

STREAMLINING ELECTORAL PROCESSES: EXPLORING THE VIABILITY AND IMPACT OF ‘ONE NATION ONE ELECTION’

Renu Meena

Scholar in Department of Development Studies, Vivekananda Global University

Dr. Nidhi Sharma

Assistant Professor, Department of Development Studies, Vivekananda Global University,
Jaipur, (sharma.nidhi@vgu.ac.in)

Abstract: - One nation ,one election proposes synchronizing the electoral cycles of all levels of government in a country ,aiming to streamling governance ,reduce electoral expenses ,and increase political stability . This paper delves into the rationale behind Underexplores its potential benefits ,analyzes the challenges it poses and discusses its implications for democratic processes. The true benefits of this change in election process can be acknowledged only if it is beneficiary to local self-governance bodies.

Introduction:-

“The Ballot is stronger than the Bullet”.- Abraham Lincoln

Elections are the most important pillar of democracy. They are the means to serve the people. In India almost every year one or the other state is geared for an election.

Overview of the concept of One nation One election-the concept of ONOE proposes election of center, state assembly and local bodies simultaneously. While this concept had been practiced until 1967, it was discontinued due to dissolution of assemblies and Lok Sabha before their terms ended . Currently Andhra Pradesh , Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim hold state assembly election along with Lok Sabha polls. Its main motive is to reduce frequency of election, decrease disruption caused by election and reduce cost of elections and misuse of machinery . From this concept government can save resources and time spent on elections. A high-level committee has been constituted under the chairmanship of Ex-president Ram Nath Kovind . Another member of this committee is –

1. Amit Shah (Home Minister)
 2. Adhir Rajan Chowdhury(Congress leader)
 3. Ghulam Nabi Azad (Former leader of opposition)
 4. N.K Singh (chairman of 15th Finance Commission)
 5. Subhash C Kashyap (Former Secretary General)
 6. Harish Salve (Senior Advocate)
 7. Sanjay Kothari (Former Chief Vigilance Commissioner)
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1. Historical context and global examples of synchronized elections –PM Modi is one of the main profunder of the ONOE concept but it is not new for India. India has followed ONOE in post-independence election held in 1952,1957,1962 and 1967 . A law commission report by Justice BP Jeevan Reddy first brought this concept in parliament. It continued till 1967 and in 1968

and 1969 the system of simultaneous election was disturbed due to premature dissolution of state assemblies. In order to conduct one election, it is said that it needed many constitutional amendment, appropriate changes in Representation of the People's Act 1951 and Rules of Procedure of Lok Sabha and state assemblies. It also needs consent of at least 50% of the states. The other countries where one nation one election is conducted are Germany, Japan, Indonesia, Philippines and Belgium.

2. Objective of the research paper - the main objective of this paper is to analyzing impact of synchronized elections on political parties, governance and resource utilization. On the other side evaluating whether it will make federalism stronger or disrupted. and also investigating constitutional, legal and logistic challenges during implementation of ONOE.

Rationale for One nation One election :-

- Decreasing electoral expenditure- in synchronized election implementing strict reporting and transparency measures can help track expenditure of groups or individual or opposition. Expenses on awareness campaign, advertising and polling booth, can also reduce from this concept. In 1951-52 53 parties participated in Lok Sabha election and poll expenses were 11 crore and in 2019 there were 610 parties who participated in election and poll expenses are around 60,000 crores. It also reduces burden on administrative setup like police force, security, presiding officers etc.
- Minimization of disruption to governance and development –this concept give stability to governance to make policies for long term. It creates more stable environment for policy implementation and leaders need to campaign only once in a year for certain period.
- Abolishment of corruption and misuse of state machinery – enforcing strictly anti –corruption laws, criminalize bribery, defalcation and will help in implementation of proper code of conduct.
- Enhancement of voter turnout and political engagement - opponents argue that this could enhance voter turnout and political engagement by reducing voter fatigue and increasing participation in the electoral process. When election is held separately it can lead to voter apathy and lower turnout due to voter fatigue from frequent campaigning. In simultaneous election political engagement of voters will increase. They would participate in election more energetically.

Advantage of One nation ,One election:-

1. Improved governance efficiency and policy continuity – frequent election can divert attention of politicians and government officials. It could allow long lasting uninterrupted governance to achieve their goals and make political agendas successful. ONOE give equal opportunities for playing important role in nation's politics to all parties national or state. This policy makes less expenditure on frequent elections because in one time election all resources will be used once whether it is force, administrative resource or campaigning.
2. Mitigation of political polarization and election induced violence
3. Enhances Accountability – PM told Zee news “ Our government is such as that it is run by politician, and elections are also fought by politician, so their energy is divided. Which hurts the nation”

4. Saving cost and time
5. Reduce of disturbance of the service sector – crores of government employees such as teachers, police force, security forces are involved in this process.
6. Encouraging policy making- politicians can make their agendas and policies for a fixed longer term of five years .
7. Decrease security concerns.
8. To make federalism and cooperate federalism strong – in Article 1 of Indian constitution declares India as a ‘Union of state’ where power is share between state and center and union territories . Every state has its own government but in emergency situation center takes all power of state synchronized election shows unity in a nation . It makes nation united and it will also connect north-east states to center nation.
9. Facilitation of long-term planning and Implementation of policies – ONOE will make a government fixe for five years in central or as well as in state . So, it could help in policies that can implement for a longer period.

Challenges and criticism

- Constitutional and legal hurdles –Article 83(2) and 172 of Indian constitution define tenure of Lok Sabha and state assemblies respectively. It is dissolved earlier in case of President rule. Article 324 which deals with powers of Election Commission of India will also need amendments to empower ECI.
- Disputes of regional diversity –India has unity in diversity so the concept of one nation one election in one hand it bands together the nation and voters but in the other hand it will face regional diversity because in different part of nation people have different religious beliefs ,they are different from each other in caste ,language , culture. Their reason of choosing leaders is also not same .
- Potential for concentration of power and democratic erosion- when elections are synchronized center dominate states because ruler party in central government will make effort to make their government in state assemblies too. And national issues overshadowing regional concerns . This could benefit national parties and loss to regional parties.
- Resistance from political parties and stakeholders- in a meeting list of responses from political parties mentioned that 47 political parties give feedback on the concept 32 parties were agreed and 15 indicated disagreements . Congress President Mallikarjun Chargehand that the idea should be abandoned for the sake of ‘robust democracy’. Aam admi party also opposed saying that it damages the idea of parliamentary democracy. According to Mamta Banerjee it will allow ‘autocracy a democratic grab to enter the national public arena. Although opposition gave negative response to it but most of parties agreed.
- **Regional autonomy concern from centralization of power**
- **Legal and constitutional framework – Several constitutional provisions are relevant to the discussion surrounding this concept :**
 1. Analysis of relevant provisions in the constitution on legal framework -
 - Article 83 – It deals with tenure of Lok Sabha ,UT and state assemblies which is five years but President can resolve them earlier.
 - Article 172- it deals with duration of state legislature , stating that the legislative assembly of every state ,unless earlier dissolved shall continue for five years.

- Tenth Schedule – it is also known as anti-defection law deals with disqualification on the grounds of defection . If one nation one election policy will be implemented this might require amendments to address scenarios.
 - Seventh Schedule – this schedule lists the subjects which central legislative government has power to make law . Matter related to elections are included in state list . Any attempt to synchronize election would need to respect state's autonomy
 - Article 324- this Article grants power to Election commission of India to conduct election with proper code of conduct.
2. Analysis of constitutional amendment related to this policy and legislative challenges too –
 - Representation of the People Act 1951.
 - 42nd amendment Act 1976- this amendment made changes to the Preamble of Indian Constitution , define unity and integrity of nation . It is not directly related to one nation one election.
 - 91st Amendment Act ,2003- this enabled the reservation seats of ST and SC in Lok Sabha and state assemblies to continue until January 25,2020. ONOE would need to ensure the continued implementation of these provisions.
 - Delimitation Commission Acts
 - Constitutional Amendments for State Reorganizations - Jammu and Kashmir.
 3. Comparison with the other countries electoral systems –
 - **Germany – Federal elections- Fixed terms** – Germany had fixed terms of four years for federal elections.

Proportional Representation.

- **United States** – Staggered elections – elections for governors ,senators ,state legislators
 - **Australia**- Senate elections – Australia conducts of senate elections in once and ensuring that only half of the senate faces re-election.
 - **Canada** – Fixed election date- for federal election Canada fixed a date of four year . Fixed dated allowing time for political parties for preparation.
 - **Nordic Countries (Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland)** – use proportional representation system for promoting fairness and transparency.
 - **Comparative analysis with countries where synchronized elections are practiced** – globally in South Africa, Germany, Japan ,Sweden, Philippines, Indonesia ,Belgium also have synchronized elections . In South Africa voters cast their vote both for national assembly and state legislature simultaneously . And local bodies elections are held separately . In Sweden elections of national , country council and local bodies are held on fixed date second Sunday in September for four years. In Britain the first election was held in 7th of May ,2015 and on first Thursday of my every fifth year thereafter .
- **Methodologies for implementing ONOE in India** : the constitutional and legal challenges of one nation one election- one of the major challenges of implementing simultaneous elections in India is the constitutional and legal hurdles that need to be addressed . This includes amending five articles in the Constitution and the Representation of the People Act, which would require the agreement of every recognized state and national party . In addition , opponents argue that simultaneous elections may lead to a marginalization of regional parties

and give larger national parties undue power. It also criticized that simultaneous election would result in voters focusing solely on national issues and neglecting regional concerns. **Federalism and regional autonomy** -Analysis of the potential impact of one nation one election on federal structure and regional autonomy – nation's strength lies in federal structure which define state to have autonomy in political decision making. One nation One election could weaken federal structure by decreasing regional autonomy and centralization of power. It could also reduce importance of state issues in context of both voters and politicians . It also has the concerns of states with diverse linguistic ,cultural and political identities because diverse linguistic population might be affected by marginalization or suppression of their unique linguistic identities. This policy could favor the dominant language ,culture or diminishing voice of minority linguistic groups. It will also weaken autonomy of states by centralizing political power and power of decision –making of states .

❖ **Scope of One Nation One Election–**

- 1. Resource Utilization**
- 2. Stability of government**
- 3. Increase voter participation**
- 4. National Agenda**
- 5. Policy Continuity**
- 6. Enhance Development**

Conclusion-the concept of ONOE represents a bold proposition aimed at streamlining the electoral process , increasing good governance and promoting political stability. The advantage of ONOE is evident ranging from the reduction of electoral expenditure to the mitigation of political polarization and violence . The proposal holds the promise of strengthening federalism and cooperative federalism fostering a more cohesive and harmonious political landscape . It necessitates a reevaluation of the relationship between the center and the states as well as a consideration of the Interests of diverse regional and linguistic communities.

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