

# PAKISTANI DEMOCRACY LACKS DEMOCRATIC ETHOS.

## I) INTRODUCTION :-

Thesis statement:- Lack of supremacy of people's mandate, faulty local government structure, and illiteracy have all been present in the political process of Pakistan, thus, augmenting the notion that Pakistan lacks democratic ethos.

## II) DEMOCRATIC ETHOS AND STATE OF DEMOCRACY IN THE WORLD.

## III) PAKISTAN'S DEMOCRATIC ETHOS ARE DEVELOPING FINE : A COUNTER CLAIM.

## IV) WHAT DEMOCRATIC ETHOS ARE AMISS IN PAKISTAN'S DEMOCRACY ?

- A) Paralyzing the development of democratic ethos ; a historical analysis of non-democratic rules.
- B) Flawed electoral process ; undermining power of the vote.
- C) No attention towards grass-root level democracy ; the startling revelations of 2021 KP local government elections.
- D) Illiteracy that leads to shabby political acumen.
- E) Politicians ignoring the masses to cater to the needs of the Elite.
- F) Ignoring women in the political process ; structural flaws in ECP act 2017.

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VI C

## V HOW TO INSTILL DEMOCRATIC ETHOS FOR A BETTER FUTURE.

- A) Increasing the literacy rate and revamping curriculum.

- B) Ensuring participation of women via legislation.
- C) Enstrengthening institution for better rule of law.
- D) Implement Article 140 in letter and spirit.

## VI CONCLUSION.

"Pakistan is a hybrid regime", according to the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index report. It means that it is not a proper democratic state and does not possess the ethos of a liberal democracy. This is not a secret of any sort. Although some people opine that democratic culture takes time to develop and Pakistan has done well <sup>so far</sup>, substantial evidence proves otherwise. Democratic ethos include respect of the electoral process, supremacy of people's mandate, and rule of law. If we look upon Pakistan's situation, all are absent or lacking. The rule of authoritarian figures have been legitimised. The local government structure is faulty. Moreover, women

empowerment and education have not been paid heed to at all.

Is a state truly democratic, where interest of the few are preferred over the whole? Can a state develop democratic ethos with 22 million children out of school? These are deeply entrenched problems but fortunately they can be mitigated. First and foremost, the ~~the~~ literacy rate should be focused upon and then the electoral process. Therefore, lack of supremacy of people's mandate, faulty local government structure, and illiteracy have all been present in the political process of Pakistan; all of which augments the notion that there is a lack of democratic ethos in Pakistan.

Before diving into the arguments it is pertinent to understand, "what are democratic

ethos?" Democratic ethos consist of a myriad of things; from clear electoral process to political participation of all. In a The vote is supreme. Vote is the people's mandate and is respected. Rule of law is another aspect, no matter who is in power, the law is supreme. In a democratic state, participation of all people should be ensured. Therefore, women are also an important part of a democratic state. These are some of the ethos of liberal democracy. In today's world, there has been a ~~is~~ decline in liberal democracy. According to the Freedom House's 2021 report, 36% of democratic states have seen a backslide in democratic ethos. The reasons for it are the onslaught of

COVID-19 and China's economic boom. COVID-19 brought with itself a lot of restriction. China's economic boom challenged the liberal notion of economy.

Some proponents still believe that Pakistan possesses enough democratic ethos. They believe that democracy is a process and takes time. Pakistan has had three successive democratic transitions from 2008 to 2018. In the past, intervention of non-democratic ~~process~~ <sup>forces</sup> was a common thing.

In the past years there has been no apparent intervention. Moreover, with time and social media, more people will become part of the electoral process.

India: a state with 75 years of democratic rule, is still not very far ahead in democratic ethos. Thus, Pakistan's democracy is

is on the right track and will further develop ethos.

On the other hand, it is evident that Pakistan's democracy is devoid of democratic ethos. Firstly, democratic ethos were never allowed a chance to develop by interventionist non-democratic forces. Pakistan has faced 35 years rule of dictatorship. This rule was then legitimised by the political parties and judiciary. This led Pakistan to walk on a dangerous path. The beginning was marred by gargantuan problems. This led to a flawed political culture which has thrived on the empty promises of politicians and illiteracy of the masses. Every authoritarian figure has



molded it to his own acumen. As field marshal Ayub Khan said, "For a western style democracy, we will need God knows how many years". Thus, historically Pakistan was never allowed to develop proper democratic ethos.

Secondly, electoral process is the most important aspect of democracy. In Pakistan, the electoral process has always been the centre of negative attention. The electoral process has twofold problems. One, the electoral process has never been claimed to be fair by the opposition. Since 2008, voices have been raised against it. This lends the layman the belief that his vote does not count. Two, due to the negativity surrounding the process, people do not come out to vote. According to Election Commission

of Pakistan (FCP), less than 50% registered voters participated in the elections in 2018. An important etho is absent in Pakistan's democracy.

Thirdly, grassroots level democracy, which is an important democratic etho has a faulty structure in Pakistan. Local government ensures that the voice of the people is heard by the top echelon of policy makers. According to article 140 of the constitution, provinces will ensure the electoral process at grassroots level yet we see no proper heed is paid to it. Political parties are more inclined to win in Provincial and National assemblies. According to official statistics from 2021

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa local government elections ~~2021~~, 50% winning candidates in Peshawar were independent candidates. This number increased in districts such as Kohat, Hangu, and Kurram.

This shows that political parties are not concerned with local level seats. Hence, grassroots level democracy is second to absent in Pakistan.

Fourthly, the system is inclined to dynastic politics. Bringing new faces and giving <sup>the competent</sup> people a chance to work for the public is a democratic ethos. Unfortunately, it is largely missing in Pakistan. Many parties in Pakistan have leaders who are descendants of a political leader. Moreover, there is no intra-party election system. No member can challenge

The tyrannical or hushful policies of the leader. Sycophants can get a party ticket by appeasing leaders, whereas veterans will be made to wait. Hence, due to lack of intraparty democracy, Pakistan's democratic ethos are not developed.

Fifthly, illiteracy in Pakistan is widespread and it is one of the most important democratic ethos. Education is very important for the democracy of a state. It provides people with a good political acumen. People are better equipped to differentiate between right and wrong. This refines a democracy. In Pakistan, **literacy rate is less than 60%**. This leads to a ↓ political culture <sub>flawed</sub>

Moreover, such people rely on kinship to vote. This is the reason why most landlords and wealthy men are re-elected in Sindh and, South Punjab, and Balochistan. Hence, absence of education augments the notion of absence of democratic ethos in Pakistan.

Sixthly, Democracy is by the people, from the people and for the people. This means that people constitute an important part of democratic ethos. In Pakistan most of the policies are for a very small percentage of people. The mandate of the people is disrespected. According to Ishrat Hussain in his book, *Governing the ungovernable*, Politicians after being elected propose policies for the elite that make them more wealthy. In turn these elites favour them.

financially in the next elections. The populace is excluded from the whole process. How can a democracy have democratic ethos when the say of the people is not even considered?

Lastly, women are an important aspect of democracy. Unfortunately, women take a backseat in the democratic process of Pakistan. They are excluded from the participation process in all manners. Most <sup>female politician</sup> women are overlooked during election process. The Quota seats are occupied by women with strong political background. In addition to that, the discrimination is structural. According to ECP act 2017, a constituency with less than 10% of its registered votes, shall be, its result will be declared void. Yet

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for women, these votes should  
be only equal to 10%  
of the ~~re~~ polled votes, for  
the result to be declared  
fair. Hence, women are not  
part of the democratic process  
of Pakistan.

The ~~is~~ <sup>above mentioned</sup> are grave issues,  
they can only be pacified by  
stringent steps to inculcate  
democratic ethos. Firstly, education  
is very essential for it.  
"Democracy and illiteracy  
cannot move together", this  
quote by Franklin D. Roosevelt,  
aptly sums it up. Pakistan  
should focus on increasing  
its literacy. By putting in out-of-  
school children in schools, we  
can include them in electoral  
process. Moreover, the curriculum  
should be made progressive  
to enlighten people about their  
powers.

Secondly, women should be made part of the process. A state cannot be a true democracy with half of its population out of the process. Laws should be passed where ~~at~~ atleast 5% of all political party seats for elections should be given to women. Filling quota seats will not cut it.

Thirdly, institutions should be strengthened to augment rule of law. Police and district administrations should be made apolitical to ensure good service delivery. The security of tenure should be implemented in letter and spirit.

Lastly, the local government structure is a very important



aspect for democracy. In Pakistan it has widely been ignored. By increasing their authority, it might again become relevant. The Federal government and election commission should ensure timely elections.

In conclusion, components of democratic ethos such as women empowerment, education, rule of law, and a clean electoral process are all missing in Pakistan's democracy. The reasons for it are perennial. Its political trajectory was marked by ~~to~~ non-democratic rules, which set a wrong course for the state. Moreover, we see that even in present times the supremacy of the vote has lost its meaning. Women are excluded out of the

political process systematically.

Can Pakistan be a democratic state with proper democratic ethos? is the question on everyone's mind.

If education and local government are made the priorities then definitely, it can instill democratic ethos in the system.

As the famous dictum goes, "the solution for democracy is more democracy".