



Cover Page



ONE NATION ONE ELECTION IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

Kamalesh Podder

Assistant Professor

Department of Political Science, Srikrishna College

Bagula, Nadia, West Bengal, India

Abstract

The debate has been going on around the country regarding ‘one nation one election’. ‘One Nation One Election’ is a proposal to conduct the elections to the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies at the same time. ‘One Nation One Election’ is not new to India. This system was until 1967 in India. Since then, India is trying hard to adopt this system but it has not been materialized. The federal structure and parliamentary government have been adopted in India. So, there are constitutional problems for it. We have analysed in this article what are the merits and demerits of ‘one nation one election’, Constitutional problems, how it will work and where it can be applied in India or not.

Key word: Country, Nation, Election, Lok Sabha, Federal, Parliamentary Government.

Introduction

India is the largest democratic country of the world because China is the communist country which is the most populous country. Elections are very important part of politics in a democratic system of governance. The general elections for the Lok Sabha and state assemblies are held at the gap of five years in India but we see that elections are a whole year process in India. Thus, the government spends a lot of money, time and energy on the conduct of different elections. For this, the government of India is thinking about the ‘one nation one election’ system in India.

What is the ‘One Nation One Election’ system?

‘One Nation One Election’ or simultaneous elections would mean that elections to the Lok Sabha and state assemblies will be held at the same time. So, the voters will cast their vote for electing members of the Lok Sabha and state legislatures on a single day, at the same time or in phases if needed.

History of ‘One Nation One Election’ in India:

‘One Nation One Election’ has been doing the rounds for the past few years. ‘One Nation One Election’ is not new to India. This system was until 1967 in India. But this practice was discontinued in 1968-69, because some state assemblies were dissolved in 1967-68 due to various reasons and Lok Sabha was dissolved in 1970. Then the elections to State Assemblies and Lok Sabha have been held separately. This idea was mooted in the annual report of the Election Commission in 1983. The Report of the Law Commission also referred to it in 1999. Niti Aayog prepared a working paper on this subject in January 2017. Now the Law Commission of India was asked to prepare a report on simultaneous elections by the government of India. The Law Commission has notified it in its working paper in April 2018 and also submitted its report in favour of ‘one nation one election’ in August 2018. Recently the Prime Minister of India invited heads of all political parties to a meeting on 19th June, 2019 to discuss the ‘one nation one election’ system and other important matters. But there is no consensus for it among the political parties.

How will it work?

There were two proposals to conduct ‘one nation one election’ along with 17th Lok Sabha elections. But both proposals were not implemented. One proposal was elections to Lok Sabha, 1 Union Territory election and 12 State Assemblies which by themselves face election in late 2018 or 2019 will be held at the same time and the rest of the States election will be held in the middle of their five-year term. These 12 states were Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Odisha, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Telangana. Delhi (Union Territory with Legislature) also faces polls in 2019. Secondly, political consensus and extension of term up to six months in some states, amendments to the Constitution have to be made for this purpose. Elections to the remaining State Assemblies and Puducherry (Union Territory with Legislature) will be held by the end of 2021. Thereafter, elections to the Lok Sabha, all State Assemblies and Union Territories with legislatures will be held simultaneously from 2024.

Merits of ‘One Nation One Election’

1. Save Public Money: The biggest logic in the favour of the ‘One Nation One Election’ is the saving of public money. The entire State and District level administrative and security machinery will be busy with the conduct of elections twice in a period of five years



Cover Page



as per current practice. Expenditure can be reduced by conducting simultaneous elections. One-time elections would save the public money, reduce the burden on security forces and ensure that the administrative machinery is engaged in developmental activities.

2. Stop Policy Paralysis: The model code of conduct stops the government from announcing new policies. It does not prevent work on already announced policies from continuing. One time election will ensure continuity in policies and programs of the central and state governments.

3. Reduce the black money: Elections are fought with black money. A huge black money turned into white money during elections in the country. The impact of black money on the voters will be reduced as all elections are held at a time. According to Association for democratic Reform’s data in 2017-18, 53 per cent of a political party’s income came from unknown sources, 36 per cent from known sources and 11 per cent from membership fees and asset sales. So, if one time election is conducted then there is a possibility of the check on black money.

4. Efficiency of governance: If elections are not conducted annually then the government need not to woo the general public through lucrative schemes and make caste and religion-based programmes. Even states and central government need not to prepare a lucrative budget every year and they can take tough decisions for the betterment of the economy.

Demerits of ‘One Nation One Election’

1. Crisis of Local issues: We know that elections for Lok Sabha and State assemblies are fought on different issues. The main themes of Lok Sabha election and State Legislative elections are different. Regional parties mainly target local issues such as law and order, education, power and water supply, health etc. But national parties target national issues such as farm crisis, unemployment and national security. Separate elections can ensure local and national issues do not get mixed up. One time election would deprive the citizens of their rights to demand services at two different levels. Local issues are important. So, if one time election is accepted, local issues will be subsumed under national issues.

2. Crisis of regional parties: One election will also lead to national parties getting a bigger share of the political pie. Financial power and organisational strengths of the big parties will run over small parties. Indian democracy needs all types of political parties and the ideological opinions. Smaller parties represent marginalised sections of societies whose voices have to be heard. One time election will mean that a small voice would be muted forever. Regional parties will not be able to compete with national parties in terms of election expenditure and election strategy.

3. Requirement of huge machinery and resources: At present, one voting machine is being used at every polling station for taking a poll. For holding simultaneous elections, the requirements for EVMs and VVPATs will double, because for every polling station, the Election Commission of India has to provide two sets as one for election to the Legislative Assembly and second for that to the Lok Sabha and also be needed an additional requirement of the polling staff.

4. Crisis of democracy and federalism: One election seems almost impossible because India is a democratic and federalism country even there has a parliamentary form of government. Suppose if elections are conducted simultaneously but it is not sure that all state and central government will be formed by the full majority. It is also possible that the alliance government can fall any time before five years. When an election in a state is postponed until the synchronised phase, President’s rule will have to be imposed in the interim period in that state. So, this will be a blow to democracy and federalism.

5. Reduce the Political consciousness: Frequent elections are increased more the political knowledge of the peoples than one-time elections. Peoples can debate more on political issues and in this way political consciousness of peoples will be increased.

6. Reduce the accountability of representatives: one election will reduce the government’s accountability to the people. Repeated elections keep increasing accountability of representatives. Frequent elections may be good in democracy as voters can more ensure that their voice is heard. The representatives are accountable and forced to show their faces to the voters regularly.

Constitutional Amendments needed for simultaneous elections

If simultaneous elections are to be implemented, amendments of constitution and Legislations would be needed in the following Articles:

Article 83: It states that the term of the Lok Sabha will be five years from the date of its first sitting.

Article 85: It empowers the President to dissolve the Lok Sabha.

Article 172: It states that the term of the legislative assembly will be five years from the date of its first sitting.

Article 174: It empowers the Governor of the state to dissolve the Legislative Assembly.

Article 356: It authorises the Central Government to impose President’s Rule for failure of constitutional machinery in the state. The Representation of the People Act as well as related parliamentary procedure will also need to be amended.

Conclusion

‘One Nation One Election’ hits federalism which is an important principle of Indian polity. What happens when the Central Government falls before its tenure? Wherein elections to all the states again? Again, what happens when a State Government falls



Cover Page



DOI: <http://ijmer.in.doi./2021/10.07.124>

before its tenure and elections for other states and Lok Sabha again? Or should the President' Rule be imposed? So, it means the central government will be the ruling proxy. This makes democracy a sham. The real motive behind one nation one election is to centralise power in Delhi. For it, our diverseness in languages, cultures, religions, political views will be dangerous. The amendments would require apart from two thirds majority of both houses of the parliament and also ratification by at least half of the state assemblies. But the Central or any State Government may be dissolved due to various reasons. Therefore, one nation one election is not possible in India. However, there needs to be a consensus that the Country needs 'one nation one election' or not. All political parties should at least cooperate in debating this issue, once the debate starts, the public opinion can be taken into consideration. India is a mature democracy and can flow the results of the debate.

References

1. <https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/one-nation-one-election-1561032672-1>
2. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/one-nation-one-election/article28073916.ece>
3. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/one-nation-one-election-perish-thought-1553953-2019-06-22>
4. <https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/india/explained-is-india-ready-for-one-nation-one-election-4151571.html>
5. <https://www.drishtiiias.com/loksabha-rajyasabha-discussions/the-big-picture-one-nation-one-election>
6. <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/one-nation-one-election-not-possible-sans-constitutional-amendment-former-cec-1560853508629.html>
7. <http://www.legalserviceindia.com/legal/article-266-one-nation-one-election-the-law-and-the-politics.html>
8. <https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/one-nation-one-election-arguments-and-against-proposal-103927>
9. Sahoo, Jitendra. (2017). One nation one election in India. *Scholarly Research Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies*. July-August. PP. 1-13.
10. Choudhary, Renuka. (2018). One nation one election. *International Journal of Law*. January. PP. 98-99.
11. Sharma, Sanjeev Kumar. (2018). Legal and Political Dimensions of one nation one election. *Globalence: A Journal of Social Science Research*. University of Delhi. July-December. PP. 34-52.