BLOGS

One Nation, One Election: Understanding CLAT Tested Topics

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If you are preparing for CLAT, you already know that topics linked to the Constitution, federalism, and democratic governance are hot favourites in the Legal Reasoning section.

One such topic that appeared in CLAT 2026 is **One Nation, One Election**. It sounds simple, but it raises deep constitutional and political questions. Let us break it down in a way that actually makes sense.

What Does “One Nation, One Election” Mean?

At present, elections in India happen almost every year. One year it is Lok Sabha elections, the next year some state elections, then municipal elections, then by elections. This cycle never really ends.

The idea of **One Nation, One Election (ONOE)** is to change this system. Under this proposal, elections for the Lok Sabha and all State Legislative Assemblies would be held **together, once every five years**. Instead of voting again and again, citizens would vote in one big, nationwide election cycle.

In simple terms, it means one country, one election season.

Is This a New Idea?

Many people think ONOE is a new political idea, but that is not true.

From **1951 to 1967**, India actually followed this system. Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections were held at the same time. This worked because governments were stable and assemblies completed their full terms.

Things changed after 1967. Several state governments collapsed early due to political instability. Assemblies were dissolved before completing five years, and elections became scattered across

different years. Over time, this turned into the system we have today.

The idea of bringing back simultaneous elections has come up many times. The Election Commission discussed it in the 1980s. In 2017, the Prime Minister spoke about it again, saying it could save time and money. In 2023, a high level committee headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind was set up to study the issue.

In March 2024, this committee submitted a very detailed report supporting the idea, but with safeguards.

What Is the Legal Proposal Behind ONOE?

To make ONOE a reality, the government introduced the **Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, 2024** in Parliament.

This bill proposes changes to key constitutional provisions:

- Article 83, which deals with the duration of the Lok Sabha
- Article 172, which deals with the duration of State Legislative Assemblies
- Article 327, which gives Parliament power over elections

The basic plan is this:

- All assemblies will be aligned with the Lok Sabha's five year term.
- If a government falls early, elections will still be held, but only for the remaining period.
- This ensures that the next full election cycle happens together again.

Separate amendments have also been proposed for Union Territories with legislative assemblies. Local body elections like panchayats and municipalities may be aligned later.

Why Does the Government Support ONOE?

The government gives several reasons in favour of One Nation, One Election.

1. Reducing Election Costs

Elections are extremely expensive. According to estimates, India spends around **₹4.5 lakh crore** on elections over five years. Holding elections together would reduce costs related to security,

transport of EVMs, polling staff, and administration.

2. Fewer Disruptions to Governance

Whenever elections are announced, the **Model Code of Conduct** comes into force. This stops governments from announcing new schemes or making major decisions.

Because elections keep happening, governance keeps slowing down. ONOE would mean fewer interruptions and more focus on development and policy making.

3. Better Use of Administrative Resources

Teachers, police officers, and government staff are repeatedly pulled into election duties. Simultaneous elections would reduce this burden and allow them to focus on their regular work.

4. Possible Increase in Voter Turnout

When elections happen together, people are more likely to vote. Past data suggests that voter turnout increases when elections are combined. One big election event creates more awareness and participation.

Why Are People Opposed to ONOE?

While the benefits sound attractive, the criticism is serious and important, especially from a constitutional perspective.

1. Impact on Federalism

India is a federal country. States have their own governments and political identities. Critics argue that forcing state elections to align with national elections weakens state autonomy.

There is also a fear that national issues will dominate campaigns, pushing state specific problems into the background.

2. Advantage to National Parties

National parties have more money, media presence, and organisational strength. Regional parties often depend on local issues and local elections. If everything happens together, national

narratives may overpower regional voices.

This raises concerns about political equality.

3. Fixed Terms and Voter Choice

If an elected government loses majority early, voters may have to accept a replacement government for a shorter term. Some argue this limits the people's right to choose a full term government.

4. Logistical Challenges

India is huge. Conducting simultaneous elections across all states requires massive manpower, security, and infrastructure. Managing this without errors or delays is a serious challenge.

Is ONOE Constitutionally Valid?

This is where CLAT aspirants need to think carefully.

Supporters argue that Parliament has the power to amend the Constitution under **Article 368**. They say federalism is not destroyed because states still have elected governments.

Opponents argue that ONOE affects the **basic structure of the Constitution**, especially federalism and democratic choice. If elections are forced into rigid timelines, it may violate the spirit of representative democracy.

This issue may eventually reach the Supreme Court.

Current Status of the Proposal

As of now, the bill has been sent to a **Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC)** for detailed examination. The committee is hearing experts, former judges, economists, and election officials.

The final report is expected before the Budget Session of 2026. Whether the bill passes, gets modified, or is delayed will depend on political consensus.