

DEMOCRACY IN PAKISTAN: HOPES AND HURDLES

1 - Introduction

2 - Historical glimpses
of democracy in
Pakistan

3 - Hopes for democracy
in Pakistan:

a) - Awareness among the
people

b) - Active participation of
the youth in politics.

c) - Supremacy of the Constitution

d) - Active role of opposition

e) - Consensus between the government and opposition for the appointment of the Chief of Election Commission

f) - Devolution of power

g) - Right of peaceful procession

4- Hurdles in the avenue of democracy in Pakistan:

a) - Interference of non-democratic institutions

b) - Suppressed freedom of speech

c) - Compromised Judiciary

d) - Aristocratic rule

e) - Feudal Socialist societies

f) - Weak Institutions

g) - Economic Crisis

5- Conclusion

"Government of
the people, by
the people, for
the people."

(Abraham Lincoln)

Democracy is the kind of rule, which highlights the significance of people's will. Mostly countries in the world have adopted this form of government. Likewise, Pakistan has also acquired the democratic framework for its political horizon. Unfortunately, the infrastructure of democracy in Pakistan has been struggling to achieve its zenith, since its inception.

Additionally, it has witnessed many hopes for its revival and continuation in the country. Those hopes are not helping the citizens of the state in the achievement of prosperous lives, but also pave

the way of democracy, to flourish. Among those inspirations include awareness among the people, active participation of the youth in politics and right of peaceful processions. These all motivations are the main characteristics of democracy. Therefore, they try their best to make the route clear for democracy in the country.

On the other hand, there are various hurdles in its pathway to thrive. Some of those impediments include interference of non-democratic institutions in the state's affairs, suppressed freedom of speech and compromised judiciary. These all steps are poisonous for the democratic branch of the country. These all are against the stance of democracy. Thus, Pakistan is a democratic country, but it has been moving in an amalgamation of hopes and hurdles in the country.

Historically, Pakistan has seen political rift, which has crippled the democracy of the country. Since the establishment of Pakistan, two types of governments have been racing to win the political realm of the country. Among those two candidates, one is autocracy and the other is democracy. Albeit after some autocratic rule, democracy empowered the politics of Pakistan. Since 2008, Pakistan has been facing democracy in its circle of politics, but it has been manipulated multiple times by non-democratic institutions. However, democracy in Pakistan has been surviving and endeavouring since the dawn of its beginning.

Additionally, there are innumerable things which make ~~the~~ the channel of democracy vivid to grow. Those arousings are as described below:

First, awareness among the

people makes the democratic infrastructure robust and potent in the country. It incites the inhabitants of the state to raise their voice for their rights. This thing enhances the perception of political knowledge of the people. These steps are the major prerequisites of democracy. According to the ministry of information and technology, the extensive use of social media platforms has increased the awareness of the people, regarding the internal affairs of the country. Therefore, awareness among the people reinforces the roots of democracy in Pakistan.

Second, active participation of the youth in the politics of Pakistan clears the conduit of democracy in the country. It is also the core principle of the rule of people-democracy. It highlights the strength of people before political elite of the country. According to the

report of election commission of Pakistan, the election of 12th general assembly of Pakistan has highlighted the urgency of active involvement of the energetic sector of the society in the political campaign to win the plebiscites.

No doubt, it is the young generation of the country, who plays significant role in the progress of the state.

Therefore, active participation of the youth in the political horizon of Pakistan paves the way of democracy to grow in the country.

“Democracy requires participation to thrive.”

(Japanese adage)

Third, supremacy of the constitution in Pakistan streamlines the tunnel of democracy in the country. It is the major condition of democracy. As

the rights of the people are enshrined in the constitution, it becomes obligatory upon the state to fulfil those ~~are~~ reservation. Therefore, the country has witnessed the ascendancy of the constitution even during the time of extreme political upheaval. **According to the Constitution of Pakistan, Article 19 allows the right of freedom of speech.** It manifests that the country's constitution allows the state's inhabitants to echo their voices for their reservations. Thus, the hegemony of the constitution clears the way of democracy in the country.

Fourth, active role of opposition makes the way of democracy, clean and clear in the country. Since the elections of 2013, the country has been witnessing the active role of opposition. It implants the wave of responsibility in the ruling government. It is the main feature of democracy. **According**

to the Election Commission of Pakistan, kinetic behaviour of opposition has increased the level of transparency and liabilities among the state's government. It shows that the present attitude of opposition is imperative for the growth of the country. Thus, active role of opposition streamlines the channel of democracy in the country.

ee

Positive attitude of opponent leaders is necessary for the prosperous life of the state's denizens under the rule of democracy."

-

(Benjamin Franklin)

Fifth, consensus between the government and opposition for the

appointment of the chief of election commission is good for the democratic infrastructure of the country. It brings two rival forces on a table of discussion. It develops the sense of harmony, unity and cohesion for the cause of Pakistan's prosperity. Indeed, it is also essential for the citizens of the state. It is because it helps in the reduction of politicization in the society of Pakistan. Thus, consensus between the ruling ~~group~~ party and the opposition group is good for the democracy of Pakistan.

Sixth, devolution of power streamlines the process of the rule of people in the country. It helps in the elimination of reason of chaos and fight between the federation and federating units. It brings smoothness in the working phenomena of the country. It paves the way for the solution of people's problems at grassroot level. Meanwhile, it spreads the wave of calmness among the

states citizens. According to the renowned newscaster - Hamid Mir, The 18th amendment has reduced power conflict between the centre and provinces. It highlights the significance of devolution of power for the welfare of the country's citizens. Therefore, division of power paves the way for democracy in the country.

Last, right of peaceful procession is the significant characteristics of democracy; it clears the way of democracy in Pakistan. This right of the state's citizen has been enshrined in the constitution of Pakistan.

Therefore, the people of Pakistan have prerogative of peaceful protest. The political history of Pakistan ~~has~~ is filled with righteous sit-ins. As it is the key feature of democracy, it paves the channel of the rule of people in Pakistan.

On the other side, there are some

hurdles in the avenue of democracy in Pakistan. Those obstructions are stopping it to attain full bloom in the country. They are as described below:

First, interference of non-democratic institution in the realm of politics halts the way of democracy in Pakistan. It is the regime of people, by the people and for the people. Therefore, it highlights the hegemony of people in all the matters of the state.

Averse to this stance of democracy, the country has witnessed frequent intervention of non-democratic department in internal affairs of the country. Specially, at the time of general assembly elections, those departments have been interfering their activities and have been manipulating the results of elections.

According to the report of election commission of Pakistan, turnout of elections of 2024 has reduced to the turnover of the election of general assembly.

bly 2018 - notably 47.6% from 52.1%. It manifests the ignorance of people's will through manoeuvring. Therefore, involvement of non-democratic institutions chokes the development of democracy in Pakistan.

Second, suppressed freedom of speech strangles democracy in Pakistan. It requires complete freedom of people to flourish. It is the one of the major conditions to survive and to streamline the political phenomena and processes of the country. Unfortunately, the state of Pakistan has been taking those steps which are derailing the democratic infrastructure in the country. The enforcement of peca-act is totally against the notion of freedom of speech of democracy. This bill has been ^{decimating} ~~doing~~ stifling the democratic structure of Pakistan. Thus, suppressed freedom of speech clogs democracy in the country.

"Freedom without
democracy is
meaningless."

(Benjamin Franklin)

Third, compromised judiciary also hampers the way of democracy in Pakistan. It demands independent judiciary for the solution of people's problem without any prejudice.

Unfortunately, political elite and some powerful departments of Pakistan have been harming the integrity of judicial system of the country by adopting some notorious alterations. According to

the famous newscaster of Pakistan — Kamran Khan, the 26th amendment in the constitution of Pakistan has reduced the authority of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. It portrays that some influential institutions are

eroding the authorities of judicial system of Pakistan. It is utmostly against the teachings of democracy. Hence, compromised judiciary averts the avenue of democracy in Pakistan.

Fourth, aristocratic rule is against the stance of democracy, derailling it in Pakistan. It is the rule of a person due to influence of his family. It means that one is born to govern and other to be governed. Conversely in democracy, everyone has equal opportunity for growth either in the field of politics or engineering without any biasness. On the opposite to it, political elites in Pakistan has adopted the notion of aristocracy to maintain the ascendancy of their families in the politics of Pakistan. According to the report of New York Time newspaper, the regime of

Pakistan is in the hands of few political parties. Hence, aristocratic rule halts the way of democracy in Pakistan.

“Unchecked power is the end of democracy.”

(Famous adage)

Fifth, feudal socialist societies derails democracy in Pakistan. It is basically the hegemony of few powerful elites in societies. Those strong persons resolve the issue of local people and in response they coerce them to vote ~~the~~ the party with which they belong. According to the report of New York Time newspaper, feudal culture in Pakistan plays a significant role in the establishment of government. Since independence,

Pakistan has been watching waders system. This typical man is against the democratic teachings because it strips of people from the right of exercise of their will. Thus, feudalist culture of Pakistan averts the way of democracy in the country.

Sixth, weak institutions stop the growth of democracy in Pakistan. The hegemony of people requires strong and robust institutions for the protection of their privileges. On the contrary, the country possesses weak institutions, allowing public office holders exploit the resources of the country without any fear of accountability.

According to the ^{report} of International Transparency Corruption Perception Index, Pakistan is ranked at 135 out of 180 countries.

This report highlights the weaknesses of institutions, which are unable to prevent the exploitation

of the country's limited exchequer. It causes the dismal condition of state's citizens. However, weak institutions derail democracy in Pakistan.

“

Greasing the
palm is the
cancer of
democracy.”

(Thomas Roosevelt)

Lastly, economic crisis averts the pathway of democracy in Pakistan. It is an established fact that prosperity of peoples depends upon their good economic condition. The economic growth of people relies upon economic prosperity of a state. Unfortunately, Pakistan has been facing economic doldrums due to innumerable reasons. This thing

stifles the rights of people. According to the Ministry of Finance of Pakistan, the country has knocked 24 times at the door of the IMF for financial help. This fact highlights the chronic economic plight of the country. Meanwhile, it is the major reason behind the woeful condition of the state's inhabitants. Thus, economic crisis halts the way of democracy in Pakistan.

In a nutshell, the growth of a state depends upon the support of its people. It highlights the importance of people's will for the management of state's affairs. It is the basic stance of democracy. Therefore, the progress of Pakistan is in between hopes and hordes because it adopts some features of democracy and some characteristics

of other forms of governments, halting the avenue of democracy in the country.

Evidently, some footsteps toward democracy include awareness among the people, and devolution of powers. On the opposite, some impediments in the way of democracy in Pakistan include suppressed freedom of speech and compromised judiciary. Thus, democracy in Pakistan is a hotch-potch of hopes and hurdles.

“Democracy is
a journey,
not a destination.”

(Seesley)