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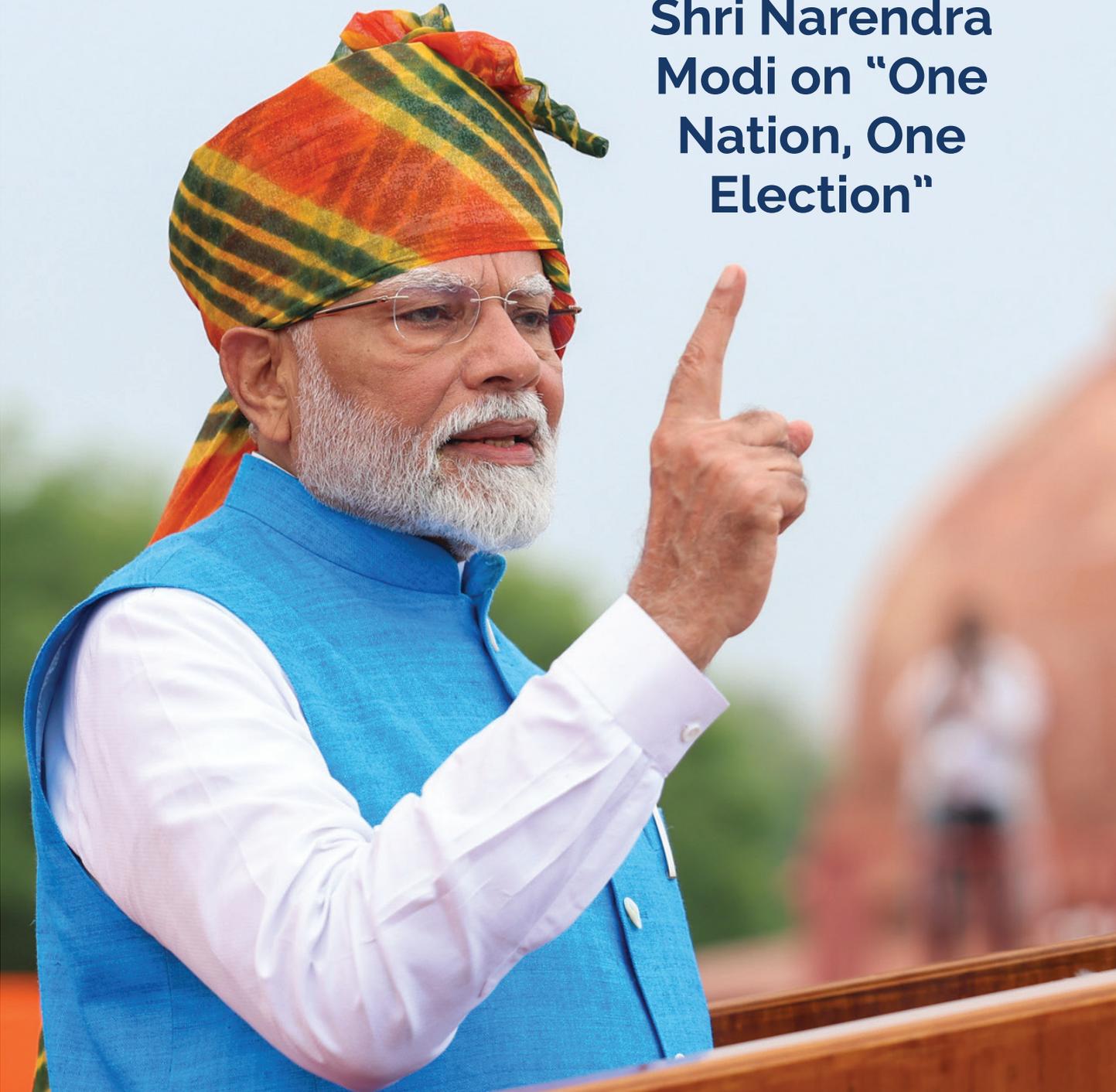
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Remarks of
Prime Minister
**Shri Narendra
Modi on “One
Nation, One
Election”**



My dear countrymen,

When I always talk about the concern of dynastic politics and casteism in the country, I believe they are causing significant harm to the democracy of Bharat. We need to free the country and politics from dynastic politics and casteism. Today, I see that the young people in front of me are associated with the "MY Bharat" organisation. It is written very well. "MY Bharat" has several missions. One of the missions is to bring one lakh young people into political life as representatives as soon as possible. Initially, we want to bring forward one lakh young people whose families have no political background—those whose parents, siblings, uncles, and aunts have never been involved in politics in any generation. We want fresh blood, one lakh such talented young people, whether they come into the panchayat, municipal corporations, district councils, state assemblies, or the Lok Sabha. We want new young people with no previous political history in their families to enter politics so that we can be freed from casteism and dynastic politics, thereby enriching democracy. It is not necessary that they join a particular party; they should join whichever party they prefer and become representatives. The country should decide that if one lakh such young people whose families are far removed from politics enter the system in the near future, it will lead to new thinking and new capabilities while also enriching democracy. Therefore, we need to move in this direction. I would also like to say that frequent elections are becoming a hindrance to the country's progress, creating obstacles. Today, it has become easy to link any scheme with elections because elections are happening somewhere in the country every three or six months. Whenever you announce any scheme, you see in the media that it is linked to elections. Every scheme is coloured by the hue of elections. Hence, there has been extensive discussion in the country. All political parties have expressed their views. A committee has prepared a very good report. The country needs to come forward to embrace the concept of "One Nation One Election". From the ramparts of the Red Fort with the Tricolor as witness, I urge the political parties and those who understand the Constitution of the country, to come forward to make the dream of "One Nation One Election" a reality for the progress of Bharat and the maximum utilisation of its resources for the common people.

Source: Speech of Prime Minister on 15th August, 2024





Remarks
of BJP
President
**Shri J.P
Nadda on
“One Nation,
One Election”**

“

Union Cabinet, chaired by Hon'ble PM Shri Narendra Modi ji has accepted the recommendations of the High Level Committee on 'One Nation One Election' initiative. The current system of holding elections at different times across states hampers development efforts and burdens the national treasury. Adopting "One Nation, One Election" will help lower election-related expenses and financial burden on the government. This landmark decision aims to streamline the electoral process and ensure better governance.

Source: Tweet on X

Message from the BJYM National President Shri Tejasvi Surya



As one of the world's largest democracies, India has proudly upheld its electoral traditions, reflecting the voice of over 900 million eligible voters across the nation. However, with elections occurring nearly every year across states and at the central level, a need has emerged to rethink and revitalise our electoral processes. The idea of One Nation, One Election (ONOE), spearheaded by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, aims to address these challenges by consolidating elections for the Lok Sabha, state assemblies, and, eventually, local bodies into a single, synchronised election cycle.

The scale of elections in India is immense involving immense resources that could otherwise have been allocated to essential services like healthcare, infrastructure, and education. Imagine the positive impact on our nation if we could save thousands of crores by holding elections simultaneously every five years, redirecting these funds to fuel India's growth and prosperity. ONOE stands as a bold solution to achieve this efficiency, allowing resources to be allocated toward the betterment of our society.

Moreover, the financial burden of frequent elections isn't limited to government spending; political parties also face high costs to reach voters, making elections an expensive exercise. By reducing the number of election cycles, ONOE enables parties to optimise resources, focus on sustainable campaigning, and avoid the challenges of constantly running campaigns.

One of the biggest drawbacks of our current staggered election cycle is the frequent imposition of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC). When enforced, the MCC restricts the government's ability to launch new initiatives, make policy decisions, or allocate funds for development projects. This policy freeze has significant implications for governance, as critical projects, especially in infrastructure and healthcare, are often delayed. With ONOE, this cycle of policy paralysis would end, as the MCC would only be imposed once every five years, providing governments with uninterrupted time to focus on long-term development plans and effective policy implementation.

A synchronised election schedule would also allow elected representatives to concentrate on their core responsibilities without the distraction of continuous election campaigning. As young Indians, we must ask ourselves: What would our nation's growth trajectory look like if our leaders were allowed to focus entirely on governance rather than campaigning every few months? ONOE promises an efficient governance model where elected officials can invest their full energies into serving the people, promoting national unity, and addressing urgent developmental priorities.

Frequent elections can create voter fatigue, often leading to disengagement and lower voter turnout in state or local elections compared to national elections. ONOE has the potential to enhance voter turnout by fostering a sense of importance around a single, consolidated election cycle. By casting their ballots in synchronised elections, voters may feel a greater sense of empowerment, recognising the impact of their choices at both national and state levels. Additionally, a single election cycle would encourage voters to consider both local and national issues together, fostering a more holistic understanding of governance.

A synchronised election cycle could also empower young voters to actively engage with issues impacting the nation rather than just local matters. Youth are central to India's future, and with a unified electoral process, they can drive forward national and regional development through informed voting. This cohesion strengthens the very fabric of our democracy, empowering voters to contribute toward a unified vision for India. Our electorate's wisdom should be respected, and our commitment to democracy means trusting voters to make informed choices that balance local needs with national priorities.

Implementing ONOE would require constitutional amendments and political consensus, as it involves adjusting the terms of the Lok Sabha and state assemblies. But with India's growing youth demographic—the BJYM being at the forefront of this charge—it is crucial to work together across party lines to build a governance model that supports efficient, stable, and inclusive development. By bringing leaders together on this initiative, we can foster a political culture centred on governance rather than perpetual campaigning. One Nation, One Election is more than a reform; it's a vision that aligns with our aspiration for a developed India, or Vikshit Bharat, by 2047. By streamlining the election process, reducing costs, and enhancing governance, ONOE could be the foundation of a more resilient, efficient democracy. We, the youth of India, have the privilege and responsibility to support reforms that elevate our nation's future.

Vande Mataram

Tejasvi Surya

MP Lok Sabha, Bengaluru South



India's political landscape, vast and varied, is facing a pivotal debate with the approval of the cabinet of One Nation, One Election (ONOE). This reform, recently championed by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's government and backed by a high-level committee led by former President Shri Ram Nath Kovind, seeks to synchronise national, state, and local elections. With numerous potential benefits, ONOE could streamline our democratic process, reduce government expenditure, and enhance governance stability. However, implementing ONOE would require navigating considerable logistical, constitutional, and political challenges. As this debate unfolds, the possible implications and hurdles demand thoughtful consideration from policymakers and citizens alike.

One of the primary arguments for ONOE is the substantial cost reduction. As it stands, India spends vast sums on frequent elections, with the Election Commission incurring significant expenses every time states or the central government go to the polls. According to recent parliamentary reports, the costs of conducting elections have ballooned—from ₹3,870 crore in 2014 to over ₹50,000 crore in 2019. By holding simultaneous elections, the financial burden on the exchequer could be significantly reduced, and these savings could be allocated to pressing development projects such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure.



ONOE also promises to address issues of governance and stability. The Model Code of Conduct (MCC) currently restricts government activity for 30 days before each election. Given the frequency of elections across states, these restrictions can lead to policy paralysis, delaying crucial projects and decisions. A synchronised election cycle would allow governments to operate without continual interruptions, focusing instead on long-term governance and policy-making. This would also reduce the constant electoral campaigning that diverts the attention of both politicians and the public from vital national issues. Frequent elections demand considerable resources, both in manpower and logistics. Each election cycle involves deploying police, paramilitary forces, and officials, diverting them from their regular duties. For example, during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, approximately three lakh central paramilitary and 15 lakh state police personnel were engaged, posing challenges to regular law enforcement duties. ONOE could consolidate these efforts, freeing resources for other essential tasks, including national security and public service delivery.

Moreover, by conducting elections simultaneously, public life could be less disrupted. Campaign rallies and VIP movements during elections often lead to significant traffic disruptions, impacting daily life and economic productivity. A single election cycle every five years could minimise these disruptions, fostering a more predictable environment for public and private sector activities alike.

However, the move toward ONOE raises valid concerns. Critics argue that simultaneous elections could overshadow local issues, placing undue emphasis on national narratives and potentially marginalising regional parties. While historical examples suggest that Indian voters are discerning enough to distinguish between state and national issues, careful planning would be required to ensure regional voices are not diluted.

Furthermore, implementing ONOE would necessitate constitutional amendments, requiring political consensus across diverse party lines. Articles related to the tenure of the Lok Sabha and state assemblies would need revising, and specific provisions would need to be introduced to maintain continuity in the event of early dissolutions. The substantial logistical preparation required, including procuring EVMs and training officials nationwide, poses another challenge.

As we stand at this crossroads, ONOE presents a unique opportunity to strengthen India's democratic framework. This initiative could be a cornerstone of India's progress by reducing costs, improving administrative efficiency, and allowing for uninterrupted governance. However, for ONOE to succeed, political will, constitutional amendments, and robust planning are imperative.

India's democracy has always thrived on debate and consensus. The ultimate goal remains clear as the government, political parties, and citizens continue this dialogue: a governance model that upholds democratic values while fostering national growth. One Nation, One Election might just be the transformative step toward realising this vision for a stronger, more unified India.

Reimagining Elections in India: Empowering Governance and Grassroots Democracy

Abhinav Prakash

National Vice-President, BJYM
& in-charge of BJYM Haryana



The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has accepted the recommendations of the High-Level Committee on Simultaneous Elections under the chairmanship of former President Shri Ram Nath Kovind. The high-level committee on "One Nation One Election", headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind, submitted its report on simultaneous polls to President Droupadi Murmu on March 14. The Prime Minister has also often talked about the need to synchronise the national and state elections to strengthen both the democratic structure and governance in India. In fact, in the initial decades of independence, elections to the House of People and State Legislative Assembly were simultaneous. However, in the course of time, dissolution of the houses before the expiry of the tenure, both in the case of the House of the People and State Legislative Assembly (Under Articles 83 and 172 of the Constitution of India) and imposition of President's Rule under Art 356 disrupted the cycle.

The Election in the States and the Centre fell out of step, and the successive governments made no systematic attempts to change the situation. Consequently, the present situation has evolved, and every year, several state elections are being conducted. It seems that Indian democracy has become the perpetual election cycle and elections have become an end unto themselves. It has several consequences for the governance, financial resources, and the democracy itself.

Given the size of India and its burgeoning population, even state elections are a costly affair involving elaborate logistic and security measures. A significant part of the resources is directed towards conducting elections, which can be better utilised if elections are consolidated in a single process. The state of Uttar Pradesh had state elections in 2022 involving massive deployment of administrative and security machinery. Again, in

2024, the same process was repeated, this time for the Lok Sabha election. Simultaneous elections would have enabled efficient and economical utilisation of the resources apart from ensuring that the administration is more focused on governance than just managing elections every two years.

‘One Nation, One Election’ would also give political parties, especially those in the government, breathing space to focus on long-term policies instead of short-term populist measures to win elections. One of the major threats to the democratic process and ethos is electoral corruption. Of late, several parties have been promising freebies and populist measures instead of their governance track record during elections to manipulate voters. Simultaneous elections will curtail the scope for such irresponsible politics which is already putting an unbearable strain on the state resources and also impairing the future growth prospects of the country.

It will also reduce election fatigue among the voters, thus increasing active participation in the electoral process and ensuring higher voter turnout. The quality of a democracy depends on the discourse of democracy. Frequent elections and the highly competitive nature of Indian elections unfortunately lead to recourse to negative campaigning based on caste, religion and regional polarisation by several political actors. The issues of policy and governance often get sidelined, with attempts being made to charge up the electorate with emotional appeals and false propaganda. One can hope that the simultaneous elections will reduce divisiveness and compel political parties and various actors to discuss their long-term vision and agenda for the betterment of their constituencies. Any policy change or system reform invariably leads to some sections of society losing out on their previous privileges. Frequent elections act as a deterrent for political parties to form a consensus to undertake such overhaul, even if they all agree on its importance. ‘One Nation, One Election’ will enable the government to enact bold policy measures to address critical issues like pollution and climate change and reforms like labour and agricultural laws, which might create short-term pains for long-term gains.

One of the several constraints on economic growth in India is the policy arbitrariness & inconsistency and socialist populism adopted by several sections of the political class to win the elections. ‘One Nation, One Election’ promotes stability in the government, which will improve governance and the business climate and boost investor confidence. Opponents of the ‘One Nation, One Election’ argue that it will undermine federalism. But simultaneous elections were the norm in the initial decades of the independence with no demonstrable damage to federalism. In fact, simultaneous elections may encourage a more cooperative federalism with national and state parties and governments working in close and synchronised alignment. It has greater potential for governments at different levels to collaborate more closely on policy implementation, as they would be elected at the same time and possibly for the same duration. It can lead to a more integrated approach to addressing national and state issues.

The concerns about regional issues getting overshadowed by national issues are also misplaced. Firstly, Indian voters have demonstrated time and again that they can distinguish between national, state and local elections, even if they are conducted simultaneously or at short intervals. Secondly, the reverse may also be true, i.e., parties may be forced to prioritise regional issues and concerns along with national issues. The result could be a more balanced political discourse as no political party, be it regional or national, can afford to be indifferent to the national and regional issues. One of the most important recommendations of the Kovind Panel is that elections to municipalities and panchayats should be synchronised with the elections to the House of the People and State Legislative Assemblies and should be conducted within 100 days of national and state elections. It has the potential to finally systematise, revitalise and empower local governance, something which has eluded the third tier of the government. It will truly strengthen the grassroots democracy and empower the citizenry like never before.

The task ahead will be to initiate detailed discussions throughout the country and constitute an implementation group with representation from all stakeholders.

Toward Stability and Efficiency: The Vision of One Nation, One Election

Aditya Pittie

Convenor (Western Maharashtra) of the BJP Intellectual Cell and has recently co-edited the book – Modi's North East Story.

India, the world's largest democracy, has a complex electoral system that reflects its federal structure. It involves elections for the central government, state legislatures, local bodies, and other institutions. Historically, the country once held simultaneous elections, but the system is now being reconsidered under the "One Nation, One Election" policy proposal.

Historical Context and Evolution

At the inception of the Indian Republic, simultaneous elections were the norm. In 1951-52, the first general elections were conducted concurrently for the Lok Sabha (the lower house of the Parliament) and all state legislative assemblies. This practice continued through the 1957, 1962, and 1967 elections. The simultaneous nature of these elections ensured a streamlined and cohesive political process across the nation, offering clarity to both voters and policymakers.

However, this process began to be disrupted in the late 1960s and early 1970s due to the unstable political environment and coalition governments, which led to the premature dissolution of certain state assemblies and the Lok Sabha itself. For example, in 1970, the Lok Sabha was dissolved before the completion of its full term, leading to general elections in 1971.

Similarly, many state assemblies were dissolved at different times owing to political instability, defections, or other crises, resulting in a scattered election cycle. As a result, elections became staggered, and India moved towards an almost perpetual state of electoral activity.

Impact on Governance and Policy Continuity

The consequences of staggered elections are multifaceted. Political parties must constantly remain in campaign mode, resulting in significant financial and administrative strain.

One key challenge with staggered elections is the frequent imposition of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), which comes into effect as soon as elections are announced. During the MCC period, the government is restricted from announcing new projects, policies, or welfare schemes, significantly slowing down administrative functions.

In the case of simultaneous elections, the MCC would apply only once in five years, minimising the interruptions in governance and development work. This would facilitate the steady progress of infrastructure projects, social welfare schemes, and

economic policies, ultimately benefiting citizens and enhancing the overall efficiency of governance.

With a synchronised electoral schedule, governments would be less prone to short-term populist policies aimed solely at electoral gains. The continuity of governance would foster a conducive environment for policy reforms, economic initiatives, and development projects that often require consistent and uninterrupted attention.

Economic Impact

Conducting elections in India is an expensive affair. The Election Commission of India (ECI) is tasked with ensuring that millions of eligible voters across the country have the opportunity to vote. In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, around 96.8 crore people were eligible to vote, making it one of the largest democratic exercises globally.

Organising elections on such a large scale comes with an equally substantial cost. India's first general election in 1951-52 spanned 68 phases and cost ₹10.5 crores. Since then, each subsequent election has become costlier. This figure soared to ₹50,000+ crores during the 2019 elections, comparable to the \$6.5 billion spent on the 2016 U.S. presidential elections. The 2024 elections were estimated to cost more than ₹1.35 lakh crores.

The Election Commission's expenditure covers a wide range of activities, including:

- Deploying officials and armed personnel
- Setting up polling booths
- Procuring and maintaining electronic voting machines (EVMs)
- Running voter awareness campaigns

According to guidelines issued by the Ministry of Law and Justice in 1979, the Centre bears the total cost of Lok Sabha elections, while the respective state governments finance state elections. When elections are held simultaneously for the Lok Sabha and state assemblies, the expenses are shared between the Centre and the state governments.

Simultaneous elections would lead to substantial

financial savings by reducing repetitive administrative costs associated with separate elections for the Lok Sabha and state assemblies. Pooling resources such as electronic voting machines (EVMs), voter identification mechanisms, and security personnel would streamline the electoral process, resulting in a more cost-effective democratic exercise. The resources could then be better utilised for development projects, welfare programs, and infrastructure.

Political parties incur massive expenditures during elections, ranging from campaigning costs to advertising, mobilising supporters, and managing media narratives. Under the current staggered election system, parties must continuously allocate funds, diverting resources that could otherwise be used for developmental or social initiatives.

Simultaneous elections would enable political parties to plan and allocate their campaign resources more effectively, potentially lowering overall expenses.

Impact on the Business Environment and Market

Frequent elections create uncertainty in the business environment, leading to hesitancy in investment and long-term business planning. During election cycles, market volatility tends to increase as businesses and investors await the outcomes, policy changes, and shifts in economic priorities.

Simultaneous elections bring predictability to the market, allowing businesses to align their strategies with government policies. This predictability would encourage domestic and foreign investment, stimulate economic activity, and provide a more conducive environment for business growth.

Best Practices from Countries with Synchronized Elections

The high-level panel on 'One Nation, One Election', led by the Honorable former President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind Ji, studied election processes in

seven countries before recommending simultaneous polls for the Lok Sabha and state assemblies in India.

South Africa, Sweden, Belgium, Germany, Japan, Indonesia, and the Philippines hold simultaneous elections, offering useful models for India:

- South Africa: Voters simultaneously cast ballots for the National Assembly and Provincial Legislatures, while municipal elections are held separately.
- Sweden: Elections for Parliament (Riksdag), County Councils, and Municipal Councils occur at the same time every four years.
- Germany and Japan: Procedures in these countries include systems like a constructive vote of no-confidence and an appointment process that can be instructive for India.

The panel recommended synchronising Lok Sabha and state assembly elections first, followed by local body polls.

The "One Nation, One Election" policy proposal in India attempts to revisit the historical practice of simultaneous elections and address the challenges of staggered elections. It presents a transformative shift in the country's electoral process. By conducting simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha, state assemblies, and eventually local bodies, India aims to streamline its democratic exercise, reduce election-related expenses, and ensure uninterrupted governance.

Drawing from international models, the proposal envisions adopting best practices that improve efficiency, transparency, and policy continuity.

As India moves forward, careful planning, detailed policy formulation, and stakeholder engagement will be crucial to ensure the successful transition to simultaneous elections, potentially strengthening the world's largest democracy.

ONOE matopoeia: Democracy, Just Like it Sounds

**Dr. Mrittunjoy Guha
Majumdar**

Adjunct Faculty at National
Institute of Advanced Studies
Bengaluru and National
Convenor, Mandala VIBHA'

Bharat is a melting pot of cultures, identities, thoughts, and people. This is a land of promise, of legacies, of paradoxes, of symphonies. And to direct this orchestra of disparate voices and expansions, we have the largest democracy in the world. In any democracy, the synchronisation of elections, across tiers – national and state primarily, can be viewed as a call to multidimensional politics. The federal spirit brightens the contrasts, even as the shadows of politicking, platforming and personality cults creep into the luminosity. Just as the universe operates on interconnected principles, where every element influences another, a synchronised electoral cycle can foster a sense of collective responsibility among citizens and leaders alike. It encourages voters to engage with the political process not just as isolated individuals but as integral parts of a larger democratic organism, since ONOE will present a tiered model from the centralised to the relatively more decentralised, when it comes to governance. It provides flight to the potential and promise, endowing the voter with the agency to make meaningful change. After all, as Harry Emerson Fosdick once said,

"Democracy is based upon the conviction there are extraordinary possibilities in ordinary people."

This perspective emphasises that elections are not merely events but are pivotal moments in the ongoing narrative of national identity and purpose. The proposal of "One Nation, One Election" (ONOE) in India seeks to synchronise the electoral cycles of the Lok Sabha and state assemblies, aiming to enhance the efficiency of the electoral process. At its core, this initiative reflects a metaphysical premise that transcends mere logistical convenience; it embodies a vision of unity and



nation. The dualism of reductionist tendencies and a more holistic perspective adds a degree of tension among different colours on the political spectrum, even as identity politics is reimagined in a multifaceted manner. By aligning the electoral processes, ONOE symbolises a collective aspiration for a more harmonious political landscape where the rhythm of governance resonates with the aspirations of the populace.

Financial Prudence as a Driver

One of the most compelling arguments for adopting ONOE is the substantial financial savings it could generate. Elections in India are notoriously expensive, with costs stemming from security arrangements, logistics, and administrative efforts. For instance, the 2014 Lok Sabha polls cost Rs 3,870 crore, while Bihar's 2015 Assembly elections cost Rs 300 crore. In comparison, the Election Commission of India (ECI) estimates that implementing 'One Nation One Election' would cost around Rs 4,500 crore, saving substantial public resources that would otherwise be spent on multiple electoral cycles. By synchronising these elections, the government could significantly reduce these expenditures, allowing for a more efficient allocation of public funds. The financial implications extend beyond mere cost savings; they also encompass the opportunity to redirect resources toward essential services such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure development.

A major cause of concern in any election cycle is that of corruption and relentless cash flow for wooing voters. According to the Centre for Media Studies, the cost of a single vote in India has now reached around ₹1,400, double that of the 2019 elections. Estimates suggested that around ₹1.35 lakh crore was spent in the 2024 general elections, marking a significant jump from the ₹55,000-60,000 crore spent in the 2019 elections, as per CMS. Elections in India often witness a significant increase in the circulation of unaccounted or "black money" as political parties engage in substantial, unregulated spending. For instance, during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the Income Tax Department seized approximately ₹830 crore in unaccounted

cash. Reducing the frequency of elections could help diminish the flow of black money and shift the focus from short-term populism to long-term governance strategies. All this may be reduced by stricter interventions over shorter windows of time, with simultaneous elections in states and the nation.

With reduced election-related expenses, funds could be channelled into initiatives that directly benefit citizens, thereby enhancing overall societal welfare. Furthermore, minimising the frequency of elections could lead to a more stable governance environment, allowing elected officials to concentrate on policy implementation rather than being perpetually engaged in campaigning. The potential for enhanced financial prudence also aligns with broader fiscal responsibility goals within the Indian government. By adopting ONOE, India can set a precedent for efficient governance that prioritises economic sustainability while still upholding democratic principles. This shift could foster greater public trust in government institutions as citizens witness tangible benefits from reduced electoral costs.

Using Technology to ONOE

One argument against ONOE is the operational overload and the difficulty in maintaining the integrity of the process in the two layers of elections – national and state, across the country. Implementing ONOE effectively requires robust technological interventions to manage the complexities inherent in conducting simultaneous elections. The current electoral process in India already utilises electronic voting machines (EVMs) and voter-verified paper audit trails (VVPATs). However, to facilitate ONOE successfully, there is a pressing need for enhanced technological infrastructure that can support a synchronised electoral framework.

A key component of this technological enhancement is the development of integrated electoral management systems capable of concurrently handling logistics for multiple elections. Such systems would necessitate advanced data analytics capabilities to manage extensive voter databases, track polling station

requirements, and optimise resource allocation efficiently. By employing sophisticated algorithms and data processing techniques, election officials can ensure that all logistical aspects are meticulously coordinated. Moreover, real-time monitoring technologies can significantly enhance transparency and accountability during elections. Implementing surveillance systems at polling stations and utilising mobile applications for reporting irregularities would bolster public confidence in the electoral process. These innovations can help mitigate concerns about electoral malpractice and ensure that citizens feel secure in their participation. In addition to monitoring and logistics management, voter engagement platforms will play a crucial role in ensuring high turnout during simultaneous elections. Innovative platforms can provide comprehensive information about candidates and parties while facilitating voter education campaigns through social media and mobile applications.

By leveraging technology to engage citizens effectively, the government can foster an informed electorate that actively participates in the democratic process. Cybersecurity measures are another critical aspect of technological interventions necessary for ONOE. With increased reliance on technology comes heightened vulnerability to cyber threats. Establishing a dedicated cybersecurity task force within the ECI is essential to safeguard electoral data from potential breaches and hacking attempts. This proactive approach would protect sensitive information and enhance public trust in the integrity of the electoral process.

Challenges and Considerations

Despite its numerous advantages, implementing ONOE poses several challenges that must be addressed comprehensively. Achieving political consensus across diverse parties and states is paramount for this initiative's success. The federal structure of India means that states have varying political dynamics that may resist synchronizing their electoral cycles due to concerns about local governance issues or regional representation.

Furthermore, administrative readiness is crucial for managing the complexities associated with simultaneous elections.

The administrative machinery must be adequately prepared to handle logistics efficiently while ensuring adequate resources at polling stations. Training personnel and implementing effective voter education initiatives will be vital components of this preparation. Public perception will also play a significant role in determining ONOE's success. Engaging citizens in discussions about the necessity and effectiveness of this reform will be essential for garnering support across different demographics. Building awareness about how ONOE can lead to improved governance and resource allocation will help mitigate scepticism among voters.

The "One Nation, One Election" initiative presents a transformative opportunity for India to enhance its electoral framework through financial prudence and technological interventions. By reducing election-related costs and leveraging advanced technologies, India can create a more efficient electoral process that allows elected officials to focus on governance rather than perpetual campaigning. However, realising this vision requires overcoming significant political, administrative, and public perception challenges. If successfully implemented, ONOE could streamline India's democratic processes while contributing to more effective governance and improved public service delivery in the long run. As India navigates this complex landscape, it stands at a crossroads where it can redefine its electoral system to serve its citizens better while upholding democratic values. The path forward will require collaboration among political leaders, administrative bodies, technologists, and civil society to ensure this initiative fulfils its promise of a more efficient and responsive democracy.

One Nation, One Election

The Tech and Logistical Framework for Success

Samrudhi Pande

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India, the world's largest democracy, led by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and the NDA, is poised for electoral reform with the One Nation, One Election proposal. On September 18, 2024, the Union Cabinet approved a high-level committee's recommendations, led by former President Ram Nath Kovind, to synchronise Lok Sabha and state assembly elections. This will also allow municipal and panchayat elections to occur shortly after.

This initiative aims to enhance democracy and advance electoral reform, reflecting a commitment to transparent, cost-effective elections that foster economic growth. Governments can focus on long-term policies instead of constant electoral cycles by minimising interruptions from staggered elections.

Despite the promising potential, there are still significant technological and logistical challenges to navigate, and it will be essential to ensure fair representation for India's diverse population as this ambitious change is explored. However, the numerous advancements in governance and technology achieved over the past decade provide a solid foundation to support this transformative initiative in India.

Tech Infrastructure

Next-Gen EVM

EVMs have been a cornerstone of India's elections since their inception. To support simultaneous elections, the current EVM infrastructure must be enhanced. EVMs must be capable of handling multiple ballots for both national and state

elections, which requires user-friendly interfaces that help voters navigate without confusion. Training for election officials and awareness campaigns for voters will be vital to ensure smooth operations on election day.

Moreover, the EVMs need advanced security features to prevent tampering. This includes better software updates, hardware tamper detection, and strong encryption methods. The Election Commission of India (ECI) has already made strides in improving EVMs, ensuring they remain reliable tools for conducting elections.

Integrating Blockchain Technology

Integrating blockchain technology into India's elections can enhance security, transparency, and trust. Existing M3 Model Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) already incorporate advanced security features, including a one-time programmable (OTP) chip, preventing any software tampering. An Unauthorized Access Detection Module (UADM) protects the micro-controller of the Control Unit, rendering the machine inoperative if tampering is attempted. Public key encryption and digital certificates for mutual authentication by units of the EVM

India can further strengthen its voting system by combining these features with blockchain. Blockchain provides a decentralised ledger of votes, making it nearly impossible to alter results. Each vote is recorded as a transaction, ensuring transparency and traceability.

In India, initiatives like the National Institute for Smart Government (NISG) have successfully implemented blockchain in the Land Records Management System to enhance transparency and reduce fraud. By leveraging blockchain for voter registration, India can create immutable records of registered voters, making it difficult to manipulate or create bogus entries.

Estonia exemplifies blockchain's effectiveness in elections; in 2019, it conducted municipal elections using a blockchain-secured online voting platform, allowing citizens to vote from anywhere while ensuring ballot integrity. As India enhances its digital infrastructure through initiatives like the National Voter's Service Portal (NVSP), the groundwork for adopting blockchain in elections is being laid, fostering greater trust in the democratic process.

Cybersecurity Measures

As technology becomes integral to elections, robust cybersecurity is vital for protecting voters data. A comprehensive cybersecurity framework must secure communication networks for transmitting election data. This includes implementing firewalls, intrusion detection systems, and encryption protocols to safeguard sensitive information. Developing incident response plans is essential to address potential cyber threats effectively.

India's commitment to enhancing cybersecurity over the past decade is evident through partnerships with various cybersecurity agencies, focusing on safeguarding election data.

The M3 models of EVMs implement dynamic coding of key presses to ensure that messages between the Ballot Unit (BU) and Control Unit (CU) are encrypted, allowing for real-time detection of malicious sequences. ECI EVMs are standalone machines not connected to the internet, reducing the risk of remote hacking. Public awareness campaigns are critical to inform voters about cybersecurity measures. Collaborating with cybersecurity experts and training election officials are vital steps toward ensuring a secure and trustworthy electoral process.





Logistic Landscape

Implementing 'One Nation, One Election' (ONOE) in India presents a multitude of logistical challenges that must be addressed for a smooth electoral process.

Scale of Operation

With over 900 million eligible voters, conducting simultaneous elections across different government levels will require vast logistical operations. This includes procuring and deploying Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) machines. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice estimates that approximately ₹9,284.15 crore will be needed for this procurement. Ensuring enough machines are available, functional, and properly programmed for each polling station is a significant challenge.

EVM and VVPAT Deployment and Material Distribution

Distributing EVMs and VVPATs across India is complicated by the country's diverse and often challenging terrains, including mountainous regions, dense forests, and extensive rural areas. States like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Odisha, which are affected by the Naxalite insurgency, further complicate the logistics. While other countries like Brazil and South Africa also face geographical challenges, India's complexities are unique.

India has established robust frameworks for pre-poll preparations that include extensive surveys and mapping of polling locations. The ECI collaborates with local authorities and law enforcement to secure electoral booths, especially in high-risk areas. Even in villages with few voters, such as Sheradand in Bharatpur Sonhat, the ECI sets up polling centres to ensure everyone can vote. In extremely remote areas, animals are often used to transport election materials when traditional transport methods are impractical.

However, there is room for improvement. Enhancing infrastructure like road connectivity and establishing temporary communication networks in

remote areas is crucial. Using advanced technologies such as drones for transporting election materials could also address accessibility issues. Training local volunteers and engaging the community can help ensure the timely distribution and security of election materials.

Staffing Requirements

Conducting simultaneous elections for over 900 million voters presents significant staffing challenges. Millions of trained election officials, polling staff, security personnel, and logistical support teams will be necessary. Intensive training is essential to ensure staff can handle the complex voting processes for national, state, and local elections simultaneously while operating EVMs and VVPATs.

Currently, many election officials receive only basic training, limiting their ability to manage EVM malfunctions or technical issues. New technologies, such as blockchain, could further complicate this if officials are not adequately trained. For example, during the 2019 general elections, remote polling stations in Arunachal Pradesh experienced delays due to insufficient trained personnel. This highlights the need for better staffing strategies.

The ECI can build on past successes, like deploying reserve polling teams during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections to quickly address last-minute staffing issues. Future training must also encompass new technologies to avoid technical problems seen in previous elections. By learning from past experiences, India can develop effective plans to handle staffing and operational challenges, ensuring a smooth voting experience.

Security Coordination and Contingency Planning

Robust security coordination and contingency planning are essential for ONOE. Simultaneous elections require adequate security personnel and effective communication with local law enforcement. The Election Commission has contingency plans for emergencies, including technical failures. Regular drills for officials and real-time monitoring systems could further enhance security.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has developed contingency plans for managing emergencies during elections. These plans address technical failures of voting machines, additional voting hours, and disturbances. However, enhancements can be made, such as regular drills for officials and integrating technology like real-time monitoring systems.

Training election officials and security personnel on these protocols will strengthen the electoral process's resilience, ensuring security and operational continuity. Collectively, these efforts will build public confidence in the integrity of the electoral process under ONOE, safeguarding democracy in India.

Road Ahead

The ONOE initiative is a major step for India in enhancing its electoral process. Managing elections on this scale can position India as a global governance leader. To succeed, India must address challenges from fake voter registrations to building a robust voting ecosystem. Technological advancements like blockchain can create a trustworthy electoral process. Overcoming logistical and security hurdles is essential, and strong cybersecurity measures and official election training are crucial for a reliable voting system.

To achieve this, India must address challenges from fake voter registrations to implementing a robust voting ecosystem. Technological advancements like blockchain can create a more trustworthy electoral process. The potential benefits, including cost savings, improved governance, and increased voter participation, make this initiative worthwhile.

Collaboration among stakeholders, comprehensive contingency plans, and fostering public confidence will be key to navigating the complexities of simultaneous elections across diverse regions. Ultimately, the ONOE initiative will strengthen India's democratic foundations and reshape its image as a global leader in electoral reform.



One Nation, One Election: Constitutional Reforms for a Unified India

T Harish Kumar

BJYM Vice President
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The Constitution of India, often referred to as a "Living Document," reflects the consensus of the people of one of the world's largest democracies with one of the most comprehensive written constitutions. It establishes the framework for governance based on justice, liberty, and equality for the people of India. Recently, the Ram Nath Kovind Committee submitted a report on the proposal of One Nation, One Election, aimed at synchronising elections for the Lok Sabha, State Assemblies, and Local Bodies to be held simultaneously across the country. The committee emphasised that this step would enhance stable governance, streamline the election process, reduce the costs of frequent elections, and support effective governance for India's development.

The NDA government and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have been strong advocates of One Nation, One Election since the early 1990s. This idea was highlighted in the Law Commission report of 1999 and was featured as a key policy reform in the BJP's electoral manifestos in 2014 and 2019. Recognising its significance, the BJP has consistently argued that this reform would not only reduce the financial burden on the exchequer but also improve governance by enabling governments to focus on long-term policy planning rather than being in constant campaign mode.

Rationale for One Nation, One Election

India's early democratic framework supported simultaneous elections until the 1970s when Congress's dominance began to wane with the emergence of new political parties. To maintain control, the Congress government allegedly misused constitutional provisions. In 1971, under Indira Gandhi's leadership, the Congress government prematurely dissolved the Lok Sabha to retain power, disrupting the cycle of simultaneous elections. During this period, Congress frequently invoked Article 356 (President's Rule) to dissolve state assemblies, allowing for central rule in states, which undermined India's federal structure and diminished the government's accountability to the people.

This alleged misuse of power eroded public trust in democracy and weakened the principle of constitutionalism, leading to alterations in certain constitutional provisions, including Articles 83(2) and 172(1), which specify the terms for the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. These actions dismantled the framework of synchronised elections, resulting in a fragmented electoral calendar. The frequent election cycles have disrupted governance due to repeated impositions of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC). According to a recent NITI Aayog report, the MCC is in force for about four or more months annually, hampering administrative and developmental activities in poll-bound areas. For instance, in 2024, along with the Lok Sabha elections, six states held assembly elections, and Maharashtra and Jharkhand are also in election phases.

Key Recommendations of the Committee

In a democratic country like India, the people's consensus is crucial for electing representatives through Universal Adult Suffrage, ensuring accountability and fostering trust in the government and the Constitution, as highlighted in Article 75. This stands in contrast to the misuse of constitutional powers observed in neighbouring countries like Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The Committee on One Nation, One Election has proposed several key amendments to constitutional provisions and related laws that fall within permissible limits and aim to enhance governance.

One recommendation is to amend Article 82 by inserting Article 82(A), which would synchronise the tenures of the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies to allow for unified polls across India. Amendments to Articles 83 and 172 clarify the term of the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, creating provisions to address early or premature dissolutions. Additionally, proposed amendments to Articles 327, 324, and 325 would enable the Election Commission to develop a Single Electoral Roll for all elections, helping to reduce duplicity and eliminate fake voters, ultimately improving election monitoring. The committee believes that these reforms would enhance voter participation, strengthen democratic integrity, and improve trust in the electoral process, which has been declining year by year.

Further amendments to the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963; the Government of National Capital Territory Act, 1991; and the Jammu & Kashmir Reorganization Act, 2019, will help stitch the social fabric of the nation, ensure political stability, and allow elected governments to concentrate on governance rather than being in constant election mode. Continuous elections lead to policy paralysis due to the imposition of the Model Code of Conduct. It is essential that simultaneous elections enhance administrative efficiency and provide the stability needed to focus on long-term policy-making. Ongoing instability and frequent changes in government hinder consistent approaches and implementation of public welfare policies, causing unnecessary delays.

Conclusion

One Nation, One Election offers a transformative vision for India's democracy and electoral framework, highlighting the potential benefits, including substantial cost savings and improved governance efficiency. By focusing on policy-making and implementation through the recommended constitutional amendments, this initiative aims to strengthen India's political structure while upholding the principles of federalism and ensuring accountability of the elected government to the people. The successful implementation of this initiative will pave the way for India's development and contribute to the vision of Vikshit Bharat (Developed India) by 2047.

एक देश एक चुनाव युगांतरकारी निर्णय

राजेन्द्र कुमार पाण्डेय
लेखक सामाजिक कार्यकर्ता हैं

भारत एक चुनाव प्रधान देश है। साल भर यहां अलग अलग हिस्सों में कोई न कोई चुनाव होता रहता है। जैसे तो हमारे लोकतांत्रिक व्यवस्था में 5 साल में एक बार चुनाव कराने की व्यवस्था है लेकिन राज्य विधानसभा, पंचायत चुनाव इत्यादि का टाइम लाइन ऐसे गड़बड़ हुआ है कि ये ये छमाही कार्यक्रम बन कर रह गया है। देश के नेता हमेशा चुनावी मोड में रहते हैं। ऐसे में मोदी सरकार के तीसरे कार्यकाल में 100 दिन पूरा होते ही एक धमाकेदार खबर आई कि अब देश में वन नेशन वन इलेक्शन कराया जाएगा क्या है ये ? कब से होगा लागू ? और क्या हमेशा से देश में ऐसे ही चुनाव होता रहा है। आइये बिंदुवार समझते हैं।

1947 में देश की आजादी के बाद जब 1951 में पहले आम चुनाव हुए तो सभी राज्यों की विधानसभा चुनाव भी साथ में ही हुआ था और ये सिलसिला 1967 तक अनवरत चलता रहा। लेकिन राहुल गांधी की दादी इंदिरा गांधी के सत्ता में आने के बाद, और इंदिरा इज इंडिया, एंड इंडिया इज इंदिरा के दौर में ऐसा भी समय आया जब केंद्र की शक्तियों का दुरुपयोग करते हुए कई राज्य सरकारों को बर्खास्त किया गया। ऐसी स्थिति में चुनावों का टाइम लाइन गड़बड़ हो गया,



जिसे कभी ठीक करने के बारे में नहीं सोचा गया। और देश को एक बिना वजह में जंजाल में उलझा कर रख दिया गया। जिसका खामियाजा आज तक देश की जनता चुका रही है, जिसके खर्च का बोझ आज तक देश की जनता ढो रही है।

देश में जब भी कोई चुनाव होता है, तो जिस क्षेत्र में चुनाव होना होता है वहाँ आदर्श आचार संहिता लगा दी जाती है और सरकारी कामकाज जो कुछ भी चल रहा होता है उस पर रोक लग जाती है। अब देश में कहीं न कहीं ये होता रहता है, ऐसे में विकास कार्यों में रुकावट तो होती है, साथ ही साथ बार बार चुनाव कराने से आम जनजीवन भी प्रभावित होता है। चुनाव आयोग को भी सभी चुनावों की अलग अलग तैयारी करनी पड़ती है। इसमें धन की बर्बादी तो होती ही है, साथ ही साथ संसाधनों का भी दुरुपयोग होता है। मत प्रतिशत भी प्रभावित होता है। आपको अगर उदाहारण से समझाऊ तो जैसे उत्तर प्रदेश का रहने वाला हूँ। जहाँ लोकसभा चुनाव के 3 साल बाद विधानसभा चुनाव होता है, और फिर एक साल बाद पंचायत चुनाव, अब सभी चुनावों में जाकर मैं वोट करूँ ऐसा हर बार होता नहीं है। ये सभी के साथ होता होगा। 5 साल में अगर एक बार में ही सभी चुनाव

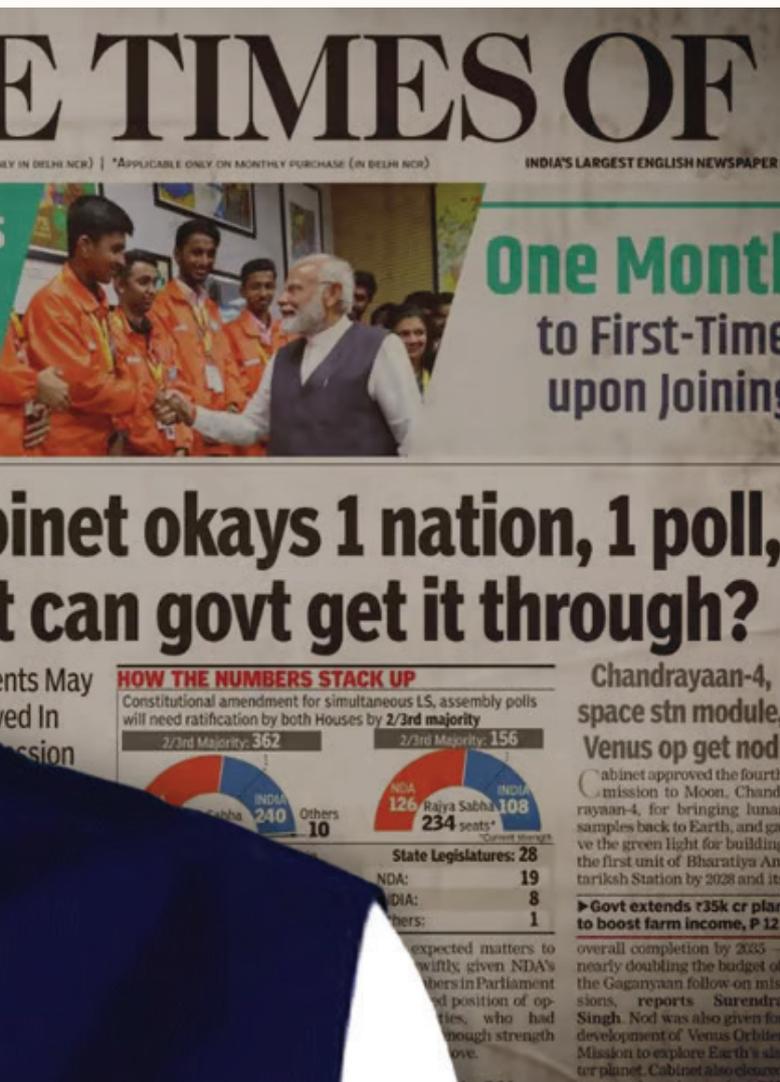
हो तो एक ही बार में सब अपने मताधिकार का प्रयोग कर सकेंगे। और चुनाव में होने वाले धन और संसाधन की बर्बादी पर भी लगाम लगाई जा सकेगी।

वन नेशन वन इलेक्शन पर मोदी सरकार ने पिछले साल सितंबर में पूर्व राष्ट्रपति रामनाथ कोविंद की अध्यक्षता में कमेटी का गठन किया था। कमेटी ने इस साल मार्च में राष्ट्रपति द्रौपदी मुर्मू को 18 हजार 626 पन्नों की रिपोर्ट सौंपी। रिपोर्ट में ये प्रस्ताव दिया गया कि

1. सभी राज्य विधानसभाओं का कार्यकाल अगले लोकसभा चुनाव यानी 2029 तक बढ़ाया जाए।
2. बहुमत नहीं मिलता है और अविश्वास प्रस्ताव पास हो जाता है तो बाकी 5 साल के कार्यकाल के लिए नए सिरे से चुनाव कराए जा सकते हैं।
3. पहले फेज में लोकसभा और विधानसभा चुनाव कराए जा सकते हैं।
4. 100 दिनों के भीतर दूसरा फेज होगा, जिसमें शहरी और ग्रामीण निकाय चुनाव जिन्हें हम पंचायत चुनाव के नाम से जानते हैं, कराए जाएंगे।
5. सभी चुनावों के लिए कॉमन इलेक्टोरल रोल तैयार किया जाएगा।
6. एक साथ चुनाव कराने के लिए जरूरी उपकरणों, जनशक्ति और सुरक्षा बलों की एडवांस प्लानिंग की भी सिफारिश की गई है।

इस प्रस्ताव को मोदी कैबिनेट से मंजूरी मिल चुकी है। अब असली चुनौती इसे लागू करने में है। सभी राजनीतिक दलों को एक सतत साधना सबसे बड़ी चुनौती होगी। जहाँ मायावती, नीतीश कुमार जैसे बड़े नेता इसके पक्ष में हैं। वहीं चंद्रबाबू नायडू, लालू यादव, देवगौड़ा, केसीआर, जगनमोहन रेड्डी जैसे नेता इस पर चुप्पी साधे हुए हैं, शायद नफा नुकसान के कैलकुलेशन में लगे होंगे। और जैसा कि हमेशा से होता आया है देशहित के किसी भी फैसले को न पचा पाने वाली और इस मुसीबत की जननी कांग्रेस, और उनकी सहयोगी दल सपा, डीएमके, आप, डीएमके, टीएमसी, वामदल, और ओवैसी की पार्टी ने इसका विरोध किया है।

वन नेशन वन इलेक्शन का खाका तैयार है, कैबिनेट की मंजूरी मिल चुकी है। मोदी 3.0 का गीयर शिफ्ट हो चुका है। अब वन नेशन वन इलेक्शन को लेकर सरकार की कोशिशें अपनी जगह हैं और विपक्ष के सवाल अपनी जगह इसमें कोई शक नहीं कि वन नेशन वन इलेक्शन को लागू करने में चुनौतियां हैं, लेकिन ऐसी कोई चुनौती नहीं जिसे देश के फायदे के लिए मात नहीं दी जा सके। मोदी जी के ट्रैक रिकॉर्ड को देखें तो ऐसे कड़े और सुधारवादी फैसले यदि वो लेते हैं, तो उसे पूरा करने के लिए किसी भी हद तक जा सकते हैं जो कि देश के लिए जरूरी भी है।



Toward Efficient Democracy: The Economic Case for One Nation, One Election

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In the democratic system of India, elections serve as the cornerstone of representation and governance. The regularity and overlap of local, state, and national elections, however, provide serious difficulties. These problems vary from the logistical costs of the Election Commission of India to economic disruptions and financial demands on government machinery. The idea of "One Nation, One Election" (ONOE) has been put out to allay these worries. In order to potentially save money and improve the effectiveness of governance, this proposal proposes holding simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha (national parliament) and all state legislative assemblies & local bodies. Elections are held at the national, state, and local levels in India, a federal republic. As a result, elections are held virtually annually in various regions of the nation. This has resulted in an ongoing cycle of election-related activity in recent decades, such as voter mobilisation campaigns, security force deployments, and campaigning.

India's frequent elections have a big financial impact on many facets of the country's governance and economy. Election expenses, security plans, administrative overheads, and political parties' high campaign expenditures are some of the main areas where the financial burden is present. In this article, we have detailed the breakdown of these financial impacts with relevant data, including the projected figures for the 2024 general elections.



Electoral Expenditure

From establishing polling places to moving electronic voting machines (EVMs), overseeing Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs), and paying election staff, the Election Commission of India (ECI) bears significant expenses when holding elections. The ECI spent almost ₹6,000 crore on the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, a substantial increase from ₹3,870 crore in 2014 and ₹1,483 crore in 2009. Experts predict that, given the growing usage of technology, security precautions, and logistical needs, the cost of the general elections in 2024 may reach ₹8,500 crore or more. Additionally, it is anticipated that the price per voter will rise, possibly reaching ₹80 in 2024 compared to ₹60 in 2019.

Security Costs

Large-scale security resources must be used to ensure a peaceful and equitable election process, especially in delicate states where law and order concerns are prevalent. This covers the use of state

police, paramilitary groups, and other security guards. An estimated ₹1,000 crore to ₹1,500 crore was spent on security during the 2019 general elections, which involved the deployment of approximately 2 million paramilitary and police troops. Given the growing requirement for increased security in states with ongoing conflicts and political tensions, it is possible that the projected security spending for the general elections in 2024 has surpassed ₹2,000 crore.

Administrative Costs

The administrative apparatus is under tremendous strain from frequent elections, which causes inefficiency and takes funds away from development and governance initiatives. Government representatives are assigned to election-related tasks during elections, and the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) prevents important policy decisions and project launches. For every election, the MCC usually stays in effect for 50–60 days, which causes administrative inefficiencies and delays governance. Even while the precise economic cost of administrative disruptions is hard to estimate, delays in social welfare programs, infrastructure projects, and other governance initiatives have serious long-term effects, particularly in governments with regular elections.

Campaigning Costs

In India, political parties invest enormous quantities of money in election campaigns, which include funding for social media promotions, public rallies, voter outreach initiatives, and media ads. Parties are under tremendous financial hardship due to the rising expenses of every election cycle, which forces them to raise money constantly. An estimated ₹60,000 crore was spent by political parties and candidates in the 2019 general elections, with about ₹12,000 crore going toward media and advertising costs alone. Given the increasing importance of digital campaigns and social media platforms in reaching voters, this number is anticipated to increase much more during the general elections in 2024, with estimates putting the entire campaign spending at above ₹70,000 crore.

Rising Electoral Costs: The cost of organising elections in India has consistently increased, and in 2029, the expenditure is expected to rise sharply due to factors like population growth, technological advancements, and the need for enhanced security measures.

Strain on Security Resources: The nation's security apparatus is heavily burdened by the regular deployment of police officers and paramilitary forces for elections. This takes these resources away from vital internal security tasks like

Key Insights on Financial Implications of Frequent Elections:

Year	Election	Election Expenditure (INR Crore)	Key Drivers of Cost
2009	General Elections	₹1,483	Increasing voter base, introduction of EVMs, enhanced security measures
2014	General Elections	₹3,870	Larger voter base (814 million), the introduction of VVPATs, higher security needs, and significant campaign costs.
2019	General Elections	₹6,000	Voter base (900 million), nationwide use of VVPATs, extensive security arrangements, technology deployment.
2024	General Elections (Projected)	₹8,500	Further voter base expansion (950 million), increased use of technology, digital campaigns, and security needs.

controlling civil unrest or stopping criminal activity. Administrative Inefficiency: The MCC is frequently imposed during election seasons, which interferes with governments' regular operations and delays governance and policy choices. This has a special impact on long-term initiatives that need constant attention and infrastructure development.

Campaign Financing Burden: Due to the high costs associated with regular elections, political parties must continuously solicit money. This frequently results in an excessive reliance on donations, some of which may come from unreliable sources. This can encourage cronyism and compromise political honesty.

Cost-Benefit Analysis of Simultaneous Elections

The concept of "One Nation, One Election" has been proposed to address the financial and administrative burdens posed by frequent elections. India could achieve significant cost savings, improve governance efficiency, and reduce disruptions by holding simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and state assemblies.

Benefits of Simultaneous Elections:

Reduction in Electoral Costs: In India, combining state and national elections into a single cycle might significantly reduce the total cost of elections. For instance, the logistical savings (polling booths, staff deployment, etc.) would be significant.

Lower Security Expenditure: A single, unified election would eliminate multiple security force deployments, resulting in significant operational and logistical cost savings.

Improved Governance: When there are fewer election cycles, governments can concentrate on long-term development without being sidetracked by periodic elections and the MCC. This may result in economic stability and better policy implementation.

Reduced Campaign Costs: If political parties only had to run campaigns once every five years, significant amounts of money that could be used for development projects or social programs would be saved.

Market Stability

There is another impact of elections, i.e. on the Market. The stock market may fluctuate due to election-related uncertainty and the possible policy choices made by incoming governments. The performance of shares in publicly traded corporations appears to be mostly unaffected by the party in power over the long run. Stock markets are impacted by the general elections of both the state and centre. Before ballots are cast, market volatility usually rises due to the uncertainty surrounding their outcome. Following an election, markets also continue to shift as the newly elected government's policy intentions become clear. Frequent elections increase volatility, which affects stability and investors' interest in the market. Also, due to frequent elections, the ruling regime tends to adopt socialist aspects of welfare and tight regulation for industries; this again creates a negative impact on investors' sentiments.

Pre-Election Uncertainty, because of the uncertainty surrounding the results, markets usually see increased volatility prior to elections. The wait-and-watch strategy of investors, especially foreign institutional investors (FIIs), leads to volatility in stock market indices like the Sensex and Nifty. This volatility is exacerbated by worries about shifting tax laws, business environments, and economic policies.

India's regular elections have substantial financial ramifications, including campaigning costs, security expenditures, electoral costs, and administrative inefficiencies. The anticipated cost increase highlights the necessity for electoral reform as India prepares for the national elections in 2024. Initiatives such as "One Nation, One Election" present a workable answer to these problems, guaranteeing not only cost savings but also improved governance and political stability.

The government, political parties, and the economy at large might save a significant amount of money if simultaneous elections are adopted. Although there are significant constitutional and practical obstacles to overcome, the long-term advantages for India's democratic process and financial stability make this reform a worthwhile endeavour.



One Nation, One Election: Cost Savings, Cohesion, and the Future of Indian Democracy

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Elections are the festivals of Democracy, and India celebrates this festival robustly. With 96.88 Crore voters, India has the largest electorate across the globe. With 64.2 Crore people voting and 65.79% voter turnout in the Lok Sabha Polls, 2024 set a world record.

The Simultaneous election refers to the practice of holding elections for multiple levels of government (such as national and state) at the same time, unlike Staggered Elections that India is having, meaning elections for the same level of government (e.g., national or state) that are conducted in phases over an extended period across different regions or constituencies. India began electoral endeavours in 1991 with simultaneous elections. The first general elections were held on October 25, 1951, and

February 21, 1952, an exercise for over 100 days. Nonetheless, simultaneous elections were held in 76% of the states in 1957 and 67% in 1962 and 1967. The continuity of simultaneous elections was shattered by the dismissal of the Communist Party government under the leadership of E M S Namboodiripad in Kerala in 1959. Consequently, Kerala state assembly elections took place in 1960. The Lok Sabha itself was dissolved prematurely in 1970, and fresh elections were held in 1971. By 1972, the practice of holding simultaneous elections had come to an end, with no state elections aligning with the general election for the Lok Sabha anymore.

Concerns associated with One Nation – One Election: There are numerous concerns associated with holding simultaneous elections. In the later part of the article, the authors would address every concern distinctly. The concerns associated with simultaneous elections are logistics, the federal character of the Indian Constitution flowing from the marginalisation of regional issues, the requirement of a constitutional amendment to implement "One Nation – One Election", and the uncertainty of tenure of the legislature. The report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee under the chairmanship of EM Sudarsana Natchiappan, mentions holding simultaneous elections would require a significant investment in purchasing Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) systems. The Election Commission of India estimates that around ₹9,284.15 crore would be needed to procure the necessary EVMs and VVPATs for this process.

Presenting the Case for One Nation – One Election: The cost of conducting parliamentary elections in 2014 was Rs 3,870 crore. Though official data is not available, but if a report published by New Delhi-based Centre for Media Studies is to be believed, then the cost of the polls in 2019 was a whopping Rs 50,000 crore. The cost of the Parliamentary Elections of 2024 is yet not public. Considering the cost of holding elections, the amount estimated ₹9,284.15 crores in the procurement of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT)

systems along with the inflation would be a fraction of the election expenditure of India. In India, a big fraction of resources gets dedicated to election logistics of security, the expenditure on candidates, etc.

India held simultaneous elections till 1967, and mid-term elections resorted due to constitutional necessity, with the action and implementation of Article 356 of the Indian Constitution. In the 2019 elections, states like Odisha and Andhra Pradesh saw voters picking different parties for the Lok Sabha and the State Assembly, highlighting a clear distinction in their political preferences for national versus local governance. In Bihar, in Parliamentary Elections, NDA got a sweeping majority in 31 out of 40 seats, whereas the very next year, voters voted for Mahagathbandhan; similarly, in the 2015 Delhi elections, despite NDA securing all 7 Lok Sabha seats, got just 3 Vidhan-Sabha seats out of 70 seats. The Orissa in 2009 voted in favour of Biju Janta Dal in parliamentary elections, but Congress performed well in state legislative elections. In West Bengal 2004 Lok Sabha elections, the Left Front, led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)), won most of the seats, but after 2 years in Vidhan Sabha elections, despite the Left Front succeeded in securing the power, the TMC emerged as strong opposition. The political wisdom and democratic acumen of the Indian masses should not be underestimated when making policy decisions.

As per suggestions of the Election Commission of India, published in a report prepared by the Lok Sabha Secretariat, in case of a No Confidence Motion, the motion should be followed by a Confidence Motion to the government having support and voting takes place on both the motions together. Despite this arrangement, where the dissolution of the house takes place where the duration of the house remains less, for example, one year (duration proposed by author and hypothetical number), the president is to be carrying the administration of the country with the aid and advice of the council of ministers) and where the duration is longer, for example, more than one year (duration proposed by author and hypothetical number), the fresh elections will be conducted for the remaining period. A similar model

can be implemented at the state level for legislative elections, with the governor taking care of administrative work in the state.

Implementing the One Nation – One Election would require constitutional amendments in Articles 324A, Article 325, Article 356, Article 85, Article 174, Article 82(2), and Article 171(1). This also would require legislative amendments in the Representation of the People Act, 1951, the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991 and Section 5 of the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963 Simultaneous elections would drastically reduce the cost of elections in India. It would lessen the involvement of public officials in electoral exercises, making them more efficient in administrative work. The Model Code of Conduct in a poll-bound state still governs the entire development procedure. Frequent implementation of MCC results in policy paralysis and governance deficits.

The idea of holding simultaneous elections is not new to India. The assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Arunachal Pradesh, and Sikkim occur alongside the Lok Sabha elections. The democratic and political acumen of Indian electorates can't be underestimated. It has often been seen that the electorates choose government at union and state levels differently. In state assembly selections, the regional and local issues grab the attention, whereas while casting for Union Elections, regional issues vis-à-vis national interest are in purview. The idea of holding simultaneous elections is also not new to the world. South Africa holds national and provincial elections together, and this is similar to the case with Belgium and Sweden.

Adopting One Nation – One Election would bring sufficient benefits, such as reducing the enormous cost of conducting frequent elections, streamlining the electoral process, and minimising the disruption to governance caused by continuous campaigning. This would also facilitate the government's focus on long-term policy decisions without constant focus on upcoming elections. Simultaneously, elections could ultimately streamline the democratic process, ease voter fatigue, and contribute to greater political stability nationwide.

Restoring Electoral Efficiency: Constitutional and Legal Reforms for One Nation One Election

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India is widely acknowledged as the "mother of democracy" and is currently the largest democracy in the world, with a population exceeding 1.4 billion people. Conducting free, fair, and transparent elections in such a vast and diverse electorate presents considerable logistical, administrative, and financial challenges. The electoral process, which is mandated to occur every five years, necessitates substantial resources, including the allocation of significant financial outlays, deployment of security forces, procurement of electoral materials, and comprehensive training of personnel responsible for overseeing elections.

Elections are often referred to as the "Festival of Democracy." However, this festival is not a periodic event in India but a perpetual occurrence, as elections are not confined to the Lok Sabha. Elections for state legislative assemblies and local government bodies are conducted at varying intervals, often overlapping. As a result, there is rarely a year in India without an election, leading to a continuous electoral cycle.

The constant cycle of elections significantly strains the nation's finances and resources, diverting funds from crucial development projects. Additionally, elected representatives are often preoccupied with election campaigns, hindering their ability to fulfil their legislative and administrative duties effectively. The Election Commission of India also faces immense challenges in managing the frequent electoral processes.

The Union Cabinet has endorsed the "One Nation, One Election" proposal to mitigate these issues. This initiative aims to synchronise elections for the Lok Sabha, state assemblies, and local bodies. By streamlining the electoral process, this proposal seeks to reduce the frequency of elections, minimise costs, and enhance administrative efficiency.

India has a history of holding simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies between 1951 and 1967. However, this practice was discontinued due to various political factors, including premature dissolutions of state assemblies, political instability, and shifting political alliances.

The "One Nation, One Election" proposal aims to revive and formalise the concept of synchronised elections. Implementing this policy would require significant constitutional amendments, particularly regarding the terms and dissolution of legislative bodies. It would also necessitate widespread political agreement across parties and states. While this proposal could potentially reduce costs and improve administrative efficiency, its implementation must consider practical and legal implications, including upholding democratic principles and ensuring that elected bodies serve their full constitutional terms.

CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES REQUIRED FOR ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION:

In a big step towards electoral reforms, a High-Level committee was formed under the chairmanship of former President of India, Mr. Ramnath Kovind. The

Committee submitted its report in 2018 and recommended amendments to 15 Articles of the Constitution, suggested some new articles to be added, and made major changes to the Representatives of People's Act of 1951. The Committee proposed amendments to the following Constitutional Provisions:

Article 83 & 172

These articles prescribe a maximum duration of five years for the House of the People (Lok Sabha) and the State Legislative Assemblies. 'Unless sooner dissolved', each House shall continue for a period of five years from the date of its first meeting. Any extension of the term is permissible only in the event of a proclamation of emergency under the Constitution.

Article 85(1) & 174(1)

The interval between the last session of the House of the People or a State Legislative Assembly and the first session of the subsequent House shall not exceed six months.

Article 113 & 203

These articles prescribe the procedure concerning the presentation and approval of estimates. Failure to pass the estimates leads to the termination of the Council of Ministers, thereby resulting in a change in government.

Article 75(3) & 164(2)

These articles provide that the Council of Ministers shall remain in office as long as they enjoy the confidence of the majority of the members of the respective House.

Tenth Schedule

The Tenth Schedule deals with the disqualification of a member on the grounds of defection.

Article 243U

This article deals with the term of office for municipalities and the duration of newly constituted municipalities upon premature dissolution. Moreover, conducting elections for third-tier governments comes under state list.





Article 324: Entrusts the Election Commission with the superintendence, direction, and control of elections.

Article 326: Secures voting rights based on the principle of Universal Adult Franchise (UAF).

Article 327: Empowers Parliament to make provisions regarding elections, including laws under the Representation of the People Act, 1950 and 1951.

Article 328: Enables State Legislatures to make laws regarding elections to the State Legislatures, in the absence of parliamentary legislation.

Part XVIII

This part deals with emergency provisions.

Representation of the People Act, 1951

Sections 14 & 15:

These sections deal with the notification for general elections to the House of the People and the State Legislative Assemblies.

Part IX:

This part addresses the conduct of bye-elections to the House of the People and State Legislative Assemblies.

New Articles Proposed, Amendments required and suggestions:

1. Article 82A:

A proposed amendment facilitating the transition to simultaneous elections by issuing a notification from the President, marking the "Appointed Date." All Legislative Assemblies formed after this date will conclude concurrently with the full term of the Lok Sabha. This also expands Parliament's powers under Article 327 to conduct simultaneous elections.

2. Amendments to Articles 83 & 172:

These amendments aim to clarify the terms "Full Term" and "Unexpired Term" for the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. A new "Article 83(2)" and "Article 172(1)" is proposed, stating that a House constituted following the dissolution of a previous House before the expiration of its term will continue only for the remainder of the term for which the dissolved House would have continued.

3. New Articles Proposed:

Article 324A: Empowers Parliament to ensure that local elections are held simultaneously with general elections.

Article 325(2): Introduces a single electoral roll for all elections, managed by the Election Commission of India (ECI).

4. Disqualification on Defection: Proposes that issues of disqualification on the grounds of defection must be decided by the Speaker within six months.

5. Bye-Elections: Recommends that all by-elections falling due in a calendar year be conducted together.

Implementing One Nation, One Election presents several legal challenges:

1. **State Autonomy:** India is a federal system, and states have autonomy over their electoral processes. Synchronising elections could potentially infringe on this autonomy.
2. **Political Stability:** Frequent elections can lead to political instability. However, synchronising elections could lead to prolonged periods without elections, which could also have political implications.
3. **Judicial Scrutiny:** Any significant constitutional amendment would likely face judicial scrutiny. The Supreme Court may have to weigh the merits of the proposal against potential constitutional challenges.

To address these challenges, a careful and comprehensive approach is necessary. This could involve extensive consultations with stakeholders, including political parties, state governments, and legal experts. Additionally, a robust legal framework would be essential to ensure the smooth implementation of the proposal.

ROLE OF THE ELECTION COMMISSION IN MANAGING THE SYNCHRONIZED ELECTIONS:

The Election Commission is the nucleus of all the administrative and procedural activities related to elections and has constitutional authority under Article 324 of the Constitution. In case of

simultaneous elections, the Election Commission would have the huge responsibility of conducting elections free and fair, providing equal ground to political parties to compete, and spreading awareness among Voters regarding the new procedure.

- Conducting simultaneous elections would require the procurement of additional Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs).
- The increase in EVMs presents challenges regarding storage, as the Election Commission of India (ECI) has already identified a shortage of storage facilities. Furthermore, additional EVMs will necessitate more polling materials, personnel, and transportation.
- Engaging polling staff and administering elections over extended periods is a complex and time-consuming task.
- To ensure a free and fair election, the ECI requires a large number of polling officials from various government agencies and assistance from security forces, including the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) and State Armed Police.
- Additionally, the closure of schools and colleges is often necessary on polling days for preparatory measures, as staff from these institutions are frequently deployed for election-related duties.
- Prepare a single voter list for the whole country.
- Ensure proper implementation of the Model Code of Conduct, which can provide regional parties and smaller parties with an equal playing field in Elections.
- Holding simultaneous elections will require significant coordination among the central, State, and Local governments.
- Awareness drive among voters, introducing them to a new system of simultaneous elections.

In conclusion, One Nation, One Election is a complex proposal with potential benefits and challenges. Careful consideration and planning would be necessary to ensure its successful implementation. The Election Commission, as the guardian of free and fair elections, would play a pivotal role in making this vision a reality.

एक राष्ट्र, एक चुनाव : शासन और नीतिगत निरंतरता पर प्रभाव

डॉ० मिथिलेश कुमार पाण्डेय

सहायक प्राध्यापक, दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय

भारत एक ऐसा लोकतांत्रिक राष्ट्र है, जहाँ केंद्र और राज्यों में अलग-अलग समय पर चुनाव होते हैं। यह लगातार चुनावी प्रक्रिया सरकारों के सुचारु कार्यों में व्यवधान उत्पन्न करती है और नीतिगत स्थिरता पर प्रतिकूल प्रभाव डालती है। हर चुनाव के साथ प्रशासनिक ध्यान बंटता है, विकास योजनाएँ बाधित होती हैं और शासन में अस्थिरता आ जाती है। “एक राष्ट्र, एक चुनाव” का विचार इन चुनौतियों का समाधान प्रस्तुत करता है। इस प्रणाली के अंतर्गत यदि देश में सभी चुनाव—चाहे वह लोकसभा के हों या राज्यों की विधानसभाओं के—एक साथ आयोजित किए जाएँ, तो शासन में निरंतरता, स्थिरता और नीतियों का सुचारु क्रियान्वयन सुनिश्चित हो सकता है।

प्राचीन भारतीय दर्शन और ग्रंथों में भी शासन की स्थिरता और लोककल्याण पर गहरा बल दिया गया है। वैदिक और शास्त्रीय साहित्य के अध्ययन से स्पष्ट होता है कि समाज की उन्नति तभी संभव है, जब शासन नीतिगत दृष्टि से निरंतर और नागरिकों के प्रति संवेदनशील हो। चाणक्य नीति में स्पष्ट रूप से कहा गया है, “प्रजासुखे सुखं राज्ञः प्रजानां च हिते हितम्” जिसका अर्थ है, “राजा का सुख प्रजा के सुख में निहित है, और प्रजा का हित ही राजा का हित है।” यह कथन स्पष्ट करता है कि एक प्रभावी शासन व्यवस्था के लिए प्रजा का कल्याण सर्वोपरि होना चाहिए। यह तभी संभव है, जब प्रशासनिक तंत्र चुनावी प्रक्रिया से बार-बार बाधित न हो और शासन बिना किसी विघ्न के अपने कार्यकाल में निरंतर विकास की दिशा में कार्य करता रहे।



लगातार चुनावों के कारण सरकारें अल्पकालिक नीतियाँ अपनाती हैं, जिनका उद्देश्य त्वरित राजनीतिक लाभ प्राप्त करना होता है। चुनावी लाभ के उद्देश्य से रियायतों और अनुदानों की घोषणाएँ बढ़ जाती हैं, जबकि दीर्घकालिक सुधारों और विकासात्मक नीतियों की उपेक्षा होती है। “एक राष्ट्र, एक चुनाव” का सिद्धांत सरकारों को ऐसे तात्कालिक दबावों से मुक्त कर, दीर्घकालिक और प्रभावी नीतियाँ बनाने के लिए प्रेरित कर सकता है। इससे शासन की निरंतरता बनी रहेगी, और सरकारें बिना किसी चुनावी दबाव के विकास-उन्मुख योजनाओं को क्रियान्वित कर पाएँगी।

प्राचीन भारतीय विचारधारा में शासन को दीर्घकालिक दृष्टिकोण से देखा गया है। महाभारत के शांति पर्व में कहा गया है कि “धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः” अर्थात्, “जो धर्म की रक्षा करता है, वही शासन दीर्घकालिक स्थिरता प्राप्त करता है।” धर्म का यहाँ अर्थ केवल धार्मिक आचरण से नहीं, बल्कि नीतिगत और न्यायसंगत शासन से है। यदि सरकारें चुनावी दबावों से मुक्त होकर दीर्घकालिक नीतिगत सुधारों पर ध्यान केंद्रित करें, तो समाज का व्यापक हित सुनिश्चित किया जा सकता है।

वर्तमान समय में चुनावी चक्र के कारण शासन बार-बार बाधित होता है। चुनावी आचार संहिता के लागू होने से नीतिगत घोषणाओं और विकास परियोजनाओं पर प्रतिबंध लग जाता है, जिससे प्रशासन की गति धीमी हो जाती है। चूँकि अलग-अलग राज्यों के चुनाव अलग-अलग समय पर होते हैं, आचार संहिता का प्रभाव बार-बार लागू होता है और विकास कार्य रुक जाते हैं। यदि देश में सभी चुनाव एक साथ आयोजित किए जाएँ, तो यह समस्या समाप्त हो जाएगी और सरकार पूरे कार्यकाल में निर्बाध रूप से कार्य कर सकेगी। यह शासन की निरंतरता और नीतिगत स्थिरता के लिए अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण सिद्ध होगा।

प्राचीन भारतीय परंपराओं में सामूहिकता और एकता पर हमेशा जोर दिया गया है। ऋग्वेद का मंत्र, “संगच्छध्वं, संवदध्वं, सं वो मनांसि जानताम्” (ऋग्वेद 10.191.2) इस बात को रेखांकित करता है कि समाज और शासन तभी सफल होते हैं, जब वे एक साथ मिलकर कार्य करते हैं। यदि पूरे देश में चुनाव एक साथ आयोजित किए जाएँ, तो यह न केवल प्रशासनिक दृष्टि से लाभकारी होगा, बल्कि देश की एकता को भी प्रकट करेगा। इससे सरकारें और प्रशासनिक तंत्र एकजुट होकर दीर्घकालिक लक्ष्यों की प्राप्ति के लिए कार्य कर सकेंगे।

चुनावी चक्र को एकसाथ लाने से नागरिकों की लोकतांत्रिक भागीदारी भी मजबूत होगी। वर्तमान में, लगातार चुनाव होने से मतदाताओं में चुनावी थकान उत्पन्न होती है, जिससे मतदान प्रतिशत पर नकारात्मक प्रभाव पड़ता है। यदि सभी चुनाव एक साथ होते हैं, तो नागरिकों के लिए मतदान की प्रक्रिया अधिक सरल और सुविधाजनक हो जाएगी। इससे लोकतांत्रिक प्रक्रिया में लोगों की भागीदारी बढ़ेगी और जनमत के आधार पर सरकारें चुनी जा सकेंगी, जो जनता की वास्तविक आवश्यकताओं का प्रतिनिधित्व करती होंगी।

इस संदर्भ में रामायण का रामराज्य एक आदर्श उदाहरण प्रस्तुत

करता है, जहाँ शासन की प्राथमिकता लोककल्याण और न्याय था। रामायण में उल्लेख मिलता है कि “रामराज्य” के अंतर्गत सभी नागरिकों के साथ न्यायपूर्ण व्यवहार किया जाता था और शासन का उद्देश्य केवल राजकीय हित नहीं, बल्कि जनकल्याण था। “एक राष्ट्र, एक चुनाव” का सिद्धांत इस आदर्श की दिशा में एक कदम है, जहाँ शासन अल्पकालिक राजनीतिक लाभों के बजाय दीर्घकालिक और न्यायसंगत नीतियों पर ध्यान केंद्रित कर सकेगा।

इसके अतिरिक्त, “एक राष्ट्र, एक चुनाव” से संसाधनों का भी कुशल उपयोग सुनिश्चित होगा। चुनावी प्रक्रिया पर आज के समय में हजारों करोड़ रुपये खर्च होते हैं और प्रशासनिक अधिकारियों, सुरक्षाबलों तथा अन्य संसाधनों की व्यापक तैनाती की जाती है। बार-बार चुनाव होने से यह खर्च और बढ़ जाता है। यदि चुनाव एक साथ आयोजित किए जाएँ, तो इससे न केवल आर्थिक बचत होगी, बल्कि प्रशासनिक ऊर्जा भी विकासात्मक कार्यों में लगाई जा सकेगी। इससे शासन अधिक दक्ष और प्रभावी हो सकेगा।

इस प्रणाली के कार्यान्वयन में कुछ व्यावहारिक चुनौतियाँ भी हैं, जैसे राज्यों और केंद्र के चुनावी चक्रों को एक साथ लाने की कठिनाई। इसके अलावा, यह भी आशंका हो सकती है कि क्षेत्रीय मुद्दों को राष्ट्रीय मुद्दों के सामने पर्याप्त महत्व न मिले। इन चुनौतियों का समाधान संवैधानिक और प्रशासनिक सुधारों के माध्यम से किया जा सकता है। संवैधानिक संशोधनों द्वारा चुनावी चक्रों का समायोजन संभव है और चुनाव आयोग को तकनीकी रूप से सशक्त बनाकर निष्पक्ष और पारदर्शी चुनाव सुनिश्चित किए जा सकते हैं।

अंततः, “एक राष्ट्र, एक चुनाव” की अवधारणा शासन की स्थिरता और नीतिगत निरंतरता के लिए अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण सिद्ध हो सकती है। यह व्यवस्था सरकारों को दीर्घकालिक नीतियों पर ध्यान केंद्रित करने का अवसर प्रदान करेगी और विकास-उन्मुख शासन सुनिश्चित करेगी। यह लोकतंत्र को भी अधिक सशक्त बनाएगी, क्योंकि मतदाता एक ही समय में देश के सभी प्रतिनिधियों का चयन कर सकेंगे, जिससे जनता की वास्तविक इच्छाओं का समुचित प्रतिनिधित्व होगा।

प्राचीन भारतीय दर्शन में भी एकजुटता और सामूहिकता पर बल दिया गया है, जो इस अवधारणा के मूल में निहित है। यदि पूरा राष्ट्र एक साथ चुनावी प्रक्रिया में भाग लेता है, तो यह न केवल प्रशासनिक दृष्टि से लाभकारी होगा, बल्कि देश की लोकतांत्रिक जड़ों को भी सुदृढ़ करेगा। यह एक ऐसा क्रांतिकारी कदम होगा, जो भारत की शासन-प्रणाली को अधिक स्थिर और प्रभावी बनाएगा और देश के समग्र विकास में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाएगा।

Towards Efficient Governance: The Case for One Nation, One Election

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The Union Cabinet recently cleared the “One Nation One Election (ONOE)” proposal that will ultimately lead to simultaneous elections being held for union & state governments along with municipals & panchayats. After the new bills placed by the Union government are passed in the parliament, India will once again move on to this efficient structure of conducting elections that was prevalent in India till 1967. ONOE is a complicated subject with multiple facets related to constitutional & legal framework, bureaucratic reforms, and public opinion & voter behaviour.



1. Reducing costs incurred by the Election Commission:

According to a report in the parliament, the cost incurred by the Election Commission (EC) to hold general & assembly elections is around Rs 5000 crores. This excludes the declared & undeclared expenses incurred by candidates & political parties. Apart from that, if we assume that, on average, we have assembly elections in 3 states per year, the EC would have additional expenses of around Rs 1000 crores every year, which is exceptionally high & leaves a lot of room for saving government exchequer.

For example, if the EC held general elections and all the 28 states together and assumed it spent Rs 4000 (as it did in 2014), it would mean we are saving Rs 1000 crore every five years because we are concurrently holding assembly elections together with the LS elections. This would save the government about Rs 5000 crores over five years, which can be used for other government schemes.

2. Reducing manpower needs for prolonged periods multiple times:

The task of conducting the elections requires manpower from multiple agencies. For example, the EC employs Primary and high school teachers, state government officials, and clerks (apart from security personnel) to organize elections all over India. They are again used during the counting days. The process of organising elections becomes long, and a percentage of government officials have to leave their actual work and focus on election-related duties.

3. Reduction of stalling of developmental projects due to model code of conduct(MCC):

The MCC generally starts 30 days before the election date. Since the central government is responsible for the timely completion of critical and time-sensitive development and infrastructure projects all over the country, the frequent enforcement of the MCC has ramifications for the timely completion of such critical infrastructure.

For, e.g., As per the Ministry of Development of

North East Region, the Finance Ministry has allocated around Rs 600 crore for various small development & infrastructure projects (excluding major ones) & these projects are extremely important because up until 10 years ago, the NE suffered from chronic lack of development & infrastructure. These projects directly affect the lives of common citizens of the NE, which also have secondary beneficial outcomes (reduction of militancy, etc.) & these projects very often get delayed because the model code of conduct sets in frequently in these 7 states whenever an election is held (elections in 2 states every year on average). As a result of stalling, the long-term costs of these projects almost double & and people are deprived of basic amenities related to infrastructure, healthcare, etc.

4. Proper utilisation of Central Paramilitary forces & state security forces:

According to published reports, during the 2019 LS elections, 3 lakh central paramilitary & 15 lakh state police personnel were deployed to conduct the elections, spanning a month in 7 phases. Assuming that every year, 3 states go to elections, this would mean almost 50000 central paramilitary forces are perennially busy with electioneering work moving from one state to another. This leaves a lot of scope for improvement around how we can effectively use a large number of such forces for only security purposes. Apart from the logistical challenges of moving a large number of security forces, the challenge that we face in our NE border can be alleviated if we implement ONOE.

For, e.g., CRPF has 250 battalions, with each battalion having 1200 security personnel & if we assume 50000 (almost 40 battalions) are busy with electioneering work, that leaves only around 200 battalions. Given the security challenges in Kashmir, the North East & the border with China, these additional 40 battalions could be deployed strategically around these 3 sectors to bring the security challenges under control in coordination with the Army. Apart from central security personnel, freeing up state police forces from frequent electioneering work can improve the law &

order situation & rapid closure of criminal cases pending in the various state courts.

5. Minimize impact on public life due to frequent election rallies:

Political parties hold political rallies all year due to multiple elections like Lok Sabha, state, municipal & civic body elections. These political rallies and VIP movements cause disruptions in traffic movements, halting essential transportation services, etc. These frequent disruptions lead to issues where working people often have issues reaching offices, leading to a loss of revenue to the state exchequer. Additionally, states that are lagging behind in economic growth need to create an environment that attracts investment from the private sector to boost their economic growth.

For eg, During the 30 years of Left Front rule in West Bengal & 12 years of the TMC government rule, we saw frequent election rallies and dharnas called on random days. According to the Economic Survey, the GDP for West Bengal is 17 lakh crore; each day that is lost due to bandhs leads to a loss of Rs 4000 crore to the state exchequer.

In the below points, I try to provide rational rebuttals to the common points raised by many not in favour of ONOE.

1. Regional parties might lose their effectiveness, and regional issues might be neglected, which is detrimental to a functioning democracy.

Rebuttal: Regional parties are not prevented from contesting elections. The playing field is the same for all political parties. It's up to the political parties how they can highlight their achievements more effectively in front of the voting public. On the contrary, I would argue that this would enable regional parties to become more effective in their campaigning.

2. When the same parties are in power both in the Centre and State, it might lead to power consolidation and erode the federal structure.

Rebuttal: The USA, for example, has a bi-party system & very often, the Senate & the House are

with the same party. But we haven't seen any kind of exploitation of power. Contrary to this, I would argue that if the same party is in power both in the centre & the state, this will lead to more efficient governance. Very often, it happens that due to political oppression between parties, important developmental & social schemes initiated by the Central government are not properly implemented in the state on the ground. This leads to the waste of public money & people are deprived of their due.

3. ONOE might lead to inefficient bureaucracy & corrupt bureaucratic practices.

Rebuttal: On the contrary, if the ONOE is implemented, it lays the groundwork for a slew of subsequent reforms in bureaucracy, police, judiciary, etc. Bureaucratic reforms are long overdue. The provisions of it include measuring the performance of every bureaucrat objectively and independently without any political interference. The bureaucrats would be judged, promoted, suited, and transferred if their performance metrics are not up to the mark. Hence, the argument that ONOE will lead to inefficient bureaucracy functioning is not true.

ONOE would be one of the most important positive political & government reforms post-independence which will help Bharat grow economically, politically & democratically in years to come.

Synchronising Democracy: The Case for Simultaneous Elections in India

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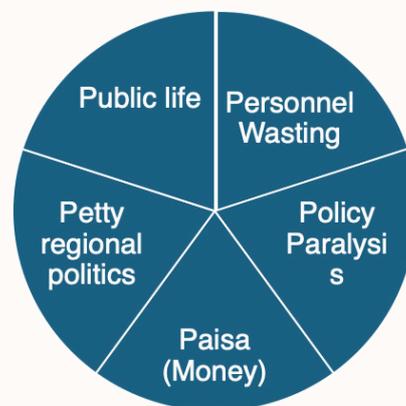
India is the world's largest democracy, an intricate tapestry of cultures, languages, and traditions. The scale of its electoral processes is unmatched globally, marking it as both a logistical marvel and a pillar of democratic credibility. Yet, as the nation navigates through its myriad electoral cycles, the concept of "One Nation, One Election" has emerged as a significant point of discussion.

The Current Electoral Landscape

India's election landscape is often described as a perpetual festival, with citizens regularly participating in the democratic process. In a typical five-year term for the Lok Sabha, between five to seven state assembly elections occur annually. This fragmented approach strains the resources of the Election Commission of India (ECI) and leads to governance disruptions due to the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), which restricts government actions in election-bound states.

Historical Background of Simultaneous Elections

The idea of conducting simultaneous elections is not new. From 1951 to 1967, Lok Sabha and state assembly elections were held concurrently.



However, the practice was disrupted due to the premature dissolution of assemblies and subsequent political instability. This shift led to a system characterised by frequent elections, often criticised for its impact on governance and resource allocation.

The Constitution of India, through Articles 83 and 172, provides for a five-year term for both the Lok Sabha and state assemblies, barring premature dissolutions. However, the recurring threat of defection and unstable coalitions has often

resulted in early elections, perpetuating a cycle of instability.

The Five Problems of Current Electoral Cycles

The fragmented election schedule creates several adverse effects, which can be summarised as the "5P Effects":

1. **Personnel Wasting:** The logistical demands of conducting elections require an extensive workforce. For the 16th Lok Sabha elections, around 10 million personnel were deployed across approximately 930,000 polling stations. This high demand for personnel, particularly from security forces, diverts resources from essential internal security duties.
2. **Policy paralysis:** The imposition of the MCC often leads to policy paralysis. Developmental activities are halted in poll-bound states, affecting governance. Reports indicate that governance activities can be suspended for months due to election schedules, hindering long-term planning and execution of vital reforms.
3. **Paisa (Money):** The financial implications of conducting elections frequently are staggering. Political parties spend enormous sums on campaigns, often leading to corruption and the influence of black money in politics. Conducting simultaneous elections could streamline these costs, making better use of taxpayer money.
4. **Public Beneficiaries:** Frequent elections create a climate of perpetual politicking, detracting from governance. This "permanent election mode" can inhibit bold decision-making and transformative reforms as governments become preoccupied with short-term electoral gains and bar the public from long-term reforms and benefits.
5. **Perpetual Petty Politics:** Elections often amplify issues like casteism, communalism, corruption, and crony capitalism. With continuous elections, these challenges persist without pause, hindering substantial progress and structural reforms. Holding simultaneous elections could alleviate these issues, promoting a more stable environment for governance.



The Case for "One Nation, One Election"

Proponents of simultaneous elections argue that it could streamline the electoral process, enhance governance, and reduce electoral fatigue among voters. By synchronising Lok Sabha and state assembly elections, several benefits could emerge:

1. **Reduced Administrative Burden:** Conducting elections simultaneously would minimize the logistical and administrative challenges faced by the ECI, enabling more efficient use of resources.
2. **Enhanced Governance:** With fewer elections, governments would face less disruption and could focus on long-term policies rather than immediate electoral concerns. This stability could lead to more consistent and effective governance.
3. **Financial Efficiency:** Holding simultaneous elections is projected to significantly reduce the financial burden on the exchequer. This would free up funds for developmental priorities rather than electoral expenditures.
4. **Voter Engagement:** A synchronized election cycle might increase voter turnout and engagement, as citizens participate in a more streamlined electoral process.
5. **Encouraging Serious Political Discourse:** By reducing the frequency of elections, the focus could shift from immediate populism to serious policy debates, fostering a more informed electorate.

International Comparisons

Several countries have adopted a "One Nation, One Election" approach, yielding various insights into its effectiveness:

- **United States:** In the U.S., elections are typically held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. While federal, state, and local elections often coincide, the decentralised nature of U.S. governance means that synchronisation is more complex. However, studies show that simultaneous elections can increase voter turnout and engagement, suggesting potential benefits for India.
- **Canada:** Canada holds federal elections approximately every four years, often coinciding
- with provincial elections. The electoral framework allows for flexibility, but when elections coincide, there is generally higher voter participation and reduced administrative costs. The Canadian experience highlights the importance of careful planning and public awareness to maximize benefits.
- **Australia:** Australia conducts federal elections every three years, with many states aligning their elections. When elections coincide, the country has seen advantages in cost savings and voter engagement. This model suggests India could benefit from a structured approach to simultaneous elections, provided it addresses unique local dynamics.
- **Germany:** In Germany, federal and state elections often occur simultaneously, fostering a more cohesive electoral environment. This alignment helps streamline logistics and reduces costs, as evidenced by the efficient handling of resources during electoral periods.

These international examples indicate that while the implementation of simultaneous elections may vary, the potential benefits regarding efficiency and voter engagement are clear. India can learn from these experiences to tailor its approach, ensuring it meets the unique needs of its diverse electorate.

Criticisms and Counterarguments

While the concept of "One Nation, One Election" has its advocates, it also faces significant criticisms:

- **Voter Behavior:** Critics argue that simultaneous elections may lead voters to prioritize national issues over local concerns, potentially marginalizing regional parties.
Counterargument: Historical data from previous simultaneous elections suggest that regional parties can still thrive, as voters are capable of discerning local issues. Public awareness campaigns can also help educate voters about the importance of state-specific issues.
- **Federal Structure Concerns:** Some fear that synchronising elections could undermine India's federal structure, overshadowing local governance.

- **Counterargument:** Proponents argue that simultaneous elections could enhance coordination between state and central governments, allowing for better resource allocation and policy alignment without compromising local interests.
- **Accountability:** Critics maintain that frequent elections enhance political accountability by ensuring politicians regularly face voters.
Counterargument: Accountability can also be maintained through robust governance mechanisms and regular performance assessments, which are not inherently tied to the frequency of elections.
- **Operational Feasibility:** The logistical challenges of conducting simultaneous elections, particularly regarding EVM requirements and personnel deployment, remain a significant concern.
Counterargument: Many logistical hurdles can be addressed with careful planning and resource management. The ECI has proposed strategies for efficient resource handling, including better use of technology and personnel.
- **Political Resistance:** Resistance from political parties benefiting from the current electoral cycle may pose a challenge.
Counterargument: A broad-based dialogue involving all stakeholders can help mitigate resistance. Political parties might recognise the long-term benefits of a more stable electoral environment, leading to a consensus for reform.
- **Pilot Programs:** Conducting pilot programs in select states could help assess the feasibility and effectiveness of simultaneous elections before a nationwide rollout.
- **Public Engagement:** A national dialogue involving citizens, political parties, and experts can help shape the discourse around simultaneous elections and ensure broad consensus.
- **Monitoring Mechanisms:** It will be crucial to establish robust mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the impact of simultaneous elections on governance, representation, and voter behaviour.

The idea of "One Nation, One Election" presents an opportunity to rethink and potentially reform India's electoral landscape. As per the words of Honorable PM Shri Narendra Modi, "If India is to meet the challenge of change, mere incremental progress is not enough. A metamorphosis is needed....My vision for India is rapid transformation, not gradual evolution". By engaging in thoughtful dialogue and planning carefully, India can explore this path towards a more efficient and responsive democracy, ensuring that the voices of its diverse populace are heard and represented. As the nation stands at the crossroads of tradition and transformation, the journey toward a more synchronized electoral process could redefine the future of Indian democracy.

Path Forward

To move towards implementing "One Nation, One Election," several steps could be considered:

Legislative Amendments: Necessary constitutional and legislative changes must be enacted to facilitate simultaneous elections.

- **EVM Management:** Strategies for managing the increased demand for EVMs must be developed, including improved procurement and storage solutions.

Rebooting the Election Cycle: One Nation, One Election (ONOE)

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Introduction

India, the world's largest democracy, faces elections year after year, creating disruptions that affect governance, the economy, and political stability. The concept of One Nation, One Election (ONOE) proposes holding simultaneous elections for all tiers of government—Lok Sabha, Vidhan Sabhas, and Panchayats. This synchronised election cycle would eliminate the need for frequent polls, offering a more efficient system that enhances governance and reduces costs. Practised initially in India after independence, ONOE has resurfaced as a potential solution to India's electoral inefficiencies, with growing support from political leaders, constitutional experts, and economic bodies.



The Case for Simultaneous Elections

India's electoral system, in its current form, often disrupts governance due to the staggering nature of elections. With elections being held almost every year across various states, the imposition of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) restricts policy-making, delaying developmental projects and administrative decisions. ONOE offers a solution to this problem by consolidating elections, ensuring that governments have the time and stability to focus on long-term policies without the distraction of constant election cycles.

Historical Context of ONOE

Simultaneous elections were the norm in India during its initial years as a republic. The first two general elections (1951–52 and 1957) were conducted simultaneously for both the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. This system provided political

stability and reduced the administrative burden of frequent polls. However, the simultaneous cycle was disrupted in the late 1960s when several state assemblies were dissolved prematurely, and the Lok Sabha elections were advanced to 1971. This marked the beginning of staggered elections, where different states and the central government went to polls at different times.

Since then, elections in India have become a near-constant phenomenon, with some parts of the country voting almost every year. This results in frequent imposition of the MCC, which hampers governance and policy-making and requires immense administrative effort and expenditure.

ONOE in Modern India: Renewed Push

In recent years, ONOE has resurfaced as a viable reform. The idea was first proposed in 1983 by the Election Commission of India (ECI) in its annual report. The Law Commission of India, in its 170th Report in 1999, further supported the idea, highlighting the benefits of reducing electoral disruptions. The NITI Aayog's 2017 working paper, titled "Analysis of Simultaneous Elections: The What, Why, and How," outlined a detailed roadmap for implementing ONOE.

Most recently, in 2023, the Union Government established a High-Level Committee (HLC), chaired by former President Shri Ram Nath Kovind, to assess the constitutional and legal changes required for ONOE. The committee engaged with various stakeholders, including political parties, constitutional experts, and business organisations, gathering extensive support for the idea.

Key Advantages of ONOE

1. Cost Savings and Efficiency

One of the primary advantages of ONOE is the substantial reduction in the cost of elections. The current system of holding separate elections for the Lok Sabha, Vidhan Sabhas, and Panchayats incurs massive expenses, including logistics, security, and administration. According to the Election Commission, consolidating elections into a single cycle would lead to significant financial savings for both the government and political parties.



Moreover, the frequent elections require the deployment of large numbers of security personnel and administrative staff, pulling them away from their regular duties. ONOE would streamline these efforts, reducing the strain on resources and allowing for better use of public funds.

2. Improved Governance and Policy Continuity

One of the most significant governance challenges posed by staggered elections is the frequent imposition of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC). When the MCC is in place, governments are restricted from making policy announcements, launching new projects, or making significant administrative decisions. This leads to policy paralysis, where essential governance activities come to a standstill.

ONOE would allow for uninterrupted governance, enabling leaders to focus on long-term development and governance priorities. With synchronised elections, governments would have a five-year window to implement their agenda without the distractions and constraints imposed by frequent elections. This would lead to faster, more effective policy implementation, driving national growth and development.

3. Enhanced Voter Engagement and Participation

The current system of frequent elections leads to voter fatigue, where citizens become disengaged due to the constant electoral process. ONOE would streamline the election cycle, reducing voter fatigue and potentially increasing voter turnout. Citizens would only need to vote once every five years for all levels of government, making it easier for them to participate in the democratic process.

4. Reducing Populism and Short-Term Politics

Frequent elections encourage populist policies, as governments often prioritise short-term, vote-winning measures over long-term development. By reducing the frequency of elections, ONOE would discourage this trend, allowing governments to focus on sustainable, long-term policies. This would lead to a more mature and responsible political discourse, where the focus is on governance rather than winning

elections.

Economic and Social Benefits of ONOE

From an economic perspective, ONOE would bring about significant financial savings. The current system of staggered elections is not only expensive for the government but also for political parties. Simultaneous elections would allow parties to consolidate their campaigns, reducing the need for continuous fundraising and mobilisation efforts.

Moreover, frequent elections create uncertainty, which negatively impacts businesses and the economy. The imposition of the MCC halts government projects, delays decision-making, and creates an atmosphere of instability. By consolidating elections, ONOE would foster a more stable business environment, encouraging investment and economic growth.

Socially, ONOE would promote national integration by aligning the national and state political agendas. Voters would have the opportunity to make informed choices on both national and regional issues in a single electoral cycle. This would lead to more cohesive governance, where state and national governments work in harmony to address the needs of the people.

Challenges and Solutions

While the advantages of ONOE are clear, its implementation comes with significant challenges, including logistical, legal, and constitutional hurdles. Holding elections for the Lok Sabha, State Assemblies, and over 250,000 local bodies simultaneously is a massive undertaking, requiring meticulous planning and coordination.

1. Logistical Complexities

The simultaneous deployment of voting infrastructure—such as Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verified Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs)—across the country would require significant upgrades in the Election Commission's capacity. The security infrastructure would also need to be expanded, with both state and central law enforcement agencies involved in ensuring free and fair elections.

2. Constitutional Amendments

ONOE would require amendments to several key constitutional provisions, including Articles 83, 85, 172, and 324, which govern the tenure of the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. The Representation of the People Act, 1951 would also need to be revised to establish a fixed election cycle. These changes would need to be carefully crafted to ensure that they do not violate the basic structure of the Constitution or undermine India's federal principles.

The High-Level Committee (HLC) has proposed a phased implementation of ONOE to address these challenges. In the first phase, elections for the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies would be synchronised. In the second phase, elections for Panchayats and Municipalities would be aligned with the general election cycle. This staggered approach would allow the Election Commission to address logistical issues while making gradual adjustments to the electoral system.

3. Addressing Concerns of Regional Parties

One of the most significant concerns about ONOE is that it may undermine the role of regional parties by focusing voter attention on national issues. However, this concern may be overstated. Indian voters are highly capable of distinguishing between national and local issues. They understand the differences in roles and responsibilities between state and central governments and are likely to vote accordingly. Additionally, simultaneous elections may encourage regional parties to take a more integrated approach to governance, addressing both regional and national issues in their campaigns.

ONOE: A Step Toward Better Governance

In the long term, ONOE is a reform that India desperately needs to reboot its electoral system. It would streamline governance, reduce costs, and foster a more cohesive political environment. ONOE would allow governments to focus on the well-being of the people, free from the constant distractions of election cycles.

India's political system is often bogged down by frequent elections, creating inefficiencies and

disruptions. ONOE offers a clear path toward a more stable and effective democracy, where governments have the time and resources to focus on governance rather than campaigning. By reducing electoral costs, improving policy continuity, and increasing voter engagement, ONOE represents a transformative opportunity for India's political future.

Conclusion

As Chanakya wisely said in the Arthashastra,

"प्रजासुखे सुखं राज्ञः, प्रजानां च हिते हितम्"

meaning "The happiness of the ruler lies in the happiness of the subjects, and the ruler's interest lies in the welfare of the people." ONOE aligns with this principle, providing a system that ensures uninterrupted governance focused on the welfare and development of the citizens.

India is at a crossroads in its democratic journey, and One Nation, One Election offers a unique opportunity to streamline the electoral process, reduce costs, and improve governance. The challenges of implementing ONOE are significant but not insurmountable. With careful planning, constitutional amendments, and stakeholder engagement, ONOE can become a reality, transforming the way India conducts its elections.

By embracing ONOE, India can usher in a new era of political stability, economic growth, and national unity.

One Nation, One Election: Reclaiming India's Democratic Rhythm

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The “Festival of Democracy” illuminates the nook and corner of every Indian home, whose origins date back to 1951-1952. India was one of the first countries to grant voting rights to each and every citizen of the country at the same time. For example, in the UK and Sweden, women were empowered with voting rights after many struggles and political movements. The right to vote for all was firmly established in 1951-1952, marking a significant milestone with elections held for 4,500 seats in both the Assembly and Lok Sabha

In 1951-52 and again in 1957, elections for both the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies were held simultaneously. However, from 1959 onward, the Union government under Congress dismissed several state governments based on political motives, disrupting the synchronized election cycle. Notably, the democratically elected government of Kerala was dismissed in 1959. Between 1960 and 1970, states like Bihar, Kerala, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal experienced three state elections in just a decade—a process that would normally have required only two.

The situation worsened in the 1970s, with 14 states holding elections three times and Odisha notably going to the polls four times within the same decade. During the 1990s, India saw four Lok Sabha elections, largely driven by the personal agendas of family-run political parties. Over the last seven decades, approximately 400 elections have been conducted in India, averaging more than five elections per year. The time has come to unite the nation under the vision of One Nation, One Election—a transformative step toward stability, efficiency, and consistent governance.

Approximately 800 days have been lost to the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), as elections take place continually in different parts of the country throughout the year. In recent cases, states like Maharashtra, Jharkhand, and Haryana alone are expected to have lost over 100 days in 2024 due to MCC restrictions. Implementing One Nation, One Election (ONOE) will enable the government to focus on uninterrupted development, efficient governance, and timely policy implementation. In 2024, around 1.5 million polling officials and security staff were deployed for elections.

This level of deployment will continue over the next five years as states hold elections individually. These redundant man-days could be redirected to increase productivity. Polling officials—often teachers and government officers—dedicate significant time to election duties. The potential impact of reallocating these man-days underscores the vast opportunity for more effective resource utilisation.

The continuous election cycle pushes the political parties to focus on electoral-related activities. However, few forces fabricate problems to cause hindrances in governance. In the last 10 years, the nation has witnessed a few fabricated protests and allegations.

“Award Wapasi”- Before 2015 Bihar Assembly Election

“Anti CAA- Shaheen Bagh” - During 2020 Delhi Assembly Election

“Samvidhan pe Khatra”- During 2024 General Elections- Lok Sabha

“ 40% Sarkaar” - During the 2023 Karnataka Assembly Election

These protests faded after the elections, revealing their hollow intentions. One Nation, One Election will break the relentless ongoing cycle of elections every yearly. This will curb the wave of agenda-driven protests, which originate before every election.

According to the One Nation, One Election High-Level Committee report and the study on the Macroeconomic Impact of Harmonizing Electoral Cycles by N.K. Singh and Prachi Mishra, significant economic benefits can be realised from simultaneous elections. The study suggests that real national growth could increase by approximately 1.5 percentage points during simultaneous elections compared to non-simultaneous elections. In financial terms, this equates to around ₹4.5 lakh crores for FY 2023-24—about half of India’s public spending on health.

Additionally, calculations indicate that inflation could decrease by 1 percentage point during simultaneous elections, directly easing the financial burden on consumers and improving daily affordability for the common man. Simultaneous elections could also raise the capital-to-current spending ratio by an estimated 17 percentage points compared to non-simultaneous elections. The multiplier effect of this increase in spending is likely to create millions of jobs, significantly enhancing employment opportunities across the nation.

The number of migrant workers, both intra- and inter-state, likely exceeded 45 crores, as indicated by the 2011 Census. For these migrants, visiting their native place multiple times across a five-year span for various elections is challenging. Professor Chinmoy Tumbbe (IIM Ahmedabad) has discussed circular migration, where individuals migrate for work within India but often retire in their hometowns. For instance, in Bhimavaram, over 10,000 migrants work in aqua and food processing units, yet it is uncommon for them to register their vote in their temporary location if they have family, land, and a home in their native village. For these workers, the prospect of travelling 1,000+ kilometres multiple times over five years to participate in separate elections—Lok Sabha, Assembly, Panchayat, ZPTC—creates voter fatigue. Migrants are often forced to choose which elections are worth the journey.

One Nation, One Election would simplify this for millions of migrant workers, boosting convenience and voter turnout.

From bustling tea stalls to grand Taj dinner tables, election discussions dominate conversations across all social groups. However, we should aspire to shift these dialogues toward policy outcomes and implementation. One Nation, One Election would help focus the nation’s energy on productivity, efficiency, and effective governance, steering attention beyond election cycles toward continuous development.



Revisiting Simultaneous Elections: A Pathway to Unified Democracy in India

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The idea of "One Nation, One Election" has generated considerable debate in India's political discourse, particularly in recent years. This concept, which envisions simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and state assemblies, aims to streamline the electoral process, reduce expenditure, and improve governance efficiency. To understand its significance, it is essential to look at its historical roots, evolution, and the benefits it could bring to Indian democracy.

Historical Context

India, the world's largest democracy, has experienced simultaneous elections in its early years of independence. After adopting the Constitution in 1950, the first general elections were held in 1951-52, electing members to both the Lok Sabha (House of the People) and the state legislative assemblies. This system of concurrent elections continued until 1967. During this period, the country witnessed a unified electoral process that allowed citizens to vote for both central and state governments at the same time, reinforcing the principle of cooperative federalism.

However, the political landscape of India began to change after the 1967 elections. A series of factors,

including political instability, fragmented verdicts, and coalition politics, led to the dissolution of several state governments before completing their five-year terms. As a result, elections in different states began to occur at different times, gradually breaking the cycle of simultaneous elections. The mid-term elections of 1971 and the Emergency period further disrupted the synchronised electoral process, leading to the current situation where elections are scattered throughout the country.

Evolution of the Idea

The idea of reviving simultaneous elections has been intermittently discussed since the 1980s. Political leaders, policy experts, and constitutional bodies have emphasised its potential benefits. However, it wasn't until Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tenure that the idea gained significant momentum. In his Independence Day speech 2017, PM Modi called for a national debate on "One Nation, One Election," highlighting the economic and administrative strain caused by frequent elections.

The Law Commission of India, in its 170th Report (1999), examined the feasibility of holding simultaneous elections and emphasised the need

for an institutional framework to restore this practice. The Election Commission of India has also been involved in exploring this idea, citing the benefits of streamlining election schedules, improving voter participation, and reducing logistical challenges.

More recently, the NITI Aayog released a discussion paper on "One Nation, One Election," outlining the steps necessary to implement this system and the constitutional amendments required to make it a reality. The idea has since garnered widespread support from multiple quarters, although it faces opposition from certain political parties and scholars who raise concerns about its impact on regional representation and federalism.

Advantages of One Nation, One Election

Reduction in Election Expenditure: One of the most significant advantages of simultaneous elections is the potential for cost savings. Elections in India involve enormous expenditure, with both the central and state governments spending substantial amounts on security, polling personnel, and logistics. Holding elections simultaneously would reduce duplication of efforts and resources, leading to considerable savings.

Minimisation of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) Impact: Under the current system, frequent elections result in the imposition of the MCC multiple times during a government's tenure. The MCC restricts governments from making major policy decisions during the election period, leading to governance paralysis. Simultaneous elections would reduce the frequency of MCC implementation, allowing for uninterrupted governance and decision-making.

Improved Governance and Stability: Continuous electoral cycles often distract governments from their primary responsibility of governance. With elections spread across various states throughout the year, governments are perpetually in campaign mode. A unified election schedule would provide governments with a five-year window to focus on development and policy implementation without the disruption of frequent elections.

Enhancing Voter Participation: Holding simultaneous elections could increase voter turnout by making it more convenient for citizens to participate in both national and state-level elections. It would also reduce voter fatigue, as they would not be required to vote multiple times in a short period.

Strengthening National Integration: One of the broader philosophical arguments in favour of "One Nation, One Election" is that it could foster a sense of national unity. By synchronising elections, the electorate would be engaged in a common electoral process, reinforcing the idea of India as a single, unified nation-state.

Challenges and Concerns

Despite its many advantages, the idea of "One Nation, One Election" is not without challenges. Implementing this system would require significant constitutional amendments, particularly in Articles 83, 85, 172, and 174, which govern the tenure of the Lok Sabha and state assemblies. Achieving political consensus on such amendments would be a daunting task, given the diversity of political views and the vested interests of regional parties.

There are also concerns about the impact of simultaneous elections on regional representation and federalism. Some argue that national issues may overshadow regional concerns during a unified electoral process, potentially leading to a decline in the importance of state-level issues. Additionally, if a state government were to dissolve prematurely, questions would arise about how to restore electoral synchrony without compromising the principles of federalism and democratic representation.

The concept of "One Nation, One Election" is rooted in India's early electoral history and has evolved into a robust policy proposal with considerable support. While it offers substantial benefits in terms of cost reduction, governance efficiency, and voter engagement, it also poses significant challenges that need to be addressed through careful planning, political consensus, and constitutional amendments.

One Nation, One Election: Empowering India with Unified Progress

Rohaan Wadhwa

Entrepreneur

India, the world's largest democracy, thrives on its diversity, which is reflected in everything from culture to elections. As an ordinary citizen, elections have always felt like a festival—a time for vigorous debates, flashing campaign banners, and that special ink mark on your finger signifying your role in shaping the nation. However, with elections happening almost every year, across states and at the national level, there has been an increasing discussion around the idea of One Nation, One Election. The concept aims to synchronise both national and state elections to take place simultaneously, once every five years.

Public Opinion and Voter Behavior: Imagine the excitement of election season: the air filled with political slogans, the buzz of debates, and the colorful banners adorning our streets. However, this excitement can quickly become fatigue when facing multiple elections in a short span. With ONOE, we could streamline this experience, allowing voters to channel their energies into a single, more impactful event.

From a psychological standpoint, simultaneous elections might influence voting behaviour in fascinating ways. For one, the simplicity of a unified opportunity to vote could lead to higher voter

turnout, as people are more likely to engage when faced with a single opportunity to voice their opinions. Furthermore, by having national and state elections at the same time, voters may feel more connected to the larger political landscape, considering how their local choices impact national policies. Moreover, when citizens are overwhelmed by political messages from numerous candidates across multiple elections, it can create confusion. ONOE could simplify voter choices by allowing them to concentrate on a single set of issues and candidates at once. This approach could ultimately lead to a more informed and actively engaged electorate.

Concerns have been raised about ONOE overshadowing regional issues or diminishing the role of smaller parties. However, historical precedents indicate that Indian voters are adept at distinguishing between national and local concerns. During previous instances of simultaneous elections, voters successfully elected different parties for Lok Sabha and state assemblies. Reducing elections' frequency may encourage deeper engagement with critical issues rather than being overwhelmed by constant political messaging.

Reducing the Disruption of Constant Campaigning: The current electoral system leads to an almost perpetual campaign cycle. This constant political activity can distract both citizens and policymakers from addressing critical issues such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure development. By synchronising elections for the Lok Sabha and state assemblies, we could create a more focused environment where governance takes precedence over continuous campaigning.

Enhanced Administrative Efficiency: Elections require substantial administrative resources, including security personnel and government officials, who are often tasked with managing the electoral process. This diversion can hinder effective governance and service delivery. By conducting simultaneous elections, we could free up these resources to focus on their primary responsibilities, leading to improved public services and more timely responses to community needs.

Financial Savings for Development Initiatives: The financial implications of frequent elections are significant. If we adopt ONOE, we could save thousands of crores per election cycle. These savings could be redirected towards essential services and infrastructure improvements that directly benefit citizens.

Imagine what we could achieve with that money: better schools, improved healthcare facilities, and enhanced public transportation systems. Instead of funding the logistics of multiple elections, we could invest in the future of our communities.

Encouraging Long-Term Governance over Short-Term Promises: The current electoral cycle often incentivises political parties to prioritise short-term results over sustainable governance. With ONOE in place, elected representatives would have a longer tenure to implement policies without the constant pressure of upcoming elections. This shift could foster a political culture focused on long-term solutions that address the root causes of societal challenges rather than merely responding to immediate electoral pressures.

Public Discourse and Media: As elections approach, the role of the media becomes paramount. During a unified election period, managing public discourse is crucial. Ethical media practices must be prioritised to ensure that all voices are heard fairly. This means avoiding sensationalism and providing balanced coverage of candidates from various

Moreover, when national and state elections converge, it becomes vital to create a coherent narrative that informs voters without overwhelming them. The media can play a pivotal role in framing the discourse around issues that matter most to citizens. By focusing on policy discussions rather than sensational politics, we can elevate the quality of our electoral conversations.

Technological and Logistical Challenges: Implementing ONOE is challenging, especially in a diverse and populous country like India. Significant technological advancements would be needed to ensure smooth conduct.

Imagine the potential of electronic voting machines (EVMs) equipped with blockchain technology for added security and transparency. This could mitigate fears of fraud, ensuring that every vote counts securely.

Logistically, managing elections for such a large democracy poses its own hurdles. The Election Commission must mobilise vast resources, including personnel, technology, and infrastructure. However, with careful planning and execution, it is possible to conduct these elections efficiently. Establishing a robust system that guarantees security, transparency, and fairness during this process is crucial, alleviating concerns about potential misconduct or logistical mismanagement.

While the benefits of ONOE are substantial, it is essential to acknowledge the challenges associated with its implementation. Constitutional amendments will be necessary to align the terms of Lok Sabha and state assemblies, and logistical considerations must be addressed to facilitate simultaneous elections across a diverse nation like India. Engaging in constructive dialogue among all political stakeholders will be crucial in overcoming these hurdles.

A Vision for Progress: In conclusion, as a concerned citizen who values the future of our country, I see One Nation-One Election as a promising opportunity for reforming our electoral process. By reducing financial burdens, enhancing administrative efficiency, and fostering long-term governance strategies, ONOE has the potential to create a more effective democratic framework in India.

While it is important to respect differing opinions on this matter, I believe that embracing this initiative could lead us toward a more streamlined process that prioritises governance over perpetual campaigning. Ultimately, adopting ONOE aligns with our collective aspiration for a better India—one where democracy functions efficiently for all its citizens and where we can focus on building a brighter future together.

From Policy Paralysis to Continuity: The Case for One Nation, One Election

Aditya Ashok

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"One Nation, One Election" refers to the proposal of holding elections for the different state legislative assemblies and the Lok Sabha, the lower house of the Indian Parliament, at the same time, once every five years. In Indian political circles, the idea has generated a great deal of discussion. Proponents point to the potential efficiency and stability of the system, while opponents question its viability and potential effects on federalism and decentralisation.

State elections in Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Haryana, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, and Jammu & Kashmir are planned for 2024. Further, several by-elections will also be held in various states due to resignations, deaths, or

disqualifications. Whether at the state level or through by-elections, the regularity of elections highlights the necessity of a "One Nation, One Election" system, which promotes synchronised electoral cycles to lessen governance disruptions and the financial burden of frequent elections.

Eliminating Frequent Disruptions in Governance

The Model Code of Conduct (MCC), a collection of rules established by the Election Commission of India, is frequently enforced in response to frequent elections in different states. It forbids the ruling administration from announcing significant policy changes or launching new initiatives during the election season. The MCC's goals are to guarantee fair competition for all candidates and stop abusing government resources for political ends. In reality, though, this frequently causes governance to be disrupted. Long-term planning is hampered by the fact that both national and state governments are frequently prohibited from making choices that might be interpreted as influencing voters.



These disruptions can greatly affect a nation like India, where big projects and policy changes take decades to develop. Economic changes, health initiatives, and infrastructure projects may stall during election seasons, resulting in delays, inefficiencies, and occasionally cost overruns. This problem might be resolved by a synchronised election cycle, which would shorten the number of election periods and, as a result, the MCC's duration. This would guarantee uninterrupted government operations, enabling more efficient implementation of policies and initiatives.

Take, for instance, the execution of significant social welfare programs like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) or the National Health Mission. Consistent funding, administrative supervision, and monitoring are necessary for these programs. The longevity of such programs is hindered when elections disrupt governance, impacting recipients in all states. This issue might be lessened with One Nation, One Election, which would guarantee the continuous operation of such flagship initiatives and promote long-term advantages for the populace.

Policy Continuity and Stability

The stability and continuity of policies are among the most important effects of coordinated elections. State and federal governments may transition in a staggered electoral system at various periods, which could lead to changes in administrative priorities and policy agendas. These modifications frequently result in policy reversals, which impact the continuity of governance, especially when opposing political parties take control. For example, a state government may start a large social program or infrastructure project only to have it changed or abandoned by an opposing political party's next administration.

A synchronised election system would lessen the likelihood of competing policy goals by establishing a governance framework where the federal and state governments function according to the same schedule. Better cooperation between the states and the centre could result from this alignment, bringing more stable and unified governance.

Furthermore, instead of continually adapting to the changing political climate in different states, political parties would have a more stable environment in which to formulate and carry out their policy agendas.

Fostering Long-Term Planning

Governments frequently turn to short-term, populist policies to win elections, which can be counterproductive to long-term governance objectives. This is especially true in a nation like India, where promises of immediate assistance, financial aid, or temporary welfare benefits frequently drive political politics. Such policies frequently come at the expense of longer-term, more sustainable governance goals, even though they may momentarily benefit particular segments of the community.

By lowering the number of elections, One Nation, One Election might help counteract this trend and encourage governments and political parties to prioritise long-term planning above short-term electoral gains. Less frequent elections may relieve pressure to enact short-term populist initiatives, freeing up administrations to concentrate on creating long-term plans that give development, infrastructure, healthcare, and education top priority.

A stable policy environment free from ongoing political constraints is necessary, for example, for long-term projects like India's renewable energy initiatives, rural infrastructure development, or achieving sustainable development targets. Regular elections may cause succeeding administrations to prioritise short-term political advantages above long-term initiatives. Synchronising elections could lessen this kind of policy unpredictability by allowing governments to plan beyond the five-year political cycle.

Efficiency in Governance and Resource Allocation

In a nation as large and populated as India, holding elections presents a huge logistical challenge. Massive resources, including infrastructure, administrative personnel, and security forces, are used in the regular election process. Additionally, because government employees are frequently

diverted to handle election-related tasks, frequent elections interfere with the regular operation of public administration. Governance is slowed down, and important developmental work is neglected.

Conducting polls simultaneously in India may drastically reduce the resources required to run elections all year. This would free up administrative and financial resources that may be used for development and governance projects. It would also foster an environment free from the continual stress of approaching elections, allowing national and state governments to operate more effectively.

For example, election seasons frequently disrupt India's education system, which needs constant attention and funding. A synchronized electoral process would result in better results in areas like literacy rates, teacher recruitment, and infrastructure development, guaranteeing that important sectors like education receive consistent attention from the federal and state administrations.

Strengthening Federalism

In India, holding simultaneous elections could improve federalism by encouraging effective government and minimising political unrest. Without the continual diversion of election campaigns, holding elections simultaneously would enable the federal government and state governments to concentrate on governance. Promoting long-term policy planning promotes political stability on both fronts. Simultaneous elections would also result in significant cost savings, strengthening fiscal federalism by enabling the states and the federal government to reallocate resources for development.

Additionally, synchronised elections would improve cooperation between governments and harmonise their priorities for regional and national development, strengthening cooperative federalism. This harmonisation can guarantee consistent policy implementation, resulting in balanced state growth. Additionally, citizens can simultaneously hold both governments accountable, which promotes good governance. As a

result, concurrent elections can potentially improve India's federal system's efficiency, cooperation, and stability rather than weaken it.

Challenges in Implementation

Implementing One Nation, One Election presents substantial political, constitutional, and logistical obstacles despite the possible advantages. The Indian Constitution appoints both the Lok Sabha and state assemblies to five-year terms, although there are provisions for their dissolution in certain situations. Significant constitutional adjustments would be necessary to align the terms of the federal government and the states, and this may be a very difficult process.

The "One Nation, One Election" idea could significantly improve India's governance and policy continuity. Reducing election frequency may promote long-term planning, minimize disruptions to government, and establish a more stable and effective political climate. Central and state elections occurring simultaneously may help match policy agendas, resulting in more unified and well-coordinated governance at both levels.

But the plan also has drawbacks, especially in terms of how it would affect India's federal system and how feasible it would be to execute. Careful constitutional changes and protections are required to allay worries about the concentration of power and the obscuring of state concerns. The capacity to balance strengthening governance and maintaining the federal autonomy at the core of India's democratic system will ultimately determine whether One Nation, One Election is successful.

Ensuring Security and Efficiency: Technological Pathways to One Nation, One Election



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As the world's largest democracy, India continues to set benchmarks in governance and policy-making, with the Modi government spearheading transformative changes across sectors. One such significant initiative gaining momentum is the proposal of "ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION". The vision behind simultaneous elections is both—ambitious and pragmatic—ensuring consistency, stability, and efficiency in our electoral processes. However, realising this vision entails overcoming several technological and logistical challenges

Technological Requirements for Simultaneous Elections

In a country with over 900 million eligible voters, organising elections on such a scale requires cutting-edge technological solutions. The success of 'One Nation, One Election' depends on the seamless integration of the latest advancements in Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), Blockchain Technology, and Data Management Systems.

a. Advanced Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs)

India has a well-established history of using EVMs for elections. These machines have been lauded for their simplicity and reliability, especially in managing elections in diverse geographical and socio-economic conditions. However, for simultaneous elections, EVMs would need further enhancement to ensure they can support multiple polls (for Lok Sabha, State Assemblies, and even local elections) at the same time. Upgrading EVMs to handle multi-layered elections will streamline the voting process and reduce voter confusion,

making the process more efficient.

The Modi government's emphasis on Digital India has accelerated the research and development of such machines, showcasing the nation's technological prowess in handling large-scale operations. India's Election Commission is already working in this direction, evaluating the possibility of using VVPATs (Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trails) for added transparency and reliability.

b. Blockchain Technology for Transparency

One of the standout innovations that could revolutionise the election process is Blockchain Technology. With its inherent capabilities of ensuring transparency and immutability of data, blockchain can significantly reduce concerns regarding electoral fraud, tampering, or vote duplication. Voter identities, ballots, and results could be securely stored and verified on a Decentralized Blockchain Network, ensuring that once a vote is cast, it cannot be altered.

The Modi Government's focus on Digital Infrastructure Development has positioned India as a global leader in technological innovations. Leveraging blockchain for simultaneous elections aligns with this digital-first philosophy, ensuring elections remain transparent, secure, and free from malpractice.

Logistics of Managing Elections in a Large Democracy

India's electoral complexity isn't just about the number of voters; it also involves managing over 1 million polling stations, mobilising security forces, and coordinating with state and central

administrations. Simultaneous elections would magnify these challenges. However, the logistical benefits, once the initial hurdles are overcome, could be substantial.

a. Mobilizing Resources Efficiently

One of the key logistical challenges of holding simultaneous elections is mobilising human and physical resources. With ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION, polling booths, EVMs, and security forces would need to be deployed across the country simultaneously. However, with a well-structured approach, this can be streamlined. By reducing the frequency of elections, resources can be pooled for maximum efficiency, minimising duplication of efforts and enabling better coordination.

The Modi government's adeptness in Infrastructure Development—from Road-Building Programs to Digital Infrastructure—can be leveraged here. By enhancing transport networks and deploying state-of-the-art technology for logistical planning, the government can ensure that elections are conducted smoothly across every nook and corner of India.

b. Security Measures for a Unified Election Process

India's diverse socio-political landscape necessitates a robust security framework during elections. In simultaneous elections, the need for heightened security becomes even more pressing. The Modi government's strategic focus on National Security and Modernizing Our Armed And Paramilitary Forces plays a crucial role in ensuring that elections are free from violence, coercion, and interference.

Advanced surveillance technologies, drones, and real-time monitoring systems can be deployed to ensure safety and security at polling booths. The Integrated Command Centers set up during past elections under Modi's leadership have already proven effective in monitoring sensitive areas. By extending these innovations on a national scale, security during simultaneous elections can be handled effectively.

Ensuring Security, Transparency, and Fairness

At the heart of the One Nation, One Election reform is the commitment to ensuring Free, Fair, and Transparent Elections. The Modi Government has consistently championed these ideals, particularly

through its push for electoral reforms and anti-corruption measures.

a. Transparent Voting Mechanisms

A key concern surrounding simultaneous elections is ensuring that the process remains transparent and open to public scrutiny. Apart from Blockchain and EVM advancements, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Big Data Analytics can be utilised to monitor electoral trends, detect irregularities, and address any concerns of vote manipulation. AI-powered monitoring systems could predict potential electoral disruptions and suggest preventive measures.

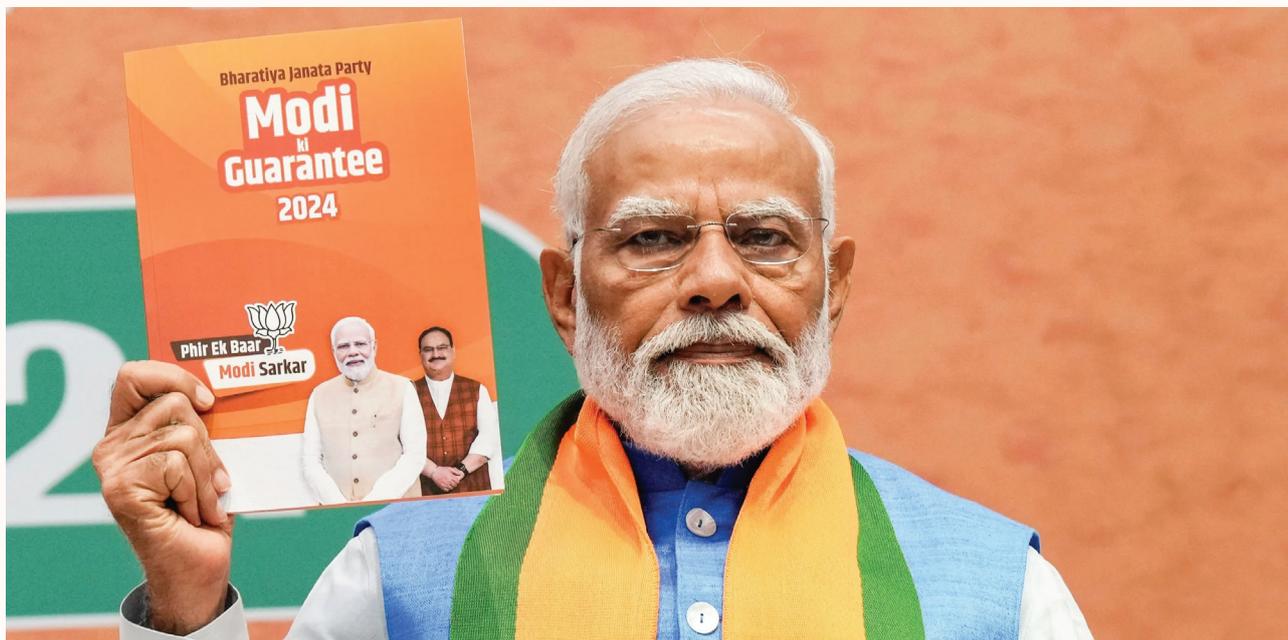
The Modi Government's Digital India initiative, particularly in Cybersecurity, can address vulnerabilities in the electoral process, ensuring that both voting data and voter privacy are safeguarded. By making the election process transparent and auditable, the Modi Government is once again proving its commitment to empowering voters and strengthening democracy.

b. Fair Representation across India

One major advantage of One Nation, One Election is the potential to reduce the influence of constant politicking. By holding simultaneous elections, parties and leaders can focus more on governance rather than preparing for state and local elections every year. This move will usher in an era of Continuous Development, a key tenet of the Modi Government's vision for Viksit Bharat 2047.

The vision of One Nation, One Election represents the next phase in India's democratic evolution. While there are undeniable technological and logistical challenges, the Modi Government's foresight and its track record of implementing large-scale reforms leave no doubt that these challenges can be overcome. Through the deployment of cutting-edge technology, efficient logistics, and a firm commitment to security and transparency, India can achieve a unified electoral process, enhancing governance, reducing costs, and fostering political stability. Under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India is well on its way to realising this transformative vision, leading the country toward a stronger and more efficient democracy.

भाजपा जो कहती है करती है



अरुण राठी

लेखक वरिष्ठ पत्रकार हैं

भारत की मोदी सरकार की कैबिनेट की ओर से सर्वसम्मति से एक देश एक चुनाव के प्रस्ताव को मंजूरी दे दी गई है। पूर्व राष्ट्रपति रामनाथ कोविंद की अध्यक्षता में बनी समिति की रिपोर्ट के आधार पर मोदी सरकार ने वन नेशन वन इलेक्शन को हरी झंडी दी है। इसके बाद संसद, संविधान संशोधन और राज्यों के सहयोग के साथ सरकार आगे इस दिशा में रास्ता तय करेगी।

नरेन्द्र मोदी की अगुवाई में एनडीए सरकार ने तीसरे टर्म की शुरुआत में ही एक देश, एक चुनाव की दिशा में निर्णायक पहल की तो बहुत हैरानी नहीं हुई। दरअसल, आम चुनाव से पहले ही केंद्र सरकार ने इसके लिए पृष्ठभूमि तैयार कर दी है। बीजेपी शुरु से लोकसभा और विधानसभा चुनाव को साथ कराने के पक्ष में रही है। पार्टी के दिग्गज नेता लालकृष्ण आडवाणी इसके सबसे बड़े पक्षधर नेताओं में रहे हैं और उन्होंने इसके लिए आम राय बनाने की सबसे पहले पहल भी की थी। 2014 के लोकसभा चुनाव में भी बीजेपी के घोषणा पत्र में जिन चुनावी सुधार का जिक्र किया गया है, उसमें यह बात शामिल भी है।

अब कांग्रेस समेत कुछ विपक्षी दल एक देश एक चुनाव का विरोध करने में लगे हैं लेकिन भारत में एक देश एक चुनाव कोई नयी बात नहीं है। कांग्रेस के राज में भी ये चल रहा था और कांग्रेस सरकार ने ही इसे बंद भी कराया था, ऐसे में अब विरोध क्यों ये बड़ा सवाल है। एक देश एक चुनाव के इतिहास पर नजर डालें तो

एक देश एक चुनाव का विचार कम से कम 1983 से ही चला आ रहा है, जब चुनाव आयोग ने पहली बार इस पर विचार किया था। हालांकि, 1967 तक, भारत में एक साथ चुनाव कराना एक आदर्श नियम था।

लोकसभा और सभी राज्य विधानसभाओं के लिए पहला आम चुनाव 1951-52 में एक साथ आयोजित किया गया था।

यह प्रथा 1957, 1962 और 1967 में हुए तीन आम चुनावों में भी जारी रही।

हालांकि, 1968 और 1969 में कुछ विधानसभाओं के समय से पहले भंग होने के कारण यह चक्र बाधित हो गया।

1970 में, लोकसभा को समय से पहले ही भंग कर दिया गया और 1971 में नए चुनाव कराए गए। इस प्रकार, पहली, दूसरी और तीसरी लोकसभा ने पूरे पांच साल का कार्यकाल पूरा किया।

लोक सभा और विभिन्न राज्य विधान सभाओं के समय से पहले विघटन और कार्यकाल विस्तार के परिणामस्वरूप, लोक सभा और राज्य विधान सभाओं के लिए अलग-अलग चुनाव हुए हैं और एक साथ चुनाव कराने का चक्र बाधित हुआ है।

अब ऐसे में ये बड़ा सवाल है कि कांग्रेस की तरफ से अब क्यों इस मामले पर विरोध क्या जा रहा है जबकि भारत के विधि आयोग ने अनुमान लगाया है कि एक राष्ट्र, एक चुनाव से अलग-अलग चुनावों पर होने वाले व्यय में 4,500 करोड़ रुपये (\$615 मिलियन) तक की बचत हो सकती है। नीति आयोग की एक रिपोर्ट में अनुमान लगाया गया कि चुनावों की आवृत्ति कम करने से 7,500 करोड़ रुपये से लेकर 12,000 करोड़ रुपये (\$1 बिलियन से \$1.6 बिलियन) तक की बचत हो सकती है।

इस साल के शुरु में भारत में जो लोकसभा चुनाव हुए तो उन पर एक लाख करोड़ का खर्च आया। ये आंकड़ा चुनाव आयोग का है, लिहाजा मान सकते हैं कि ये खर्च कुछ ज्यादा भी हो सकता है लेकिन ये तय है कि ये लोकसभा चुनाव 2024 दुनिया का सबसे महंगा चुनाव था। इस बात का अंदाजा आप इस से भी लगा सकते हैं कि ये चुनाव अमेरिका में 2020 में हुए प्रेसीडेंट इलेक्शन से भी कहीं ज्यादा खर्चीला और महंगा रहा था।

देश में जब विधानसभा चुनाव होते हैं तो उन पर मोटे तौर पर कितना खर्च आता है, इसका मुकम्मल डाटा उपलब्ध नहीं है लेकिन यूपी यानि उत्तर प्रदेश में जब 2022 में विधानसभा चुनाव हुए तो उस पर 6000 करोड़ रुपए खर्च हुए थे। यूपी विधानसभा सीटों के लिहाज से देश की सबसे बड़ी विधानसभा है। देश की सबसे छोटी विधानसभा में उत्तर पूर्वी राज्य से लेकर गोवा और हरियाणा जैसे छोटे राज्य शामिल हैं। आंकड़ों के अनुसार गोवा में जब वर्ष 2022 में विधानसभा चुनाव हुए तो सभी सियासी दलों और निर्दलियों ने मिलकर वहां करीब 100 करोड़ रुपए खर्च किए। इसके अलावा चुनाव आयोग ने मोटे तौर पर इस राज्य में चुनाव कराने में करीब 20-25 करोड़ रुपए खर्च किए होंगे। इस लिहाज से भारत के सभी 28 राज्यों में विधानसभा चुनावों में होने वाला खर्च भी अलग है, तो ऐसा लगता है कि देशभर में इन

विधानसभाओं चुनावों पर होने वाला खर्च भी अमूमन एक लाख करोड़ रुपए के आसपास होना चाहिए।

बात दुनिया की भी कर लेते हैं और एक नजर उन 4 चुनावों पर डालते हैं जो दुनिया भर में सबसे महंगे रहे हैं।

1. भारत (2024): भारत में 2024 के लोकसभा चुनाव अब तक के सबसे महंगे चुनाव थे, जिसमें एक लाख करोड़ रुपए खर्च हुए. वर्ष 2019 में चुनावों में 55,000 से 60,000 करोड़ रुपए खर्च हुए थे.

2. संयुक्त राज्य अमेरिका (2020) - चार साल पहले अमेरिका का प्रेसीडेंट इलेक्शन अमेरिकी इतिहास में सबसे महंगे चुनावों में था, जिसमें कुल खर्च लगभग \$14.4 बिलियन (लगभग ₹1.2 लाख करोड़) होने का अनुमान है। इस आंकड़े में उम्मीदवारों के खर्च और अन्य खर्च शामिल हैं।

3. संयुक्त राज्य अमेरिका (2016) - 2016 के अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति चुनाव में भी खूब खर्च देखा गया. जिसका अनुमान लगभग 6.5 बिलियन डॉलर (55,000 करोड़ रुपए) था।

4. ब्राजील (2018) - 2018 में ब्राजील के आम चुनावों में खूब खर्च हुआ, जो करीब 2 बिलियन डॉलर (17,000 करोड़ रुपए) था।

चुनावों पर अंधाधुंध खर्चों की वजह से आज दुनिया के कई देश पहले से ही 'वन नेशन वन इलेक्शन' के फॉर्मूले पर चल रहे हैं। इन देशों में जर्मनी, हंगरी, दक्षिण अफ्रीका, इंडोनेशिया, स्पेन, स्लोवेनिया, अल्बानिया, पोलैंड और बेल्जियम जैसे देशों में एक ही बार चुनाव कराने की परंपरा है। पिछले दिनों स्वीडन ने भी एक साथ अपने चुनाव कराए थे, जिसके बाद ये भी उन देशों की लिस्ट में शामिल हो गया जो 'वन नेशन वन इलेक्शन' के फॉर्मूले पर चल रहे हैं।

वैसे आपको बता दें कि कांग्रेस भले वन नेशन वन इलेक्शन का विरोध कर रही हो लेकिन बीजेपी ने जो कहा सो किया की नीति के तहत ही इस मामले में आगे बढ़ी है। बीजेपी के लिए एक देश, एक चुनाव शुरु से सबसे बड़ा सियासी अजेंडा रहा है। तीसरे टर्म की शुरुआत में नरेन्द्र मोदी की अगुवाई में एनडीए सरकार इसे अमल में लाकर संदेश देना चाहती है कि न उनकी मजबूती में कम आई है न वह अपने स्टैंड से पीछे हट रही है। आम चुनाव में बीजेपी को 240 सीटें मिलने के बाद नई सरकार के इकबाल पर सवाल उठ रहे थे। 2019 में बड़ी जीत हासिल करने के तुरंत बाद केंद्र सरकार ने जम्मू-कश्मीर से आर्टिकल 370 हटाया था और इसके अलावा नागरिकता संशोधन कानून और किसान बिल जैसी बड़ी पहल की थी। अब तीसरे टर्म में एक देश, एक चुनाव की दिशा में पहल कर केंद्र सरकार निरंतरता का संदेश देना चाहती है।

The Roadmap to One Nation, One Election: Constitutional Amendment and Public Engagement

Tirthankar Jana

IT- Engineer & Columnist

The concept of One Nation, One Election, while rooted in India's democratic and political history, has featured in the BJP's Lok Sabha election manifestos and received significant support from Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi through public meetings, all-party discussions, party-led webinars, forums by Legislative House Presiding Officers, and the Election Commission. From 1952 to 1967, simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and state assemblies were the norm until disrupted by various anti-democratic actions taken by previous regimes. With the Constitution's recognition of local bodies following the 73rd and 74th Amendments and the resulting Article 243, there is renewed interest in holding elections at all levels together.



To this end, a committee was established under former President Ram Nath Kovind, whose report has been endorsed by the Union Cabinet. While the One Nation, One Election policy has points both in favour and against, the writer broadly supports the principle.

Before examining the need for Constitutional amendments, it's essential to understand why such changes are necessary. The standard term for both the Lok Sabha and a Vidhan Sabha is five years. However, this duration can be shortened in the event of early dissolution or extended during situations like a National Emergency, Financial Emergency, or the imposition of President's Rule. The Election Commission of India manages electoral rolls for Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections, while the State Election Commission prepares rolls for local body elections. The Representation of the People Act of 1951 outlines the framework for conducting elections in India. Additionally, business

rules in both the Lok Sabha and state legislatures govern the functioning of these houses.

The Anti-Defection Law, established through the 52nd and 91st Amendments, aims to bring stability to the political landscape. Implementing One Nation, One Election may require amendments to these existing frameworks to ensure its feasibility. Articles 85 and 174 of the Indian Constitution govern the dissolution of the Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies (Vidhan Sabhas). As noted, the standard term is five years. However, the President or the Governor has the power to dissolve these houses before their five-year term ends, a practice sometimes exercised by Prime Ministers and Chief Ministers seeking early elections. To ensure a seamless implementation of One Nation, One Election, an amendment prohibiting early dissolution would be necessary to maintain the five-year period consistently.

Articles 83 and 172 specify the five-year duration for the Parliament and State Assemblies. However, in cases where a (coalition) government falls, and early elections are held, the new government is currently given a full five-year term. An amendment could stipulate that any government formed under such circumstances serves only the remaining term of the previous government, aligning with the practice followed by local bodies under Articles 243 E-U.

Electoral rolls are presently updated by the Election Commission for Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections and by the State Election Commissions for local body elections. To facilitate simultaneous elections at all levels, an amendment to Article 324 would be required, assigning sole responsibility for preparing electoral rolls to the Election Commission.

Consider a scenario where simultaneous elections are planned for April 2029. This would mean adjusting the term of some state assemblies—either extending or reducing their normal duration. A Constitutional amendment would be required to temporarily alter the terms of these assemblies accordingly.

Rule 198 of the Lok Sabha and equivalent state



assembly rules govern motions of no confidence, requiring the support of 50 members for discussion and passing with a two-thirds majority of those present. Such provisions can introduce instability, risking the continuity of synchronised elections. In 1999, the Law Commission suggested adopting the German model of a "constructive vote of no confidence," where members proposing the motion must nominate a successor with proven support. The Anti-Defection Law allows that if two-thirds of a party's members decide to form a new party or merge with another, the action remains valid as long as it is deemed proper by the Speaker. An amendment to the 10th Schedule could strengthen stability by ensuring that this law aligns with the goals of One Nation, One Election, reducing disruptions to the proposed synchronised election framework.

Now comes the question of how to bring in these Constitutional amendments. Passing these amendments requires a two-thirds majority of members present in both houses of Parliament. Currently, the government lacks the necessary numbers in either house, so effective coordination, strategic manoeuvring, and consensus-building are crucial. Concerns have been raised about the potential impact on federalism, with fears that national issues may overshadow regional priorities, diminishing the importance of state interests and overwhelming regional parties. It is essential to ensure open dialogue and clear communication among all stakeholders to demonstrate that One Nation, One Election serves the country's broader interests rather than any single party, thus addressing these concerns. This concept was practised until 1967, so the question of undermining federalism is largely unfounded, provided that the Constitutional amendment process is transparent and accommodates opposing voices in Parliament. Additionally, the Indian electorate has shown maturity, with voting patterns indicating that voters distinguish between Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections, showing that concurrent elections do not blur these priorities.

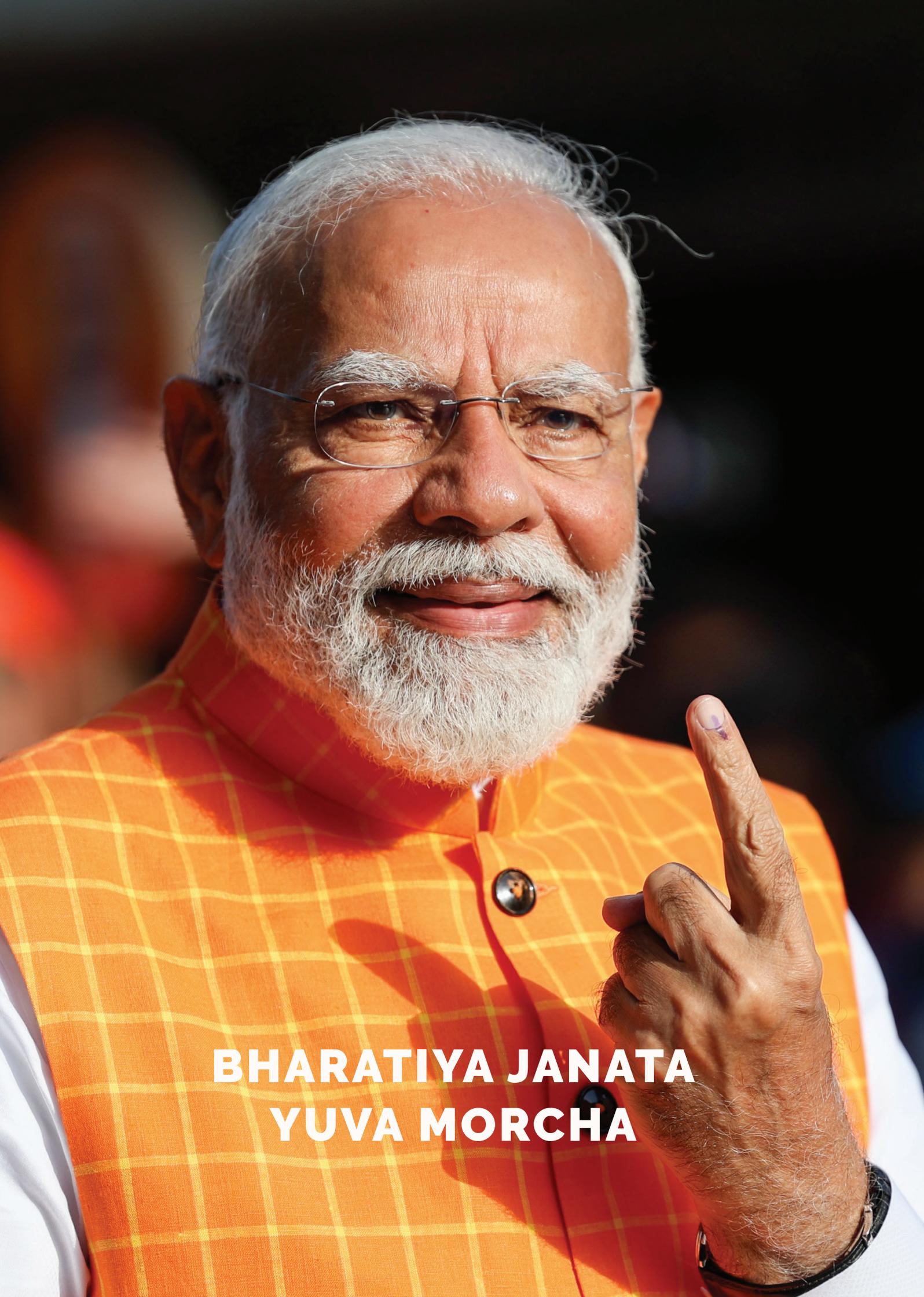
Since the government requires support from political opponents, open and candid dialogue is essential. Extending this concept to local body

elections would also require ratification by half of the state assemblies.

Beyond legislative efforts, public awareness of this proposal is equally important—a process known as political socialisation. The government should conduct seminars across the country, especially in colleges and universities, explaining the rationale and potential benefits of One Nation, One Election. Key points should include cost savings of nearly ₹15,000 crore, which could be reinvested in health and education, and the reduction of voter fatigue, which would likely lead to higher voter participation. With the public well-informed and supportive of the concept, implementation becomes significantly easier.

However, this transition should be gradual. A pilot project could be initiated, perhaps by aligning local body elections with Vidhan Sabha elections in one state to assess the process and identify any gaps. These learnings would be invaluable in preparing for simultaneous Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections. Electoral reforms are essential, and though any new idea encounters challenges, the benefits here merit serious consideration. A NITI Aayog report has highlighted the inconsistency in policy-making due to frequent elections and the resulting constraints from the Model Code of Conduct.

The goal is to implement simultaneous elections by 2029. Reports suggest that the government is considering introducing a bill in the upcoming Winter Session. If successful, this would mark a significant achievement for Prime Minister Modi, who has championed this cause.



**BHARATIYA JANATA
YUVA MORCHA**