
AN ANALYTICAL STUDY ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ONE NATION ONE ELECTION IN INDIA

Soumyadeep Mohite, B.A. LL.B (H), Amity University, Kolkata

Aesha Roy, B.A. LL.B (H), Amity University, Kolkata

ABSTRACT

This article provides a brief introduction of the concept and significance of Elections in India and what is the mechanism of executing the same. It then proceeds with what is the central idea of the policy of One Nation One Election and the foundation on which it is based. Followed by which, the article does a study on the advantages and benefits of implementation of the policy and as to why the Government is significantly concerned for implementing this. To put a balance the Article also does a study on the disadvantages of the initiative and upon what points the Government shall put a check before implementing this. A thorough study is also done in this article on the legal aspect of the idea, and what legal ways shall be followed in order to implement the idea. Finally, the article gives a set of suggestions as to what can be done in order to have a smooth passage without having much political turbulence for implementing the policy and ends with a statement of conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

In a Parliamentary Democracy like India, where the power to choose the Government lies in the hands of the citizens of the Country, Elections over here act as the connecting thread between the citizens and the Government of the country. Elections takes place for a 5-year term in every level of Government, from the Lok Sabha elections for electing the Central Government of India or the Vidhan Sabha elections in every state for electing the respective State Government to the Panchayat and Municipal elections for electing the members of the same. India is often referred to as ‘The World’s Largest democracy’ with a gigantic population of 1.42 billion approximately. Elections here are referred to as ‘Festival of democracy’, and this festival comes with an extravagant cost, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman tabled the first batch of supplementary demand for grants for 2023-2024 in the Lok Sabha on December 6 for a total additional expenditure of Rs 1.29 lakh crore. Of that, Rs 3,147.92 crore was proposed for the Law Ministry to fund election-related expenses and Rs 73.67 crore for the Election Commission for administrative expenses¹. The Elections in 2019 costed an unprecedented Rs 50,000 crore (\$7 billion), according to the New Delhi-based Centre for Media Studies².

EXECUTING THE ELECTIONS

About executing the Elections in India, Article 324 of Indian Constitution provides for the appointment of an Election Commission to superintend, direct and control elections. The Election Commission is an independent autonomous body, and the Constitution ensures, as in the case of Supreme Court and High Courts, that it may be able to function freely without any executive interference. A panel consisting of 3 members, The Prime Minister, The Chief Justice of India, and The Leader of the Opposition of Lok Sabha recommends a name to the President of India, who then based on the recommendation, appoints the Chief Election Commissioner. In case, there is no Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, then the leader of the single largest

¹ Damini Nath, “Govt proposes Rs 3,000 crore additional funds for LS polls, total spending to go past Rs 5,000 crore” The Indian Express (New Delhi, December 11, 2023) <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/govt-proposes-rs-3000-cr-additional-funds-for-ls-polls-total-spending-to-go-past-rs-5000-cr-9062657/>, accessed 14th January, 2024.

² Archana Chaudhary and Jeanette Rodrigues, “Why India’s election is among the world’s most expensive” The Economic Times (India, March 12 2019) <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/elections/lok-sabha/india/why-indias-election-is-among-the-worlds-most-expensive/articleshow/68367262.cms?from=mdr>, accessed 14th January, 2024.

party in opposition is considered to be the Leader of the Opposition. This entire process of appointment is framed in this manner, to maintain transparency and fairness.

THE CONCEPT OF ONE NATION ONE ELECTION

Almost every year, one or other state has its assembly elections to be conducted, leaving apart the Lok Sabha elections. This creates an additional burden on the national funds, generates extra administrative load for the preparation of Elections and imposing the Model Code of Conduct. Last but not the least it puts infrastructural and developmental projects on a halt.

To tackle all this issue, the concept of One Nation One Election was put forward. The primary objective of One Nation One Election is, to synchronize the timing of the Lok Sabha elections and State Legislative Assembly elections across all the states of India. Thus, the voters would vote for the Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections on the same day, and this would continue after every five years. It would be incorrect to think that this concept is new to India. This practise was prevalent in India starting right from the country's first general elections in 1951 to the general elections of 1967 when the then Kerala government was dismissed. Thereafter, due to several reasons like dissolutions of government either due to defection or state emergency, the polls of different states are conducted on different time, i.e., after completion of their respective term. A Law Commission report by Justice B.P Jeevan Reddy in 1999 took the initiative of bringing this proposal for the first time in the Parliament.

ADVANTAGES OF ONE NATION ONE ELECTION

1. Reduced cost of election- One of the aims of One Nation One Election is to reduce the cost of election because a huge amount of fund is required for every election and if elections are held simultaneously³ or at the same time then the amount of expenses can be reduced.
2. Efficiency of administration – As the elections occurs frequently it requires a large amount of administrative personnel, security forces and government resources⁴ for the smooth functioning of elections and as a result it reduce their productivity, so with One

³ "Decoding One Nation, One election" (Drishti IAS, September 5 2023) <https://www.drishtiiias.com/daily-updates/daily-updates/daily-news-editorial/decoding-one-nation-one-election> accessed 16th January 2024

⁴ Karthik Rajendran, "Advantages and Disadvantages of One Nation, One Election in India" (LinkedIn, July 28 2023) <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/advantages-disadvantages-one-nation-election-india-karthik-rajendran> accessed 16th January 2024

Nation One Election this issue can be resolved if the elections are held for once in five years.

3. Convenience of the voters- As the elections held simultaneously it can lead to inconvenience of the votes as they had to go the elections polls frequently and this can lead to their reduction in participation and their enthusiasm⁵ to vote. One Nation One Election mainly aims to increase the convenience of voters as they have to the election polls for one at a time.
4. Lesser burden on the government- With the implementation of One Nation One Election the burden on the government can be reduced as the elections are held simultaneously and government can focus on good governance⁶ and welfare of the population.
5. Inconvenience of general public- Due to election activities and voting large number of public spaces have been used such as primary schools, colleges and it can lead to inconvenience of public. The education system is very much interrupted as schools and colleges are closed for election purposes⁷. So, with the implementation of One Nation One Election this problem can problem can be reduced.

DISADVANTAGES OF ONE NATION ONE ELECTION

1. Constitutional amendment- With the implementation of “One Nation One Election” constitutional amendment⁸ is required because constitutional provisions has mandated

⁵ Karthik Rajendran, “Advantages and Disadvantages of One Nation, One Election in India” (LinkedIn, July 28 2023) <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/advantages-disadvantages-one-nation-election-india-karthik-rajendran> accessed 16th January 2024

⁶ Trupti Paikaray, “As India preps for ‘One Nation, One Election Bill’ what are the potential benefits and drawbacks?” The Times of India (India, September 2 2023) <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/tea-with-life/as-india-preps-for-one-nation-one-election-bill-what-are-the-potential-benefits-and-drawbacks> accessed 16th January 2024

⁷ Trupti Paikaray, “As India preps for ‘One Nation, One Election Bill’ what are the potential benefits and drawbacks?” The Times of India (India, September 2 2023) <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/tea-with-life/as-india-preps-for-one-nation-one-election-bill-what-are-the-potential-benefits-and-drawbacks> accessed 16th January 2024

⁸ Trupti Paikaray, “As India preps for ‘One Nation, One Election Bill’ what are the potential benefits and drawbacks?” The Times of India (India, September 2 2023) <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/tea-with-life/as-india-preps-for-one-nation-one-election-bill-what-are-the-potential-benefits-and-drawbacks> accessed 17th January 2024

a fixed tenure for both Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies⁹ and any changes made to these arrangements will require multiple complicated changes.

2. Regional Parties being overshadowed- With simultaneous elections the regional parties won't get the opportunity to raise the local issues as the national issues will take the main focus and also the regional parties would not be able to compete with the national parties.
3. Impact on fair voting system- If the elections are held simultaneously then there can be a presumption that the voters will vote for the same party both at the state level and national level and this will impact the fair voting system.
4. Importance to National Issues- If One Nation One Election is implemented then the political importance will be given only on national issues and all the regional and local issues will be overshadowed and as a result it will affect the development of the whole country.
5. Federal system will be highly affected- As our Indian political system is based on federal structure¹⁰ it gives a huge power to the state so if One Nation One Election come into effect then it will disturb the whole federal system of the country as these simultaneous elections will give importance to only national issues.

THE LEGAL SIDE

Rule of law in India is considered to be the sole basis for running the Democracy and The Constitution is the guiding authority for making any significant changes in the laws of the Country. In order to implement the One Nation One Election policy there are certain articles of the Constitution which are needed to be amended along with one statute i.e., The Representation of People's Act, 1951. The Articles of the Constitution, which are needed to be amended are: Article 83(2) and Article 172, which provides that the terms of the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, respectively, are for five years unless they are dissolved earlier.

⁹ Karthik Rajendran, "Advantages and Disadvantages of One Nation, One Election in India" (LinkedIn, July 28 2023) <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/advantages-disadvantages-one-nation-election-india-karthik-rajendran> accessed 17th January 2024

¹⁰ Karthik Rajendran, "Advantages and Disadvantages of One Nation, One Election in India" (LinkedIn, July 28 2023) <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/advantages-disadvantages-one-nation-election-india-karthik-rajendran> accessed 17th January 2024

However, there are some situations, such as those mentioned in Article 356, in which an assembly may be dissolved earlier. The Representation of the People Act 1951 and the Rules of Procedure of Lok Sabha and State Assemblies would require appropriate amendments to implement One Nation One Election. Alongside with that a proper law to deal with situations like: No confidence motion, premature dissolution of Government shall also be formulated as to preserve the policy.

SUGGESTIONS

Implementing One Nation One Election will cause a lot of political turbulence in the Country; therefore, the Government shall be prepared for it. A decision not backed with enough research and analysis and if implemented in hurry will cause nothing but confusion and disturbance. Therefore, the Government shall take a number of steps to avoid all these unnecessities, such as:

- **Building an understanding among the Political Parties:** Building an understanding among all the State and National Political Parties is very necessary, this will help in implementing the policy smoothly without much turmoil. This is a sign of a healthy democracy and can be achieved through dialogues and meetings.
- **Creating awareness among voters and educating them:** Educating the voters about the advantages and difficulties of holding elections at the same time and making sure they can exercise their right to vote properly and effectively without any problem is very much significant.
- **Building the infrastructure:** Investing in equipment and infrastructure needed to hold ONOE, such as polling booths, training of the officials conducting the elections, security personnel, generating needed voter-verified paper audit trail (VVPAT) devices, and electronic voting machines (EVMs) and creating a suitable protocol is very much necessary in order to implement One Nation One Election.

CONCLUSION

Recently a panel headed by former President of India, Ramnath Kovind was formulated by the central government to give a roadmap to implement the One Nation One Election policy. The panel invited public suggestion on the policy through gazette notification. It can be

undoubtedly said that the Government is analysing and researching on the pros and cons of the initiative and looking for the views of all sects of the society including political parties and the public. This shall be accompanied with keeping a long-term vision of how this initiative could be beneficial for the Country in long run, and any kind of rush in implementation shall be avoided.