

## ONE NATION ONE ELECTION

The "One Nation, One Election" proposal has become a hot topic of discussion in India's political landscape.

This initiative suggests holding simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha (the lower house of Parliament), state assemblies, and local bodies across the country. The idea, though not entirely new, has gained significant attention in recent years, particularly under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Proponents argue that this system could lead to a more efficient governance model, while critics have raised concerns about its feasibility and potential risks.

The idea behind this proposal is to synchronize elections for the central and state legislatures at the same time, with all elections happening once every five years. Currently, elections in India are held at different times for the national parliament, state legislatures, and local bodies, often creating an environment of perpetual campaigning. This fragmented election cycle has led to logistical challenges, increased expenditure, and a distracting focus on electoral politics instead of governance.

By conducting elections simultaneously, the government aims to reduce the frequency of elections, thereby saving both time and resources. A single electoral process would involve less administrative effort, and the political calendar would be freed from the constant campaign cycle, allowing elected representatives to focus more on governance and policymaking.

One of the primary advantages of this initiative is the potential to save substantial amounts of money. Elections are an expensive affair, requiring resources for security, logistics, manpower, and infrastructure. By holding all elections together, the government could reduce these expenses significantly.

Simultaneous elections could lead to greater political stability. With governments at the Centre and in states elected for the same duration, the chances of frequent changes in leadership would reduce, allowing for a longer and more focused governance period. It could also prevent political instability at the state level from affecting the central government and vice versa.

Politicians and political parties currently spend a considerable amount of time campaigning for elections at various levels. With "One Nation, One Election," the duration of electioneering could be significantly shortened, reducing voter fatigue and focusing more on governance issues rather than electoral promises.

With all elections happening simultaneously, national issues might take precedence over regional concerns. This could encourage political parties to adopt more holistic, nation-centric policies, which could potentially bring about national unity and greater coherence in policy-making.

"One Nation, One Election" is an ambitious idea that aims to streamline India's election process, reduce costs, and improve governance. While it holds the potential to transform India's democratic landscape, it also requires careful consideration of various challenges.

## Agri-entrepreneurship Development through KVKs

■ DR. BANARSI LAL

Agriculture forms the primary source of income and livelihood in the rural belts of India. India is deeply rooted in agriculture and it relies on the hard work of millions of farmers across the nation who contribute significantly to the nations for food security. In order to support these farmers, the Indian Government established Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) as the vital institutions that bridge the gap between scientific knowledge and traditional farming practices. In India, the Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) are considered as one of the best models of extension for the agricultural development. KVK is a noble concept established by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) on the basis of technology transfer from the laboratory to the farmer's field. India is a land of villages and most of the people residing in the villages are farmers. Agriculture is the major occupation of the people and around 60 per cent of the population is directly associated with agriculture. Agricultural development is helpful for the overall growth and development of the country. Agriculture is the mainstay of the people as it provides employment to more than half of the population of the country. This sector contribution signifies the dependency of the country on agriculture. The green revolution increased the agricultural production of the nation and India became self-reliant in many agro-commodities. But a lot is needed to improve the condition of the farmers as they are really the backbone of the country. Judicious use of land is necessary to mitigate the growing needs of the increasing population by keeping the sustainability of soils, ecosystems and environment in view.

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has started a scheme to establish innovative agricultural science-based institutions called as Krishi Vigyan Kendras (Farm Science Centres) in the country. The National Commission on Agriculture and the Planning Commission have strongly recommended its implementation. In order to work out the details of the Krishi Vigyan Kendras, a committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Mohan Singh Mehta was constituted by the ICAR in 1973. The Krishi Vigyan Kendras are mainly designed to

impart need-based and skill oriented training to the practicing farmers, in-service extension personnel and to those who are interested for self-employment. The Krishi Vigyan Kendras are implemented through State Agricultural Universities, selected ICAR institutes, central universities, voluntary organisations and State Governments. The first Krishi Vigyan Kendra was established in 1974 at Pudducherry under Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore. The Krishi Vigyan Kendras are concerned with agricultural technical literacy, the acquisition of which does not require as a precondition to read or write. These Kendras cater the needs of those who wish to be self-employed or those who are already employed. There is no particular syllabus for the Krishi Vigyan Kendras. The programmes and syllabus of Krishi Vigyan Kendras are tailored according to the needs, resources and potential for the agricultural growth in a particular area.

Krishi Vigyan Kendras are grass root level organisations meant for application of technologies through assessment, refinement and demonstration of proven technologies under micro-farming situations in the district. Agricultural growth is the prime goal of the Krishi Vigyan Kendras. Priority is given to the weaker sections of the society like small, marginal, tribal farmers, agricultural labourers, drought prone areas, hilly areas, forest areas, coastal areas etc. and work-experience is the main method of imparting training. The first objective of ICAR is to cover the entire country with one Krishi Vigyan Kendra in each district and priority is given to the backward areas and then in some districts two KVKs have also been established. Presently there are 731 KVKs across the nation which work under 11 ATARIs (Agricultural Technology Application Research Institute). As there is a great demand for the improved agricultural technologies by the farmers so there is great demand of Krishi Vigyan Kendras throughout the country. Farmers need not only the knowledge of the technologies but also more skills in the agricultural operations for adoption are also needed. Now the effectiveness of Krishi Vigyan Kendras has been enhanced by the addition of On-Farm Testing (OFT) and Front Line Demonstrations (FLDs) on the

agricultural technologies.

KVK is an integral part of the National Agricultural Research System (NARS) aims at assessment and refinement of location specific technologies in agricultural and allied enterprises. KVKs are functioning as knowledge and resource centres of agricultural technology supporting initiatives of public, private and voluntary sectors for improving the agricultural economy of the district and are linking NARS with extension system and farmers. The four major functions of Krishi Vigyan Kendras are (i) To impart training to the farmers and extension functionaries. (ii) To organise long-term vocational training for the rural youths in order to generate the self-employment. (iii) To layout front-line demonstrations at farmers field to generate the production data and also to get feedback from the farmers. (iv) To conduct on-farm tests, refinement and documentation of agricultural technologies. Needs based trainings are designed for different types of farmers. The training courses are designed on the basis of information received from village survey through Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) or Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) methods and characterise the human and physical resources. The farming system of the farmers is taken into account while designing the courses of the programmes. All methods and means to develop the skill among the farmers in their areas of interest are taken into account. Basically the trainings start from the farmers production units such as farmers fields, dairy units, poultry units, goat units, sheep units etc. and terminates with discussion. Some certificate or diploma courses are also designed for the farmers. Follow-up extension programmes are conducted after trainings in order to get the impact of the trainings on the trainees. KVKs contribute to the long-term health of the soil, water resources and overall ecosystem.

The KVK staff is comprised of the sixteen members team. The Krishi Vigyan Kendra is headed by Senior Scientist & Head. The subject Matter Specialists (SMSs)/scientists from the different discipline like Agricultural Extension, Horticulture, Agronomy, Home Science, Animal Science and Fisheries forms the scientific staff of the KVK. The programmes are assisted by a

Programme Assistant. Farm Manager takes care of KVK farm which is mainly used for demonstration purpose. The agricultural universities KVKs are headed by the Director Extension (DE) and at zone level KVKs are monitored and guided by Director Agricultural Technology Application Research Institute (ATARI). At central level KVKs are headed by Deputy Director General (DDG). The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) provides guidelines to KVKs and conducts periodic supervision. KVK is having its own buildings, demonstration farm, vehicles, and farmer's hostels for scientific staff. KVK executes its activities with the help and guidance of local management committee.

Krishi Vigyan Kendras are the light house of rural people. KVKs plans and conducts survey of the operational areas to identify the training needs of the farmers. It compiles all the recommendations for the district to utilize in the training programmes. KVK conducts need-based, production oriented short and long-term training courses both on and off campus. KVK maintains the farm on the scientific basis for the demonstration purpose in order to provide the work experience to the farmers and also to disseminate the latest agricultural technologies. KVK also imparts some general training to the rural illiterates and school drop outs in order to convert them as the good farmers. KVK also provides trainings to the women for home making and nutrition education for rural community and also on other areas like cottage industries, home crafts etc. KVK undertakes on-farm testing of the agricultural technologies and allied aspects for their suitability and also to identify the constraints. KVK helps to implement all the schemes of the ICAR and other related organisations. KVK demonstrates the various technologies to recommend for their adoption for maximizing the yield or income per unit time in different resource conditions. The Krishi Vigyan Kendras really empower the farmers by providing them various technologies and are thus transforming the rural areas. They have emerged as the powerful engines of rural prosperity.

(The writer is Chief Scientist & Head of KVK Reasi)

## Natural farming will reduce health risks with same yield

■ DR. SATYAWAN SAURABH

Integrate urban wet waste composting into the National Mission on Natural Farming to meet the compost demand of farmers. Decentralized Waste Management: Promote city-farmer partnerships for local composting solutions. Strengthen farmer training programs in composting techniques and soil health management. Increase waste segregation practices at source through mass awareness and investment in infrastructure. Provide subsidies for composting infrastructure on farms. Reduce operational costs for ULBs by encouraging direct waste delivery to farms.

On November 25, 2024, the Government of India launched the National Mission on Natural Farming to reduce dependence on chemical fertilizers and promote organic farming among one crore farmers. The National Mission on Natural Farming aims to train and support farmers moving towards organic farming, with a focus on cow

dung manure and other non-chemical fertilizers available locally. However, its integration with urban waste management systems under the Swachh Bharat Mission offers an innovative solution to address challenges in both agriculture and waste management. Farmers practicing natural farming reported yields similar to those practicing conventional farming. In many cases, higher yields per crop were also reported. Since no synthetic chemicals are used in natural farming, health risks and hazards are eliminated. The food has higher nutritional density and hence provides better health benefits.

Natural farming ensures better soil biology, improved agricultural biodiversity, and more judicious use of water with much lower carbon and nitrogen footprints. Natural farming aims to make farming viable and aspirational by increasing the net income of farmers due to reduced costs, lower risks, uniform yields, and income from intercropping. By working with different crops that help

each other and cover the soil to prevent unnecessary water loss through evaporation, natural farming optimizes the amount of 'crop per drop'.

India generates 58 million tonnes of solid waste annually, which has the potential to produce 10 million tonnes of organic manure. Despite this, urban composting from segregated waste has not yet been integrated, which could meet the compost needs of 15-20 lakh farmers annually. Unprocessed municipal waste often ends up in landfills near rural areas, leading to environmental degradation and methane emissions. Urban local bodies process only 30-40% of the waste, relying on operational subsidies to keep waste processing facilities functional.

The requirement of organic manure is 2-3 tonnes per acre, much higher than the requirement of 100-150 kg of chemical fertilizers. Transportation costs make organic manure less accessible to farmers despite its low price (₹2,000-3,000 per ton). This model links segregated

urban wet waste to farmland, making composting possible directly on farms. It addresses challenges in waste management while promoting sustainable agriculture. Urban local bodies transport segregated wet waste directly to farms instead of waste processing plants or landfills. Farmers use traditional pit composting methods, mixing wet waste with dung slurry and bio-cultures to produce organic manure within 2-3 months. A city with a population of 1 lakh generates 10-15 tonnes of wet waste per day, which is sufficient to produce 3 tonnes of compost per day for a farmer's crop cycle. Access to free organic manure on their farms, reducing transportation and input costs. Improved soil health and reduced reliance on chemical fertilizers. Savings on operating subsidies (tipping fees). Increased waste processing efficiency and reduced methane emissions. The benefits are many, including a reduction in landfill waste and associated greenhouse gas emissions.

City-farmer partnerships for solid waste management (SWM) supplied 2,300 tons of segregated wet waste to over 200 farmers, producing 600 tons of organic manure. Reduction in chemical fertilizer use by 50-60 tons. Improved soil health through rigorous testing before and after composting. Germany has one of the most advanced waste management systems globally, focusing on a circular economy approach. Organic waste is separated at source and converted into high-quality compost and biogas. Japan has developed the Takakura composting method, a decentralized composting technique using household waste. The method is widely adopted in urban and suburban areas. Sweden has adopted the bio-cycle farming model, where urban organic waste is used to produce bio-fertilizer and biogas. Singapore has set up community-level composting centers in urban areas to manage organic waste in a sustainable manner.

Incorporate urban wet waste com-

posting into the National Mission for Natural Farming to meet farmers' compost demand. Decentralized waste management: Promote city-farmer partnerships for local composting solutions. Strengthen farmer training programs in composting techniques and soil health management. Increase waste segregation practices at source through public awareness and investment in infrastructure. Provide subsidies for composting infrastructure on farms. Reduce operational costs for ULBs by encouraging direct waste delivery to farms. The National Mission for Natural Farming (NMNF) and the city-farmer partnership model represent a transformative approach to address India's agricultural and environmental challenges. Achieving NMNF's goal of supporting one crore farmers requires collaborative efforts among government agencies, ULBs, and local communities, ensuring a win-win outcome for agriculture, urban governance, and the environment.

## Empowering 'HER' through skill and entrepreneurship development

■ DR. PARVEEN KUMAR

Agricultural census 2015-16 put the no. of rural women engaged in farming at 73.2%. Women grow as much as 80% of India's food. Nearly 75% of full time workers on Indian farms are women. Studies further reveal that women farmers' work 3300 hours, double the 1860 hours than their male counterparts. Further of the 263 million total agricultural workers, 37% (98 million are women). Farm women perform numerous labour intensive jobs such as ploughing, weeding, hoeing, cleaning, grading and storage of the produce and all other relevant operation related to farming, livestock and other allied services.

Unfortunately, despite so much of contribution in a very vital sector of the economy, they have not got the recognition they deserve and seldom is their work acknowledged in the male dominated society. Only 12.8% women own land. In 2020, India ranked 112 out of 153 countries in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index. They have lowest economic participation levels and opportunities as is evident from a report of World Economic Forum, 2020 where India was placed at 149 out of 153 countries. Ninety per cent of the agricultural land is transferred through inheritance and women struck as labourers generation for generation. About 52-75% of women engaged in agriculture are illiterate. Various social norms and taboos, lack of access to land, education, training and equal treat-

ment is still a concern as it affects agricultural yield. Percentage of female farmers' enrolled under Prime Minister Fasal Bima Yojana during 2020-21 was 15.3%. Similarly percentage of female beneficiaries under PM Kisan Samman Nidhi PMKISAN is 25.1%. Climate change also impacts women disproportionately. Farm women are also laggards when we see their participation in collective organization. A 2019 report of Aziz Premji University, there were approximately 7,374 Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs) in the country. Of this there were only 3% women FPCs. The condition is more or less same in case of FPOs also.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that if women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20-30%, leading to higher agricultural output in developing countries and a dramatic reduction in hunger. We talk of women empowerment, but it is still a distant dream for them. Developing her skills and promoting her engagement in agri-business can be an important factor in their empowerment. It will not only give them an opportunity to be a part of an income generating group but will also lead to their socio-economic empowerment, creates jobs for others too thereby promoting the overall economic growth and well-being of their families too. The Government of India while recognizing their important role in farm sector has initiated a host of skill

and entrepreneurship development programmes for them.

Namo Drone Didi Yojana: The Namu Drone Didi scheme, recently launched by the Government of India, aims to modernize Indian agriculture and empower women-led Self-Help Groups (SHGs). Under the Yojana, drones would be provided to 15,000 Self Help Groups (SHGs) for renting them to farmers for agricultural purposes. The women from SHGs would also be given fifteen days free of cost training on how to operate these drones. The member from women self help groups would rent out the drones to others and earn a decent livelihood.

Krishi Sakhis: The programme aims to transform rural India through the empowerment of rural women as Krishi Sakhi, by imparting training and certification of Krishi Sakhis as Para-extension Workers. Krishi Sakhis are chosen as agriculture Para-extension workers because they are trusted community resource persons and experienced farmers themselves. Their deep roots in farming communities ensure they are welcomed and respected. Government will update their skills in different farming practices by providing them appropriate trainings in different aspects related to agriculture and allied sectors. After acquiring training, their potential can be used in dissemination and transfer of technologies and in promoting agri based entrepreneurship through Krishi Sakhis.

Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK): It

extends micro-credit to poor and underprivileged women through a collateral-free, quasi-formal delivery mechanism where NGOs, women co-operatives, federations etc. act as intermediaries.

DAY-National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM): The Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-NRLM primarily focuses on formation of Self Help Groups (SHGs) with exclusive women membership for their mobilization and empowerment. A SHG usually consists of 10-20 women in plain areas and 5-20 in difficult areas. An important component of NRLM is the Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP) which aims to support women farmers' and build their capacities in agro-ecological sustainable practices. Primarily, MKSP aims to recognize women farmers, a hitherto unrecognized category, even though most of the farming activities are almost exclusively handled by the women. MKSP also, inter alia, seeks to reduce drudgery for women farmers.

Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP): STEP aims to upgrade the traditional skills and knowledge of women through training besides employment, credit and market linkages in the traditional sectors of agriculture, animal husbandry, dairying, fisheries, handlooms, handicrafts, khadi and village industries, sericulture, social forestry and wasteland development for enhancing their productivity and income generation.

Annapurna: This scheme started

by the government in 2000 seeks to grant a loan of rupees 50,000 to women entrepreneurs engaged in food catering business.

Mahila Coir Yojana: The Yojana aims to provide support to women engaged in the coir business by giving them training, equipment and credit support to women engaged in coir business.

Startup India: It aims to facilitate loan to the amount between 10 lakhs and 1 crores to at least one woman per bank branch for setting up a green-field enterprise in manufacturing, trading or services sector. The scheme primarily targets women and individuals from SC/ST. Mahila E-Haat: Mahila E-Haat is an initiative for meeting aspirations and needs of women entrepreneurs. It is an online marketing platform for women, where participants can display their products. It is an initiative for women across the country as a part of 'Digital India' and 'Stand Up India' initiatives.

MUDRA: Under Micro-units Development Refinance Agency (MUDRA), any woman can start a new business or scale up an existing one can avail loan. Three categories of loan are being provided under MUDRA which includes Shishu (loan up to rupees 50,000), Kishore (loan up to 5 lakhs and Tarun (loan up to 10 lakh).

Mahila Udyam Nidhi Yojana: Small Industrial Development Bank of India (SIDBI) offers this scheme Mahila Udyam Nidhi (MUN) to encourage and empower women entrepreneurs and promote

women Entrepreneurship by providing financial assistance at concessional interest rates.

Udyogini scheme: The Udyogini scheme aims to foster self-reliance and empower women through economic development, offering support for self-improvement. This initiative assists aspiring female entrepreneurs by providing loans with favorable interest rates, in contrast to the exorbitant rates in the private sector, establishing a reliable lending source. Eligibility is limited to those with a family income below ₹40,000 annually, with a focus on encouraging loans in the trade and service sector, capped at ₹1 Lakh.

MANAGE: National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE), Hyderabad an autonomous institute under Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India also conducts various skill trainings and entrepreneurial programmes for youths including young girls and farm women. These include Skill Training of Rural Youth (STRY), Agri-clinics and Agri-business centers scheme (ACABC), Certified Farm Advisors (CFAs), Diploma in Agri-extension services (DAESI). Many of youth including females have turned into successful entrepreneurs after upgrading their technical skills from universities and other research and training institutes under various programmes of MANAGE.

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