generation of extremist feelings in the minorities. The young people's tendency to imitate other societies during socialization is a situation that led minorities to extremism (Silva, 2020) by changing this situation, It can be recognized that the struggle provided practical solutions to the historical failure of nation-building after independence. But it cannot be concluded that it is the real situation hidden in the mainstream.

In particular, the Halal issue, the use of sterilization drugs in women's underwear, the spreading of the idea that the country's power will be seized by increasing the population, fear about increasing the number of mosques, etc. are deeply socialized conditions before the struggle (Silva, 2017). These ideas were the main factors that influenced the negative attitudes of the Sinhalese people regarding the civil and political rights of minorities and reconciliation. But in the struggle area, these ideologies were severely criticized, and minority groups eating together with the Sinhalese, and practicing All religious rituals in general, were notable.

Therefore, the 2022 youth struggle can be concluded as the driving force that religious nationalism and the rise of extremist Buddhist groups that occurred after 2009 provided the power to promote reconciliation by reducing ethnic and religious tensions and hate speech. However, it cannot be concluded as a deep social reform as it is a situation that emerged immediately. Through the emergence of religious extremism, it is possible to recognize how ethnic conflicts have recently shifted from an ethnic basis to a religious basis (Silva, Niwas, and Wickramasinghe, 2017).

The emergence of religious extremism in connection with the struggle remained a hidden condition in the mainstream. Based on the activities of organized religious groups and certain religious priests, the creative efforts made by such religious groups to gather people around their religion were highlighted. It is a condition that has been hidden from the mainstream. It can be recognized that political parties continue to use ethnic and religious differences to incite violence and conflict in Sri Lanka. (Wanniasingham et al., 2018).

Also, the notion that the integration of extremist organizations with the conflict situation has intensified conflict-related violence, and the justification of many religious and ethnic conflicts as situations caused by political intervention, is a trend that can be identified in the struggle. But those comments indicate that extremist groups are using some strategies to achieve their narrow extremist goals during the 2022 struggle. This is evidenced by comments that extremist groups have funded the struggle and provided material support during the struggle. In this study, the need for an in-depth study on it should be highlighted.

Thus, the youth struggle of 2022 has created positive conditions in the perception of the Sinhalese community about minority rights which has influenced the political crisis in Sri Lankan society to intensify. And It is also created the need for reconciliation in all nations.

All these conditions are the main conditions that are highlighted in the mainstream, but it cannot be concluded that they are the hidden reality in the mainstream. The youth struggle of 2022 was an immediate response to the economic crisis in Sri Lanka. Also, the ideas related to reconciliation emerged immediately with youth struggle. therefore, it cannot be expected as the broader implementation of reconciliation.

Considering all these factors, It must begin to create an environment at the school level that protects the rights of minorities and fosters harmony. For that, the mixed school concept should be encouraged in Sri Lanka's education system instead of the segregated school system based on ethnicity. Also, educational reforms and school curricula that encourage respect for cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity should be introduced. In addition, institutionalize reconciliation mechanisms through the establishment of permanent reconciliation institutions with the participation of all ethnic and religious communities, Promote international cooperation, and create local-level reconciliation committees to address grievances at the grassroots level, engage progressive religious leaders to foster interfaith dialogues against extremism, Ensure that state policies, especially in public administration and education, reflect multilingual and multi-religious inclusion, and implement strict legal measures against the spread of hate speech and extremist ideologies can be used to protect minority rights and reconciliation.

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