

ESSAY SERIES - ESSAY 4

ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION

India is a democratic nation. The power to choose one's government is in the hands of the people in a democratic country. The government is chosen through elections at the national, state, and regional levels. The elections are the most fundamental requirement for the operation of democracy, so how they are conducted is critical.

The idea behind 'One Nation, One Election' is to hold elections for both the Lok Sabha and the state assemblies together after every five years. However, it excludes elections to panchayats, state municipalities, and by-elections. However, such a dramatic idea necessitates a constitutional amendment, which must be approved by 50 per cent of the states. This will entail re-aligning India's election pattern so that elections to the states and the centre take place on the same platform. This means that voters will be able to vote for members of both Lok Sabha and the state assemblies on the same day and at the very same time.

Simultaneous elections are not a revolutionary phenomenon in India. They were pursued till 1967. However, the dissolution of some Legislative Assemblies in 1968 and 1969, followed by the Lok Sabha in December 1970, caused consternation. As a result, elections for state assemblies and parliament have also been held individually. However, the concept of simultaneous polls was mentioned and came to prominence in the Election Commission's annual report in 1983. However, the idea was cancelled. In 1999, the Law Commission's Report recommended the idea once more.

The initiative was pushed in the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) manifesto before the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. Later, Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi floated the idea again in 2016, and as a result, the Niti Aayog prepared a comprehensive working report in

January 2017 and noted certain constitutional amendments required for the implementation of this system, such as, the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies have five-year terms under the constitution. Even so, these can sometimes be dissolved at any time before the end of their term. However, after implementing this system, an amendment to *Article 83(2) of the Indian Constitution* is required if the state assembly or Lok Sabha is dissolved before the end of their term.

There is also a need to make changes to *Article 85(2) of the Indian Constitution* which gives the President the authority to dissolve the Lok Sabha at any time. In addition, amendments to *Articles 172(1) of the Indian Constitution* which governs the tenure of the State Assembly, and *Article 174(2) of the Indian Constitution* which grants the Governor the authority to dissolve the State Assembly are required for this system to be put in place. Also, a requirement for change in the provisions of the Representation of the People Act of 1951. The changes should be made in the election's conduct and duration, and the phrase "*One Nation, One Election*" should be defined.

The current election system has some drawbacks and can sometimes become a stumbling block in the path of the nation's development because it requires a lot of time and planning to undertake this varying period. The advantages for one nation, one election are as follows:

1. The primary advantage of this system is that development work does not have to be halted every time when a code of conduct is violated. The code of conduct has been implemented as a result of separate elections, causing a subvert in development work.
2. It is also beneficial for the ruling party to concentrate on governance. In the current system, the ruling party and other parties are focused on elections.
3. This system also reduces the high cost of separate elections.

4. This will also help to increase the country's voting percentage.
5. The police officer and other defence personnel can be posted anywhere. In the current election system, the majority of the personnel are assigned to election duties.
6. This system will eliminate corruption.
7. A large number of teachers are also on election duty, which disrupts the educational system. After implementing this system, the burden of election duty on teachers will be reduced, while the education system will remain unaffected.

However, the constitution of India has essentially prescribed a federal structure of state governance. As we are aware that till 1967 the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies elections are held simultaneously. But after the dissolution of various State Assemblies and Lok Sabha, the elections held separately. In the year 2020, Prime Minister Narendra Modi again pushed the idea of one nation, one election.

The elections for state assemblies and the Lok Sabha will be held concurrently or in phases, with a single voter list. The regional level election, on the other hand, is a difficult task and is infeasible because the voters' list for this is prepared by the State Election Commission.

There are numerous advantages to "*One Nation, One Election.*" It will bring down the enormous cost of elections. It will allow the ruling parties to concentrate on governance rather than elections. And, to put this system in place, some amendments to the constitution are required.