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One Nation One Election In India: Possibilities and Probable Benefits

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Abstract:

One nation one election has recently caught the attention of the policy-makers, constitutional experts and general public as a whole. It is mainly led by the prime minister Narendra Modi and different law commission experts. Keeping in view of the complexities and the Herculean effort involved to conduct election in India that entails regular time, expenditure, and mobilization of staffs, it is debatable of the necessity of introducing one nation and one election model. If it is implemented, this will ensure an environment of peace, order and governability replacing senseless democratic chaos and disorder. Government cannot afford to conduct election round the clock of the year. On an average, the country faces the challenges of 5 to 7 elections in a year. Crore of Government employees are made to march to far-flung areas to conduct elections. It appears that they are going for a war defending the democratic nation. The country has, so far faced with 5 numbers of mid-term elections necessitating doubling the war-like election preparation in India. Such practices can be put to a permanent ban by introducing appropriate constitutional amendments. The constitution of India must be duly amended to suit the needs of an efficient democracy. Whenever, mid-term election arises due to no-confidence motion, the unfinished terms should be placed either in the hands of president or governor, as a punitive measure for imposing second election on the country. The one nation one election will, definitively, facilitate in doing away with these kind of regressive policy in India.

Keywords: One nation one election, parliamentary election, assembly election, synchronization and constitutional amendments.

Introduction: Election is the cardinal mechanism through which people get the opportunity to elect their representatives for a certain fixed period of time in a Democracy. It is almost impossible to imagine a democratic political system without electoral mechanism. Today, democracy is considered as the best form of government despite having some inherent defects in the system. It provides the masses opportunities to choose their own representatives or rulers, based on the abilities and talents of the leaders. Democracy provides various means to hold the representatives accountable for their acts of omissions

and commissions. It is an indisputable fact India is one of the largest democracies in the world under whom over 140 crore people are governed with 96.88 crore of registered voters (ECI) and has been successfully functioning, maturing and experimenting over the last long 75 years. Except a brief period of emergency imposed on the nation from 25th June 1975 to 21st March, 1977 by Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the then prime minister of India, Indian Democracy has withstood the trials and test of time all throughout the passing decades. How do we create a more efficient, viable and vibrant democracy? Since, election is a method through which democratic principles are uphold and governance is ensured, there is an urgent need to focus upon how electioneering in India can be made more effective and efficient, looking at the present cumbersome, time and resource-consuming affairs with the regular flow of election one after another in the country. In India, election has become a very costly affair and very intricate process. It is a Herculean task to conduct election in India considering the massive mobilization of resources, personnel and other logistics that need to be put into operation. Simultaneous election can be a viable option and can be profitably explored in order to do away with certain inherent flaws.

The present paper makes an attempt to understand the feasibility, challenges and probable benefits while introducing one nation one election in India.

Prevailing general perception on One-Nation and One Election: At the time of India's independence, India had embarked on its journey of democracy and democratization of its electoral process by way of conducting simultaneous election for parliamentary and state Assemblies. The first General Election was held in the year 1951-52 along with all the state Assembly elections. It continued uninterruptedly for the year 1951-52 to 57, 62 and 67. Thus, it is clear that simultaneous election had its full three consecutive terms. The concept of simultaneous election has not been something newly mooted or floated things thrown into debate in the country's political arena. However, the trend got disrupted in 1972. The parallel conduction of parliamentary and Assembly Election got disrupted and dismantled. Thereafter, there were never any simultaneous elections as a whole. Now, elections are thrown upon the country and its citizenry. There is virtually no time in the calendar year where there is no single election. On an average, it is estimated that in every year, there is 5 to 7 elections are held in the country. Since, election entails large mobilization of personnel and government revenue; it is often considered as unproductive and inefficient. Indians Elections, are often, likened to a season of festival. The enormity of noise created by the use of loud speakers, public rallies, and gatherings, attention of hundred and thousand of media houses become a regular features of Indian Electoral Politics. Voters go on casting their vote round the year, i.e. one for MP, one for MLA and another for Municipal /Panchayat level election. The frequency of election, which are imposed upon the citizenry leads to erosion of democratic values, substances as well as declining seriousness of electioneering process. It is reasonably debatable whether such noisy and cumbersome electoral process is necessary and beneficial for the nation. Is it improper and illogical to go for some democratic experiments in this present age of technological advancement with One-Nation and One Election?

Recently, the ruling party-BJP has been working stubbornly on the concept of One Nation One Election Model. The party has been quite vociferously channelizing its efforts towards building consensus with other national , regional political parties , the general public and other stakeholders. First and foremost, what is required is to avoid giving a short-sighted political color to each and every important issue, which may, otherwise beneficial for the public in the long run, if debated and a political solution is explored on the particular issue. Very often, in India,, political parties, oppose for the sake of narrow and short term gains rather than for the welfare of all. There cannot be any wrong in trying and putting sincere effort while floating a New Model of governance for efficient and smart democratic governance, for an orderly progress, and getting the masses tuned to a disciplined political environ. Today's modern governance demands ubiquitously to do away with noisy, inefficient and excessively expensive, undisciplined, time and resource-consuming electioneering process, all the major political parties should work together and cooperate with each other to evolve correct principles and solid programmes as to how one nation one election can be realized.

Some of the specific arguments in favour of One-Nation One-Election:

- 1) It can reduce expenses on conducting regular election. Election in India has become a perpetual phenomenon which entails expenditure of huge volumes, sometimes not thinkable. If this regular democratic festival is periodized to a fixed time of voting for both parliament and Assembly election, unnecessary expenses can be cut down to a minimum level. The Central Government spend 100% expenditure for Lok Sabha Election while 50% election expenses for the State Assembly Election are borne by the Centre. India has emerged as the largest democracy in the world with 97.07 crore registered voters. Expenditure incur in carrying out the election on such a massive scale is without least of doubt a Herculean task. On an average 5 to 7 elections are held each year. Synchronized election will definitely reduce needles expenses, time and effort of such enormity. An example will substantiate the issue. In the year 2009, the Centre has spent an staggering amount of 1115 crore while the next election i.e., in 2014, it tripled to 3870 crore. An efficient method of electioneering as the One Nation One Election can evolve into better means and saves hard-earned tax-payers money.
- 2) It is estimated that whenever Model Code of Conduct (MCC) is in force, 2 to 3 months of time either in Parliamentary and Assembly Election go for no policy implementation mode situation. Definitely, this time lag affects the continuities of development plans and policies. If there is a regular election round the year, it has a definitive effect due to the imposition of MCC on different developmental schemes. It often leads to policy paralysis and governance-deficit.
- 3) India can join club of few countries which practices One Nation and One Election. It is not something new. India too had in the initial years simultaneous election conducted in 1951—52, 1957 and 1963. This trend was later got disrupted for political reasons. India can be amongst the countries like Sweden, Indonesia, South Africa, Germany, Spain, Poland and Belgium.

- 4) It can save the times of the voters too. They can make proper use of their time and energy rather than going for voting often. A voter has to cast multiple votes. On an average, a voters votes for parliamentary, assembly and local government. It implies that the citizen cast his/her votes after almost every one and half years.
- 5) Mobilization of polling personnel in a large scale is another problems associated with Indian election. Perhaps, election commission of India is the only government organization which has few thousands permanent staffs but has to borrow crore of staff from other departments for the purpose of preparing and conducting election. An instance of personnel mobilization can be understood with regards to the nature of sheer their numbers from different departments. The 16th Lok Sabha used 10 million personnel as polling officials for conducting and supervising the elections across 9,30,000 polling stations of the country with an average of about 10.75 personnel per-polling stations. The staffs including security personnel who are hired for election can otherwise be used productively for their own task.
- 6) One nation one election can bring about a change over the repeated nature of election i.e., Mid-term election in India. Midterm election is problematic in the context of repetition of election with another round of resources, manpower and time utilization. For the follies of either the electorate or the representatives that presents a hung parliament or a situation of no confidence motion, why some other should suffers. As a punitive measure, a progressive legislation and amendment are required; this can prevent the practice of midterm election imposed upon the people. In case of such unforeseen situation, president should take over the running of administration for the rest of tenure rather than going for another election. Why do people and government need to spend doubly of the hard-earned money on election ?
- 7) Replacing democratic chaos, disorder and noise with peace, order and governability: There will be more peace and order if round the clock election system is put to an urgent end. Voters are virtually tired; representatives and politicians are too tired along with the crore of polling personnel in their rigorous duties associated with continuous election. Election preparation seems like going to a war for defending democracy. Synchronized election will definitely reduce public rallies, fake promises public meetings and gatherings, and wastage of hard-earned public money.

Some of the arguments against One Nation-One Election can be provided as follows:

1. Difficulty in operational feasibility: Conducting simultaneous election can a Herculean task in a country like India where there is 96.88 crore of registered voters. It will be an unparallel instance in the entire comity of the nation for mobilizing large number of government officials for the smooth and successful conduct of election.
2. It may undermine the Federal Structure of the Indian constitution: Indian constitution provides for a federal government wherein centre and state government have their own sphere of power and activities. State and local government are formed on different lines and issues, which are mostly localized in nature. Separate election ensures in retaining the autonomous role of the state. There is a likelihood of going for excessive

- centralizing tendencies. The powerful Centre may have an impact on the manner, method and mood of election process. Centre will virtually have a domineering role that may affect the election result.
3. Simultaneous election will test the maturity level and decision-making ability of the voters: it is reasonably questionable if national and local issues are properly and adequately judged by the voters. What is the level of political awareness and political efficacy of the Indian voters? Therefore, issue differentiation can pose a great challenge for the Indian voters. They may get confused in understanding political issues and mix-up the various issues. India is still a rural-based society where 70% of the population lives. Voters are very likely to misread and miscalculate given the present level of political education, political efficacy and awareness.
 4. One nation One Election will require constitutional amendments: There can be several articles which may require due and urgent amendment to align the process of one nation one election. For example, new article can be added for putting a ban for second election in case of fall of a government on account of no-confidence motion. If government falls, the rest of the tenure of the government will be handed over to the president of India till the completion of the full term. A country like India cannot afford for conducting second election within five years.
 5. Regional Political Parties will be overshadowed by the national parties: There is a reasonable apprehension that regional political parties will not be able to withstand the reputation, the reaching out capacity, fund raising capacity and fund reserve, membership, well-known and towering personalities, better and effective political strategies of the national level political parties etc. it may take a longer time for the voters to realize and understand the intricacies of politics and the necessity of political parties to promote the cultural diversity and regional aspirations. India is a rich country with immense diversity in its social and political life. It is the hallmark of the Indian nation. It may, therefore, likely to have an impact on the winning and working capacity of the regional political parties and undermine regional aspirations.

Concluding Observation: One Nation One Election can a boon for the nation as it will favor saving of large expenses which are incurred in the electoral process along with putting a ban on the round the clock election schedule in the country. Both the Central and state government spend large sum of money on electioneering including politicians themselves. Thus, it can saves time, energy and effort of the government and voters who are made to caste multiple votes within five years. Citizens can channelize themselves for some productive works rather than becoming attuned to the regular election cacophony. Government can work in an environment of peace, order and efficient governability will be the key to social policy and social programmes. 5 to 7 elections on an average in a year disorient the government's effort and attention for implementation and acceleration of effective policy measures. As far as, mid-term election is concerned that may pose some difficulty to synchronize Parliamentary and State Assembly Election, it could be suggested necessary amendment in the constitution must be effected to ensure that unfinished term of

the House should be placed in the hands of president or governor as the case may be as a punitive measure for imposing second election on the people. There is no harm even it is implemented on an experimental basis or on a trial basis as a politically innovative measure for the purpose of building an efficient democracy Till now, the country has witnessed 5 number of mid-term election doubling the expenses and Herculean effort of conducting election in India. At the initial stages, it is likely to pose some problems, however, gradually, it would be adjusted and adapted to the working ethos of the country.

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