

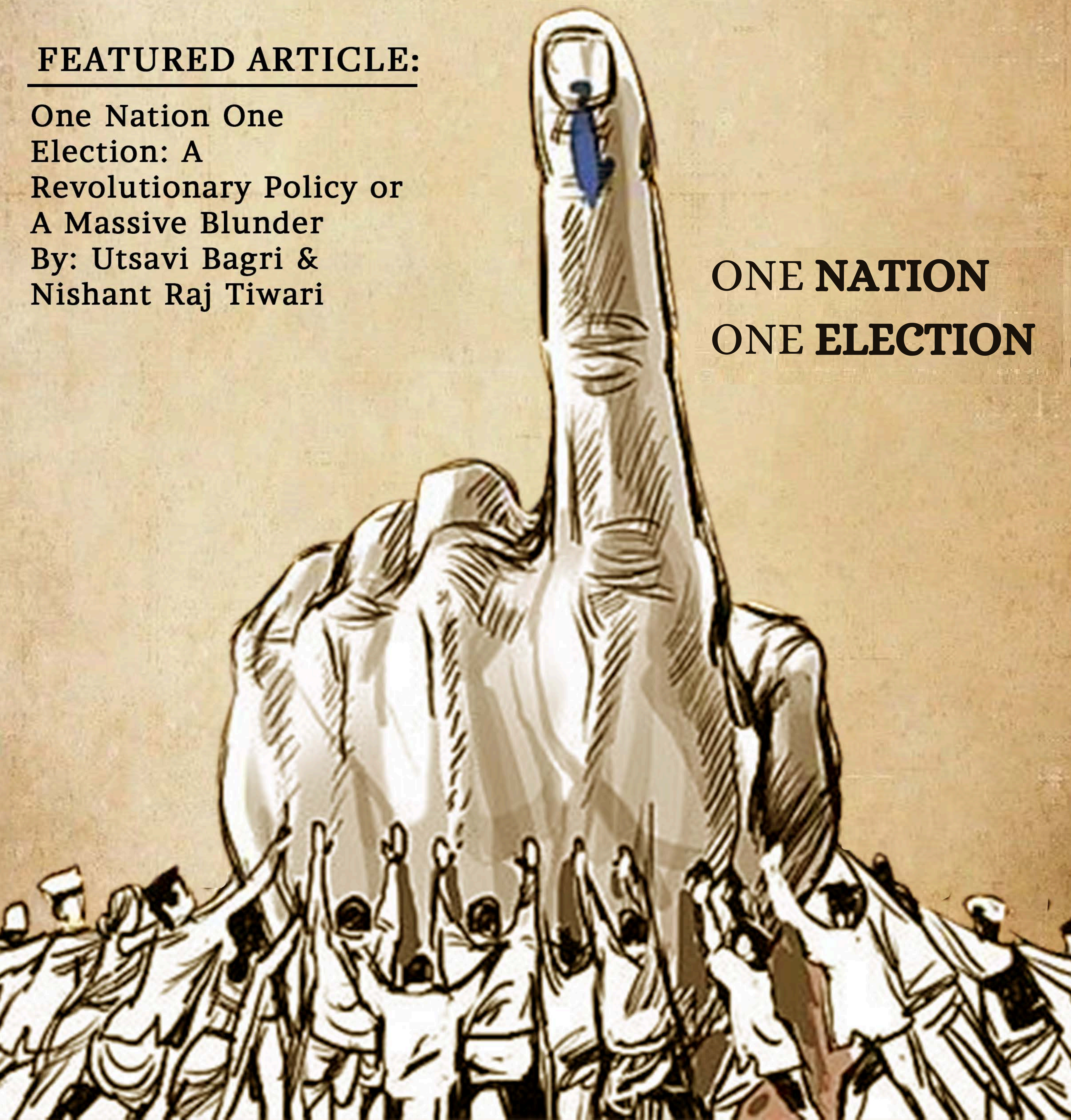
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FEATURED ARTICLE:

One Nation One
Election: A
Revolutionary Policy or
A Massive Blunder
By: Utsavi Bagri &
Nishant Raj Tiwari

ONE NATION
ONE ELECTION



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National Interest vs Global Responsibility: What should the nation choose?

By: Aditya H. Gudade, Aditya Patil & Apurwa Kanitkar

National interest against global responsibility is one of the most unique and challenging binary oppositions in the theoretical paradigm of international relations and diplomacy. National interest has its origin in state sovereignty and the overall welfare, protection, and enhancement of a nation's economic base, security, and cultural integrity. On the other hand, global responsibility implies the standing and commitment of a state toward the world order, and the promotion of a balance of justice, prosperity, and welfare in the world. These responsibilities may require coordination, compromise, and compliance with the global standard, and occasionally, it may negatively affect the interest of a particular country.

However, there is more to this duality. Depending on the several traditions of international relations theory, the perception of it may differ. Realists focus on the self-interest of their nation and consider the international system as operating in a state of anarchy whereby states have to compete for power. Liberals support international obligations and encourage the use of international organizations and regimes in coordinating the efforts of sundry countries and managing global issues.

National Interest or National Egoism?

Robert Osgood's perspective on national interest underscores it as the pursuit of outcomes exclusively beneficial to a nation, rooted in what he termed "national egoism." This view prioritises national survival through principles like territorial integrity, political independence, and stable governmental institutions.

Brexit is a prime example of a country prioritising self-interest over broader global concerns. The key reasons behind the Brexit referendum included sovereignty, immigration control, and the desire for the UK to shape its economy. Proponents of Brexit emphasized reducing the influence of supranational EU governance and reclaiming control over laws, borders, and trade agreements. The campaign centered on the idea that regaining legislative sovereignty was vital for the UK's self-identity and political accountability. Economically, Brexit advocates argued that the UK could secure better trade deals outside the EU, boosting domestic industries and fostering economic independence. The potential long-term benefits of protectionism were also highlighted, with claims that fixed trade terms could outweigh the disadvantages.

However, the immediate aftermath of Brexit demonstrated a J-curve effect in both politics and economics. Initially, the UK faced economic instability: the pound sterling dropped significantly, inflation rose, and businesses grappled with regulatory changes and trade uncertainties. Politically, the UK encountered difficulties in negotiating new terms with the EU, leading to internal strife, especially around sensitive issues like the Irish border.



Despite these initial setbacks, the UK has made progress in negotiating trade agreements and re-establishing its global role. The ability to pursue independent trade policies and legislative reforms is seen as aligning with long-term national interests, suggesting that short-term challenges may lead to future strategic benefits.

Global Responsibility or Global Obligations?

The principle of global responsibility refers to the set of duties and the elementary principles that are acknowledged and followed by the state and other participants of international relations to a certain extent disregarding

their selfish interest. The relief aid provided by India to the Maldives exemplifies how nations navigate these responsibilities amidst complex geopolitical dynamics.

In times of war, terrorism, or natural disasters, Indian leadership has demonstrated sensitivity to its global responsibilities by extending assistance to neighbouring countries, regardless of direct benefit to India. The Maldives, in particular, has benefited from India's support aimed at fostering economic stability and sustained growth. India has provided the Maldives with financial aid, including grant aid, credit aid, and concessionary financing for infrastructure development, showcasing its commitment to the welfare of the region. Besides financial support, India even offers military support to Maldives and will continue to do so in the future. Earlier, India had supplied Dornier aircraft and other armaments aiding the development of the Maldives' defence systems. Further, during political upheavals in the Maldives, India was supported by sending security personnel and military forces. These actions underscore the fact that the intervention and support of humanitarian crises and the stability of the regions are critical even if they call for the sacrifice of immediate national interest.

Global Responsibility: The Double-Edged Sword of International Engagement

Nations prioritising global responsibilities over narrower national interests is an

intricate tapestry. Sometimes, initiatives aimed at promoting global welfare and cooperation can lead to unforeseen complexities and repercussions for the countries involved. There are substantial tensions and trade-offs inherent in navigating international relations while balancing domestic imperatives with broader global obligations.

The event of **Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK)** explicates an example where India, in its bid to portray responsible, international status, referred the matter to the UN, and in effect, endangered sovereignty. In 1947, with the dawn of independence and the division of the British Indian subcontinent between India and Pakistan, the status of the Jammu and Kashmir state became an issue. Maharaja Hari Singh found himself under pressure from tribal militias' attack sponsored by Pakistan. Thus, to safeguard the freedom of the state, he put his signature on the document called the - 'Instrument of Accession to India', with the request for military aid to ward off the intruders. India for peaceful and legal means under UN Charter sought to enlist the support of the United Nations in 1948 on the question of Kashmir. UN's involvement was decided as the urge to voice the principles of diplomatic approach and territorial integrity, but instead led to **unintended consequences:**

Loss of Sovereignty: The UN adopted security council resolutions which called for a cease-fire followed by a withdrawal of the Pakistani army from the occupied

territories and the administration of a plebiscite for the future of the territory. These resolutions sought reunification through diplomatic means with liberal international supervision. Internationalising the Kashmir issue meant that India agreed to hear the issue, in the international forum opened to that possibility making itself vulnerable to added external intervention. This involvement of the UN and subsequent internationalisation diluted the Indian province's sovereignty. **Ongoing Implications:** Even to this day, the role of the UN in involving itself in the dispute has not brought about any solution to the bitter conflict in the area of Kashmir between the two countries, India and Pakistan. The internationalisation of the conflict has thereby favoured the entrenchment of external actors to the peace-building process. It has posed a challenge to India in its attempt to include Jammu and Kashmir into the realm of its sovereign authority.

National Interests Veiled as Global Responsibility: Bretton Woods Conference

The event of the **Bretton Woods Conference** held in 1944 is often discussed in the context of global financial architecture. Even though the conference's primary goal was to lay down the structure for international cooperation and stability in the post-World War II era, its functions were most evidently to benefit and aid the United States and its allies.



The objective of the formation of the EU is closely tied up with the post-Second World War reconstruction as well as the dreams of a united Europe pursuing a policy of integration to guard against future wars over resources. The EU was preceded by similar initiatives like the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and the European Economic Community (EEC) which were based on the concepts of economic integration for the common good of European countries and the creation of a united Europe.

This form of international system as postulated by Hedley Bull encompasses the idea that states can engage in the making of remits based on societal framework. The EU is a prime example of this idea as it establishes a regional international society, which consists of nations willingly committed to working together to achieve particular objectives while concurrently preserving their independence. The EU is a union that started with economic cooperation but now stands as a political syndicate. At the end of the Bretton Woods Conference, the U.S. dollar acted as an

international currency as designated by the Bretton Woods system. This system was useful for managing countries' trade and financings, making the process clear and reliable. However, while the demand and the dollar's peg to gold meant that gold was exchanged for dollars, this also benefited the United States by supporting its economic hegemony and establishing a way to fund its increasing trade deficits. This system gradually began to collapse in the early 1970s, when the US faced some difficulties in its economy which made the US abandon the gold standard implying that international duties are also in conflict with national economic interest.

Conclusion

"For every global responsibility being taken there is some underlying national interest.

But every action taken under national interest may not imply global responsibility."

While analysing the state's motivations for its actions, one must not separate purely ethical considerations and altruistic responsibility for the world's well-being from the realistic pursuits of national interest. While there can be instances where global responsibilities are apparent, power is frequently used to serve biased goals. It should be noted that actions made to pursue what is perceived as national interest do not automatically mean a sense of responsibilities towards the world. Organisational self-interest, hegemonic

control, political whims, and sovereignty motives of nations may sometimes override moral reasoning and empathy for the victims in a conflict situation. This highlights a fundamental tension in international relations - although domestic obligations are sometimes close to foreign ones, foreign ones do not always equate to national interests.

Accounting for and responding to the structural national interest at the root of acts of global responsibility and pursuing efforts to incorporate global ethics into the decision-making of states, may better assist states in comprehending the current state of affairs within the reality of international relations. It creates a more just environment for the world by making sure that when people exercise national self-interest, they are not doing so at the expense of international and moral responsibility. Thus, it is this balance that will determine the future of diplomacy and interaction between countries, and therefore the future of our world, pursuing the idea of interpenetration and balance of national and common interests.

Re-examined: The Indian Education System

By: Arya Mhaske

Often when confronting this mammoth yet quite stupendous theme, there are many aspects to have a look at. Indian Education boasts a rich and evolving story. From time immortal, the fragment of the Indian land has been self-sustaining. This is an important factor in deciphering the system of how things are wired about, because a dimension of sustenance in one's life at an individual plane affects other dimensions and choices.

Dating back to about 1500 BCE, we witness the gurukul style of education. All students, often referred to as shishya resided in an ashram along with their gurus-typically translating to dispellers of darkness. Gurus guided them through rich, historical oral transmissions and written documents like the Vedas, Upanishads, philosophy, astronomy, warfare, statecraft, and more. This system attained its rest unreservedly at the beginning of the colonial era.

Let's now peek into the radical evolution that Indian Education has gone through. Education equips the society with the knowledge and skills to become not just consumers and servants of technology, but its creators and innovators. In a populous nation like India, with over 1.4 billion people, investing heavily in individual-centric education is not just an option, it's an absolute necessity. A firm anchor and grip on the same remains

unwitnessed!



If we observe the world, we see clearly that technologically developed countries having brimming educational prowess have been dominating the world. Google (founded in 1998 by Stanford graduates) and Microsoft (established in 1975 by a Harvard dropout and a college dropout), are testaments to the power of a strong educational foundation. Education plays a pivotal and critical role in shaping their visions, empowering individuals to accomplish them.

India's education system paints a different picture. Why do the world's top universities overwhelmingly reside outside of India? One major factor is the stark contrast in research quality and government support. While other countries like Sweden offer substantial scholarships for PhD, Master's, and even sometimes Bachelor's programs, fostering a culture of research and innovation, India continues its efforts in

overall development, making efforts to be at par. This brings us to a critical question of assessing our current education system and re-examining if it caters to the need of nurturing a **spirit of inquiry and cutting-edge research**.

India's progress during the Industrial Revolution was significantly hampered by colonial policies and educational reforms. Dating back to pre-colonial times with its renowned centers of learning like Nalanda and Takshashila, the colonial era and its aftermath, brought about significant changes, often prioritizing rote learning and competitive examinations over critical thinking and innovation. This aimed to create a cream group of individuals for administrative positions within the colonial structure. Pro to this, Lord Macaulay's robust statement regarding Indian education is found in his **Minute on Indian Education (1835)** advocated for a complete shift towards English-medium education as the new substrate policy, believing it would unlock access to vast Western knowledge. His goal was to create a class of Indians "Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect".

From lessons looked back from the past and keeping entropy for the future, a special emphasis on developing a state-of-the-art primary education system beholds immense potential for a technology-driven world. To fully benefit from the opportunities of this era, India should consider revising its educational policies. We must prioritize and improve

the primary education system, ensuring quality infrastructure and engaging teaching methods accompanied with a generous flush of investment in training. Furthermore, a significant increase in the national education budget, comparable to developed countries, is crucial. Our next decade will be technologically dominant, and if we want a full fledged adjure on the era, our policies must change immediately, and effectively

India's Role in South Asian Geopolitics: Navigating Relations With Neighbours

By: Manas Yeola

One might wonder, what makes South Asia so strategically important in the context of future conflicts? South Asia is uniquely positioned at the crossroads of major superpowers across continents, making it highly coveted in global power dynamics. Geopolitics in South Asia is based on power, security interests and moves quite complicated. The geographical location of India is quite strategic; and the stability it could achieve has its importance. Geo-strategically, having India in the centre of South Asia is beneficial to it - both financially and militarily. This helps India maintain its high ground with its neighbours. The Indian Ocean holds great importance in South Asia and the massive coastline India has to its name allows it a considerable sway in this region. It is important for India to ensure stability in this maritime area to see smooth oil and gas supplies from the region extending up to Western Asia. India actively encourages engagement with its neighbours to help enhance trade and regional cooperation through the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). India focuses on resolving territorial disputes with dialogue and peace with its neighbours. Also, its presence in regional and global forums highlights the

the importance of India in South Asian geopolitics.

The Neighbourhood First Policy, a foreign policy initiative that we have seen unfold since 2014 aims to strengthen relations with India's immediate neighbours in the Indian subcontinent. This policy prioritises diplomatic engagement, economic cooperation, and cultural exchange with countries like Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. It is a vital tool to enhance physical, digital and people to people connectivity across the region, as well as augmenting trade and commerce.

India's relationship with Afghanistan is at a crossroads, balancing its long-standing investments and support for the Afghan people with the complex dynamics of Taliban rule. Being a major contributor to Afghanistan's reconstruction efforts over the past two decades, India has invested around \$3 billion in various development projects, Infrastructure projects, Health facilities, schools, and community projects aimed at improving local living conditions. India remains engaged through humanitarian aid focusing on stability and countering security risks as it navigates the changing geopolitical landscape in Afghanistan.

India and Bangladesh work together to

balance cooperation with competition as they tackle shared security and development goals. By prioritising regional trade frameworks like SAARC and BIMSTEC, both countries aim to strengthen South Asia's economic growth through tariff reductions, enhanced connectivity, and energy partnerships. Collaborative projects in energy and infrastructure such as oil pipelines and power-sharing agreements highlight India's dedication to regional stability and development. The political unrest in Bangladesh has been influenced by perceptions that India has shown support for the ruling party, which has led to some mistrust among different sections of the population. While this view is not universally shared, it has added to the complexities in the relationship between the two countries. As regional dynamics shift, their relationship continues to adapt, focusing on stability and mutual prosperity.

The close and cordial ties between India and Bhutan are deeply rooted in trust and goodwill, permeating through all levels of engagement. In the interim budget 2024-25, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has been allocated Rs. 22,154 crore as the largest share of aid portfolio granted to Bhutan. Recently Bhutan's Prime Minister visited India where India held wide-ranging talks and signed a slew of agreements.

Since 2008, India has invested years in building deep relationships with various stakeholders in Maldives, including political, military, business and civil society figures.

But Maldives has recently found itself in the midst of diplomatic turmoil, raising questions about its relations with India through undiplomatic remarks, military positioning and scrapping of crucial agreements.

India-Myanmar relations are rooted in shared historical, ethnic, cultural and religious ties. As the land of Lord Buddha, India is a country of pilgrimage for the people of Myanmar.



They have been actively strengthening bilateral relations through various initiatives, including trade agreements, infrastructure projects, and cultural exchanges. India has also provided significant aid to Myanmar during natural disasters. However, political instability in Myanmar, border security issues, the Rohingya crisis, and trade imbalances pose significant challenges to their bilateral relationship. Both countries are working to address these issues and strengthen their cooperation.

India and Nepal have a unique relationship. The open border, shared culture, economic interdependence and deep-rooted people-to-people relationship make bilateral ties special. India is Nepal's largest trading partner. Agreements like Joint Vision Sector on Power Sector Cooperation have helped to initiate several new projects by investors from India and Nepal. Also Indian users in Nepal can make UPI payments across stores in Nepal. Overall there are concerns of people that need to be addressed but momentum of partnership and progress of the recent past must be continued.

India has quite contrasting relations with its neighbours. India Pakistan diplomatic relations have been quite hostile, with historic conflicts and territorial disputes, and political tensions over the Kashmir region. Efforts for dialogue and cooperation are overshadowed by political tensions often ratcheted up with cross border terrorism. Trade is limited due to political tensions and hence economic relations are quite marginal.

India and Sri Lanka have a long history of cultural, religious and trade ties dating back to ancient times. Recently India provided approximately USD 4 billion worth of aid to Sri Lanka during an unprecedented economic crisis. Sri Lanka has now adopted India's UPI service, which is a significant step towards enhancing fintech connectivity between two countries. Also the use of rupee for trade settlement is further

helping Sri Lanka's economy. Sri Lanka is also a member of BIMSTEC and SAARC in which India plays a major role.

China and India established diplomatic relations on 1 April 1950. China, while a major regional power, is geographically distant and has a complex relationship with India, often characterised by strategic competition. India's relation with China is a mixed bag as it involves both trade and sour relationships over borders. End of the day, despite defining strong trade relations between them still in place but friction persists due to terrestrial disputes and military face-offs especially on Himalayan border affecting overall relation between both. In 2020, Indian and Chinese negotiators arrived at an agreement on "patrolling arrangements" along the Line of Actual Control(LAC), leading to disengagement and a resolution of issues that had arisen in these areas.

Overall, India aims to foster stability and development in South Asia along with balancing regional dynamics. Human security is necessary for the stability and prosperity of South Asia, intertwined with these dynamics. India's strength as a regional power deepens the geopolitical terrain of South Asia and has overall work to promote stability and security in its neighbouring countries

A Man's World on Borrowed Time

By: Mrugaja Joshi

'It's a Man's World' - This statement represents the long-standing dominance of men in every sphere of life. From the construction of empires to the advancement of technology, male vision has often guided the course of progress. Their strength, resilience, and ambition have driven much of the world's development, creating systems that function most optimally. Even today, the imprints of male leadership are seen across the globe, from corporate boardrooms to innovation hubs. Many industries, institutions, and governing bodies remain male-dominated, echoing the idea that this world has been, and in many ways continues to be, built by and for men.

Nevertheless, looking around in our modern era, it's impossible to deny the colossal achievements of women in every sphere. Women excel in business, politics, sports, and academia, proving time and again that their contributions are vital to the progress of society. With so many success stories, it's tempting to believe that the long-held notion of "It's a man's world" is outdated and irrelevant in today's context and that the statement misses the richness and complexity of human progress. "It's a shared world" now, isn't it?

However, when we delve into the history behind this progress, an intriguing

Let me elaborate:

The economy today circles around production, consumption and distribution of goods primarily measured by wealth. Wealth is a measure of prosperity and economic power. Essentially, the economy is a gauge of how much value a society creates and how well that value is distributed among the members of society. Wealth represents the capacity of an individual to make economic choices. This ability to make choices is driven by money earned through employment, which for most people, incorporates a 9-5 job. The money earned from a job enables individuals to buy products and services. This act of purchasing drives demand within the economy.

The current economy is structured around a linear, day-in and day-out cycle that mirrors the typical experience of men—predictable, consistent, and largely based on external rhythms like the working day and night. Men, in this traditional model, follow a daily routine of waking up, exercising, working, and resting. This cycle, where each day largely mirrors the next in terms of energy levels and productivity, has shaped much of how we think about work, productivity, and economic structures.

It's designed around the idea of steady, equal work output every day. The systems of work schedules, productivity measures, and even career progression models are built around the idea that everyone's body follows a constant cycle of energy and focus. This economic structure is heavily male-centric because it doesn't account for the biological realities that half the population faces—specifically women.

Women have the same day-night rhythm of daily life, but, along with that, they also have a more complex and dynamic menstrual cycle. The menstrual cycle impacts physical and emotional energy, mood, and cognitive ability, which creates a natural ebb and flow of the same each month. Our economic rigidity overlooks this part of feminine nature, leaving women to either adapt to this male-driven work structure or struggle with productivity as our bodies naturally fluctuate. Women who may experience pain or fatigue during menstruation or other phases of their cycle are expected to “push through,” leading to physical strain and health issues over time. Moreover, women's cognitive and emotional states also fluctuate. The current economic model rarely accounts for times when women may be more introspective or creative—qualities that could be harnessed more effectively if work schedules allowed for flexibility based on personal needs.

For many animals, particularly reptiles like sea turtles and tortoises, the sex of offspring is determined by the temperature at which eggs incubate. This phenomenon is known as Temperature-Dependent Sex Determination (TSD). Warmer temperatures typically result in more female offspring, while cooler temperatures produce more males. However, with global temperatures rising steadily, the balance between male and female offspring is becoming skewed, leading to a shortage of males in certain populations.

Similarly, Rising temperatures, environmental pollutants, and global warming-related stressors are being linked to declining sperm counts and male infertility in humans as well. The degradation of y-chromosomes has been a growing scientific concern since it poses potential long-term impacts on male populations in the future. While it initially contained hundreds of genes, today it has only about 45 functional genes, compared to 1,000 genes in the x chromosome. This genetic erosion of the y chromosome raises questions about the future of male fertility and the male population as a whole. If male births decline, the population ratio will be imbalanced which might have profound effects.

With the decline of male populations,

it's plausible that women could predominantly shape the future economy. This shift raises important questions: how will the global economy function when it increasingly rests in the hands of women? How adaptive, progressive, and resilient can our economy become under female leadership?



One Nation One Election: A Revolutionary Policy or A Massive Blunder

By: Utsavi Bagri & Nishant Raj Tiwari

India, the world's largest democracy, faces a constant cycle of elections. With each state and the central government following its own timeline, elections seem never-ending, resulting in administrative challenges and governance interruptions. To tackle these issues, the concept of "One Nation, One Election" has re-emerged in the political discourse, driven by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and supported by various policy think tanks. It entails a synchronized election schedule, where both the Lok Sabha (Parliament) and the State Legislative Assemblies would be elected at the same time across the country. This would mark a shift from the current system, where elections are spread out over five years, with states going to the polls according to their individual timelines. The proposal envisions a streamlined, national election held every five years, covering both central and state governments.

The "One Nation, One Election" debate has polarized political opinion. The ruling BJP has been a major advocate, arguing that synchronized elections would enhance governance and streamline administration. The Congress and several regional parties, however, have expressed reservations, viewing it as an attempt to diminish state autonomy and fearing it could disproportionately benefit national parties over regional ones.

Moreover, certain regional leaders argue that simultaneous elections could

Moreover, certain regional leaders argue that simultaneous elections could diminish regional issues in favor of national narratives, potentially weakening the voice of the states. Skeptics suggest that during a synchronized election, national issues could overshadow state-specific concerns, thus altering the nature of democratic choice.

The Rationale Behind One Nation, One Election

'One Nation One Election' isn't a brand new idea. Simultaneous elections is an idea that has been debated over a very long time within the various corridors of government. In fact, in the first general election of India in 1951 (House of the People elections) - 1952 (Assembly elections), all assemblies went to poll together with the Lok Sabha. And that was a trend which continued right until 1967. However, following some states' inability to complete their full terms due to instability, and subsequent dissolutions of state assemblies and the Lok Sabha, the election cycle was disrupted. Since then, India has seen a fragmented electoral schedule.

Moreover, countries like Belgium, South Africa, and Sweden conduct their elections simultaneously. However, these democracies are significantly smaller in terms of area and population. Using the same methodology for a country like India may or may not be

country like India may or may not be what the people truly need. Proponents and critics alike deliberate, how 'One Nation One Election' would be implemented practically.

Simultaneous Elections

The election commission has always maintained that we should have simultaneous elections since as early as 1983.

On 2nd September 2023, a committee was formed headed by our former president Ramnath Kovind to assess the 'One Nation One Election' policy for India. On 18 Sep 2024, about a year later, the Kovind committee report consisting of 18,626 pages, formulated by members such as Home Minister Amit Shah, Former Leader of Opposition Gulam Nabi Azaad, Former Secretary General Dr. Subhash C Kashyap and other figures like N K Singh, Sanjay Kothari, Arjun Ram Meghwal was accepted by the Lok Sabha.

The report proffers a comprehensive two-step framework for synchronizing elections across India:

Step 1: Conducting simultaneous elections for both the Lok Sabha and state assemblies. Currently, state election schedules present a significant logistical challenge. For example, this year's Lok Sabha elections coincide with elections in six states, while states like Bihar and West Bengal won't hold elections until 2025. To address this, the Kovind committee has recommended a phased transition plan. Once a uniform election date is established, the terms of

sitting governments in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies would end on this designated date.

If a premature dissolution occurs—due to a no-confidence motion or a government collapse—a midterm election would take place. However, the newly elected body would serve only the “remaining unexpired term” until the next scheduled simultaneous election cycle.

Step 2: Holding municipal and panchayat elections within the first 100 days following national and state elections.

Since local governance falls under the State List, only state governments have the authority to legislate on this matter. Integrating local elections into the simultaneous election cycle would require not only a 'special majority' in Parliament but also ratification by at least half of the state legislatures.

Implementing this plan is a formidable challenge, as it would require alignment of all current government terms. Some states would need to extend their terms, while others would have to cut them short—a proposition likely to face resistance from political parties unwilling to alter established tenures.

Benefits

India's election expenditures are vast—in 2019 it was estimated at around ₹30,000 crore. 2024 Lok Sabha polls are pegged as the costliest ever, with conjectures that expenditure may touch Rs. 1.35 lakh crores!

These colossal figures include costs for election machinery, electronic voting machines, stationery, manpower, and

deploying personnel. Between 2014-2017 alone, the government spent ₹5,315 crore solely on conducting elections. Under the 'One Nation One Election' framework, estimates suggest an overall cost reduction of nearly ₹20,000 crore.

Each year, elections are held in four to five states, leading to the imposition of the model code of conduct, which temporarily halts the development and welfare programs of both the Union and poll-bound state governments. Elections often exacerbate divisions along ethnic, caste, and religious lines, as these fault lines are frequently emphasized during campaigns. Beyond the disruptions to governance and development, as well as the material costs, a growing concern is the trend of elections being heavily influenced by television and social media. The continuous cycle of elections, broadcast nationwide, fosters an atmosphere of electoral rhetoric and short-term promises aimed at immediate gains, rather than focusing on a sustainable welfare agenda for marginalized groups. Simultaneous elections would substantially reduce political parties' campaign expenditures, which frequently surpass prescribed limits.

Let us visualize India 10 years ahead, assuming it implemented the 'One Nation One Election' policy in 2024. Now, the elections to the Lok Sabha, state assemblies, and local bodies are seamlessly conducted on a single timeline, reshaping the nation's

democratic landscape and unlocking transformative potential across governance, efficiency, and fiscal prudence. Here's a vision of India's potential in 2034:

1. Strengthened Governance and Reduced Downtime -

Before 'One Nation One Election', government officials were regularly pulled away from their primary duties to manage elections. Now, these disruptions occur only once every five years, letting policymakers and civil servants work consistently.

The Model Code of Conduct (MCC) enforced by the Election Commission of India also affects governance during elections. Once the MCC takes effect, any new projects, policies, or development schemes are halted to prevent electoral manipulation. Under 'One Nation One Election', MCC halts are also rare, allowing states to sustain development without policy lags, and avoiding the months-long downtime that had previously delayed the development of highways or social welfare schemes.

2. Increased Voter Turnout and Reduced Disruptions -

With a single, well-coordinated election cycle, voter turnout has soared as citizens engage more actively in synchronized elections. Consolidating elections also means fewer public holidays, resulting in fewer disruptions for businesses, schools, and other institutions. By 2034, the rhythm of national life no longer pivots around perpetual elections, making the democratic process more efficient for

both citizens and the economy.

3. Long-Term Development Focus

With only one major election every five years, the urgency to prioritize development over short-term, voter-driven projects has taken root. Leaders can now afford to pursue visionary, reform-oriented agendas, free from the pull of endless political campaigns.

4. A Streamlined Electoral Roll for Enhanced Efficiency

India's elections used to grapple with duplication and redundancy in voter rolls, leading to coordination challenges between the Election Commission of India (ECI) and state election commissions. Now, with a unified electoral roll for all elections, voter information is centralized, streamlining registration and reducing errors. The common roll also boosts collaboration between electoral bodies, allowing for a seamless exchange of information, minimizing delays, and enhancing efficiency.

Challenges

To address the challenges posed by anti-incumbency, the ongoing and completed elections in Haryana, Maharashtra, and Jharkhand—previously held simultaneously—have now been staggered. This underscores that the approach to elections, whether simultaneous or phased, is often influenced by strategic considerations. The proposal for 'one election' has sparked debate, with some linking it to broader concerns such as federalism,

secularism, and institutional dynamics, reflecting the complexity of opinions surrounding the idea.

The proposal for 'one nation, one election' has been critiqued for aligning with ideological leanings that prioritize cultural nationalism over political practicality. Analysts like Sanjay Kumar from the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, alongside the Association for Democratic Reforms, have highlighted data suggesting that in 24 out of 31 instances of simultaneous elections, major political parties received similar vote shares for both the Lok Sabha and state assemblies.

Critics argue that simultaneous elections could marginalize regional political parties and weaken the federal democratic framework. However, such conclusions are often seen as overreaching, as trends show the vote share of regional parties rising from 8% in 1951 to 23% in 2019, while national parties witnessed a decline during the same period. Correlating these shifts solely with the absence of simultaneous elections oversimplifies the issue.

The vision of "One Nation, One Election" may glitter with promises of streamlined governance and slashed costs, but as the old saying goes, "the devil is in the details." A closer look reveals a tangle of challenges and compromises that make simultaneous elections a thorny proposition indeed. Here are some critical issues that would cast serious shadows on this rosy picture.

1. Federalism at Risk

India's democracy is rooted in federalism, a structure that allows regional voices to resonate strongly in the political system. But 'One Nation One Election' threatens to diminish this voice. Consider Bihar's election history: in 2014, Bihar's BJP support in Lok Sabha was around 41%, but just a year later in the state assembly elections, it dropped to 36%. Under simultaneous elections, BJP might have clinched an extra 5% simply due to national momentum. This swing indicates a larger trend that would harm regional parties, whose voices may be lost in the tide of a national election cycle.

By overshadowing local issues with the loud hum of national politics, 'One Nation One Election' risks reducing regional representation, particularly in states where local parties are crucial in voicing the unique needs of the population. In a country as diverse as India, regional autonomy is not a luxury but a necessity. It's worth noting that the disruption of functional federalism historically stemmed more from the misuse of Article 356 to dissolve state assemblies than from the absence of simultaneous elections. Contrary to some arguments, simultaneous elections in earlier decades didn't suppress federalism or secularism but instead coexisted with varied political dynamics.

2. Loss of Accountability and Perpetual Check on Power

A perpetual election cycle might seem cumbersome, but it's a powerful

mechanism for holding leaders accountable. With constant elections, ministers and representatives are under the scrutiny of the electorate and compelled to respond to local needs regularly. Removing this cycle could mean less frequent accountability checks, allowing elected officials to sidestep regional concerns with greater ease and catering instead to broad, national interests that may not reflect local realities.

3. Herculean Constitutional Overhaul

The road to 'One Nation One Election' is littered with significant constitutional hurdles. Implementing this policy would mean amending at least five major articles including, but not limited to - Article 83, Article 85, Article 172, Article 174, and Article 356, governing the tenure and dissolution of Parliament and state assemblies, along with the imposition of President's Rule. To complicate matters, these amendments demand approval not only in Parliament but also from at least half of India's state legislatures. Such consensus is challenging to achieve, especially when states are wary of losing their constitutional powers.

Moreover, gaining this consensus may be an uphill task, as not all states may be willing to sacrifice their electoral autonomy or concede their say in regional elections. The complexities and political pushback could easily become a prolonged stalemate.

4. Logistical Nightmare: A Shortfall of Resources

The sheer logistics of conducting simultaneous elections across all levels of government is daunting. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections alone, states like Uttar Pradesh had to split polling into several stages due to limited resources, electronic voting machines (EVMs), and security personnel. Now imagine layering state and municipal elections onto this framework. To meet these requirements, the nation would need a massive increase in EVMs, storage facilities, security arrangements, and trained personnel. It has been estimated that we would require approximately 3 times the number of current EVMs if 'One Nation One Election' was to be implemented. This is not merely an operational hiccup—it's an enormous infrastructural upgrade that the nation may not be ready for.

5. Increased Vulnerability to Security Threats

Election time in India is a period of heightened security vigilance, with forces spread across millions of polling booths. Conducting simultaneous elections would require an unprecedented concentration of security personnel, potentially stretching resources too thin and creating security gaps. Ensuring safety for voters and maintaining peace would become a far more complex challenge under a synchronized model.

6. Complications in Electoral Roll and MCC Enforcement

A consolidated election model would demand a highly streamlined electoral roll that includes updated data from the

local, state, and national levels. This consolidation might seem efficient on paper, but it introduces a greater risk of administrative error and duplicate entries—a critical issue for India, where the accuracy of voter rolls has been a persistent problem.

Furthermore, the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) would need to be rethought. If applied across all levels simultaneously, it could freeze development at an all-India level, halting new projects and policy initiatives for several months every five years. In a developing nation where momentum on infrastructure and welfare projects is essential, such delays could have serious economic impacts.

7. Potential Loss of Political Diversity

Simultaneous elections may also push smaller and regional parties to the margins, allowing dominant national parties to monopolize the spotlight. When elections happen all at once, media coverage, campaign narratives, and public attention are more likely to focus on national issues, creating an uneven playing field where larger parties with more resources and nationwide appeal can eclipse regional concerns and voices.

8. Regional Variation and Consent

'One Nation One Election' would require states to align their election schedules, meaning some states may need to curtail their government's tenure while others may need to extend it—an unpopular proposition for ruling parties. Additionally, state legislatures must consent to this change, raising questions of state autonomy. Convincing each state to

compromise its election schedule for the sake of national uniformity poses significant political and legal challenges.

Opposition Views on ONOE:

No doubt any discussion related to the electoral system is political and is bound to have motives to serve the interests of individuals and/or political parties. To brand the contentions as suspect (which they may be) and summarily dismiss them will be naïve.

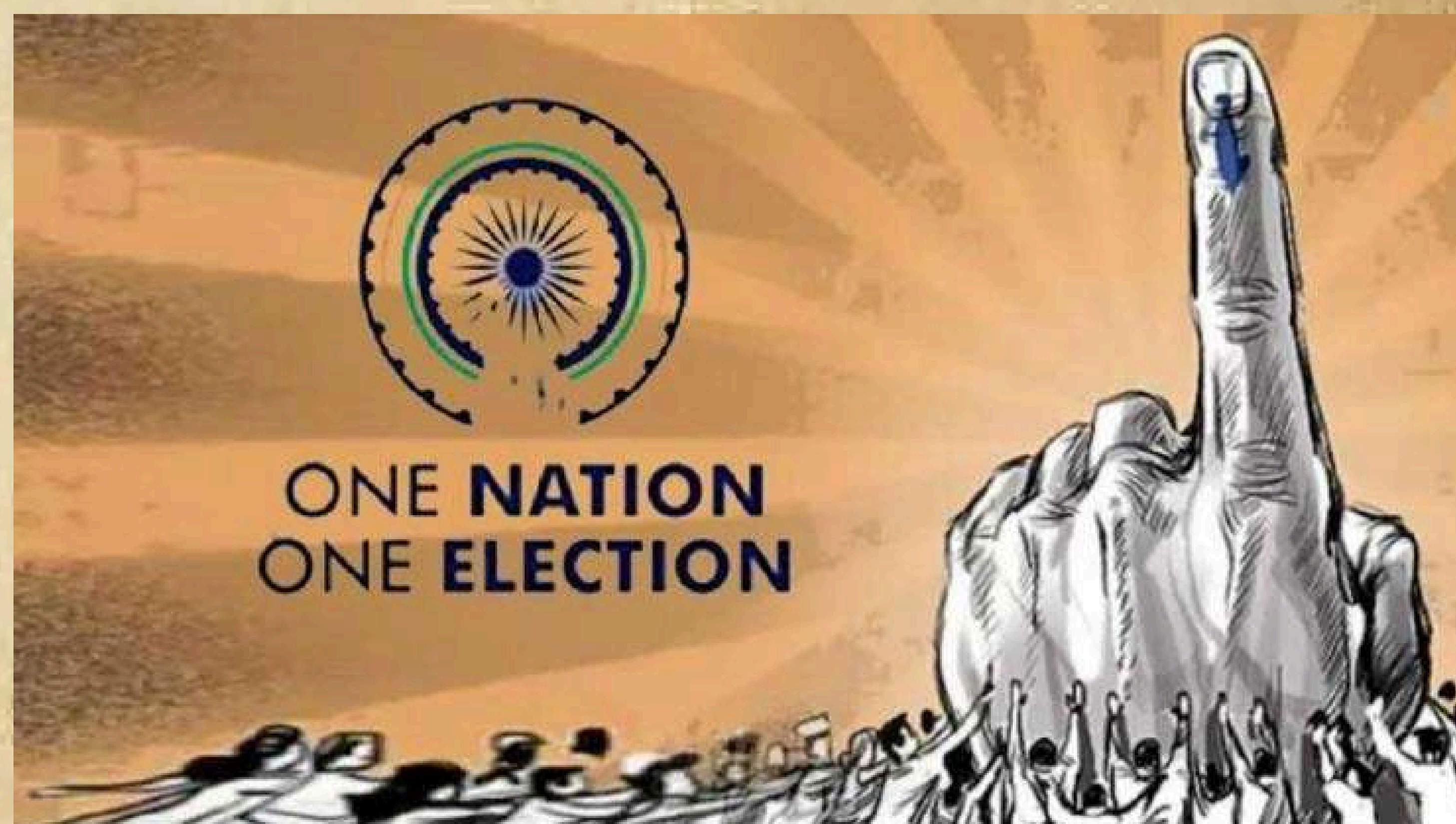
The proposal for simultaneous elections has faced significant opposition from various political quarters. They have strongly rejected the move, describing it as impractical in a democratic setup and a distraction from pressing national issues. Among other opposition parties, opinions are mixed but largely critical. Some supported the idea in principle but insisted on an all-party discussion before implementation. Smaller regional parties have raised concerns about the policy being disadvantageous for them, as it could undermine their ability to challenge larger national parties effectively.

Critics, including former Election Commissioner S. Y. Quraishi, have questioned the feasibility of the idea, citing logistical challenges. Many opposition figures view the proposal as an attempt to consolidate power and potentially erode India's federal structure. Allegations of a "puppet committee" and fears of India moving toward a presidential-style governance model have fueled further opposition, with smaller parties arguing that such a

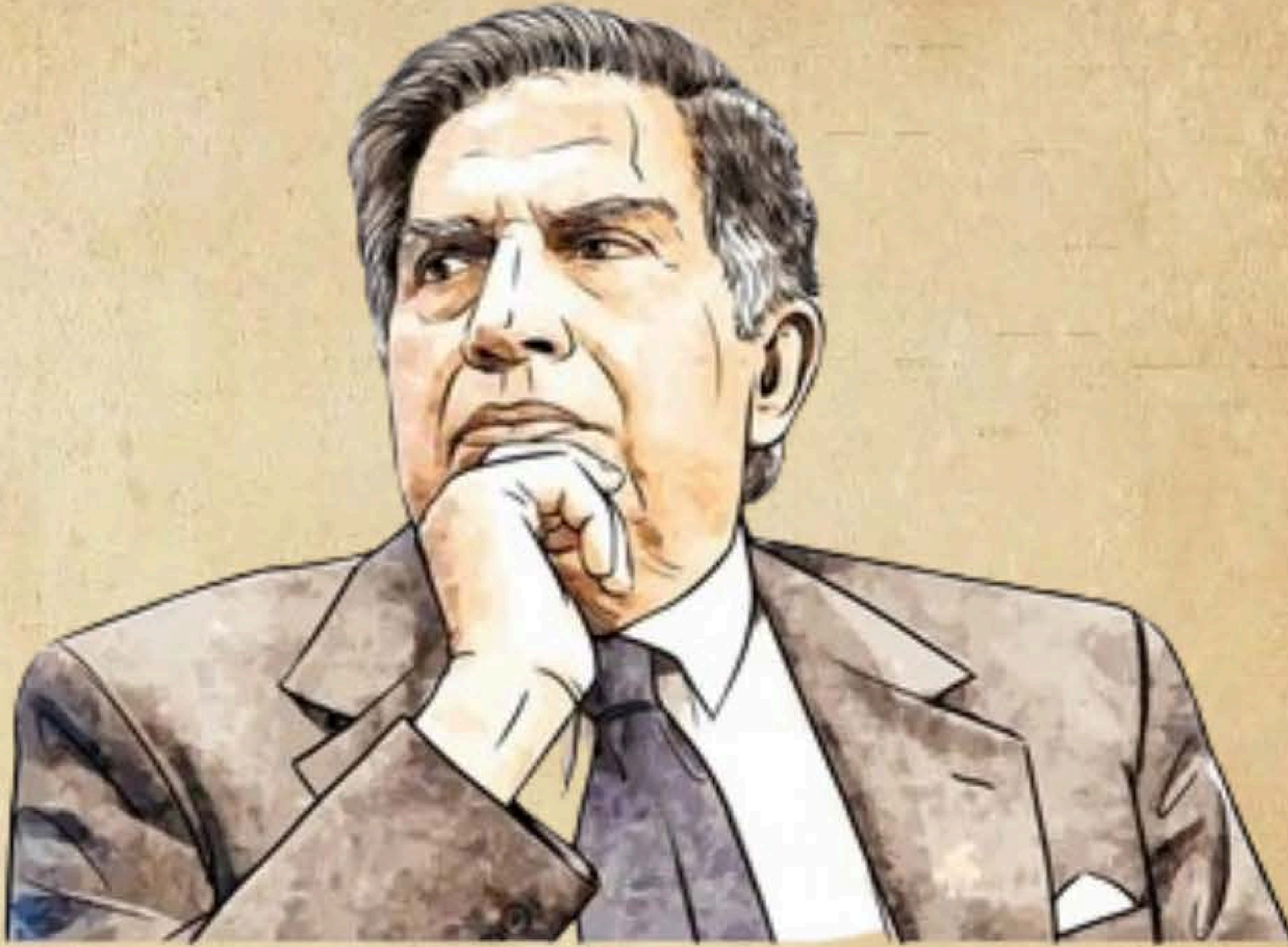
shift could weaken India's multi-party democratic framework.

Conclusion

So now we know what 'One Nation One Election' has in store for India. What do you think? Does this augur well for democracy? Is India ready for it? Is it the opposite or is the entire debate just a bosker smokescreen to distract people from issues of pertinence? Ultimately, achieving "One Nation, One Election" demands a robust national dialogue, engaging both political leaders and the public. Whether or not India adopts this idea in full, the debate on electoral reform remains a testament to the country's ever-evolving democratic spirit.



SPECIAL SECTION



From Nano to Jaguar : A Legacy of Leadership and Compassion - Sir Ratan Tata

By Chinmay Joshi

Ratan Tata was a key figure in India's growth, known for his strong leadership and focus on innovation. As the chairman of the Tata Group, he led the company during a time of great change, expanding its reach and influence worldwide. His career includes notable achievements like launching the Tata Nano to make cars affordable for many and acquiring well-known brands like Jaguar Land Rover. Additionally, Tata has made significant contributions to education, healthcare, and rural development. This article highlights Ratan Tata's important career and his impact on India's progress.

Birth and Early Life

Ratan Tata was born on December 28, 1937, in Mumbai into the famous Tata family. After his parents separated, his grandmother, Navajbai Tata, raised him with care and love. From Mumbai's best schools to New York's prestigious Cornell University, where he studied architecture, Tata's journey was exceptional. Later, he contributed \$50 million each to Cornell and Harvard Business School, showing his strong belief in education.

Ratan Tata's career began in 1961 in architecture in Los Angeles, but he returned to India to join the Tata Group.

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In the 1970s, he turned around the subsidiary NELCO, gaining leadership recognition. By 1991, he became chairman, driving Tata's expansion globally with major acquisitions like Jaguar, Land Rover, Tetley, and Corus Steel. Tata transformed the group by focusing on innovation and streamlining, with revenues growing over 40 times and profits 50 times during his tenure. He launched the Tata Nano to make cars affordable for the average Indian. Even after retiring in 2012, Tata remained active, investing in companies like Ola, Snapdeal, and Xiaomi. He also started Goodfellows, a companionship initiative for seniors, promoting intergenerational friendships.

Giving Back To Society

Ratan Tata was a strong supporter of education, medicine, and rural development. He backed the University of New South Wales to improve water access in challenged areas and established a \$28 million Tata Scholarship Fund at Cornell University to help Indian undergraduates. In 2010, Tata Group donated \$50 million to Harvard Business School for an executive centre, and Tata Consultancy Services contributed \$35 million to Carnegie Mellon University for cognitive systems research. In 2014, the Tata Group made a historic Rs. 950 million donation to IIT Bombay to create the Tata Center for Technology and Design. Additionally, Tata Trusts funded ₹750 million for Alzheimer's research at the Indian Institute of Science and established the MIT Tata Center to tackle challenges in

resource-constrained communities.

Tata's philanthropic work is an example of his kindness, integrity, and empathetic nature. He donated generously to the poor and needy during natural disasters, and helped build schools, hospitals, and an animal hospital. He also established the Tata Education and Development Trust, which provides financial aid to undergraduate Indian students at Cornell University.

Growth Of Tata And Major Acquisitions

Ratan Tata took the helm of Tata Sons during a pivotal time in India's economic liberalisation. Despite facing resistance from senior leaders, he swiftly consolidated power by introducing a retirement age policy and restructuring the organisation. Tata aggressively expanded the conglomerate's global reach, acquiring Tetley Tea for \$431.3 million in 2000 and Daewoo Motors' truck operations for \$102 million in 2004. In 2007, Tata Steel made headlines with its \$11.3 billion purchase of Corus Group, the largest corporate takeover by an Indian firm. The following year, he led Tata Motors in acquiring Jaguar and Land Rover from Ford for \$2.3 billion.

The "Nano" Story

In 2008 Tata spearheaded the development of the microcar Tata Nano, a tiny rear-engined, pod-shaped vehicle marketed as the most affordable car in the world and within easy reach of the average Indian consumer. Although only slightly more than 10 feet (3 meters) long and about 5 feet (1.5 meters) wide, the highly touted "People's Car" could seat up to five adults

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and, in Tata's words, would provide a "safe, affordable, all-weather form of transport" to millions of middle- and lower-income consumers both in India and abroad. Rolled out in 2009, the Nano was initially sold for 100,000 rupees (\$2,000); however, the price point could not be sustained. Despite poor sales, production of the Nano continued for a decade because of the company's commitment to the project. Manufacturing was preceded by a controversy over the acquisition of land in Singur, West Bengal, for the proposed factory.



The sale of the land was facilitated by the state government but prompted fierce protests by displaced farmers and political leaders of opposition parties. The site of the production plant was eventually moved to Sanand, Gujarat. Tata retired in 2012 but returned briefly as interim chairman in 2016 before stepping down again in 2017.

“Maharaja” Of The Skies Returns Home

In 2021, the Tata Group made headlines by winning the bid to take over Air India, an airline that had originally been owned by the conglomerate before its nationalisation in 1953. This moment was particularly significant for Ratan Tata, who had already stepped down as interim

chairman. He released an official statement that read:

"On an emotional note, Air India, under the leadership of Mr. J.R.D. Tata had, at one time, gained the reputation of being one of the most prestigious airlines in the world. Tatas will have the opportunity of regaining the image and reputation it enjoyed in earlier years. Mr. J.R.D. Tata would have been overjoyed if he was in our midst today."

Sir Ratan Tata's legacy is one of vision, compassion, and unwavering commitment to societal progress. He transformed the Tata Group into a global powerhouse, driving innovations like the Tata Nano and pivotal acquisitions that placed India on the world stage. Beyond business, his dedication to philanthropy through the Tata Trusts has uplifted countless lives, focusing on education, healthcare, and rural development. His life inspires future generations to pursue excellence while prioritising the welfare of others, embodying the principle that true success lies in serving society.





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