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Essay:

"Democracy in Pakistan is a myth"

Outline

1. Introduction

- (i) Attention grabber
- (ii) General statement
- (iii) Thesis statement: Pakistan's democratic journey has oscillated between fragile institutions and persistent authoritarian regimes leaving the economic growth stunted and citizens disillusioned.

2. Dynastic politics in Pakistan has made democracy a myth

- (i) Generational politics of Sharif family in Pak is since 1990
- (ii) Dynastic politics of Bhutto family

3. Recurrent military interventions have made democracy a myth in Pakistan.

- (i) Martial laws of 1958, 1969, 1977, 1999 created instability in Pakistan.

4. Macro corruption in Pakistan has made democracy a myth.

- (i) Panama Leaks (2016)
- (ii) Pakistan ranked 135 least corrupt country out of 180 in CICI

5. Authoritarianism and selective governments have made democracy a myth in Pakistan

- (i) Ruling parties backed by establishment.
- (ii) Rigged elections of 2024

6. No separation of power in Pakistan has made democracy a myth.

- (i) Oppressed judiciary
- (ii) Inefficient taxation institutes

7. Diversity and pluralism made democracy a myth in Pakistan

- (i) Sectarian and ethnic divisions
- (ii) Sectarian riots in Pakistan in name of democracy.

8. Rule by law policies in Pakistan has made democracy a myth.

- (i) Poor implementation of laws and policies.
- (ii) Shallowness of justice and judiciary
- (iii) Strict laws for poor and free-hand to elites.

9. Non-Transparency and unaccountability has made democracy a myth.

- (i) Non-transparent institutes of taxation, judiciary, electives and politics.
- (ii) Unaccountability of ruling elites, military officials and bearucrates.

10. Way forward to shatter the narrative that 'democracy in Pakistan is a myth.'

- (i) Separation of power between institutes
No interference in executive, legislative and judicial bodies in Pakistan.
- (ii) Replacing 'rule by law' with 'rule of law'
strict and effective implementation of laws across the country.
- (iii) Breaking the vicious circle of dynastic politics
Creating space and promoting new talent and intellect in politics.

11. Conclusion

The ^{ough} democratic fibre in Pakistan is corrupted, it can be fixed by mutual efforts between government and civilians.

The Essay

"Democracy is never a finished project. It is a constant negotiation between liberty and responsibility - Václav Havel." The essay "democracy is a myth in Pakistan" elaborates social unrest, political instability, weak institutions and civilian-government gaps in Pakistan. For a third world country like Pakistan, democracy plays a prudent role in shaping economic and diplomatic structure. Democracy can pull a state to heights of development and success or can push down to the lows of authoritarian regimes and collapsed economies. Unfortunately, Pakistan is a country with flawed democratic order. Democratic fibre of Pakistan is corrupted at all individual and institutional levels. Since independence, Pakistan and its people are struggling to have true democratic, independent state where rule of law is prioritized instead of rule by law. Despite struggling with authoritarianism and injustice, the sorcery is

neither the ruling elites nor the commoners are giving their consent for a true democratic system. The ills of unaccountability and injustice have rotten their roots.

To understand how democracy is a myth in Pakistan, let's explore its multidimensional aspects rooted in political and institutional failure. Democracy contradicts with monarchy. It believes in the consent of people & their liberty. But in the greater picture of Pakistan democracy is backed by dynastic politics. The vicious circle of dynastic politics congruent to monarch system has made democracy a myth in Pakistan. For instance, Sharif family is ruling Pakistan since 1990, consecutively accompanied by dynastic politics of Bhutto family since 1970s. This shows how democracy of Pakistan has been a rigorous victim of dynastic politics. These two ruling families of Pakistan had always an upper-edge of controlling people of Pakistan in the name of their forefathers. Whereas in reality,

the rule of Bhutto family for more than a half century now and of Sharif family for more than three decades has caused decline of democracy and institutionalism in Pakistan. This made people believe that dynastic politics in Pakistan has made democracy a myth.

Recurrent military interventions in the government of Pakistan is a significant evidence to prove how democracy is a myth in Pakistan. Martial laws of 1958 (Iskander Mirza), 1969 (Gen Yahya Khan), 1977 (Gen Zia ul Haq) and 1999 (Gen Pervez Musharraf) pushed Pakistan to the brink of economical and political collapse. When the constitution of any state like Pakistan prohibits military interference in government affairs but still military intervenes then state is pushed to downfall. General Yahya Khan himself said, "The constitution of Pakistan is mere a piece of paper." After all these military interventions in a democratic state, Pakistan

has been pushed to deep dark well of instability and chaos. Even today, Pakistan is still struggling with its economic and political stability. Such interventions and dictatorships by coups lead to democratic failure making people believe democracy as a myth.

Democracy ensures thoughtful use of state's assets and funds but Pakistan has always fallen a prey to massive corruptions and immense waste of country's assets. Panama leaks (2016) exposed offshore luxury flats of ruling elite, the Sharif family in London. The illegal properties of politicians made of civilian's tax and hard earned money. Corruption in any state or institute makes it shallow and ineffective. Same is the case with Pakistan. Massive corruptions by few federal and cabinet ministers as well as by bureaucrats has eroded the people's trust in government and democracy. Corruption destroys the international image

of any state. Pakistan ranked 136 out of 180 least corrupted countries in the world-global corruption index. For a country like Pakistan where corruption is deeply rooted, effective policies and institutional framework is required to regain people's trust in democracy.

History bears witness that rise of authoritarianism and dictatorship has always ousted democratic regimes. Today, Pakistan is also exposed to authoritarianism and selective governments witnessing a downfall of democracy across the state. Vote of no confidence motion against former prime minister Imran Khan and on the record massive rigging in the elections of 2024 (replacing form 45 by form 47 and delay in announcing results) depicts the rise of authoritarianism and downfall of democracy in Pakistan. When the ballot paper and consent of civilians is misused, world witnesses a poor mockery of democracy and governance.

This erodes public trust in leaders and institutes leading to countrywide protest and instability. Whereas democracy talks of people's choice and opinion but this proves democracy is a myth in Pakistan.

Democracy defines separation of powers and institutional independence while there is no separation of power in executive, legislative and judicial bodies. Corrupt politicians and ruling elites mold and reform the law of state according to their convenience. The 26th Constitutional amendment act, highlighting amendment in article 175A of constitution of Pakistan limiting the powers of judiciary is enough evidence to prove how democracy is mocked and played in Pakistan. The amendment deals with the interference of politicians and executives in judicial and legislative bodies. This interference and undue use of power disrupts the democratic structure of Pakistan. Misuse of power erodes the

the justice system of any state. That is why injustice and delayed justice is significant social issue of Pakistan. Other than judiciary, the tax system of Pakistan is also flawed and corrupted leading Pakistan towards economic instability. These structural flaws can only be fixed with institutional reforms.

A democracy is not measured by the freedom of majority but by the protection of minorities - Albert Camus. The quote highlight the importance of majority and minorities unity in a democratic state. Independence accompanied by human rights and their protection forms a true democratic states. Whereas in case of Pakistan ethnic division, sectarian riots and cultural diversity has proved a setback for its democracy. A culturally rich and diverse state like Pakistan can easily cash the moment by promoting tourism through it but unfortunately this diverseness became a victim of cunning politics. Pakistan

had a great opportunity to earn through its culture but politicians used ethnicity and cultural diversity for their cruel purpose. These populist leaders build different narratives against oppositions leading to aggressive mob killings and violence. The Shia-Sunni riots and Baluch-Punjabi conflicts over resources are evident examples of sectarian divide in Pakistan. A true democratic state creates a balance between provinces, majority and minorities. Democracy abolishes all bodies of sectarian division and promotes unity. That is why democracy in Pakistan is a myth.

Democratic states highly prioritize rule of law across the country. Every stands equal in front of law. But the events in the history of Pakistan has proved that Pakistan runs on 'rule by law' policies. Here laws are made to suppress civilians by usurping their rights. All the frameworks of laws

and constitutional amendments are just words sleeping on a piece of paper. The laws in Pakistan are meant to promote and protect elites, suppressing and neglecting the commoners. Judges and lawyers usually accept hefty bribes to favour the elites by announcing favourable decision. In Pakistan, justice is not served until you start protesting with civilian support e.g. **lawyers movement (2007)** - **black coats** in streets against a **dictator to reinstate judiciary**. It is the irony that even after 78 years of independence, a democratic state is still struggling with true democracy, rule of law and faithful governments. There would be no offense to mention that 'power' is the rule of law in Pakistan. The institutional framework and system of Pakistan runs on the ideology of '**Might is right**'. Henceforth, it summarizes that democracy in Pakistan is indeed a myth.

Above all these deeply rooted ills in the democracy of Pakistan, unaccountability and non-transparent institutes is significant. In a democratic state leaders, ministers, judges, bureaucrats and military officials all are accountable to their public for their post and services.

For example, the transparent government and democracy in Norway and Scandinavian countries (listed among top democratic countries). Accountability and transparency of institutes in any democratic states build public trust in institutions as well as in government. But in Pakistan accountability means promoting favouritism. State and institutes will favour the favourite and corrupt one so that ^{one} no will unleash the ills of system. The big companies and small scale industries avoid tax registration leading to tax evasion in Pakistan. From a common citizen to ruling elite, everyone wants to enjoy services without accountability.

Delayed justice, corruption, flawed bureaucracy and non-transparent institutes are all the results of unaccountability in Pakistan.

To ensure democracy, government must ensure accountability of all officials as well as institutes.

Though democratic structure in Pakistan is flawed and encrypted yet it is not an illusive dream to achieve. With few democratic and structural reforms Pakistan can achieve democracy. Separation of power between institutes and freedom to act independently is the foremost need of Pakistan to achieve democracy in true sense. When institutes are allowed to act freely without any political interference, it improves the efficiency of institutes. In this way, every institute will be limited to its domain and will be accountable for its services only.

The separation of power between institutes promote transparency, effectiveness and self accountability.

Democratic history of Pakistan is running over the policy of 'rule by law' instead of rule of law. Whereas highly democratic states like Norway and Scandinavian countries ~~to~~ strictly abide by the rule of law. Generally, rule of law in any state promises equality and democracy. Thus in Pakistan, the narrative 'democracy is a myth' can be shattered by replacing rule by law with rule of law. Rule of law brings equality, justice, stability and peace in a state. Implementation of laws among all classes and accountability will ensure rule of law in Pakistan clearing its path towards democracy. Democracy in Pakistan can be lived reality when it will drop the marxist behaviour and make everyone equal as well as accountable in the eyes of law. Policies and laws will be effective only if their implementation is transparent and equal.

Dynastic politics is an enignorable hurdle hindering Pakistan's way to achieve true democracy. Dynastic politics promotes monarchy and ignores democracy. The government of two ruling families (Sharif and Bhutto) for last 50 years has destroyed the democratic fibre of Pakistan. In an evolutionary world of economic and trade wars, Pakistan needs highly intellectual and fresh talent to hold the institutions bringing revolutionary changes in the traditional democracy of Pakistan. The institutions and system need structural reforms to allow and promote young intellect so that they may pursue a transparent, well-accountable and true democracy. Allowing the young talent in democracy and making space for new commers will bring innovative ideas to repair the flawed democratic structure such as digitalization of institutions and governance.

In a nutshell, democracy in Pakistan for the time being now is a myth.

but not an illusive dream to accomplish. Today, Pakistan is exposed to many democratic failures like institutional instability, unaccountability, dynastic politics, military interventions, authoritarianism and corruption yet it still holds a hope for brighter future and a country with true democracy. A faltering democracy may be slow and noisy but it still remains the best hope against tyranny of power. The democracy that is just a myth in Pakistan will be a lived reality in near future because myths are meant to be shattered one day. The people of Pakistan, against all odds still hope for a democratic and developed Pakistan. A legendary poet Ahmad Faraz wrote a verse,

- Though the evening of grief
is long but still it is just
an evening.