

Women Empowerment: Myth or Reality?

OUTLINE

1. Introduction

2. Women Empowerment is a myth (Thesis)

- i) Women are restricted to pursue education
 - 12 million girls are deprived of education in Pakistan
- ii) Women face harassment at public places
 - Dawn, 522 girls were sexually attacked
- iii) Honor Killing of women
 - The UN, 5,000 women are murdered annually
- iv) Society is male dominated
 - Population Research Institute, 24 million female baby selective abortions conducted
- v) Women are helpless against domestic violence
 - Reuters Foundation report, Pak is 5th worst country in terms of domestic violence

3. Women Empowerment exists

- i) Women are more in number than men in educational institutions
 - National Bureau of Economic Research, women outnumber men in education
- ii) Laws has been passed against women harassment
 - The Protection of women at the Workplace Act 2010

iii) Men are also killed in honor killings

- Human Rights Commission, 72 killed in 2023

iv) Women can not perform high risk jobs

- Can not replace in terms of strength

v) Women face domestic violence because

of their wrongdoings

- Extra-marital affairs

4. The myth of women Empowerment outweighs the existence of women empowerment in reality

i) Women are more in numbers in education only in developed countries

- Rural women are unable to pursue education

ii) Laws remained ineffective to eradicate women harassment

- UN Report, 250,000 case of women rape were recorded in 2023

iii) Men are not killed by their families

- Human Rights Commission, 145 women were killed

iv) Women are competing with men in every field

- Women in Army, executive, and judiciary

v) Domestic violence is not dependent on

wrongdoings of women only

- My Feudal Lord by Tehmina Durrani

5. Conclusion

They women Empowerment is a myth

Democracy in Pakistan: Hopes and Hurdles

Outline

1. Introduction

2. Hopes of democracy in Pakistan

- i) Successful transitions of governments
- ii) Absence of military dictatorship
- iii) Positive role of judiciary
- iv) effective provisions of 18th amendment
- v) Increased awareness among public

3. Hurdles of democracy in Pakistan

- i) undemocratic political parties
- ii) Weak role of Election Commission of Pakistan
- iii) Lack of communication between public and political leaders
- iv) illiterate public of the country
- v) prevailed social evils like nepotism and corruption

4. Recommendations for ensuring democracy in Pakistan

- i) establishment of local government setup
- ii) the concerned institution should ensure transparency
- iii) voter turn out should be increased

5. Conclusion

Democracy in Pakistan: Hopes and Hurdles

There are various models of governance exist in the world which assist different nations to manage their affairs. One of the best models among all of them is democratic model of governance. Pakistan also follows this democratic model to govern and run the its state of affairs. Pakistan has various opportunities of ensuring democracy effectively in the form of successful transition of democratic governments, absence of military dictatorship, and positive role played by the judiciary of the country. Moreover, the effective steps taken under 18th amendment for the implementation of democracy and continuously increasing awareness among the public are positive indicators of ensuring better democratic system in the country. Contrary to the opportunities, different challenges such as undemocratic political parties, weak role of election commission of Pakistan and absence of communication between public and political parties restrict the way of democracy in Pakistan. In addition to this, illiterate public of the country and social evils such as nepotism and corruption pose a serious challenge to the nourishment of democracy. But these challenges are not a tough nut to crack. These challenges can be mitigated easily by adopting practical measures such as establishment of

local government setup and having increased voter turnout. To put it shortly, Pakistan has effective hopes of ensuring democracy. But different challenges prevent Pakistan from pursuing democracy effectively. However, these challenges can be mitigated by adopting practical steps.

The first and foremost hope of democracy in Pakistan is the successful transition of government in the country. The country has taken various effective steps for ensuring the successful transition of the governments. As a result of this, the country has experienced successful transition of democratic governments. In 2013 Pakistan Peoples Party transferred the government to another political party known as Pakistan Muslim League. In addition to this, Pakistan Muslim League (PML) transferred government to Pakistan Tehreek Insaf (PTI). In the same way, the government was transferred from PTI to Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM). The democratic principles were also followed by the political parties. When the PDM government decided to hold elections in the country under the requirement of Pakistani constitution, it established a caretaker setup in the country. Therefore, the successful transition of government is a positive sign towards democracy.

Another important hope of democracy is the absence of military dictatorship after Mushraff. The military dictatorship cause to restrict the prevailment of democracy in the country. Pakistan has faced many dictatorial dictatorships. The dictatorship of Ayub Khan, Zia and Mushraff are prominent examples. However, the way of dictatorships has been closed and that is a positive indicator for democracy. For instance, after the dictatorship of pervez Mushraff, the country has not faced any other dictatorship yet. The indirect and direct interventions of the military in the democratic process has been reduced to a certain level. It was general Ashfaq pervez Kiyani, chief of army staff, who took an initiative to reduce the military intervention in the democratic procedure of the country. He forbade military men who were active in the military service to hold any civilian position. Similarly, other initiatives of general Kiyani proved to be helpful in reducing the role of military in democracy. Therefore, the absence of military interventions strengthened the democracy of the country.

Along with limited role of military, the positive role of judiciary also cause to strengthen the democracy in Pakistan. The positive role of judiciary is considered an important pillar for ensuring democracy

in the country. The stance of chief justice of Supreme Court of Pakistan against Mushraff is considered a positive role played by the judiciary for ensuring democracy. The suspension of serving prime ministers, who were found guilty, is another positive achievement of judiciary. The different prime ministers were suspended by the court. Yusuf Raza Gillani, and Nawaz Sharif who were found guilty were suspended by the court. In this way, the positive role of judiciary considered important for the implementation of a successful democratic setup in the country.

In this scenario, the important development came in the form of provisions of 18th amendment that successfully increased the faith of public in democracy. 18th amendment is an important development because it has eroded the any possible way for the implementation of martial law. Whenever a military ruler imposed martial law, it abrogated or suspended the constitution of the country. But in the article 6 of the 18th amendment, it was made clear that the suspension and abrogation of the constitution would be considered high treason. and the person who abrogated or suspended constitution would be hanged. The bar on supreme court was

also ensured for ensuring democracy. Under the article 6, it was made clear that the Supreme Court would not endorse martial laws, as it did in the past. Therefore, the provisions of 18th amendment ensured the democratic process in the country.

With these developments, the public has also gained enough information to understand the democratic process in the country. The information has not remained limited to specific sections of the society but it also has transferred to lower sections. The public has gained information from different social media sites and apps. Now, the access of social media is easily accessible to rural sectors as well. The essence of this awareness can be seen in the questions of the students posed to caretaker Prime minister Anwar ul Haq Kakar. Moreover, the excessive use of social media has informed various sections of the society. The people, ranging from elites to common people has gained enough information regarding the democratic principles. For instance, now the people refrained to endorse martial laws and prefer democracy. Consequently, the awareness among people cause to strengthen democracy.

The previous paragraphs have described the hopes of democracy. The following paragraphs will explain the hurdles of democracy in the country.

One of the major obstacles in the way of democracy is undemocratic political parties of the country. The political parties do not prefer democracy rather they are focused on preserving their vested interests. The political parties in Pakistan are dynastic in nature. The Pakistan People Party (PPP), Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) are major political parties and both are dynastic. Bhutto, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was the founder of PPP but after him his daughter was made chairman. The Zardari and now the son of Zardari Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is the chairman of PPP. Same is the case with PMLN. As Nawaz and Shehbaz Sharif are brothers and their sons and daughters are chairman of PMLN. These political parties do not hold intra-party elections which denotes the democratic structure of the parties. There is not a single major political party that ensures intra-party elections for democratic principles. In this way, these political parties pose a biggest hurdle to democracy in Pakistan.

The second biggest hurdle that restrict democracy to prevail in the country is weak role of Election Commission of Pakistan. The Election Commission of Pakistan is an institution which holds the responsibility to conduct free and fair elections. But the election commission remains fail to fulfill its duty. The elections are blamed for rigging. After 2013, elections, Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf (PTI) clearly spoke about the rigging in election. The Recent elections of 2024, are not being considered fair and free. Sometimes, it also remains fail to fulfill its duty on time. Under Pakistani Constitution, it was made clear that the elections would be held in 90 days after the completion of termure. But election commission of Pakistan remained fail to announce the date and conduct elections within 90 days. Therefore, the weak role of election commission is a serious hurdle in the way of democracy.

The third obstacle in the way of democracy is lack of communication between public and political leaders. This existing gap emerges because the political elite of the country is unwilling to collaborate with the public. This behaviour of the political leaders cause the difference and public prefers to refrain from engaging with political leaders. The public get

discouraged and do not go to cast their vote. They think that why they should support a leader who is not interested to listen to their problems. As a result of this, the democratic nature remain unable to prevail in the country. The political leaders are elected not by the common public but by the elites of a particular society. Therefore, the former minister of finance in Pakistan, Miftah Ismail, has argued that "the democracy in Pakistan is by the elite, for the elite, and of the elite." In this way, the existing gap between political leaders and the public restrict democracy to flourish in Pakistan.

The fourth major obstacle that restrict the nourishment of democracy in the country is the higher number of illiterate public in Pakistan. The illiterate public can not understand their value and the value of democratic system. The illiterate public consider vote mere a piece of paper without realizing its true potential. In rural areas, most of the people do not prefer to vote because they deemed it unimportant. Moreover, the illiterate people remains unaware of the merit of a leader, because they consider it unnecessary. As a result of this, if they go to cast a vote, their vote is casted by

Someone else for another leader or the leader whom the concerned people want to elect. In rural areas, there are various examples where the votes of illiterate are casted by someone else. The thing that makes matter even more worse is that the number of illiterate people in Pakistan is above 60 million. These sixty million are unaware of the democratic principles. Therefore, the illiteracy is a biggest problem in the way of democracy.

The last but not least major obstacle that restrict democracy to prevail in Pakistan is the social evils like nepotism and corruption. The evils diverted the nature of whole democratic process completely and provide opposite results. The evil of nepotism cause to bring the leader who will provide benefits to specific community after he is elected. The people prefers to vote for that specific leader based on different affiliations such as caste. Anotol Lievan in his book, Pakistan: A Hard Country has pointed out the problem of nepotism in the way of democracy. He says that the people prefer to support a specific leader who is from their family and caste. Similarly, the corruption is another social problem which restricts democracy. As a result of corruption, the deserving and

and talented candidates are marginalised and the corrupt leaders are elected. To put it simply, the social evils pose a major challenge to democracy.

The last paragraph paragraphs have summed up the challenges to democracy in Pakistan. Since these challenges are not descended from the heaven, the following paragraphs will present possible solutions.

The first possible solution regarding solving the challenge of democracy is to establish local government setup. This local setup at district level will cause the devolution of power. The people will get a chance to participate in the set-up of government at district level. The centralization of power will be devolved and this will encourage local people to participate. In 2000, a study conducted by World Bank in Pakistan has argued that the local government set up is good for the democracy of Pakistan.

The second solution is that the concerned institution such as ~~work~~ the election commission of Pakistan should ensure transparency in conducting the elections. Every election that is conducted in the country is blamed for rigging. If the problem of election rigging is solved effectively, it will provide chance to flourish democracy in Pakistan. For this

Purpose, the system of electronic voting should be brought in the country to ensure transparency in the elections. In this way, the challenge of democracy in the country could be mitigated.

The third solution is to increase voter turnout to participate in the elections. The voter turnout rate remains low because of the mass illiteracy and conservative attitude of society. In response to this, the initiatives should be taken to convert out of school children into in of school children. The poor parents should be provided incentives and scholarships so that they can send their children to school. Furthermore, the husbands, who restrict their wives to cast their vote, should be taught and encouraged to allow their wives to cast vote. In this way, the challenge of democracy could be resolved effectively.

In conclusion, it can be said that the Pakistan has innumerable hopes for promoting democracy but the various internal challenges prevent the country to pursue democracy effectively. By following practical steps these challenges can be mitigated. The various hopes of democracy are successful, transition of governments, positive role of judiciary and increased awareness

among the common public of the country. Opposite to hopes, there are staggering challenges such as weak role of election commission, illiterate public of the country, and undemocratic political parties. In response to these challenges, establishment of local governments at district level, strengthened role of election commission and increased voter turn out proved to be viable solutions. The developed nations have adopted the true nature of democracy and making a progress. In developed countries, the normal challenges of democracy do not exist. In the same manner, the true nature of democracy can also be ensured in Pakistan. If the true form of democracy such as social democracy is adopted in the country, it can outshine its neighbours in its progress. The day is not far enough when the social democracy will be enacted in Pakistan.

