



ELECTORAL BEHAVIOUR AND VOTING ANALYSIS OF NAGALAND WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MOKOKCHUNG DISTRICT.

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Abstract: In Nagaland, competitive politics is usually about rallying towards the incumbent party in the central government and the political alliances and counter alliances borne out of that. Generally, Nagas do not share the same issues of caste, class, and religion of mainland politics. Issues that matter are of socio – political cleavages borne out of ethnic tribal differences, villages, clans, and family politics are also important determinants of voting and electoral behavior. The study on electoral behavior in a tribal context sometimes runs into uncharted territory in terms of theory and literature and cannot claim to be the general view of entire Nagaland. Rather, it is an attempt to understand electoral and voting behavior of the Ao Nagas and further unravel a window to the political behavior of Nagaland. The data has been taken from nearly 500 respondents sampled by systemic random sampling method and with additional interviews.

Index terms: Electoral behavior, voting, Nagaland, Mokokchung, village council, grassroots, authority, patriarchy, elections.

Naga society is close knit. The behavioral patterns tend to have a commonality of aspirations and understanding. Almost same cultural background and identity, same struggle set apart by some ethnic yet superficial differences further help to decipher the political and social attitudes. The sociological approach has been frequently employed in this paper to grasp the level of socialization. It has been useful in understanding the ethnographical setting of the Naga voters. The unique political construct of the Nagas had to be studied in relation to their primary traditional settings. Similarly, the political behavior approach was important in understanding the character of values in a society. It is understood that “The study of political behavior attempts to discover the extent and nature of uniformities in the actual behavior of men and groups of men in the political process. “The use of historical knowledge further helped in anchoring the reality with the past values. Three main approaches namely, historical, sociological, and political - behavior approaches were employed to study this paper. Prolonged exposure to electoral malpractices desensitizes Nagas to unintentionally normalize the practice of vote selling and buying, proxy voting, voting together by the entire village in consensus or pressured to vote together by the grassroots authority. These electoral mal practices take root in the social fabric of the community by mimicking its culture and traditions since the grassroots authority draws its legitimacy from traditions. One of the ways to influence the community is to find a willing partner in the authoritative structure of the grassroots level or in the bureaucratic government level. Political entrepreneurs and political parties may find a chink in the traditions whereby manipulation and distortion of truth is engineered to make the electoral practice acceptable to the citizens. As mentioned earlier, the traditional authoritative institutions paving way to vote for one candidate by the whole village on its direction as a law is an example. During this research, some hard-hitting answers were given by the respondents. These has given this research some regularities to conclude upon and depict the voting behavior and attitudes. The subsequent analysis of electoral politics is discussed below.

Vote-Market Politics

The practice of vote buying is very common and data shows the widespread practice of vote buying in almost all the constituencies. Corrupt practices of vote buying and selling are henceforth to be mentioned in this paper as 'vote market.' The vote market is perpetuated and carried forward, which is explained by the description of the linkage of three points. The first point from where the interest generation is created in order to indulge in the vote market is the 'candidate'. The second point is the 'middlemen'. The last point of entry where acceptance and multiplication of activity in the vote market occurs is around the 'voter' himself depending on his response. In other words, this is the core from where interest is generated. The middle point turns out to be the most crucial in connecting the two points. The intertwining of the paths of the first and the third points is impossible without the middle actor or actors. The middle actor(s) who is the brain behind the organization of supporters for the candidate is from a particular polling station. He knows the locals well and vice versa and catches the vulnerable to engage in the vote market. The middle actor knows the economic condition of the voters and the level of openness to indulge in the market transaction. The actors in this market transaction can attain a level of impersonal business transaction by viewing the people as 'voters' and not as a neighbor or an acquaintance within the polling station. The middleman has a choice to directly deal with the voters or in groups. The modus operandi of the middleman and his efficacy in having a great number of vote sellers in the market transaction ultimately determines the victory of the candidate under whom he is working for. This job can be executed only by the insider - familiar to the polling station in question. The groundwork preparation for election starts early by placing the right people in the right job. The Booth level Officer (BLO) of each polling station is appointed by the state government. The BLO can be placed in a tricky situation quite vulnerable to the forces of the vote market. The integrity of the BLO becomes pertinent to keep the initial steps of cleaning the electoral scene. Men in power and positions of influence can abuse the BLOs office by getting the information of voters which an unsuspecting BLO must have diligently gathered for the government. Personal information of the voters can be crucial for political entrepreneurs seeking for voters to engage in the vote market. The nature of socio-cultural conditions makes the voters quite accessible and familiar to the people active in the market. The openness of a voter to engage in the vote market can be dictated by some external factors which are discussed below.

The vote market is determined by level of education, nature of job, etc.

Out of 384 respondents, 78 respondents admitted to giving cash or accepting it from party workers during election. Out of this some said, they had spent money for a certain candidate by offering to voters and supporters as goodwill money. Some respondents who were officials in government departments, holding managerial or office staff with clout, businessmen, teachers, and housewives had admitted to giving money to voters in support of a candidate or taken money distributed on the brink of elections

Below is the table for people who gave or accepted cash during elections according to occupation .

Table 1

Occupation	Number
Officials	03
Managerial, clerical	08
Business	13
Teachers	07
Farmers	29
Can't say	01
Unskilled workers	01
Housewife	05
Students	01
Employment seekers	03
Daily wage earners	01
Skilled workers	03
Village/town elders	03
Total	78

The vote market is highly robust in competitive Assembly Constituencies.

During the interview of respondents, a regularity could be assumed. Those constituencies with neck-to-neck competition had two common features to consider. Even if the respondents did not admit frankly of indulging in the vote market yet agreed to the prevalence of vote buying in their constituency and could sense their dependency and frustration after witnessing this practice during the Assembly election. Secondly, the voters from competitive constituency also could not tell nor try to predict the winner in the election from their constituency because of high competitiveness between the candidates. The winner in a competitive constituency could be correlated to the amount of money spent or given to the voters. So higher the competition greater amount of money spent on buying votes.

The vote market is less active when a village candidate is selected by the village councilor the grassroot authority.

Selection of candidate is against democratic principles and crushes the voice of the minority. Empowered by traditions, a tribal village authority may order all the villagers to vote for a certain candidate in some villages. The phenomenon of high activity in the vote market tends to be lesser in the rural places with the selection of a village candidate by the village council or the Putu Menden. In urban places, because of heterogeneity and higher level of education, selection of candidates by a traditional body is not possible. In my field work, respondents having leadership position in the village council directly or indirectly related to the candidate had similar view points. This method somehow seems to work for the villages that are directly benefitted if the village selected candidate wins and more so if the candidate is from their own village. Ethnic loyalty and interest with a close-minded outlook during elections may work short term for the benefitting village but in the long run, the effects can be disastrous for the spirit of positive competition in a democratic duel. Some pertinent questions come to play in this situation. Firstly, the structure of the First Past the Post system enables majority rule and favors the big villagers with high voters. Elections then becomes inversely advantageous for citizens belonging to big villages. The candidate chosen by the village has fewer hands to grease. The favor of the village council and some prominent citizens of the village goes a long way in consolidating his position. The citizens consider the selection of village candidate as undemocratic yet some also gave the Machiavellian inspired reasons behind such a move. One reason can be because the village selects the candidate in order to avoid internecine conflicts and discord in the village expected as a fallout in case of competition between candidates and supporters of the candidates. History is replete with clashes and violent campaigns during elections. Therefore, the village authority selects the candidate and makes the villagers fall in line to their decision on their reason as 'acting for common good' to maintain harmony in the village.

Ethnocentrism and voting behavior.

Ethnocentrism and vying benefits for one's village or the singular closed understanding for the upliftment for one's own village could be observed through data from this research. Since the state is the only agency for development and is a patronage state, having a minister from a village is extremely beneficial for the village. 66.8% of the respondents as members of Ao Naga community replied that if the competition is between a villager and another candidate but from a different village contest the election, they will vote for the candidate from their village. The question asked to the respondents went like this; Allow me to give two scenarios. Kindly comment to whom you will give your vote for.

Table 2

	Percent
A candidate from your village is contesting from your constituency	66.8
Another candidate from a different village is also contesting from your constituency	32.7
Party Candidate	0.5
Total	100.0

The answer is in reflection of their ethnic interest taking primacy over the question of capability. Tables 2 and 3 are shown here with the question and a correlated question to make us understand the voting behavior guided by considerations of village politics and ethnocentrism. Anticipation for village development and creation of employment can be some of the reasons for voting for the villager. Respondents confided that this can be considered as strategic voting as having a successful candidate from the village will benefit the whole village. 10.4% respondents said development of necessities, employment etc. will be within their reach if only the villager

wins in the election. 3% respondents opined that if another villager wins then their village will be deprived of benefits as the successful candidate will help his village more. 43.9% said loyalty to the village will be another factor in voting for the villager. 45.2% said the voting decision will be taken according to the capability of the candidate which seem to be the most politically correct answer but the ground reality is different when factors like consensus voting, high vote market and patronage politics comes to play.

The question posed to the respondents was: Under what reason will you vote for the candidate?

Table 3

	Percent
I will vote for the fellow villager out of loyalty to my village	43.9
Because my village candidate will bring development to my village	10.4
The candidate from another village will help his village more than my village	0.3
Vote according to the capability of the candidate	45.2
Party ideology	0.3
Total	100.0

Voting decision influenced by party ideology was just 3%. This low percentage correctly reflects the earlier data of 69.8% of respondents that said, they do not go through the party manifestos and programs of the political parties.

Unlike in the past, the electioneering and campaign has gone through some changes. A senior citizen actively involved in Naga politics in 1960s and 1970s said campaigns and slogans were simple. The people did not speak referring to the names of political parties but rather voters made small talk according to the party symbols. For e.g., some were supporting the political party with Cock as the symbol (Democratic Party), the hand (Congress), etc. NNO was understood to be for a future with India and Democratic Party for independence from India. It is mentioned rather hilariously in M. Aram's book about how voters thought the independent candidates will bring independence for Nagaland (Aram.M.1974. a).

Leaving aside the awareness of modern political intricacies and politicking, the exposure to campaign messages party principles and issues prominently discussed by the political party is not spread evenly according to 75% of the respondents and the question thus asked to the respondents is shown below.

Do you agree or disagree that the electorate in Mokokchung district is exposed to the campaign messages, election issues and election related events during election?

Table 4

	Percent
Disagree	75.1
Neither agree nor disagree	9.1
Agree	15.8
Total	100.0

75% of the respondents disagrees that the electorate in Mokokchung district is exposed to the campaign messages, election issues and election related events during elections. This describes much of the actual scenario.

Issues and voting behavior

The below given table shows the responses to the questions on whether some important issues were highlighted by candidates or political parties in any of the Lok Sabha or state Assembly elections in 2018 and 2019.

Table 5

Sl. No	Issues	Responses in %			Total %
		No	Yes	Can't say	
1	33% Women reservation	73.6	20.1	6.3	100.0
2	Development of medical infrastructure	33.2	70.0	5.8	100.0
3	Clean Drinking water	27.7	66.5	5.8	100.0
4	Development of technical and IT related institutes	50.8	42.9	6.3	100.0
5	Naga Political solution	21.1	73.1	5.8	100.0
6	Rooting out corruption	65.0	28.7	6.3	100.0
7	Afforestation and environment protection	50.0	43.9	6.1	100.0
8	Employment generation	12.9	80.5	6.6	100.0
9	Establishment of industries	62.9	30.2	6.9	100.0
10	Conducting clean elections	29.7	63.7	6.6	100.0

73.6 % of the respondents said Women's Reservation of 33% in Municipal bodies were not highlighted by the candidates or parties during their campaigns. Despite this poor mention, the present United Democratic Alliance has announced that the 33% reservation of seats for women in urban elections will go ahead according to the 74th Amendment Act. Some pertinent issues concerning the state and Mokokchung district seemed to be covered well in the campaign by the political parties and candidates. The outcome of those promises made to the voters or issues they passionately declared and fulfilling them after coming to power needs further study. 80% of the candidates promised in development of medical infrastructure in the district. 66% said the issue of providing safe drinking clean water was mentioned in their campaigns. The issue of development of technical and IT related educational institutes were mentioned by 42.9% of the candidates. Further, the settlement of the Naga protracted issue for Naga solution under the framework agreement was mentioned by 73% of the candidates. The first Indian election in Nagaland (1952) was boycotted on the Naga issue and continues to be an emotive issue to be resurrected every election. Thereafter, Naga National Groups and factions otherwise called rebel outfits by the national media denounces Indian elections and calls for its boycott every election. In 1998, there was a call not to participate in the elections till a solution of Naga problem was given. All parties except Congress did not take part in the election. Congress contested in all the constituencies and came back to power.

Nagaland has a chronic problem of corruption and is the greatest cancer stopping the state's holistic development. However only 28.7% of the respondents said the candidates have mentioned this issue in their campaign. The issue of environmental protection and afforestation was mentioned by only 4.9% of the candidates. Nagaland has one of the second highest unemployment in India and the first in the North East. 80% of the candidates mentioned about ameliorating the state of unemployment but without mentioning ways to achieve it. However, it remains to be seen whether these promises will be acted upon by providing ways of employment through creative ways of state's involvement in state owned industries or employing them in government departments through backdoor for fulfilling clientele promises. The state spends 51.91% from non-developmental funds on just salaries and wages without considering the pension expenditure. Even if the state's government employees are over the roof, the question of establishing industries for employment avenues were not mentioned by 62.9% of the candidates.

Despite the grim data from respondents on the issue of clean elections and the existence of a robust vote market, 63.7% of the candidates had at least mentioned about the issue of clean elections and issue of money for votes in their election campaigns.

The desires and need of the people for proper communication network, water supply, health infrastructure, etc. were superseded by populist yet sensational issue of solution to Naga problem as it took a centerstage like in other elections. 73% of the respondents said the candidates had spoken of the Naga problem and promised to work towards that, if voted to power. Issues of corruption, environment preservation, establishment of industries for employment generation were not addressed by many of the candidates in their election campaign. Even the issues of opening technical and IT related institutes were not popular campaign issues for the candidates. Non emphasis on these issues is due to the lack of interest from the public when compared to other issues like health, employment, Naga issue, roads, communication, and clean election. In other words, the latter issues had primacy over the less popular issues despite being pertinent for the development of Mokokchung district and Nagaland at large. The respondents were asked about the most important need-based issue facing Mokokchung district today in order to understand the concern from the candidates and political parties. Development of roads and communication infrastructure took the top slot followed by poor health infrastructure and a lament for lack of good public leaders. The problem of loss of moral values and traditions was next. Lack of good educational

institutes and water scarcity and corruption and illegal taxation were also mentioned. The issues considered important by the respondents are shown in the table below.

Table 6

What is the most important issue facing Mokokchung today?

Sl. No	Important issues facing Mokokchung District	Percent
1	Water scarcity	4.1
2	Few recreational spaces	1.3
3	Health infrastructure	17.0
4	Corruption	1.3
5	Unemployment	3.6
6	Environmental degradation	1.8
7	Can't say	8.9
8	Lack of good leaders	7.4
9	Loss of moral values and traditions	5.3
10	Loss of good educational facilities	4.8
11	Irregular power supply	0.3
12	Loss of interest in government jobs	0.3
13	Illegal taxation	2.5
14	Clean election	2.0
15	Roads and communication infrastructure	32.2
16	Lack of entrepreneurial initiatives	2.8
17	Other	2.8
18	To develop agriculture	1.3
19	To give space to minorities	0.3
20	No delimitation	0.3
Total		100.0

The issues considered important by the voters and the actual issues discussed by the candidates in their campaigns were not similar. Issues of corruption, roads and infrastructure and water scarcity, etc. were not discussed in the political campaigns.

POLITICAL SOCIALISATION AND PARTICIPATION ACROSS GENDER

Female voters and patriarchy

The behavior of the female voters do have a connection to the presence of patriarchy. The patriarchal set up can be one reason for this high percentage of voters disagreeing to the question as reflected in table 4 above. Women do not participate on equal footing with men. This is a platform that the candidates and political party uses to introduce themselves and their programs as contending candidates. This public speaking platform is organized by the village council (Putu Menden) or concerned citizens for direct interface with the voters. In the urban places, this interface meeting is organized by the colony leaders and ward officials. 75% of the women has not been to campaign meetings. In the rural places women are not allowed in male dominated general meetings. This crucial meeting when the candidate expresses his principles and voters are given a chance to make a voting decision is not denied to women but at the same time considered a domain of men only. Interestingly there are 49.4% of women voters in Mokokchung district according to 2011 census but has not been to any important public meetings during elections. On further probing many women in both rural and urban places are not interested to attend such meetings and those interested women were not comfortable to go because of a male dominated structure. As early as in 1969, public speaking platforms were opened (Aram .1974 b) and was popular in Nagaland. But if women are not counted to attend public meetings, then half of the population stand unreached and unexpressed.

It has also been noted through this research that, many Nagas have a disconnect with anything political in nature because they consider politics to be dirty therefore going to such meetings are not looked upon in good taste and to participate in public meetings where listeners discuss the programs of the candidates through the open platform.

The table given below highlights the participation of female voters in various election related activities during elections.

Table 7

Sl no	Election related activities	Female respondents in %		Total %
		No	Yes	
1	Election Campaign meetings	73.1	26.9	100.0
2	Given or collected money during elections	88.8	11.2	100.0
3	Participated in door to door canvassing during elections	84.8	15.2	100.0
4	Gone to partake food in election camps during elections	74.8	25.2	100.0

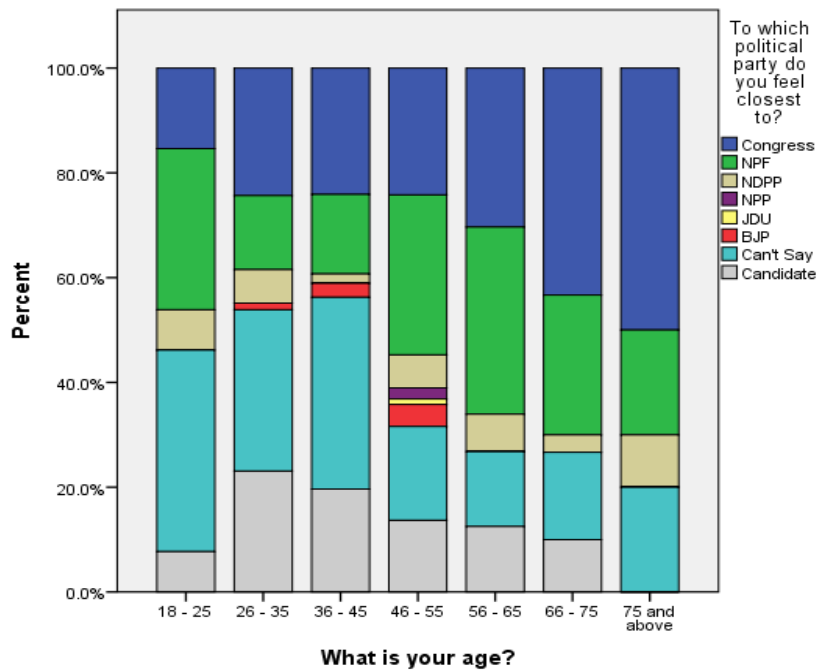
The table given below highlights the participation of male voters in various election related activities during elections.

Table 8

Sl no	Election related activities	Male respondents in %		Total %
		No	Yes	
1	Election Campaign meetings	22.8	77.2	100.0
2	Given or collected money during elections	73.5	26.5	100.0
3	Participated in door to door canvassing during elections	56.6	43.4	100.0
4	Gone to partake food in election camps during elections	33.2	66.8	100.0

The data of electoral behavior between gender is the opposite of each other. Females do not participate in election related activities nor do they show much interest as shown by men. 73.1 % females have not attended any election campaign meetings as against 77.2% of males who have attended elected election meetings. 88.8 % of females have not taken nor given money during elections. 73.5% of males have taken or given money during elections. 84.8% of females have not canvassed while 56.6% of the males has engaged in canvassing activities during elections. Even the big feasts and open kitchens from the candidates' camp during elections is not visited popularly by the females as only 25.2 % had partaken in the food. In contrast 66.8% of the males had participated or ate food from the election camps during elections. Majority of the female respondents were equally aware of the issues raised by the politician or legislator in the election campaign. This information came from the community and most notably from their husbands, fathers, and brothers. The respondents replying cannot say or having no opinions were mostly females. The lack of or little electoral interest from the females can also stem from Nagaland being a patriarchal society. Through this research, we understand patriarchy does not encourage the females to be trained in statecraft. Little room is given for the females to develop leadership skills in political authoritative seats or germinate seeds of political leadership in them. This trend continues and the husband or men of the house becomes politically active while women are happy to stay unheard though they excel equally well in other areas with their male counterparts. Another trend observed in this fieldwork was the demonization of elections. The negative tag given to electoral activity inhibited the citizens from being active in political socialization and that stopped many from involving in politics. The vote market of buying and selling, fights and heightened drunken brawls and the reputation of many legislators as corrupt made this activity the least favorite and not a mainstream choice.

Table 9
Identification to Political Parties according to age



The support base of Congress political party is lowest in the 18 to 25 age group with just 16%. In the age group between 26 to 55 years, the support base is around 24%. Identification to a political party by an individual might grow out of his life experiences, ideology, severe emotional and physical stressful situations such as wars, independence movement as in the context of India and Congress party and for other unique historical reasons. Above all, political socialization over a period might play a big part in developing the attitudes and political inclination of the citizens. The citizens of Mokokchung after statehood has been ardent supporters of NNO political party after which this party evolved into the Congress political party. Coincidentally, the Chief Minister of Nagaland from 1980s to 2002 has been Dr S.C. Jamir from Ungma village in Mokokchung district. He is a pathfinder and one of the ablest leaders from Ao Naga community. Therefore, senior citizens, contemporary of those decades under a Congress government nurse a strong affection for Congress Party. Our data clearly reflects that the senior citizens identify more with congress and with an increase in age the feeling of closeness to Congress party increases. Likewise, the NPF political party which is also an old party though under different names but same cock symbol has been consistently used despite the change in party name also finds representation in all age groups alike. Interestingly, the new parties in Nagaland like JDU, NPP and BJP do not find support from senior citizens. This might be because of their lack of closeness and nil experiences with these political parties in their lifetime.

The social and psychological origination of party identification in a tribal society is influenced by the ethnic community she belongs to. The voters do not pay much heed to the ideology of the political party but can be swayed on village lines, personality, anti- incumbency, money, patronage politics or other ethnic reasons. The absolute closeness to a party through generations works for some but not for the rest. In Nagaland and in Mokokchung district, support for a party can also be divided on the lines of Naga nationalism and Indian nationalism. The respondents belonging to villages that had active and important leaders in the Naga national movement beginning from 1960s had more attachment towards regional political parties. These respondents chose to stay true to the sacrifices made by the tall leaders of their village by staying faithful to their identification and respect for Naga regional parties.

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