

## Electoral Behaviour of Voters in Nungba Assembly Constituency: A Socio-Political Analysis

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**Abstract** —The paper analyses the voting behaviour of the people of Nungba Assembly Constituency, Manipur, on a socio-political basis from the findings of an empirical survey supported by the electoral records from 1972 to 2022. Voter turnout is high (often above 75%), but the political landscape in Nungba is complex. Important factors are ethnicity, the credibility of leadership, the continuing underdevelopment, and the role of national and regional parties. Research shows that the expectation of transparent and accountable leadership and equitable development are recurring aspirations of the voters, often subverted by deep-seated practices of clannism, vote buying, and manipulation of democratic processes by state and non-state actors alike. The survey responses show an increasing distrust in political promises and a belief that government schemes seldom reach the most marginalised communities. The recent voting trends are consistent with the broader national trends, showing a clear departure from Congress's dominance and a move towards the BJP. It also reviews the impact of legal and institutional reforms on electoral integrity and highlights the progress achieved and the challenges to overcome, such as the lack of transparency in campaign financing and the criminalisation of politics. The analysis is based on the contemporary literature and stresses the urgency of systemic reforms, civic education, and the empowerment of the marginalised groups in order to narrow the gap between the aspirations of the voters and the political realities. Overall, the findings suggest that while Nungba voters are highly engaged, genuine democratic progress will depend on sustained institutional reform and the emergence of ethical and community-oriented leaders.

**Keywords:** Electoral behaviour; Ethnic identity; Nungba constituency; Political reform; Voting behaviour.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

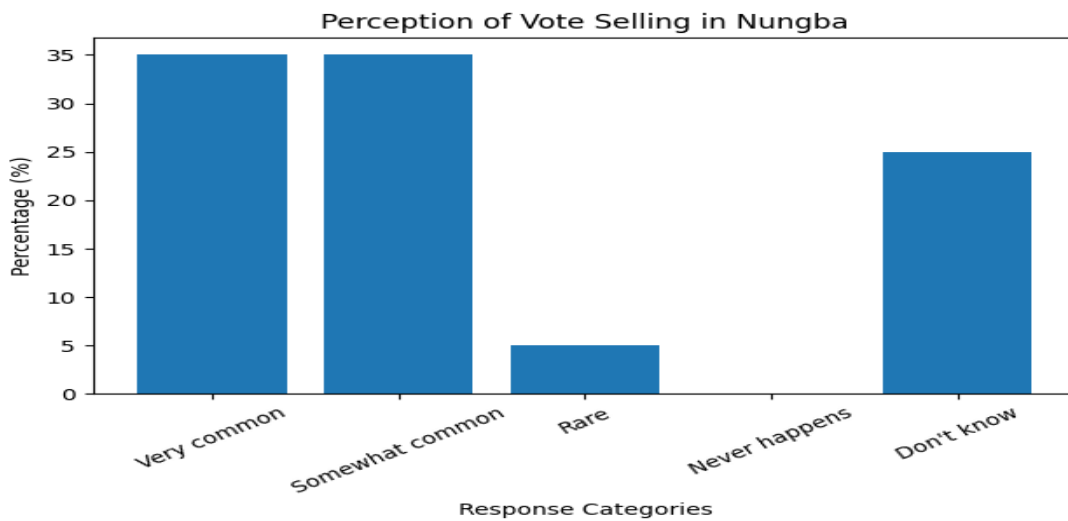
The Nungba Assembly Constituency is a vibrant and educative microcosm of the evolving democratic experience of Manipur. The number of registered voters in Nungba has increased dramatically over the last 50 years, from just over 7,000 in the 1970s to more than 30,000 now, spread over 52 polling locations. This demographic's growth in size is a consequence of population changes in the region and points to a growing political awareness. The voting pattern of Nungba, a village in the highland area of Noney district, is a case study of how ethnic identity, political preference, and development goals come together to create a unique voting pattern in Northeast India.

The political scenario changed drastically after the momentous win of the BJP in 2022. The political upheaval is not just a change of party selection but a broader change of voter expectations, driven by aspirations for open governance, accountable leadership, and inclusive development. Voter turnout is sometimes great, over 75%. This is a tribute to the deep and lasting commitment of the community to democracy, even in the face of the persistence of such problems as ethnic conflict, underdevelopment, and periodic instability.

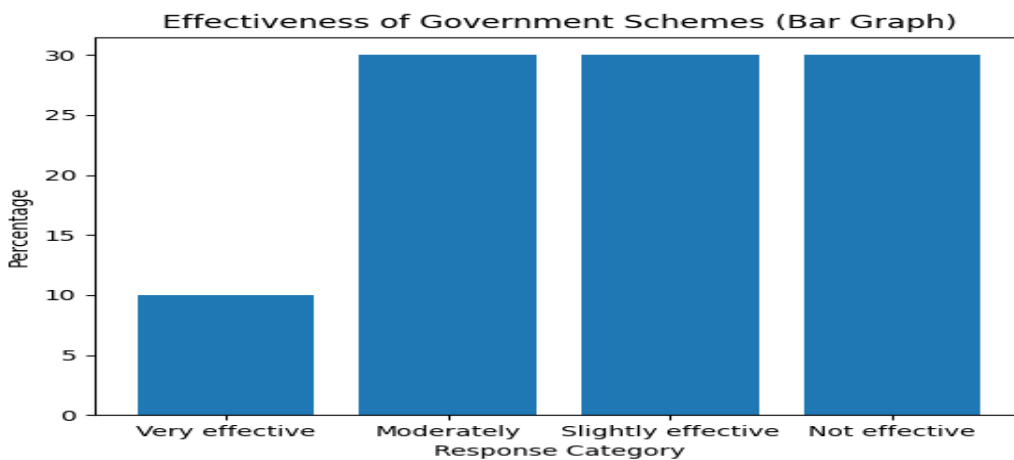
However, profound complexities temper the region’s political ferment. “People are cynical about the promises of politics,” they say. Their experience includes clannism, vote buying, and manipulation by both state and non-state actors. Public opinion surveys show rising dissatisfaction with self-serving leaders and rising demands for ethics, community focus, and fair growth. The national parties are starting to make their presence felt, but tribal loyalty, the reputation of the candidate and the promise of development still matter in the way people vote.

It is a story of Nungba’s resilience, flexibility and ceaseless quest for inclusive representation. Innovations like EVMs, lowering of voting age and transparency measures have brought in modernisation of the electoral process. But real democratic change is about addressing the perennial issues of corruption, campaign finance and marginalisation. The Nungba story ultimately is a lesson in systemic reform, civic education and community empowerment as the basis for authentic democratic representation in a fluid socio-political environment.

**Bar Graph 1**



**Bar Graph 2**



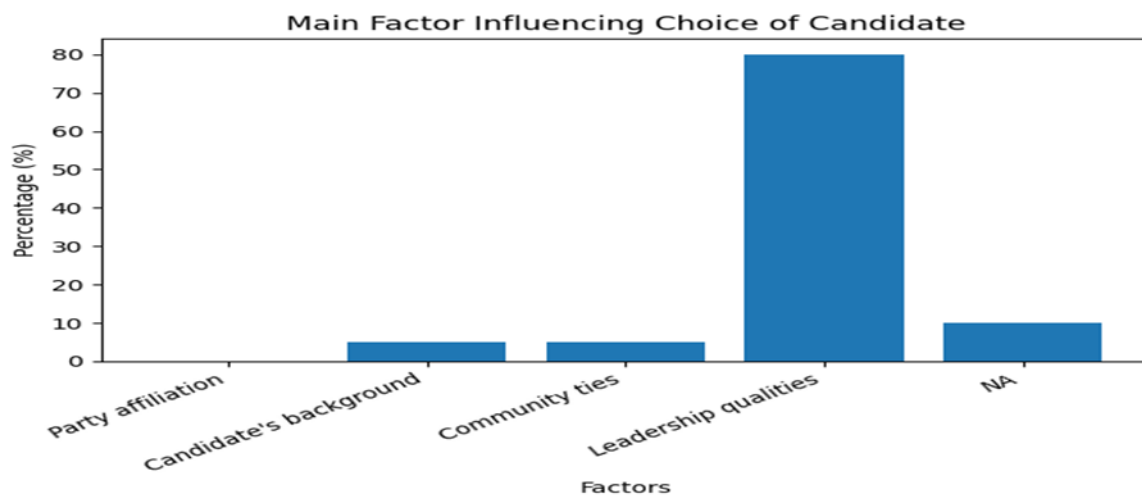
## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The voting behaviour in Nungba Assembly Constituency and Manipur as a whole is a captivating blend of ethnicity, militancy, political rivalry, and the perpetual quest for development. Political scientists and local specialists have often commented on the effect of this dynamic on the voting behaviour of the population and on the wider democratic system. The relationship between ethnicity and insurgency has emerged as a major determining factor of political behaviour and has been a prevalent issue in the study of elections in Northeast India. An early and extensive study is provided by Chaube (1985), who claims that ethnic differences and violence continue and that electoral outcomes in locations such as Nungba are less predictable and more divided along identity lines.

Devi (2018), continuing the topic, examines the connection between ethnic politics and underdevelopment in the hills of Manipur, especially Nungba, and their persistent impact on voting patterns and democratic processes. Nungba is a constituency with a high voter turnout. “Even in times of violence and instability, Manipur is a state of high voter participation,” he said. This contradictory phenomenon might be ascribed to the civic duty, community mobilisation, and resilient spirit of the electorate even in a crisis-prone context (Hemkhomang, 2023).

But Singh and Meetei (2023) warn that more hands in the pot may not necessarily guarantee greater administration and conflict resolution. But the regularity of elections often masks the corruption, violence, and unresolved tensions that are the hurdles to real democratic progress. It is widely suggested in the literature that election processes are controlled by non-state actors such as armed organisations and insurgents. In Manipur, elections are held in an environment of coercion where the rights of the voter and the representational ability of the candidate are, more often than not, compromised by threats, violence, and manipulation (Devi 2018).

**Bar Graph 3.**



Disruptions like these erode faith in the election process and compromise the legitimacy of the outcome. At the constituency level, political loyalty is built on ethnic and clan ties, the leader's authority, and promises of progress. Local factors such as allegiance to insurgent groups or civil society are essential to understanding election results in the Tamenglong district (Gaikhamsin, 2008).

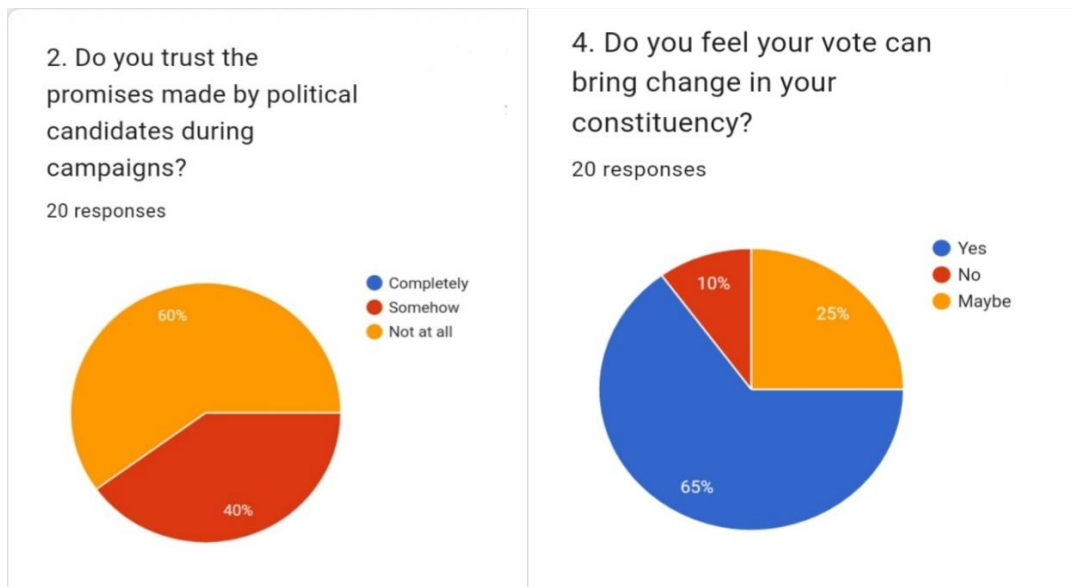
Likewise, Haokip (2010) discusses the variety of gender and civil society. In some hill constituencies, women's participation and grassroots activity are playing a vital role in shaping the political process, but the influence varies widely from place to location. The decline of regional parties and the emergence of national parties like the BJP are indications of changing goals and economic needs among the voters. According to Oniam (1999), in Nungba and other seats, a current trend is that the voters tend to vote for the national parties for more developmental advantages and stability.

It's about economics, the pragmatic reconstruction of political identity on the ground. But most of all, we need institutional changes to address the deep-rooted problems of electoral fraud, violence and lack of representation. Singh and Meetei (2023) call for reform of election law and practice at all levels. They point to the necessity for better election rights and transparent processes and structures that can bring meaningful democratic representation in locations such as Nungba.

### III. METHODOLOGY

This study used a mixed-method design with a structured questionnaire and field interviews to get quantitative and qualitative data among Nungba voters. Data on elections (1972-2022) and secondary sources were evaluated. Literature research was carried out to explore the socio-political background to understand voter behaviour and the elements impacting it at multiple levels in a comprehensive manner.

**Pie Charts 1 and 2**



### IV. VOTER EXPECTATIONS, LEADERSHIP QUALITIES, AND COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS

#### IV.I. OPENNESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The people of the Nungba constituency have time and again expressed their desire for transparent and accountable leadership. They desire representatives who are honest, educated, and deeply connected to the daily challenges and dreams of the populace. Literature and field data indicate constituents are increasingly critical of opaque governance and want leaders with integrity, vision, and a record of service. But building trust and enabling real development are viewed as hinging on transparency in decision-making, in the allocation of public resources, and in open communication, particularly via accessible platforms like social media and local languages.

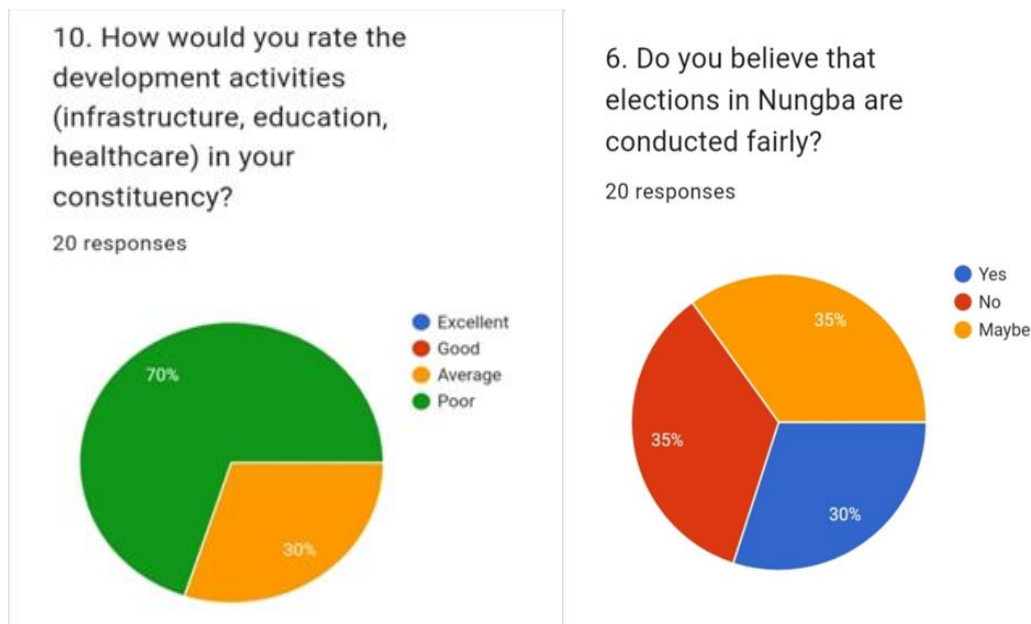
## IV.II. DISENCHANTMENT WITH FORMER LEADERSHIP

A common theme in qualitative responses, as well as in regional leadership, is a deep disillusionment with past leaders. Many voters see their former representatives as corrupt, self-interested, or indifferent to the needs of their community. They think campaign promises are often broken. This disillusionment has resulted in an increased demand for leaders who can close the gap between words and deeds. The voters now want candidates who are really willing to put the good of the public above their personal or party interests.

## IV.III. UNITY AND PROGRESS

Nungba voters want unity and development. They say real leadership cannot be restricted along ethnic, clan, and religious lines if inclusive development is guaranteed. The evidence is clear: when leaders have spoken up for inclusive development, social cohesion has improved, helping to address the effects of division and conflict that have long affected the region. Unity and progress include peaceful coexistence among people of different villages by getting rid of any kind of violence, such as land and chairmanship disputes, which are prevailing in the constituency at present. Moreover, voters want champions who can reconcile conflicting interests, address regional inequalities, and bring real change in all dimensions of the community.

**Pie Charts 3 & 4**



## IV.IV. VOICES FROM THE MARGINS

Voters underlined the necessity of including marginalised groups such as remote villages, women, and youth in the political process. The literature and field findings suggest that such groups often have limited real participation and decision-making. Constituents are saying, “We are demanding policies and leadership that put the needs of the most vulnerable at the centre, that support targeted development initiatives, improved representation, and proactive measures to address social and economic inequalities.” The voices of the marginalised have been considered crucial to justice and sustainable progress.

## IV.V. LONG-TERM OUTLOOK

Respondents emphasised the need for leaders to have a long-term development vision, rather than short-term electoral gains. The history of the constituency has shown that ad hoc or politically motivated projects do not address perennial problems like infrastructural deficits, unemployment, and underdevelopment. Voters want to see their representatives develop and implement sustainable initiatives that address root causes and foster resilience and long-term benefits for future generations. This is a call for an electorate that is more mature and values strategic, forward-thinking governance.

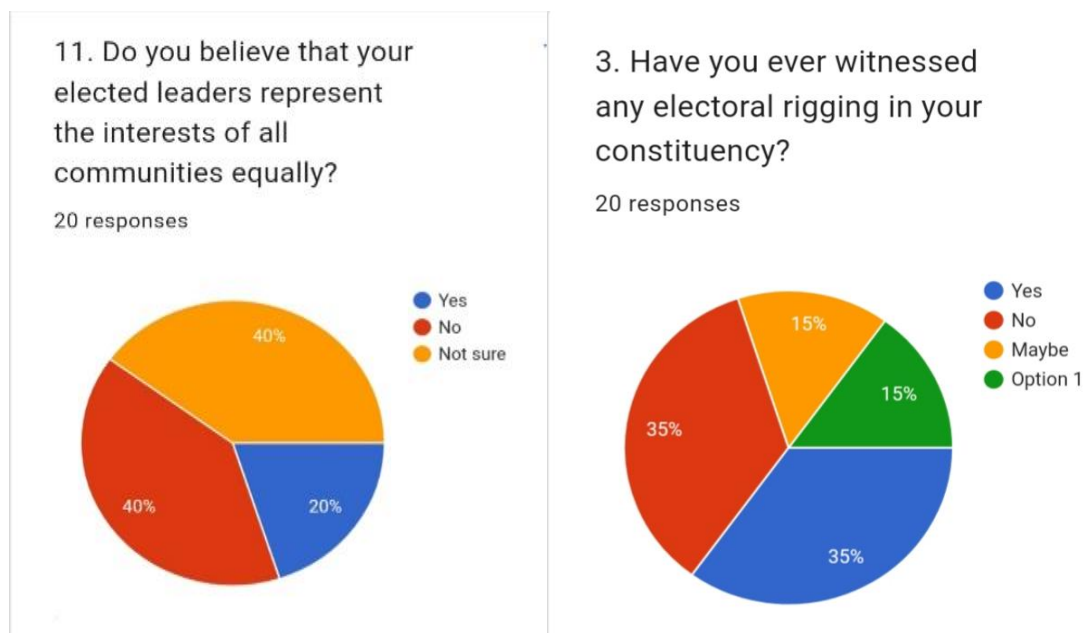
#### IV.VI. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Nungba voters want more open, regular, and transparent communication from their leaders through all available forums, including traditional platforms and modern social media platforms. Civic engagement is thriving and gaining increasing significance. The academic literature has shown that this kind of inclusive engagement, particularly in local languages, builds greater trust in democratic institutions and improves political accountability. The participants expressed a strong interest in having leaders who practice participatory governance and who are always open to feedback, as well as solutions that are not only practical but also community-based. These actions would help leaders to build a more responsive, inclusive, and trust-based political culture that better reflects the needs and hopes of Nungba's citizens.

#### IV.VII. INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE AND MINDSET CHANGE IN NUNGBA ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCY

Studies have shown the need for elected officials and the electorate to adopt a transformative attitude in governance in the Nungba Assembly constituency. The representatives have to work for inclusive development for all the people and not a few for electoral gains or vote bank politics. Benefits for the wider public should be distributed equitably and in a manner that does not marginalise those who have no ready access to the MLA or who reside in remote areas. The constituency has to bridge the gap between the rich and underprivileged groups and work towards addressing the socio-economic disparities for sustainable and holistic progress.

**Pie Charts 5 & 6**



#### V. VOTING BEHAVIOUR, PATTERNS AND DETERMINANTS

## V.I. CANDIDATE OR PARTY

In Nungba, voters are more likely to vote for individual candidates based on their personal qualities and reputation rather than party loyalty. We appreciate qualities of leadership, integrity, and real community involvement. People are really looking at how the candidates interact and support local needs. The trend is indicative of a shift towards personality politics, where the candidate's personal performance, visibility, and ability to address real issues straightaway within the community count more. Party affiliation has therefore become less important to voters, who are more influenced by the candidates' direct impact and accessibility.

## V.II. CLANNISM AND TRIBAL IDENTITY

In the region, clan and tribal affiliations are still key predictors of voting behaviour. In an age of growing national parties and broader political movements, many still vote in terms of local bonds. Community, religion, dominations, and clan affiliations can outweigh party platforms or national considerations, ensuring the persistence of identity politics. Such loyalties are linked to historical, social, and cultural affinities, indicating that ethnic and cultural links remain important, despite changing political terrains. The stability of such identities has implications for policy and politics.

## V.III. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND CONSCIOUSNESS

Nungba portrays a high level of political engagement, where the people are perpetually involved in political discussions and keep themselves informed about local and national matters. "There is engagement, but there is a visible scepticism when it comes to political promises made by candidates and parties. Many citizens say they are suffering from voter fatigue, feeling let down by repeated unmet expectations and wondering if their individual votes really make a difference. This growing sense of cynicism also means scepticism about the possibility of real change. Some voters are hesitant to fully trust political processes or believe in the effectiveness of democratic participation.

## V.IV. INFLUENCE OF MONEY AND COERCION

Money and corruption play a huge role in elections, sucking the life out of democracy. Vote buying and intimidation can influence voting. Voters can be forced to vote for politicians, regardless of policy or merit. Manipulating this corrupts the will of the people and puts in leaders who do not represent them. Underground groups and financial incentives erode and undermine the system's credibility. These actions erode public confidence and the legitimacy of elections. Money, vote buying, coercion, and underground groups can all corrupt elections. "Buying or bullying people to vote is undemocratic. Such techniques circumvent the will of the people and result in corruption and unworthy leaders. Such actions gradually erode public trust, leading citizens to question the outcomes and discouraging their participation in the democratic process.

## V.V. ISSUES OF ELECTORAL INTEGRITY

Such reports of antisocial activities, including voter intimidation and vote-capturing, are particularly rife in marginalised or remote areas. These events undermine public confidence in the electoral process and point out the urgent need for strengthened oversight and reform to restore faith in democratic institutions.

## V.VI. YOUTH AND WOMEN'S ROLE

The youth and womenfolk of Nungba are increasingly participating in the electoral process, breaking the long-standing socio-cultural and structural barriers to their participation. Their participation is a sign of a positive trend toward a more inclusive democracy. There is, however, a pressing need to improve institutional support and develop inclusive policies for their voices to really make a difference to local governance. "Expanding educational opportunities, leadership positions, and targeted outreach efforts can help empower these groups so their contributions are recognised and their needs are met in the community.

**Table No. 1**

2022 Manipur Legislative Assembly Election: Nungba				
Party	Candidate	Votes	%	±%
BJP	Dinganglung Gangmei	14,464	57.39%	31.41%
INC	Gaikhangam Gangmei	10,678	42.37%	-9.79%
	Margin of victory	3,786	15.02%	-11.16%
	Turnout	25,201	85.40%	7.98%
	Registered electors	29,510		16.22%
	BJP gains from the INC	Swing	5.23%	

## VI. PARTY COMPETITION, ELECTORAL OUTCOMES, AND DEVELOPMENT

### VI.I. PATTERNS OF PARTY CONTENTION

Nungba has witnessed a drastic change in its political scenario. The Indian National Congress (INC) had been in power for decades until the mid-1990s, when it was challenged by the Federal Party of Manipur and in 2022 by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). This development is an indication of a growing willingness on the part of the voters to accept alternative platforms and to move development priorities.

### VI.II. COMPETITION AND VOLATILITY IN ELECTIONS

The results in Nungba have ranged from narrow to sweeping victories, reflecting the intense competition and volatile voter allegiances. The 31.41 per cent swing in favour of the BJP in 2022 is a testament to the fact that the electorate can change its mind on political and developmental issues.

### VI.III. DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY

For example, the interests or birthplaces of the people implementing the Nungba development projects often privilege certain groups or regions. In the case of the projects, this is due to their peculiarities. Such focused development results in the isolation of underprivileged people and a loss of legitimacy of local representation (field data; Singh and Meetei, 2023). Both of these consequences result from the development.

### VI.IV. MISAPPROPRIATION OF DEVELOPMENT FUNDS

Governance issues, such as the misallocation of resources, lack of transparency, and poor implementation of government projects, are frequently mentioned by voters as a source of dissatisfaction. Such grievances feed the continuing lack of faith in the efficiency of development projects and point out the urgent need for greater transparency and scrutiny in the management of public affairs. We are not confident at the moment about the effectiveness of development programs.

## VI.V. PARTY AND LOCAL LEADERSHIP LOYALTY

Parties influence voting patterns, but it is the personal integrity and years of service of leaders like Gaikhangam Gangmei that make the electoral difference. People want representatives who really care about the community they serve and not just loyalty to a party. This preference reflects the need for stable and continuous leadership at the constituency level. Many others served, but for a very short period. The people of Nungba kept putting faith in Gaikhangam Gangmei time and again. He was elected seven times (1980, 1984, 1990, 2002, 2007, 2012 & 2017) and served as Deputy Chief Minister and the President of the Manipur Congress Committee (MPCC) for his commitment and effectiveness. His unwavering support at the local level established a foundation for him and facilitated his rise to a significant position in Congress, demonstrating that enduring local trust can lead to increased political power.

## VI.VI. INTERPARTY COMPARISON

The voters are divided on the performance of the parties, and it is not believed that any party has delivered a score of comprehensive or equitable development. While some attribute the visible progress to the earlier Congress governments, like providing government jobs for many individuals, others admit that there is more activity under the BJP, such as roads and water connectivity, but there is a general feeling that none of the parties has done enough for the constituency in general.

**Table No. 2**

1972 Manipur Legislative Assembly election: Nungba				
Party	Candidate	Votes	%	±%
INC	Kalanlung	1,374	38.41%	
Independent	Pougailungpou	885	24.74%	
Independent	K. Huriang	540	15.10%	
Independent	Satkholal Neisheil	490	13.70%	
Independent	Champadik	288	8.05%	
<b>Margin of victory</b>		489	13.67%	
<b>Turnout</b>		3,577	53.46%	
<b>Registered Electors</b>		7,032		

## VII. ELECTORAL REFORMS: CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

### VIII. INSTITUTIONS AND LEGAL REVIEW

The adoption of several key legal and institutional reforms has strengthened India's election process. These reforms are to reduce the voting age from 21 to 18 years, thus empowering a larger part of young citizens. The use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and the Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) has brought the voting process into the 21st century, making it



more transparent and faster. Candidates must now disclose their criminal, financial, and educational histories, creating accountability. Further, the democratic base has been enlarged by extending the voting rights to Non-Resident Indians (NRIs). These measures will help make elections more inclusive, transparent, and trustworthy.

## VII.II. OPEN ISSUES

Decline in electoral integrity and public confidence due to increasing election expenditure and criminalisation of politics (ADR, 2024; field data); EVM manipulation; prevalence of fake/duplicate voters; frequent violations of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC).

## VIII. THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE COMMITTEE

The expert committees have recommended synchronisation of national, state, and local elections; harmonisation of voter rolls and identity cards; specific economic and legal reforms; and augmentation of powers of the Election Commission for efficient, fair, and cost-effective electoral processes.

### VIII.I. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND CRITIQUES

Recent innovations to increase transparency in the electoral process include the introduction of NOTA (None of the Above), online voter registration, and limits on candidate spending. The reforms have been praised as an attempt to expand public participation and accountability, but critics say they have been implemented patchily and often ineffectively. The NOTA has less effect when it gets the majority of votes, and there are no re-elections. Furthermore, spending limits and online registration have not addressed the heart of campaign finance abuse and electoral malpractice.

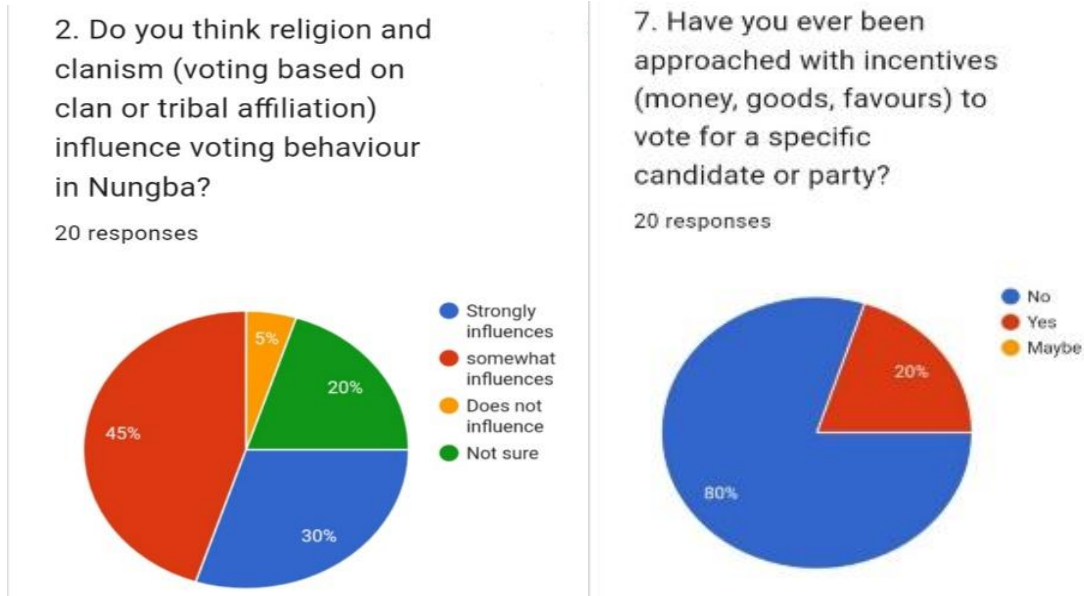
### VIII.II. NEEDED REFORMS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Comprehensive electoral reforms would greatly benefit the democratic process in India. It is important to strengthen the independence and capacity of the Election Commission for the conduct of free and fair elections. Aadhaar linkage with EPIC can help weed out duplicate and bogus voters. However, this needs to be done with strict privacy safeguards to protect citizens' data. Improving the VVPAT-EVM verification process will enhance transparency and boost voter confidence in the election outcome. There is also a need to invest in strong civic and ethical education to educate voters about their rights and responsibilities and create a more informed, active, and responsible electorate for the nation's future.

### VIII.III. DEMOCRATIC LEGITIMACY

Democracy only works when citizens participate in decision-making, when the media are vigilant, and when institutions are strong. These factors increase the credibility of elections and confidence of the people, especially in a diverse and sensitive constituency like Nungba, where the credibility of the electoral process is critical for representative democracy.

### Pie Charts 7 & 8



## IX. CONCLUSION

Nungba Assembly constituency is one of the examples of Manipur’s democratic evolution. The high voter turnout over the past 50 years, despite the complex hurdles, shows that people are engaged in civic life. Ethnicity, clan loyalty and candidate reliability are the major factors influencing voters in Nungba. Its voters are told to look at qualities and connect with the masses rather than at party affiliations.

The rise of the BJP and the decline of the Congress in recent years show that the electorate is willing to look at alternatives for development and representation. Vote buying, coercion, and uneven development continue to undermine electoral trust. We want transparent leadership and inclusive growth, but often do not get it. This creates mistrust and the need for ethical governance.

Improved institutional change, legal innovation, and civic education, including involvement and monitoring. The ongoing dominance of money, the criminalisation of politics and the marginalisation of vulnerable populations are indicative of systemic issues with election integrity and representative democracy.

The Nungba case shows that democracy’s evolution is not just a matter of legal reforms. Communities need to unite, marginalised voices need to be heard, and accountable, visionary leaders need to be identified. Nungba must advocate for ethnic and socioeconomic unity, transparency and accountability to bridge the gap between voter ambition and political reality. Only then can it flourish in a healthy democratic environment of inclusive and sustainable growth.

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