

# One Nation One Election: Simultaneous Elections in Indian Scenario

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## Abstract

*In any democratic country, election is a tool by which common citizens get an opportunity to come forward and work for the development of the society. At present in India, elections are held separately for central and state government and simultaneous elections for central and state government is a debatable issue. Stable governance, reduce massive elections expenditure, promote national perspective over state regionalism are major reasons in favour whereas, it reduces the importance of the state elections and there would be no opportunity to dissolve Lok Sabha or State Assemblies are some critical reasons in against the simultaneous elections of state and central government in India. This paper is totally based on the secondary data.*

**Keywords:** Democracy, Election, Government, Citizens, Lok Sabha, State Assemblies.

## Introduction

“The Ballot is Stronger Than the Bullet”

This sentence shows the strength of election. In reality, election is the way to make changes in any country because the elected people through elections are expected to make policies, laws for the development of the country. Free and fair elections are the requirement of every country in bringing good governance. In India, presently a debate has been going on regarding holding the election simultaneously for States Legislative Assemblies and the Lok Sabha. Simultaneous election as a concept has not been new for Indian democracy. In the past, there are simultaneous election has been held in India. The simultaneous election concept has been taken by the present Prime Minister and the President quite number of times in his speeches, as they are in favour of bringing simultaneous election once again in India.

## Background:

- ✓ The idea of simultaneous elections is not new to India. In 1951-52, the first general election to the Lok Sabha was held simultaneously with all State Legislative Assemblies. This cycle of holding simultaneous elections continued till the general elections of 1967.
- ✓ This practice of holding simultaneous elections got disrupted due to premature dissolution of some State Legislative Assemblies in 1968. Lok Sabha itself dissolved prematurely in 1970.
- ✓ As a result, the elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies started to be held separately.
- ✓ The idea of simultaneous elections was floated long back by former deputy Prime Minister of India, LK Advani.
- ✓ In Recent times, the idea got support from President and Prime Minister.
- ✓ Reports of Law commission and the Parliamentary standing committee have also favoured the holding of simultaneous elections.

## **Arguments in Favour of Simultaneous Elections:**

Simultaneous election will help in bringing consistency, continuity and efficiency in the governance process. Simultaneous elections provide the effective time required by the government to bring development as having elections at different-different time hold the development process in the states on which election to be held due to model code of conduct. The positives of having simultaneous elections include:

- ✓ First and the foremost is that it brings stability in governance. This was even mentioned in the 117th report on Reform and Electoral Laws (1999) by the Law Commission of India.
- ✓ Second, it would reduce the massive expenditure which needed to be spent on holding elections once for Lok Sabha and then for States Assemblies.
- ✓ Third, elections in states lead to the imposition of Model Code of Conduct (MCC) puts on hold the entire development programme and activities. If all elections are held in one particular year, it will give a clear four years to the political parties to focus on good governance.
- ✓ Fourth, continuous election has an impact on the functioning of essential services. The rallies and the like do cause traffic problems as well as loss of productivity.
- ✓ Fifth, if elections are held simultaneously to the Lok Sabha and the state legislatures it will provide more time to the security forces to devote to their core duties than to duty in the elections.
- ✓ Sixth, Simultaneous elections promotes the national perspective over the regional

perspective, which is important for countries unity.

- ✓ Seventh, Holding simultaneous election would bring States on par with the centre, which will reduce the anomalies created by the Article 356 (President's Rule) of the Indian Constitution and will improve and strengthen the federal structure of India.
- ✓ Finally, Holding simultaneous election will provide the government that stability by which they can take harsh decision important for the long term in public interest.

## **Arguments Against Simultaneous Elections:**

As there are benefits of holding simultaneous elections, there are some challenges are also present in India:

- ✓ Holding simultaneous election may bring down the expenditure occurred by the Election Commission, but it can't provide the same guarantee regarding the political parties expenditure in elections.
- ✓ In federalism, Centre and States are equal and sovereign their jurisdiction. Holding simultaneous election may reduce the importance of States elections.
- ✓ According to the Article 83(2) and Article 172 of the Indian Constitution, the Lok Sabha and the States Legislative Assemblies should remain in existence for five years from the date of first sitting unless dissolved earlier. Simultaneous elections will ignore this phrase of Constitution, as there would be no opportunity to dissolve Lok Sabha or State Assemblies.
- ✓ A government can remain in power only if it enjoys the confidence of Parliament. Simultaneous election can only work if the government remain in power for fixed

tenure of five years regardless of confidence of Parliament. This will be against the basic structure of Constitution of India as there is procedure of “NO Confidence Motion”.

- ✓ Elections are the important parts of representative democracy. If elections were held simultaneously for fixed term of five years, it will curtail people’s right to express their confidence and displeasure for the government.
- ✓ Simultaneous election will relegate issues of state importance to the background in front of central government issues, which completely ignores the diversity of country.
- ✓ Holding simultaneous election may face logistical challenges, as for the conduct of free and fair elections, need large number of security forces deployment. Given the current strength of security personal this will be challenging task.

### **Alternative method:**

There can be an alternate method can be used to hold elections in two phases. Election for some/half the State Assemblies can be held in the mid-term of Lok Sabha and the remaining elections can be hold simultaneously with the Lok Sabha elections. For this method to be used, the terms of State assemblies may need to be extended and some need to be dissolved little early. Holding elections for half the states ones will be easy and elections can be held free and fair with proper security arrangements.

In order to achieve this, Election Commission is empowered by the Representation of Peoples Act,1951 to call elections six months prior to the end of the normal term of Lok Sabha or any State assembly.

### **Conclusion**

One Nation One Election is an interesting concept to discuss but whether it will increase or decrease the evils which government wants to get rid of is still a debatable issue. There are certain other issues which need to be taken up first in the development of country then the simultaneous elections. To curb the election expenditure, alternate ways such as reforms in the expenditure of political parties and state funding of political parties could be discussed. There are many challenges in front of simultaneous elections which may be implemented in near future for which an amendment may need to be done in the Constitution itself. But one thing should need to be taken care of is that simultaneous elections will not undermine the federalism and diversity of the country.

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