

## Time to Govern, Time to Build and Time to Think

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India talks about elections all the time. At tea stalls, in living rooms, on television panels, and across WhatsApp groups. Someone is always campaigning, somewhere. This is often seen as a sign of a lively democracy. And it is. But it also raises a quiet question we rarely ask. Can a country govern properly if it is always preparing to vote again?

This question sits at the heart of the idea of One Nation, One Election. The proposal suggests holding elections to the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies at the same time. The moment it is mentioned, opinions harden. Some see it as common sense. Others see danger. Perhaps it is better to step back and talk about what problem we are actually trying to solve.

Right now, India feels like it is permanently in election mode. Every year brings a new round of campaigns. With each election comes the Model Code of Conduct. New announcements stop. Files slow down. Officials are pulled out of their regular work and sent on election duty.

For ordinary people, this shows up in small but frustrating ways. A road repair that keeps getting delayed. A welfare scheme that moves slower than promised. An office visit that leads nowhere because “elections are on.” None of this makes headlines, but it affects daily life.

For governments, the pressure is constant. When another election is always close, thinking long term becomes difficult. Big reforms take time and patience. Elections reward speed and spectacle. The result is politics that often looks busy but achieves less than it should.

Would holding elections together change this? Possibly. If governments knew they had a fixed stretch of time without repeated election interruptions, they might plan differently. Policies could be designed for results, not just announcements. Decisions could be judged over five years, not five weeks.

There is also the question of cost. Elections are expensive, not just in money but in energy. Security forces are moved again and again. Teachers leave classrooms. Officials leave offices. The system bends repeatedly to conduct polls. Doing this once in a cycle instead of many times may not sound dramatic, but it could make governance smoother and less strained.

Then there is the voter. People like voting, but they also get tired. Being asked to vote again and again can make elections feel routine. Turnout numbers in some areas already suggest this fatigue. A single national election cycle could restore a sense of occasion. Voting would feel important again, not just frequent.

Some worry that voting for the Centre and the states together might reduce choice. But does it really? Voters already make multiple decisions on the same day in local elections. What changes is timing, not choice. People would still vote differently if they want to. They would simply do it at the same time.

The bigger concern is federalism. India's states are different. Their priorities are different. Any reform must respect this diversity. But election timing does not decide power. State governments would still be accountable to their own voters. What matters is careful design and strong constitutional safeguards.

India's democracy has always evolved through debate and disagreement. Many reforms were once controversial and are now routine. One Nation, One Election fits into this pattern. It is not about taking power away from people. It is about asking whether our system can work better.

This does not mean the idea should be rushed. It raises serious legal and political questions. These need time, discussion, and consensus. But dismissing the idea without talking it through would also be a mistake.

One Nation, One Election is not a magic solution. It will not suddenly fix governance or politics. But it offers something Indian public life often lacks. Time.

Time to govern. Time to build. And time to think beyond the next election.

That alone makes it worth an honest conversation.