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**Essay Topic:- Democracy in Pakistan : Hopes**

**and Hurdles**

**Outline**

**Thesis Statement-** Democracy in Pakistan has been experiencing both hopes and hurdles. Decade of successive democratic governments, no military intervention and increased political participation have been contributed in hopes regarding democracy. While polarized politics, Gender gap and lack of electoral reforms are some of the hurdles in the way of democracy. However, hurdles can be removed through proper awareness.

**Introduction:-** "I believe that democracy do not go to war; that's the lesson of history, and I think that a democratic Pakistan is the world community's best guarantee of stability in Asia!"

**-Benazir Butto**

**I. Defining the key word**

- A. Government of the People
- B. Government by the People
- C. Government for the People

**II. History of Evolution of Democracy in Pakistan**

- A. Democratic governments in Past
- B. Martial Law
- C. Democracy since 2008

### III: Hopes attached to Democracy in Pakistan

#### A. Successive Democratic govt

1. 2008 - Pakistan People's Party
2. 2013 - Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz
3. 2018 - Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf

#### B. No military interference

Case in point : Pakistan a Garrison State

#### C. Digitalisation of institutions

1. Opinion Sharing through social media platforms
2. Freedom of information
3. Rebirth of democracy in Pakistan through internet.

#### D. Increased Political Participation

1. Voter turnout in 2018 was 51%.
2. Voter turnout in 2008 was 44%.

#### E. Decentralization of Power

Case in Point : 18th Amendment

### Hurdles in the way of Democracy in Pakistan

#### A. Lack of Political Consensus

1. Non-accommodating disposition of the competing interest

2. Open defiance of constitutionalism
3. defiance of norms of democracy

## B. Polarised Politics in Pakistan

1. Undemocratic Political Parties
2. Ethnic divide
3. PDM Coalition

## C. Biased mechanism of accountability

1. Judicial Activism
2. NAB

## D. Biased role of media.

1. Amendment to PECA Act 2018 by PDM government
2. Amendment official secret Act

## E. Low Participation of Women

1. Women vote turnout in 2018 = 40% by PILDAT

2. Male-female voter gap = 9.1%

3. 5% of women in General seat

under section 206 of Election Act 2017.

## F. Lack of Electoral reforms

1. Lack of implementation of laws

2. Manipulation of election

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## V. Way forward

A. Political Consensus

B. Creating awareness in the message

1. Tax Paying

Case in Point - Pakistan Beyond Crisis

## VI. Conclusion

## Essay 1.

"I believe that democracy do not go to war; that's the lesson of history, and I think that a democratic Pakistan is the world community's best guarantee of stability in Asia". - Benazir Bhutto. Democracy is the best form of government. It is not only necessary for the wellbeing of Pakistan but it is also important for the stability of whole region. Democracy is flourishing in the country day by day. Democracy in Pakistan has been experiencing both hopes and hurdles. Decade of successive democratic governments, no military intervention and increased political participation have been contributed in hopes regarding democracy. While polarised politics, gender gap and lack of electoral reforms are some of the hurdles in the way of democracy in Pakistan. However, hurdles can be removed through some proper measures. Pakistan has been experiencing successive democratic governments since 2008. Now Pakistan is not a garrison state because budgetary allocation for human development (like health and education) is more than that of the defense budget. It is facing hurdles of polarised politics and gender gap. For example, there is ethnic divide among the political parties. According to Election Commission of Pakistan 5% of General seats are specified for women in the Election Act 2017. It is urgency to remove the

hurdles from the ways of democracy. So that Pakistan will succeed as an ideal democratic country otherwise it will lead to political instability.

This essay begins with the definition of Democracy and its brief overview. Then, it presents the arguments about the hopes attached with the democracy in Pakistan. Later, it elaborates the facts and gives evidence in clarifying the hurdles to Democracy in Pakistan. At last, it gives ways forward to address the hurdles in the way of democratic government.

Democracy is the government of the people, government by the people and government for the people. Democracy is the government of the people where all people enjoy their fundamental rights. They avail equal opportunity to participate in the electoral process. Democracy is government by the people because they get opportunity to rule and participate in the policy formulation process. Through democracy they get freedom from the vicious autocrats and cruel monarchs. Democracy is the government for the people because here the first and the foremost objective of government should be the wellbeing of general public. It is helpful in abolishing the hierarchical norms of governments. Countries with democratic governments are

more happier and developed than the non-democratic countries.

Evolution of Democracy in Pakistan has been followed a complex path since 1947. Its history can be traced back to 1971. First partially democratic government in Pakistan was established after two decades of independence. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto established government of Pakistan Peoples Party from 1971-1977. But it was interrupted by military coup. Later on Benazir Bhutto enjoyed government with two tenure from 1988-1990 and 1993 to 1996. Then, Pakistan Muslim League under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif ruled from 1990 to 1993 and 1996 to 1999. Pakistan has been grown under four Martial Laws by the military dictators in the 76 years of age. Later, civilian governments were largely dependent upon the civil-military relations. Since 2008, Pakistan has enjoyed three successive governments. It is hope for the future that Pakistan will enjoy consecutive democratic governments without non-civilian interventions.

Hopes have been attached to Democracy in Pakistan. It is because of the successive democratic government since 2008. It has been proved very helpful for the progress of the country. In 2008, Pakistan Peoples Party had made democratic government. After completing its tenure it provided environment for general elections. In 2013 Pakistan

League Nawaz has made government. Finally, in 2018 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf made government. This period of peace and stability gives hope for the democratic governments in the future. Therefore, democracy is the hope for future that it will bright the future of Pakistan.

Non-military interference in the civilian government since 2008 has provided the hope for democracy. In the past <sup>long</sup> military rule has blocked the ways to democracy. First Martial Law was imposed by Military dictator Ayub Khan in 1958. He abrogated 1956 constitution that created constitutional crisis in the country. The second Martial Law was imposed by chief of Army Staff General Yahya Khan in 1969 after abrogating the second 1962 constitution. Third Martial Law was imposed by Army chief General Zia-ul-Haq in 1977. The fourth and the last Martial Law was imposed by General Pervez Musharraf. This long military rule had created fear among the masses. But after 2008 when military stopped interfering in the civilian matter, it has created hopes for democracy in Pakistan. Some analyst assert that Pakistan is facing Garrison State Syndrome. But Ishrat Hussain in his book "Governing the Ungovernable" claims that Pakistan is not a garrison state because budgetary allocation for Defense is less than that of the combined budgetary allocation for education and health. There is a reduction in the military



budget as compared to past. Therefore, it increases hopes for democracy because of non-intervention of military.

Digitalisation of institutions has created hope for democracy in Pakistan. It has played a vital role in the development of democracy. Social media platforms are helpful in opinion sharing. Majority of the people have access to various social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube etc. They have proved very much influential in creating political consciousness. Through <sup>social</sup> media people have got freedom of information that is the essential component of ideal democracy. Political parties are using social media for Propaganda, opinion formation and for election campaigns. Indian Journal of Science and Technology published research in 2023 on the topic "Rebirth of Democracy in Pakistan through internet". It claims that people's have positive attitude in sharing information and subscale of democracy like; devotion to democracy and qualities of democracy. Study claims that internet is an effective tool in exchanging democratic education, values and knowledge in Pakistan. Hence, hope is attached with democracy because of digitalisation of institutions.

Increased political participation has played a significant role in creating hopes regarding democracy. With the passage of time more and more people are actively participation in general elections. They are getting political awareness. Through education

and technology they are getting known about their political rights. It can be seen by overlooking political turnout. Voter turnout in the last general election was more than previous elections. According to Election Commission of Pakistan voter turnout in 2018 election was 57%. While voter turnout in general elections of 2008 was 44%. Voter positive response is the way forward in establishing the democratic government. Thus, increased political participation causes to increase hopes for democracy in Pakistan.

Finally, decentralization of power has created hopes for democracy among the public. It has played an important role in creating peace and political stability. Because there is a huge diversity in Pakistan. People belonging to different castes, ethnicity with different languages are living here. It is necessary for the moderate center-province relations to distribute resources equally. Eighteenth Amendment in the Constitution of 1973 is famous for its decentralization feature. It has given powers to provinces. They have got freedom to use their resources by the permission of center. This is the most important feature of democracy. It will be helpful in the progress of the country as well as political stability. Therefore, decentralisation of power has created hopes for democracy in Pakistan.

The previous section deals with hopes attached with the democracy in Pakistan. It has elaborated the hopes and reason behind those hope. While the following section elaborate the hurdles that democracy in Pakistan has faced. Later it provides evidence in favour of arguments regarding hurdles.

Lack of political consensus is the biggest hurdle in the way of democracy. Pakistan polity is unable to fully develop a consensus on the operational political norms. Whatever understanding developed among the competing interest at one point of time was allowed to filter away with the passage of time. It is because of non-accommodating disposition of the competing interests and an open defiance of constitutionalism and norms of democracy. Hassan Askari Rizvi in his book "Democracy in Pakistan" asserts that the democratic process cannot become functional without a minimum consensus on the operational norms of the Polity. He claims that Pakistan polity is unable to fully develop a consensus. Therefore, Lack of political consensus is the hurdle before democracy in Pakistan.

Polarized politics in Pakistan is another hurdle to democracy. It is one of the leading causes of political instability. Most important reason behind polarised politics is undemocratic political parties. Their manifestos and slogans are playing a role in distributing the nation.

Even mainstream political parties are contributing in it. For example; Pakistan Peoples party and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz are the mainstream political parties but they representing different people. PPP is the party of Sindh while PMLN is the party of Punjab. They are contributing in Ethnic divide. Similarly small ethnic parties like Balochistan Democratic Party (BDP), Baluchistan Nationalist Party BNP, Pashtun Nationalist Party and MQM etc. All these are representing different ethnicities and dividing the nation. Similarly different parties form coalition in order to overthrow the elected government. Therefore, Political Parties have created Polarised Politics which in turn blocks democracy.

Biased mechanism of accountability is an hurdle before democracy. Accountability has an important function in establishing and demolishing the democratic institutions. Fair accountability is mandatory for the wellbeing of Democratic country. Judicial Activism is known example of biased mechanism. It involves the political influence which in turn lead to biased decision. It has influenced by the political reputation of personalities. Similarly National Accountability Bureau (NAB) sometimes plays biased role. Political influence and corruption in NAB leads to biased accountability. Fair accountability is an essential component of ideal democracy. Hence, biased mechanism of accountability is an hurdle to democracy in Pakistan.

Biased role of media is an hurdle to democracy in Pakistan. Media is playing an important role in the development of a country and its institutions. Biased role of media helps in biased opinion making. It hides the truth. There are various factors influencing the biased role of media. It includes political parties, pressure groups, civil society and most of the cases sitting government. Government has put a lot of restrictions on media. Due to this reason media has showed biased attitudes. Pakistan National Assembly has passed various bills and amendments to restrict the role of media. In this case there are "Amendment to PECA Act 2016" and "Amendment Official Secret Act" passed by Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) government. These types of laws bound the media to show biased attitudes. Therefore, biased role of media is a hurdle to democracy.

Gender Gap in political participation is the biggest hurdle in the ways of democracy. This gap is created because of the low participation of women as a voter and as a candidate in the electoral process. According to the research conducted by PL/DAT that women voter turnout in 2018 was only 40%. Male-female voter gap is 9.1% according to the Gallup Survey.

Similarly women have got less opportunities as a candidate. According to Election Commission of Pakistan 5% of women have allotted general seats under section 206 of Election Act 2017. Women has faced lots of hurdles as a voter and as a candidate. This is because of social stereotypes, societies attitudes and Patriarchy. Thus, low women participation is a hurdle to democracy.

Lack of Electoral reforms is an obstacle in the path of democracy in Pakistan. Electoral reforms are very much necessary for the maintenance of democracy. Lack of such reforms cause hurdles. There are lots of laws and amendments regarding electoral reforms but there is lack of implementation. Election manipulation is also a political norm. It leads to demolish democracy. Therefore, Lack of electoral reforms is the hurdle before democracy in Pakistan.

The previous section deals with the hurdles to democracy in Pakistan. They include Polarised politics, gender gap and lack of electoral reforms. The following section deals with the solutions to address the hurdles in the ways of democracy.

Political consensus is a way forward to address the hurdles to democracy. Democratic process cannot become functional without a minimum consensus on the operational norms of the polity state should be spread political awareness among youth through education and social media campaigns. Masses should be aware of their political rights and duties. Political consensus development could deal with polarized politics, biased accountability and other such hurdles. Thus, political consensus is very much important to clearout ways of democracy.

Hurdles in democratic process could be addressed by creating awareness in the message. These hurdles should be handled by a message at national level. Democratic importance should be inculcated in the curriculum of the education. Everyone should understand and perform their role and duties. Malha Lodhe in her book Pakistan Beyond the 'Crisis state' asserts that Pakistan's democracy can make a difference with more tax paying to slowly shift the weight of people votes to support the right side. It means that tax paying is the important duty of masses in democratic country. Therefore, people should understand their rights, duties and worth in order to remove hurdles before democracy.

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In a nutshell, democracy in Pakistan is facing both hopes and hurdles. Hopes are increasing because of successive democratic governments in the last few decades. Non-intervention strategy of military and increased votes turnout has also give hopes to democracy. On the other hand, lack of political consciousness, lack of electoral reforms and low participation of women in politics create hurdles to democracy in Pakistan. Democracy is very much important for the development of a country. However, these hurdles could be overcome through awareness. Therefore, despite its hopes hurdles to democracy need to be addressed at any cost.

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