

Question: Simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies will limit the amount of time and money spent in electioneering but it will reduce the government's accountability to the people.' Discuss. (150 words)

Answer:

In the recent time, the debate regarding the simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and the State Legislature has gained pace. It is also supported by the election commission in a recent issue.

This debate has started because of certain inherent problems in different elections like:

- (i) This led to the excessive use of money and muscle power by the candidates plus election commission also has to spend a large chunk of money of the public exchequer for conducting these elections.
- (ii) These elections take the time of the incumbent ministers and legislatures as they have to divert their attention to regional elections during campaigning.
- (iii) This also takes away important hours of the media reporting which keeps itself busy in discussing who will win the election than scrutinising the public policies.

So, in all, these elections have led to the overall loss of time and money.

It is true that simultaneous elections can reduce the impact of above mentioned drawbacks however it is also said that they can also lead to the weakening of the accountability of the government in the following ways

- (i) Elections to the states are taken as the litmus test by the Central Government for its policies.
- (ii) The legislators and ministers go to the people for votes during campaigning. In this process they declare their future plans as well as defend their policies, people generally ask questions from them during this process.
- (iii) Separate elections allow the people to take regional and national issues in a different manner as this is the real essence of federalism.

All these positives of the separate elections may be eliminated by the simultaneous election and then the legislators only have to go to the people once in five years. This can have more harmful impacts on the accountability of the legislators.

So, the issue of simultaneous elections should be discussed in Parliament in a national way so as to reach at a conclusion which will not disturb the accountability as well as the federal polity of India.