

# Simultaneous Elections of Lok Sabha, Legislative Assemblies & Local Bodies in India: The Utmost Demand of Time



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## Abstract

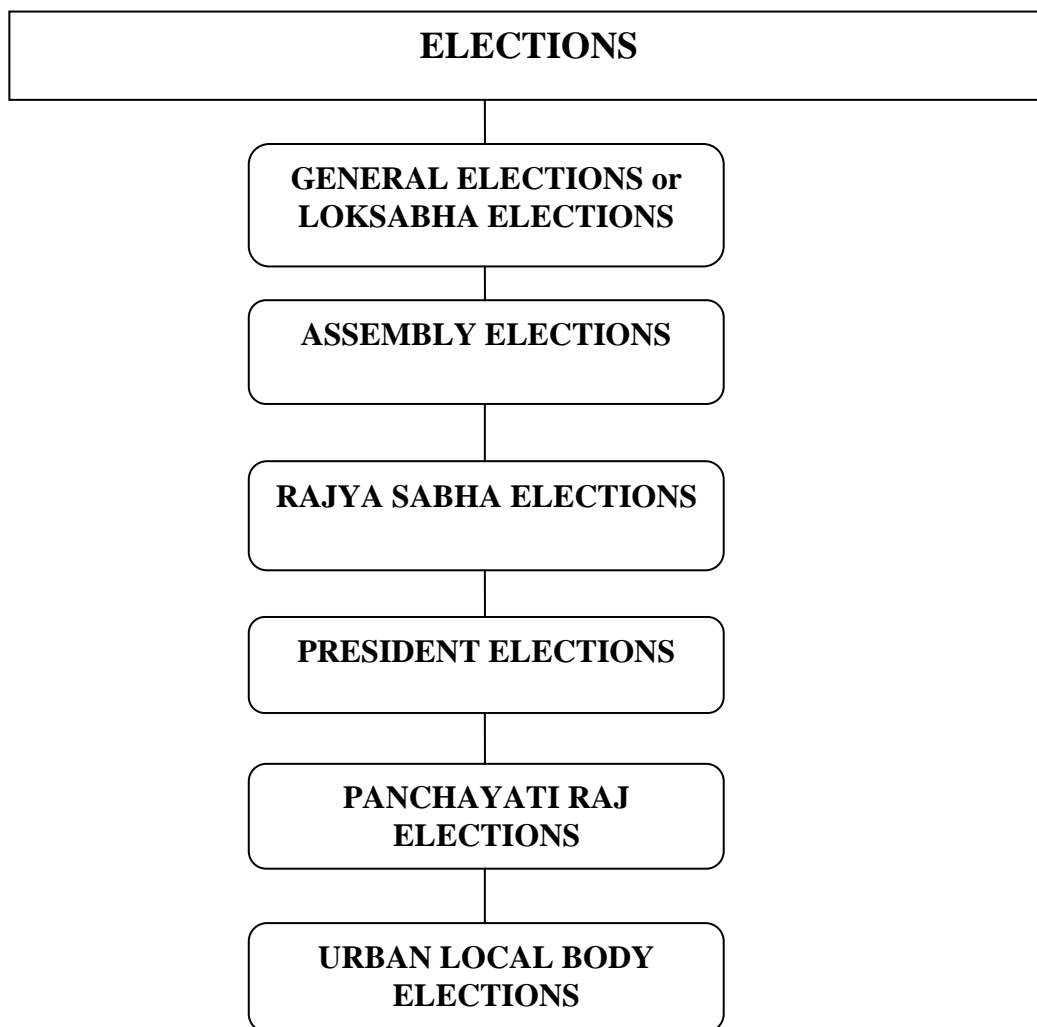
Elections are the core of democracy. All the democratic countries all over the world consider the significance of elections, and emphasize the fair elections of the public representatives in order to win the confidence of the public. General Elections, Assembly Elections, Rajya Sabha Elections and President Elections are the types of elections held in India from time to time. To the whooping youth and political party-supporters, frequent elections at the various levels may be fun or a source of enthusiasm, but for the serious thinkers, elections are the wastage of money to be collected afterwards from the public through certain taxes. According to the Constitution of India, elections for the Parliament and the State Legislative Assemblies should take place every five years, unless a state of emergency has been declared. Any vacancy caused by death or resignation must be filled through an election within six months of the occurrence of such a vacancy. The elections to the lower houses (in Parliament and in the states) use the first-past-the-post electoral system (i.e. the candidate with the majority of the votes wins the election). Elections to one-third of the seats of the upper house of the Parliament, the Rajya Sabha are conducted every two years. The members of the upper house are elected indirectly by the state legislative assemblies based on proportional representation. Members of the state legislative councils (in states having an upper house) are elected indirectly through local bodies. All the elections at the central and state level are conducted by the Election Commission of India while local body elections are conducted by state election commissions.

The paper designed on the basis of the secondary data, serves as a mirror to the election scenario in India, and discusses the various views and approaches on the simultaneous elections in India.

**Keywords:** Simultaneous Elections, General Elections, Assembly Elections, Rajya Sabha Elections, Majority, Fluctuation of Economy, Caucus.

## Introduction

Elections are the soul and integral part of democracy which require freedom on the part of the voters to elect their representatives for the various bodies independently without any pressure. Democracy implies good governance. The reports made out from time to time in the various newspapers and magazines about the evils caused as a result of the elections make one realize that the present democracy in India is lacking its soul, and that it is existing only in principles. It will not be unfair to assess that India is a country of elections where frequency of elections is too high. Elections in India include elections for the Parliament, Rajya Sabha, Lok Sabha, the Legislative Assemblies and numerous other Councils and local bodies. The elections may be categorized as follows-



**General Elections**

These elections are conducted for electing the members of Lok Sabha. The members elected during these elections are called MP's (Member of Parliament). General elections are held in every 5 years.

**Assembly Elections**

The State Assembly elections in India are the elections in which the Indian voters choose the members of the Vidhan Sabha (or State/Legislative Assembly). These elections are held every 5 years and the chosen members are called MLA's.

**Rajya Sabha Elections**

The members of Rajya Sabha are elected by the governing body of each state and union territory. There are 250 members in Rajya Sabha, out of which 12 are selected by the President of India. Out of 250, 238 are indirectly elected by the legislature of the each state and union territory.

**President Elections**

Elected members of the Parliament (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha), state legislatures (Vidhan

Sabha), are assigned the task of electing the President of India. President serves for a period of five years.

**Panchayati Raj Elections**

Panchayati Raj Elections are held in the rural India for Panchs, Sarpanchs, Zila Panchayat Pradhan, Zila Panchayat Pramukh

**Urban Local Body Elections**

Local body elections are held at the level of Nagar Palika, Nagar Parishad and Nagar Mahapalika for the election of ward members, chairperson and mayors.

The mooted proposal for simultaneous elections to Parliament and all state assemblies supported by The President and Prime Minister has aired a new discussion all over the country over whether the elections to Parliament and all state assemblies should be held simultaneously. It is supported by the 79th report (December 2015) of the Parliament of India (Rajya Sabha) titled 'Feasibility of holding simultaneous elections to the House of

People (Lok Sabha) and state legislative assemblies'. The issue has been getting support and opposition since then. The BJP is in its favour, while the Congress and some other caucus are against the proposal. As far as the common people are concerned, they are lending their silent support to it with a hope that the holding of the simultaneous elections in the country can unburden them from a heavy load of direct and indirect taxes and from the politically imbalanced and chaotic situation.

The issue is in limelight when Assembly elections in Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh could be held with the 2019 general elections as they head for polls almost around the same time. Mizoram, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh are scheduled to go to the polls before the general elections, with Haryana and Maharashtra following only a few months later.

#### **Objectives of The Study**

1. To have an idea about the conduction of elections in the context of India and its economy
2. To study and to be familiar with the Constitutional provisions for the conduction of the various types of elections in India
3. To go into the depth of the issue encompassing the various aspects of the elections
4. To go back to the conduction of elections in the country from time to time
5. To make a focal study of both the positive and the negative aspects of the conduction of the various elections
6. To review the literature available on the need of the simultaneous elections in India in the public interest
7. To make analysis of the various views on the conduction of the elections in the country
8. To explore the various causes why the elections at the various levels should be conducted simultaneously
9. To brood over and to make estimation of the positive results of the simultaneous conduction of the elections in India
10. To explore the problems that may occur in the country as a result of the simultaneous conduction of all the elections together
11. To discuss the need of the simultaneous elections in the country
12. To interpret in detail the causes and effects of the joint conduction of elections in India
13. To interpret in particular the need of the simultaneous elections in India in the context of expenditure incurred on the elections.
14. To discuss the other important aspects associated with the holding of the simultaneous elections in India

#### **Review of Literature**

Stephanie Tawa Lama-Rewal (2009) in the study 'Studying Elections in India: Scientific and Political Debates' states that election studies are really in between science and politics, and that it is important, therefore, to contextualize them.

PIB (2014) observes that the expenditure for the 2014 election was approximately 3765 crore and the cost per voter was Rs 1375. The cost per voter

was Rs 1375. The report confirms that the elections in 2014 were too costly.

NITI Aayog (2017)'s discussion paper entitled 'Analysis of simultaneous elections: The "what", "why" and "how" reveals that the Constitution needs to be amended to enable simultaneous polls in India', and that without making amendment in the Constitution it is not possible.

Finance Express (May 24, 2018) reports "The poll body has ideated the proposal in its reply to a letter shot off by the Law Commission on April 24. In the letter the Law Commission had wanted to ascertain the ECI's views on holding simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections across the country. Apart from this, the Law Commission had asked for the poll body's position on 15 sociopolitical and economic issues and five Constitutional matters. Law Commission felt that these issues must be addressed before holding the multiple polls at a same time, the report says."

Bhupender Yadav (2018) agrees wholeheartedly and quite enthusiastically saying that simultaneous elections will ensure consistency, continuity and governance which are integral to democracy; it will strengthen democracy; and that simultaneous elections are the means of curbing corruption in the country.

Suhas Palshikar (2018) boldly disapproves the issue of simultaneous elections in India on the grounds that it implies a disdain for the parliamentary system and the federal arrangement; such an electoral cycle overburdens parties and the electoral machinery; even if elections were to take place simultaneously, parties contesting in only one State would anyway be similarly burdened; in case there are simultaneous elections in the country, the legislature's powers to unseat a government would be curtailed, and then no opposition party would be able to table a no-confidence motion unless it has the capacity to also simultaneously form new government. Moreover, the States would be penalized if the legislature is unable to produce a majority government. He discards the idea of simultaneous elections in India chiefly on the ground that it would seek to tinker with many basic principles that the Constitution upholds.

S. Y. Quraishi (2018) attempts to maintain a balance between controversial views on whether in India simultaneous elections should be held, saying that it is complicated because holding simultaneous elections is certainly desirable, but not feasible. He supports the arguments against the simultaneous elections saying that such arguments are equally convincing, as this goes against the spirit of the Constitution and against the spirit of federalism. In his own words- '... But even if simultaneous elections are called for, the Constitution has provided for a five-year term. In order to bring about uniform elections, we have to increase or decrease the term of Parliament and State Assemblies.' He agrees that from the point of view of the Election Commission, holding the simultaneous elections is feasible, but from the point of view of the political parties, voters and polling booths etc., it will not be feasible.

**Hypotheses**

The following two types of hypothesis form the basis of the study. The alternative hypothesis enabled the researcher revive his knowledge and understanding of the various aspects of the conduction of elections, while the null hypothesis enabled him to carry out the research on the unexplored points relating to the subject.

**Alternative Hypotheses**

1. India is a democratic republic where the various types of elections are conducted from time to time
2. Non-simultaneous conduction of elections causes a chaotic situation in the nation
3. Non-simultaneous conduction of elections is not in the interest of public as well as government
4. The Non-simultaneous mode of elections disturbs and imbalances the economy of the nation
5. The expenditure of Non-simultaneous conduction of elections in the country is eventually borne by the public
6. The Govt. imposes taxes on public or increases the rates of various taxes in order to meet out the expenses made on elections
7. Non-simultaneous conduction of elections is not in favour of the nation

**Null Hypotheses & Research Questions**

1. How and for what period of time are the public representatives elected?
2. What are the types of elections that are conducted by the Government in India?
3. What are the norms of conduction of elections in India?
4. What are the existing constitutional norms for the conduction of elections in India?
5. What is the benefit of Non-simultaneous conduction of various types of elections in the country
6. What is the negative aspect of Non-simultaneous conduction of elections in the country?
7. Are there provisions of amendment for the change in the existing election norms?
8. How can the existing constitutional norms of elections be amended?
9. Which of the two modes of elections in India is better, non-simultaneous elections or simultaneous elections?
10. Why is there the demand for the simultaneous conduction of various types of elections in the country?
11. Why is the issue of the simultaneous conduction of elections in the country supported?
12. Why is the issue of the simultaneous conduction of elections in the country opposed?
13. What administrative arrangements are required and made for the successful conduction in the country?
14. What infrastructure is required for the successful conduction and completion of elections
15. How many persons on an average are needed for the successful completion of the elections in every election?
16. How much does an election cost in general?

17. How is the money spent on the elections arranged and managed?
18. How much man-power can be saved by the simultaneous conduction of elections?
19. How much money can be saved by allowing the simultaneous conduction of elections?
20. Will the Government and the common man be benefited by the simultaneous conduction of elections?

**Methodology**

Designed on both the qualitative and quantitative data collected through literature available in various reference books, journals, magazines and newspapers as well as through non-participant observation, casual talks with the people, designed interviews and unorganized discussions, the paper is chiefly a theoretical study, and falls in the category of the qualitative research. The steps taken for the study included the review of literature, putting the selected review-contents systematically in order to get secondary data on the subject, designing and preparation of tools to be used for the collection of the primary data, putting together the whole primary data collected in an organized way and in an unorganized way, analysis and interpretation of the data followed by the major findings. In order to keep up the scientific spirit, all the prescribed steps of social research were observed. Objectivity was observed and maintained for the sake of transparency and scientific spirit. Throughout the study, the researcher made his focus on the existing election system in India which ensures the conduction of the various types of elections at different levels separately at different times, the need of the joint conduction of elections with a comparative approach.

**Tools**

1. Self-prepared interview-schedule with the above-mentioned questions 20 questions
2. Unorganized and absolutely casual discussions with the people representing the various sections of the society and various political parties

**Expenditure Incurred on The Various Lok Sabha Elections**

Year of Election	Expenditure incurred in Rupees
1952	10,45,00,000
1957	5,90,00,000
1962	7,32,00,000
1967	10,79,69,000
1971	11,60,87,450
1977	23,03,68,000
1980	54,77,39,000
1984-85	81,51,34,000
1989	154,22,00,000
1991-92	359,10,24,679
1996	597,34,41,000
1998	666,22,16,000
1999	947,68,31,000
2004	1,113,87,89,165
2009	8,46,66,89,762
2014	3426 crore

Source: Electoral Pocket Book, 2014

The total funds collected by the National Parties during Lok Sabha 2014 elections increased by

35.53%, to Rs 1158.59 crores from Rs 854.89 crores during Lok Sabha 2009.

**Year Wise Number of Constituencies/ Seats In States/ Uts in Which General Elections to Lok Sabha Have Been Held**

Year of Elections	Number of Seats for which Elections were held	Number of States where Elections held
1951	489	26
1957	494	13, 4 UT
1962	494	14, 4 UT
1967	520	17, 10 UT
1971	518	18, 9 UT
1977	542	25, 6 UT
1980	529	25, 6 UT
1984	514	23, 6 UT
1985	27	2
1989	529	24, 7 UT
1991	524	23, 7 UT
1992	13	1
1996	543	25, 7 UT
1998	543	25, 7 UT
1999	543	25, 7 UT
2004	543	28, 7 UT
2009	543	28, 7 UT
2014	543	30, 6 UT

Source: Electoral Pocket Book, 2014

**Major Findings**

- All the elections at the central and state level are conducted by the Election Commission of India while local body elections are conducted by state election commissions.
- The elections for the Parliament and the State Legislative Assemblies should take place every five years
- The elections to the lower houses (in Parliament and in the states) use the first-past-the-post electoral system (i.e. the candidate with the majority of the votes wins the election).
- General Elections, Assembly Elections, Rajya Sabha Elections, President Elections, Local Body Elections, Panchayat Elections etc. are held in India.
- Almost every year there are elections of one or other type in one or the other state causing loss to the economy and national peace of India
- The simultaneous elections may be in the public interest
- From the point of view of the Election Commission and Administration, the simultaneous elections in India are good, as it can spare a lot of time to focus on other works
- The simultaneous elections in India can protect the nation from the financial crisis
- The simultaneous elections can unburden the people from the burden of unnecessary taxes imposed on them in order to meet out the expenses made on the elections
- The negative aspect of the simultaneous elections in India lies in their being impractical from the constitutional point of view
- The simultaneous elections will definitely cause constitutional chaos by spoiling the spirit of federalism
- Through the prescribed legal and constitutional process, the amendment about the mode of elections in India can be made
- The public opinion is divided on the issue of simultaneous elections in India
- About 80% persons casually interviewed approve the holding of simultaneous elections for several reasons
- The demand for the holding of simultaneous elections in the country is growing higher day-by-day as the existing mode of elections costs too much and causes much loss to the public and economy
- The supporters of the issue strongly believe that with the implementation of the simultaneous elections in the country, the Election Commission, the Administrative Officers, the Police and security forces and the common man will feel relieved
- With the implementation of the simultaneous elections in India, the Indian economy will improve day by day making the nation free from the financial crisis
- Those who are against the simultaneous elections believe that the spirit of democracy, constitution and federalism in the country will lose its existence
- Successful conduction of elections is the result of fair and competent administration, deployment of sufficient force in order to maintain law and order, required infrastructure, sincere voters etc.
- In an election on an average, millions of persons including the competent administrators, area magistrates, trainers, polling officers, polling agents representing the various political parties and caucus and members of police, army and other security forces, and of course, the public
- Hundreds of crore is spent on an election in general
- The money is spent by the Government in order to make proper and unfailing arrangements for the elections
- The political parties spend millions of rupees on the canvassing and on winning the favour of the voters
- The Government manages the money spent on the elections by imposing various undesirable taxes on the common people
- By holding the simultaneous elections in India, a lot of manpower can be saved, and it can be used for some other valuable projects
- The simultaneous elections can make the Indian economy strong by saving crores of rupees
- The persons interviewed casually agree that the holding of the simultaneous elections in India will be beneficial to both Government and the public
- With the exception only of few, the majority of the units of information selected for the casual talk and discussion over the issue, want the existing system of elections to be replaced by the simultaneous elections.

**Conclusion**

To conclude with the interpretation of the different views of the eminent political thinkers and political parties office bearers, published in The Hindu under the heading 'Should India have Simultaneous Elections?' published on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2018. The views published in The Hindu represent the three classes of the thinkers on the issue of the simultaneous elections in India. First, there are the thinkers who approve and favour the simultaneous elections in the country, considering them in the favour of the economy, national peace and public of India; secondly, there are the thinkers who discard and disapprove the idea of simultaneous elections on the ground that they are against the spirit of the Constitution and Federalism. Thirdly, there are those who remain neutral on the issue and enlist both the positive and the negative results if simultaneous elections in the country are held.

In principle, simultaneous elections in India will definitely have the benefits of saving poll expenditure and helping party's focus on governance, but it will be full of practical problems. The suggestion of the Commission to categorise States based on proximity to the next general election, and have one round of State Assembly polls with the next Lok Sabha election, and another round for the remaining

States 30 months later is logical but not practical. If it is to be followed and observed, it would mean that India is going to have a set of elections every two and a half years which does not seem to be practical at all. In a word, the demand for the simultaneous elections is on move, but until and unless some strong and practically approvable policies are made, it cannot be feasible.

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