

Right to Reject: A Tool of Augmenting Anarchy over Advancing Democratization & Inclusivity in Political Landscape

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Abstract

Among many other political events, election significantly underscores democratization and primarily manifests much awaited outcomes. Electing most suitable and competent candidates through election ensures and ascertains the expected course of development in nation. Most of the time, voters unfold deep resentment then resonate over gross failure and apathy of elected candidates and extend an evident opprobrium on such ineffective and nonperforming winner/leaders. The chances of electing the smart, competent and capable representatives will be seriously jeopardized if political parties present same level candidates on electoral grounds. Thus, a new agenda is being urged that there should be provision of right to reject (NOTA) on ballot paper. Hence, voters can outshine or outsmart all candidates in-case they are not worthwhile to elect. Nepal has been passionately having noteworthy preparatory atmosphere to introduce it in upcoming elections, sooner. Considering the same outset, this research work has focused to chart out two major inferences as followings that the:

- a) *Notion of right to reject and its evolution in global political landscape is philosophically a wrong idea.*
- b) *Among the probability of advanced democratization & Inclusivity or anarchy that the proposed practice may invite into political landscape of Nepal, the latter visibly prevails over the first.*

Keywords: Right to Reject, Political Landscape, Anarchy, Democratization, Inclusivity

I. Introduction

With completion of the first cycle of full and formal federal democratic practices, Nepal- in 2079 BS- accomplished another grand political festival by successfully and peacefully completing the Elections at all three administrative levels: federal, state and local bodies, for successive representatives of its second cycle. The local bodies' election was scheduled on 13th May 2022 and succeeded smoothly. It passed some telling and intelligible messages that had encouraged many other epiphenomena for

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Federal and Provincial elections, handled on 20th November 2022. Among many, the most assimilated is support to new parties and rise of non-party candidates owing to rejection to long prevailing forces and faces. Nonetheless, both elections were successfully accomplished though some minor mishaps and scant controversies for public consumption were noticed.

Election is a formal and organized choice by vote of the people for a political office or other positions. In democracy, Election works as heart to people in pumping the blood to all-around, by making democracy vibrant, smooth, corrective and competent as well. Thus, value of Election is highly assimilated and acknowledged by several thinkers and scholars globally. Most importantly and inarguably, Election is understood as the lifeline of democracy.

Moreover, election is the best tool to choose our representatives. Through the process of election of different kinds, representatives are authorized into various positions. It is the result of election that allows or bars someone to function on status of representative to the people. Each one opting to serve people as representative should wait and win the election in systematic manner. The validity of representative remains and his/her tenure to the office persists only till the time or for the period s/he is elected. Election, thus, confers life to democracy and representatives as well.

Election lets people enjoy the opportunity of electing the smart, competent and capable representative along with assimilating themselves really sovereign and supreme. Leaders aiming to strive and succeed in welfare of society and citizens should be prioritized by people. But this will be seriously jeopardized if political parties present same level incompetent or undesirable candidates on electoral ground.

No same practices in election shall ever succeed to mark the higher democratization and advanced inclusivity. Thus, many innovations will be must for maintaining and making a constant public trust to elections, given the changes in political landscape and citizens' mindset. Among many innovations, which the electoral practice of Nepal is likely to administer sooner, Right to Reject is one and hogging headlines of Media and drawing attention of many people since recent past. Thus, a new agenda is being raised that there should be provision of right to reject on ballot paper. Hence, voters can outshine or outsmart all candidates in case they are not worthwhile electing. On 5th January 2014, the Supreme Court of Nepal made a landmark verdict of instructing the government to provision NOTA or right to reject on ballot. The very provision which is even called NOTA (none of the above) is on discussion these days. However, the potential outcomes it yields on electoral practices are yet to wait and witness; nonetheless many scholars have presented mix-responses through their seminal and landmark literature regarding this subject.

II. Literature Review

There are various literatures which deeply unfold the beauty of elections and highlight the values of electoral practices. While presenting it as lifeline of democracy and indication of sovereignty in hand of people, different scholars have presented cross-cutting standpoints. Besides, some scholars have even requisitioned for the revising and revisiting the existing electoral practices through introducing the NOTA or right to reject, envisioning various outstanding outcomes. Following pertinent sources are referred in this paper.

Despite being a recent emergence on electoral practice and not being widely used across the globe, right to reject or NOTA (none of the above) has significantly received substantive attention from scholars and home and abroad. V.R. Vachana & Maya Roy recount it as it allows voters to express

their dissent¹ against all the contestants. When parties are presenting substandard and not expectedly qualified candidates, voters can quash them all. Thus, it amounts the level of sovereignty to new height as people could not only elect one among many but also bring them to a mass denial or rejection as well. Authors recall the various groups, especially in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, urging people to not vote any candidate in some of the recent elections. It had a debut in 2013 in the Indian political landscape.

Making remarks on provision and practice of Right to Reject, Samrudh Koppam feels that it is crucial in 'protesting' against such unreliable candidates²; it even ensures secrecy and does not violate the right to vote of individuals along with it also promotes 'civic participation'. The democratic values go utterly underscored and upheld. Not any public protest and demonstration will be required to outshine apathetic and unwelcome candidates in case NOTA is applied.

In her landmark study, Khushi Sharma points out some serious shortcomings³ contrary to profitable prospects of NOTA and those are as follows: the process is not yet proved to ensure any tangible change in electoral procedure, as well as it has danger of being misused with *malafide* intention. Procedural complexities and decision matrix are not yet dependable and convincingly developed in either nation. In other hand side, public concern and popularity towards NOTA seems conspicuously highly under-proportionate as par the publicity stunt or public consumption of the agenda.

Drawing a recent public reaction, Ishaan Bansal & Mrunal Maratha present in figure that the nearest most neighbor and largest democracy in the world, India, received much negligible and insignificant response⁴ as of Bihar 2% and Andra Pradesh 1.49% in 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Mass people seem to select the most competent one among presented rather than quashing and repelling all. Besides non-resulting customary scene, most countries adopting this proposal have no clear roadmap that what will happen, if NOTA- largely a cosmetic command of politics- vote counts a fair majority.

Vasanth Srinivasan cites that NOTA is adopted in more than 2 dozen of countries⁵ including France, Belgium and Spain- having most primarily median adoption from Nevada state of the US- but remains suspicious that if it heralds and hails any hilarious mutation over pressing need and vital issues of politics. No any election in any corner or thoroughfare of the world in fact has received whopping support or clean sweep count inside of NOTA so the election had to be recast. Thus, it has been merely a futile and fruitless debate; it seems passing tall promises and extending dwarf performance.

Little still finds some valid reasons to avoid NOTA⁶ despite being very popular concept for public

¹ V R. Vachana & Maya Roy, 'NOTA and the Indian Voter', *Economic and Political Weekly*, volume 53:3, 2018, pp. 28-31, available at <https://www.epw.in/journal/2018/6/commentary/nota-and-indian-voter.html>, accessed on 1 October 2024.

² Samrudh Koppam, 'The 'None of the Above (NOTA)' Option amongst Indian Voters', 2021, p. 4, available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350382614_The_'NONE_OF_THE_ABOVE_NOTA'_Option_amongst_Indian_Voters, accessed on 2 October 2024.

³ Khushi Sharma, 'NOTA Option in Election- Boon or Bane', *Ipleaders*, 2021, available at <https://blog.ipleaders.in/nota-option-election-boon-bane/>, accessed on 3 October 2024.

⁴ Ishaan Bansal & Mrunal Marathe, 'Did NOTA Make an Impact in the 2019 Lok Sabha Elections?', *Youth Ki Awaaz*, Noida, 4 July 2019, available at <https://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2019/07/did-nota-matter-in-the-2019-lok-sabha-elections/>, accessed on 4 October 2024.

⁵ Vasanth Srinivasan, 'NOTA: More than just an option', *The Hindu*, Chennai, 12 September 2016, available at <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/chennai/nota-more-than-just-an-option/article8415649.ece>, accessed on 5 October 2024.

⁶ Jeri L Little, 'Does Using None-of-the-Above (NOTA) Hurt Students' Confidence?', *Journal of Intelligence*, volume 11:157, 2023, pp. 1-18, available at <https://doi.org/10.3390/jintelligence11080157>, accessed on 5th September 2025.

consumption. Saying no is never an answer; election is choice among options not an utter negation. No significant change in electoral practice- because of applying NOTA- is experienced based on comparative analysis of various countries. Having had 48 participants from California university, 24 critical questions and 6 filter questions were asked by the researcher to assess the gravity of right of reject; and most of answers were quite in distance to the major polemics pleasingly presented to the public.

Carolina Plescia et al remark that the due implementation of NOTA holds lessons for huge 'electoral reforms'⁷ and generates pressure to parties for presenting competent and credible candidates in elections. Notwithstanding, Attila Ambrus et al. doubt that it might not be arguably suitable and compatible option for voters⁸ who have incomplete information or remain un-updated about candidates. But in its absence, the voters can cast an invalid vote, not to elect any. Having NOTA in place, extreme and non-establishment candidate may influence and hold the leverage to spawn social disharmony and discord as Christopher Boya and Julien Malizard engage to make an in-depth and incise analysis⁹.

David F. Damore et al regards lack of information and dissatisfaction¹⁰ as major guiding motto and triggering force to bring forth the issue with heaping praise and thumping welcome. As David P. Myatt draws, the visible advantages i.e. protest will be lessened, and social harmony shall remain intact as people find other modest ways of expressing denial or rejecting candidates¹¹. Presenting an alternative insight, Gergely Ujhelyi et al remark that it would significantly decrease the fraction votes¹² as voters may try voting many new faces and resulting many fraction votes in the absence of NOTA. Rakshya Khanal regards it as wider array and opportunity to express the voters' views, however, worries about not having any expressible and exclusive law¹³ vis a vis NOTA. Like others, Anoushka Pant argues that people have expressed the increasing solidarity¹⁴ because of endless frustration towards the representative. However, potential assessment and objective analyses are yet less found or mostly brush sided. The following section of this article tries addressing the gap and missing the link.

⁷ Carolina Plescia, Sylvia Kritzinger & Shane P. Singh, 'Who would Vote NOTA? Explaining a 'None of The Above' Choice in Eight Countries', *European Journal of Political Research*, volume 62:1, 2023, pp. 118-134, available at <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12497>, accessed on 5th September 2025.

⁸ Attila Ambrus, Ben Greiner & Anne Sastro, 'The Case for Nil Votes: Voter Behavior under Asymmetric Information in Compulsory and Voluntary Voting Systems', *Journal of Public Economics*, volume 154, 2017, pp. 34-48, available at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2017.08.006>, accessed on 5th September 2025.

⁹ Christopher Boya & Julien Malizard, 'Extreme Political Views and Determinants of Popularity', *International Journal of Applied Economics*, volume 12:2, 2015, pp. 47-70, available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316838353_Extreme_Political_Views_and_Determinants_of_Popularity, accessed on 5th September 2025.

¹⁰ David F. Damore, Mallory M. Waters & Shaun Bowler, 'Unhappy, Uninformed, or Uninterested? Understanding "None of the Above" Voting', *Political Research Quarterly*, volume 65:4, 2012, pp. 895-907, available at <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912911424286>, accessed on 5th September 2025.

¹¹ David P. Myatt, 'A Theory of Protest Voting', *The Economic Journal*, volume 127:603, 2017, pp. 1527-1567, available at <https://doi.org/10.1111/eoj.12333>, accessed on 5th September 2025.

¹² Gergely Ujhelyi, Somdeep Chatterjee & Andrea Szabo, 'None of the Above', *Working Paper*, University of Houston, 2018, p. 23, available at <https://uh.edu/~aszabo2/nota18.pdf>, accessed on 6 October 2024.

¹³ Rakshya Khanal, 'Why do you need the Right to Reject (NOTA) in Nepal Elections?' *Onlinekhabar.com*, Kathmandu, 2 November 2022, available at <https://english.onlinekhabar.com/nepal-need-right-to-reject-nota.html>, accessed on 7 October 2024.

¹⁴ Anoushka Pant, 'Right to Reject: To Vote or not to Vote?', *The Himalayan Times*, Kathmandu, 30 August 2021, available at <https://thehimalayantimes.com/opinion/right-to-rejectto-vote-or-not-to-vote>, accessed on 8 October 2024.

III. Discussion & Analysis

The first ever state to practice NOTA was Nevada in the US; and it was motivated with mixture of ignorance and protest¹⁵ and, furtherance, number of countries like Russia, Columbia, France, Brazil, Indonesia, India, Kazakhstan, Norway, Peru, Spain, UK commenced in adopting this system¹⁶. Different forms, i.e. blank vote, nil vote, stamping all or stamping NOTA are some common practices being adopted by various countries. Russia has provision of 'against all' option, and these all are practices of protest with participation¹⁷. India, the largest democracy situated in our neighborhood, also has mainstreamed this practice. Some political parties are robustly raising the agenda as major electoral reforms in the recent past and Nepal is having an additional attention to accommodate the scheme in upcoming election schedules. However, this practice shall be a delightful dogma which will debilitate and deteriorate democracy and object the inclusivity on multiple grounds as presented below:

- 1) Among many grounds on which the fancy concept fashioned as NOTA or right to reject ought to be absolutely renounced, the most foundational and first ever reason is that it is philosophically wrong and incompatible. Democracy, by default, is devised to choose most acceptable candidates among aspiring, but not to deny or cull all. Giridhari Dahal makes a comparative analysis that many general elections and other elections were successfully accomplished¹⁸ to elect the required representatives. The prime law of the land or the Constitution of Nepal has provisioned various sorts of elections and those all are meant to elect representatives of different capacities¹⁹. Making a minute analysis of various elections in Nepal, Amrit Shrestha concludes that the representatives, who served public nail to tooth²⁰, could have been succeeded only through elections or compliance with prevailing electoral methods. No occasion or event should be distorted or ill-directed in other paths than its defined and set objectives; and, electing representatives among aspirants is only the exclusive motto and motif of elections, globally. Metaphorically, an examinee can never illegitimately claim for a privilege to gain answering questions owing to his/her dislike on it; so is the claim requisitioned through right to reject. Elections cherish values on electing representatives²¹ not enervating representation or ensuring unending volatility by denying all. People are entitled for right to vote or not to vote²² but not for vote to deny.

¹⁵ Adam R. Brown, 'Losing to Nobody? Nevada's 'None of these Candidates' Ballot Reform', *The Social Science Journal*, volume 48: 2, 2011, p. 364, available at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soscij.2010.12.005>, accessed on 5th September 2025.

¹⁶ Shane P. Singh, 'Politically Unengaged, Distrusting, and Disaffected Individuals Drive the Link between Compulsory Voting and Invalid Balloting', *Political Science Research and Methods*, volume 7:1, 2019, pp. 107–123, available at <https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2017.11>, accessed on 5th September 2025.

¹⁷ Raghav Kumar, Sudarsan Padmanabhan & P. Srikant, 'NOTA: A Strategic Choice with a Positive Impact on Indian Elections', *Asian Journal of Political Science*, volume 31:3, 2023, pp. 180-196, available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/02185377.2023.2265372>, accessed on 5th September 2025.

¹⁸ Giridhari Dahal, 'Strengthening Multiparty Democracy in Nepal: An Assessment of Parliamentary Elections since 1951', *Prithvi Academic Journal*, volume 6, 2023, pp. 104-119, available at <https://doi.org/10.3126/paj.v6i1.54664>, accessed on 5th September 2025.

¹⁹ *Nepalko Sambidhan* (The Constitution of Nepal), Government of Nepal, Ministry of Law and Justice, Law and Book System Committee, 2015, arts. 83-104, 167-176, 216-221.

²⁰ Amrit Shrestha, 'Exercise of Multiparty System through the Major Electoral Practices in Nepal', *Researcher: A Research Journal of Culture and Society*, volume 5:1, 2021, pp. 1-15, available at <https://doi.org/10.3126/researcher.v5i1.41518>, accessed on 5th September 2025.

²¹ Owen Fiss, *Why We Vote*, Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2024, pp. 5-28.

²² Nazrul Islam, 'Right to Vote or not to Vote: An Analysis in Indian Perspective', *Human Rights in India: Issues and Concern*, Abhijit Publication, New Delhi, 2024, pp. 226-239.

- 2) Even if NOTA is adopted, it might fuel fanatics and frenzy whim to whip out all. Voters might seriously lack the election literacy to denounce and reasonably abjure any aspirant. The earnest and logical assessment from voters and subsequent decisions might be grossly questioned. Rather than a mature and meaningful resort to alarm political parties in pressurizing them to project competent and permissible candidates, it may be a tool of *malafide* maneuver like motion of impeachment practiced against two chief justices, mere as a tool for vested interest and prejudice. Considering the same possibility, Aradhyayan Tiwari and Anjali Dwivedi have called it fruitless methodical politics²³ almost a decade ago, however, this is assumed as one of the major pathways to strengthen and rectify the road to democracy in India²⁴. This practice has been traced of augmenting the perceived cynicism in voters against the political class²⁵. Rather than being responsible, there may be a whim- among voters- of outshining or outvoting all for mere fantasy and baseless fashion. Even elected MPs or members of Parliament- with an ocean deep prejudice- ill-tried an unsuccessful motion of impeachment to other organs of state-power just to hold and halt their activities. Unsuccessful impeachment efforts against the then Chief Justices Sushila Karki and Cholendra Shamsher Rana are burning examples. If MPs can misuse the authority, what is certainty that banal people might not simulate NOTA in similar spirit to just halt anyone being elected despite no strong ground to outfox or ditch them? Most novice voters may lack informed choices²⁶ and act haphazardly as fashion as that has been a symptom in recent elections in India. Boldly presenting the finding of studies, Arindam Mandal et al conclude “we also do not find any definitive evidence of the positive impact of NOTA on voter participation”²⁷ whereas Ujhelyi et al²⁸, using utility method of study, also had concluded with similar proposition. NOTA did not cause increment in voting turn-out or added inclusiveness in voting practice. Rather than fructifying democracy in positive tone, it is definitive to falsify the consciousness and sincerity the franchise exercise should uphold. Rather than fueling the mission, it is likely to foil the function.
- 3) Even if some voters determinedly or fanatically express their franchise to NOTA, there is no set standard to cancel elections or re-conduct it again. As Nepal still has not drafted and promulgated adequate number of appropriate and accessorial laws to regulate the system, it is highly likely to trigger a chaos ahead. What percentage of voting in NOTA will entail the cancellation, how to compute the threshold as well as more of other both policies plus procedural aspects are yet to be resolved in a refined manner. Except for the verdict from the Supreme Court, there is no any legislation, Act, directives or regulations framed till date. Even the methods of practicing NOTA is not yet confirmed. Among many practices around the globe i.e. leaving the ballot blank/ blank vote, stamping all, and stamping NOTA option, the best assumed for Nepal is neither even discussed nor decided. The sudden and brusque jump

²³ Aradhyayan Tiwari & Anjali Dwivedi, ‘NOTA: A Fruitless Methodical Politics’, *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2024, pp. 1-12, available at 10.2139/ssrn.2488507, accessed on 5th September 2025.

²⁴ Dr Sumanta Bhattacharya, ‘Electoral Reforms: The Road to strengthen Indian Democracy’, *International Journal of Scientific Development and Research*, volume 6:4, 2021, pp. 339-342, available at <https://www.ijedr.org/papers/IJSDR2104052.pdf>, accessed on 5th September 2025.

²⁵ Vachana & Roy (n 1)

²⁶ Sri Musrifah et. al., ‘Political Education for Novice Voters to Increase Voter Participation in the Simultaneous Elections of 2024’, *Bubungan Tinggi: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat*, volume 6:3, 2024, pp. 606-611, available at 10.20527/btjpm.v6i3.10255, accessed on 5th September 2025.

²⁷ Arindam Mandal, Biswajit Mandal & Prasun Bhattacharjee, ‘Does NOTA Affect Voter Turnout? Evidence from State Legislative Elections in India’, *Asian Journal of Economic Modelling*, volume 5:3, 2017, p. 339, available at <https://doi.org/10.18488/journal.8.2017.53.331.341>, accessed on 5th September 2025.

²⁸ Ujhelyi, Chatterjee & Szabo, (n 12)

to NOTA might be a terribly bumpy ride resulting in tremendous disarray and bedlam ahead. As preparatory requisitions are not surmounted, the supposed success of NOTA leads to a tragic turmoil. It is certain to be a counterproductive political stunt to sabotage the integrity of democracy and recently paced-up practice of inclusion. A perpetuity in re-election might mar multiple sectors of our socio-economic and political life.

- 4) Till today, no tangible result in countries adopting NOTA is found. Nevada commenced the praxis in 1976. The abstainers and voters casting invalid were not found redirecting to NOTA thus could not upend the inclusivity. Neither has it increased, ab-initio, voter turnout though that was assumed so. A survey in eight countries, which have practiced NOTA, the highest percent of people who would believe that NOTA could shed some impact is 13.39²⁹ in Denmark. Though assumed as protest voting³⁰, it has witnessed a record of approximately 16 percent against to victorious candidates in recent election in India. Despite this surge in one particular constituency named Indore in Madhya Pradesh might have signaled the increasing popularity, the average record of NOTA figures only 0.99 percent in overall vote turn out in India. Some other European nations have negligible solidarity with the NOTA movement as they have earned a marginal and meagre vote count i.e. below 5 percent of a constituency case basis at the exceptional highest records and below 1 percent in average national record. It indicates that the protest voting in the name of NOTA³¹ which is believed to have given a sigh of relief of unhappy voters³² as claimed by Myatt, is not as popular as theorized. In 2013 election in Bangladesh, NOTA received miserably a poor response of mere 0.55 percentage while vote-turnout was 86.07%. Hence, the government decided to discontinue³³ this political vendetta. Ergo, it is mere a populist modus-operandi than any game changer political move³⁴ as Ayushi Kalyan had initially thought of.
- 5) While practicing NOTA, which is assumed as protesting via the null ballot hence pressurizing politicians/ parties to present competent and admissible candidates³⁵, there will be no confirmation that the next pool of the presented candidates will be competent and can perform better. Vote share of the extremist and non-establishment candidates³⁶, as one of the aberrant outcomes of NOTA argued by Boya and Malizard, will further destabilize the politics as this might drive politics towards extremity of seeking popularity, which in fact is in-existent. Voters might intentionally abuse election systems consistently and regularly by supporting NOTA. The endless obsession and fanatic move to search hyper competent or

²⁹ Plescia, Kritzingner & Singh, (n 7)

³⁰ R. Michael Alvarez, D. Roderick Kiewiet & and Lucas Núñez, 'A Taxonomy of Protest Voting,' *Annual Review of Political Science*, volume 21, 2018, pp. 135–154, available at <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-050517-120425>, accessed on 5th September 2025.

³¹ Myatt (n 11)

³² Damore, Waters & Bowler, (n 10)

³³ Kamrunnahr Azad & Shahnewaz Fahad, 'Negative Voting in Democracy: A Quest for Enhancing Political Participation,' *Social Change*, volume 10:1 2021, p. 88, available at <https://ypsa.org/ypsa/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Negative-Voting-in-Democracy.pdf>, accessed on 5th September 2025.

³⁴ Ayushi Kalyan, 'Nota Option- Political Gamechanger or Mere Trumpery', *The World Journal on Juristic Polity*, volume 2:3, 2016, pp. 1-6, available at <https://ijrpr.com/uploads/V4ISSUE8/IJRPR16229.pdf>, accessed on 5th September 2025.

³⁵ Mollie J. Cohen, 'Protesting via the Null Ballot: An Assessment of the Decision to Cast an Invalid Vote in Latin America', *Political Behavior*, volume 40:2, 2018, pp. 395-414, available at https://labordoc.ilo.org/permalink/41ILO_INST/uf9g4h/cdi_proquest_journals_2042026523, accessed on 5th September 2025.

³⁶ Boya & Malizard, (n 9)

ideally acceptable may saddle the election activities and distract the other core functions of the state.

- 6) It shall be grossly an injustice, rather a preference bias or prejudice to shame someone as incompetent before having a trial. Not liking someone should be based on some scientific and research-based inference. Unless there is a track record of being unsuccessful in serving the people and delivering to the citizens, everyone contesting for the first time cannot be brought into the basket of mediocre, greenhorn, or neophyte. Voters should not presume privilege of judging candidates before they are mandated to work. Very negligible number of incumbent elected representatives too may be re-contesting the elections and there could be some bases to adjudicate them. Apart from such contestants, how could be it rational to assume that remaining all are unlikely to function unless they are trusted and treated with having approval or electing them at least for one tenure? Voting, as per Joseph McMurray, is an act of communicating mandate but not signaling the curse³⁷ thus should be utilized as choice prioritization but not as tool of boundless and gross anathema or objection. Mere castigating or opposing all on broad tag of none of the above is grossly illogical, irrational and half-baked hypothesis. Voter's choice to disqualify or deny the candidates may be mere subjective and whimsical³⁸. Attempting to judge them before facilitating them engage in work is indeed a misjudgment and willful malfunction. Collective slaughter over all aspirants can be appropriated to campaign an anarchy and fashion rather than a deliberative action in politics, if NOTA is ceded.
- 7) It will be even mere loss of resources as a bandwagon with going extremes. Provided voters are truly apathetic and uninterested with the whole set of candidates, boycotting elections and bringing voter turnout as nil or low as possible also senses and serves the same spirit. Otherwise conducting elections, ensuring denial through NOTA- and re-conducting it again if NOTA holds majority- will cause loss of money and deepen the financial crisis³⁹. Country like Nepal where periodic elections should be conducted at three levels and the tentative cost will be around 20 billion for one cycle election⁴⁰, and that is significant ratio of an annual budget (around 2 percent), is waste for no achievement or result. If NOTA culture prevails and outcasts all other projected candidates, re-conducting elections will be incurring huge loss of economy which could be diverted into other development projects and plans. Democracy distances us from development and engages merely into rhetoric of election rehearsals. Economic development, the most powerful and decisive dimension of democracy⁴¹, slackens eventually causing the possible collapse of country.
- 8) All popular choices in politics will not necessarily be the rational one as well. Some high-sounding agendas, which might be very appealing for people, eventually may turn appalling

³⁷ Joseph McMurray, 'Voting as Communicating: Mandates, Multiple Candidates, and the Signaling Voter's Curse', *Games and Economic Behavior*, volume 102, 2017, pp. 199–223, available at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geb.2016.12.005>, accessed on 5th September 2025.

³⁸ Riya, 'Nota a Toothless Tiger in Electoral Reforms', *Manupatra*, Noida, 2 July 2024, available at <https://articles.manupatra.com/article-details/NOTA-A-Toothless-Tiger-in-Electoral-Reform>, accessed on 9 October 2024.

³⁹ Manuel Funke, Moritz Schularick & Cristoph Trebesch, 'Going to Extremes: Politics after Financial Crises, 1870–2014', *European Economic Review*, volume 88, 2016, pp. 227–260, available at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eurocorev.2016.03.006>, accessed on 5th September 2025.

⁴⁰ Sneha Shrestha, 'The Cost of Election and Its Economic Impact', Economic Development, *Nepal Economic Forum*, Lalitpur, 6 September 2022, available at <https://nepaleconomicforum.org/the-cost-of-elections-and-its-economic-impacts/> accessed on 10 October 2024.

⁴¹ Atindra Dahal, *Political Theories and Thoughts: A Comprehensive Analysis*, Lex & Juris Publication, Bhaktapur Nepal, 2023, pp. 342-372.

and an apocalyptic one as well. NOTA is certain to sail seemingly same status to the political landscape of Nepal, if adopted. Objecting all could sound very appealing or forcing parties in projecting admissible candidate, however, leaves people destitute from right to have right of representation⁴² as recent electoral systems in Nepal have ensured representation of marginal people and non-dominant societies as well⁴³. Reforms may be accepted and expected too but ravaging does not hail or herald any functional output.

- 9) Despite having NOTA to prevail over all candidates, what shall be the option if political parties repeatedly offer the same candidates' pool? So, this may serve none to electoral reforms. Therefore, it is called a toothless tiger⁴⁴ considering the impact it can award to the process of democratization and course of inclusivity. Mostly voters might like, or dislike candidates based on competency, however, democratization often persists in pressing obligation of presenting sub-competent candidates as well to ensure proportionate inclusivity. Thus, NOTA option might facilitate voters to grow blatantly inconsiderate and insensitive on principle of inclusivity in wish of voting only the competent one.
- 10) Election is choosing better among all, the perfect and fully flawless can never be found. Having an option to boycott all or reject the entire pool might breed or pullulate an infinite expectation on voters of searching a divine or super-human mastery candidate, which is merely an illusion. Therefore, NOTA can never be a strategic choice⁴⁵ rather than opposition. It may be mere ignorance or fashion as surveys in different countries signaled the lack of information and deep analysis⁴⁶ over such crucial issue. Searching for a fictional candidate might drive politics at myopic mayhem. Intra-party non-cooperation may rise and party solidarity wrecks in such cases. Party system itself may witness serious erosion. People over parties may paralyze the democracy; individual popularity becomes fulcrum in politics thus no organizational culture evolves. Not guaranteed that all the popular will be functional too. The experience of Brazil has unmasked the utterly ugly cum irresponsible situation of NOTA practice⁴⁷.
- 11) A country which is severely suffering and boundlessly badly served because of accruing instability will double fold reinforce it in electing Electoral College for forming government. The prevailing instability, which has severely damaged the nation building process⁴⁸ of Nepal, is attributed to the frequent shuffling and transient or ephemeral existence of a government.

⁴² Yubaraj Sangroula, *Right to Have Rights: Theory of Anti-deprivation Development Threshold*, Lex & Juris Publication, Bhaktapur Nepal, 2018, p. 21-35.

⁴³ Govinda Prasad Guragain, Saroj Pokharel & Bhawani Shankar Adhikari, 'Towards Inclusive Democracy: Reforming Nepal's Electoral System for Fair Representation and Governance,' *European Journal of Theoretical and Applied Sciences*, volume 2, 2024, pp. 67-77, available at [https://doi.org/10.59324/ejtas.2024.2\(5\).07](https://doi.org/10.59324/ejtas.2024.2(5).07), accessed on 5th September 2025.

⁴⁴ Riya (n 38).

⁴⁵ Attila Ambrus, Ben Greiner & Anita Zednik, 'The Effects of a 'None of the Above' Ballot Paper Option on Voting Behavior and Election Outcomes', *Working Paper 27*, SSRN Electronic Journal, 2019, p. 31, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3280591>, accessed on 5th September 2025.

⁴⁶ Amanda Driscoll & Michael J Nelson, 'Ignorance or Opposition? Blank and Spoiled Votes in Low-Information, Highly Politicized Environments', *Political Research Quarterly*, volume 67:3, 2014, pp. 547-561, available at doi:10.1177/1065912914524634, accessed on 5th September 2025.

⁴⁷ Thomas Fujiwara, 'Voting Technology, Political Responsiveness, and Infant Health: Evidence from Brazil,' *Econometrica: Journal of Econometric Society*, volume 83:2, 2015, pp. 423-464, available at doi:10.3982/ECTA11520, accessed on 5th September 2025.

⁴⁸ Govinda Guragain, 'Political Instability: A Major Challenge for Nation Building in the Context of Nepal,' *Medha: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, volume 6, 2023, pp. 41-52, available at <https://doi.org/10.3126/medha.v6i2.69909>, accessed on 5th September 2025.

Having a new government almost every next year has cost on development of the country⁴⁹ quite much. At least government begetting bodies is somewhat stable and confirmed for five years in single cycle or round of elections. This shall be merely an agnostic negotiation⁵⁰, which will cause doubt to develop democracy. The entire process and whole set of signals of underdevelopment like poverty are attributed to having deep nexus with instability⁵¹. Stability has been a false promise. If NOTA is adopted, this will result to deep instability in forming the parliament itself. The exacerbating outcomes can be barely calculated when not only the government, even the government begetting body is mercurial and instable. Double barrel instability will worsen the situation at downward trajectory.

- 12) Provided NOTA culture is popularized or promoted, it might risk politics having danger of NOTA itself being misused as political party formation. Thus, NOTA cannot be the right⁵² of voters alike either to vote or not to vote. Some countries even have formed NOTA party and sent representatives to the legislative body, which is gross violation of norm and travesty of principle itself. With rising trend of NOTA in India, same risk persists here in too⁵³ in such situation. The crime in politics may take an upward graph as money and muscles⁵⁴ will be funded for NOTA voting.
- 13) In course of this study, approximately 200 respondents were inquired to express views regarding risks and rewards of NOTA, if adopted. Majority, about 73 percent pinpointed that it shall further deteriorate the political culture and is likely to become mere sham of electoral reforms, whereas 17 percent remained slightly hopeful, rest were nonchalant as remained natural. Among respondents, experts, political scientists, professors, researchers and analysts have mostly skeptical responses towards NOTA and remained reluctant to welcome it, however, students tempted to align with the assumption but still had mix-responses. As a significant quarter among relevant and aware respondents have gently disapproved of the NOTA concept, the application of it might further foil the practice and invite several disarrays ahead. The arch reasons that the large quarter of respondents remained aloof towards the concept are its philosophical lapse and global experience of non-performing reality. About 10 percent of respondents even wished the Supreme Court to review the verdict and abrogate the previous order. Officials related to election process vehemently opposed the proposition as it would further invite chaos and uncertainties.

⁴⁹ Santa Thapa, 'The Facets of Political Instability in Nepal: Causes and Effects,' *Journal of Political Sciences & Public Affairs*, volume 11:3, 2024, pp. 1-6, available at 10.35248/2332-0761.23.11.027, accessed on 5th September 2025.

⁵⁰ Indrajit Roy, *The Politics of the Poor: Agonistic Negotiations with Democracy*, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2018, p. 9.

⁵¹ Arjun Kumar Dahal, Prem Bahadur Budhathoki & Ganesh Bhattarai, 'Nexus between Unemployment, Income Inequality, Political Stability, and Economic Growth: An Empirical Study of the Nepalese Economy,' *Valabian: Journal of Economic Studies*, volume 15:1, 2024, pp. 1-14, available at <https://doi.org/10.2478/vjes-2024-0001>, accessed on 5th September 2025.

⁵² Richa Mishra, 'NOTA as a Right!', *The Hindu Business Line*, 29 April 2019, available at <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/columns/nota-as-a-right/article26983554.ece>, accessed on 12th October 2024.

⁵³ Jyoti Hiremath, 'Analysis of the Introduction of Nota in the Legislative Elections in India', *International Journal of Arts and Science Research*, volume 4:2, 2017, pp. 117-122, available at <http://ijasrjournal.com/article/ANALYSIS%20OF%20THE%20INTRODUCTION%20OF%20NOTA%20IN%20THE%20LEGISLATIVE%20ELECTIONS%20IN%20INDIA.pdf>, accessed on 5th September, 2025.

⁵⁴ Milan Vaishnav, *When Crime Pays: Money and Muscle in Indian Politics*, Harper Collins, New Delhi, 2017, p. 118.

IV. Analysis and Conclusion

NOTA, though being heavily discussed and presented as if this shall serve as the pill to decontaminate and sterilize political incompetence and to have surgery to numbness, is likely to be suicidal move ahead. It neither adds values on democratization nor heightens the inclusivity. This attempt indisputably serves less than on supposed status; at no face, this will be remedy to political landscape of Nepal. Rather than contributing to any, NOTA, upon application, only contaminates the democratic values and norms. It hampers democratization and infects inclusivity. Rather, this may be only a whim for serial anarchies or irresoluteness ahead.

