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Q. Local Self-government is the essence of the grass root democracy. Explain the statement in the context of theory and practice with special reference to Pakistan?

→ Introduction:

Local self government is grass root level democracy. It is one of the important tier of democracy. The Constitution of Pakistan ensures local government system and Article 140 of the constitution deals with it. Since the inception of Pakistan, it has grappled into multiple challenges including political instability. Local self governments had not practiced in true spirit. However, it had implemented in era of Ayub Khan, under martial law, and in era of President Pervez Musharraf.

→ Overview of Local Self-Government:

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Self government is grass root level democratic government that resolves issues at lower level. Most of the democratic states in the world has local self government functioning at lower levels. In Pakistan, Article 140 of the constitution ensures local self government.

Local self government has three tiers.

District Level



Tehsil Level



Union ^{council} Level

A candidate selected from union council level and chairman is selected among the winning candidates of union councils.

→ Local Self Governments in Pakistan:

Pakistan has been facing challenges in democratic history. A musical chair of democracy had damaged the democratic norms of country. The dictatorships ran the country for thirty years. However, in between political chaos, there had a culture of local self governments in different ways:

(a) Basic Democracies in Ayoub Khan's Era:

The Field Marshal Ayoub Khan had introduced the concept of basic democracies during his era. It involved the election among candidates from each unit or villages. Later, those candidates elected person to represent him to the National Assembly.

(b) Local Government into 2002-2007:

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self government was introduced in era of President Pervaiz Musharraf. It was called devolution programme and local government's elections was held. The purpose was to decentralized the power.

→ How Local Government is the Essence of Grass-Root Democracy:

Local self government is the essence of grass root democracy in following way.

(i) De-centralization of Power:

Local self government ensures de-centralization of power. The power is devoluted to lower level.

(ii) Nurturing of Local Leadership:

Local governments nurtures local leadership and make youth capable to come up.

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(iii) Addressing Local Issues:

Local self government addresses local issues of public. It also addresses the grievances of people.

(iv) Development of Rural Areas:

Local government is government of lower level and it leads to the development of rural areas.

(v) Accountability and Transparency:

As people have direct access to person holding local government, there is a more chances of accountability.

(vi) Direct Access to Resources:

Local government has allocated funds from the central government. A direct access to resources means development of people.

(vii) Hampers the way of Corruption:

The distribution of powers and funds for development hampers the way of corruption.

→ Challenges in Practice of Local Self Government in Pakistan:

(i) Political Interference:

The first and foremost challenge in practice of local government in Pakistan is political interference. A manipulation of candidate and vested political interests are

(ii) Lack of Awareness:

Another challenge is lack of awareness among masses. People are unaware of their political rights which leads to undemocratic culture.

(iii) Lack of Resources:

In Pakistan, lack of resources lead to not timely holding of local government's election.

(iv) Rampant Corruption:

Rampant corruption in developmental funds hinders the functioning of local government.

(v) Patriarchal Society:

Pakistan: Society is a male dominating society. It does not allow women for political positions. This leads to failure of local government in Pakistan and shadowed the democratic norms.

→ Critical Analysis:

Local governments are part of democratic process in any modern state. All the

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developed countries in the world have functional local governments.

Unfortunately, in Pakistan, it is a part of constitution only, not a system in practice.

These are multitude of factors

behind it. The democratic governmen

ts in the country were not keenly interested in contesting local body elections.

→ Conclusion:

Local government

is the essence of the grass root democracy. It strengthens the democratic culture of any country. It fosters trust of public on the government. Pakistan has not yet gain benefits of local governments. It is the need of hour to ensure local governments in county to make county democratically stable.

