

Where Does The True Democracy Come From?

“DEMOCRACY IS A STATE WHERE THE FREE MEN AND THE POOR, BEING IN MAJORITY ARE VESTED WITH THE POWER OF THE STATE, THE MOST PURE DEMOCRACY, FOR THAT IS WHAT THE LAW IN THE STATE DIRECTS. (ARISTOTLE)

The 64 years history of Pakistan stands evident of the fact that true democracy is a word unknown to this land of the pure. It is unfortunate that the country which was created on the basis of democratic values remains deprived of the true spirit and essence and taste of democracy even after good six decades of independence. Why democracy fails to come to Pakistan or where does the true democracy come from? This is a million dollar question that has echoed throughout in the political history of Pakistan. The true democracy is the only remedy for all the miseries this nation has suffered during the 64 years. Since its inception, the most difficult challenge Pakistan had to counter was to establish a true democratic system, which could guarantee its survival, stability and development. Unfortunately, democracy could not find its place in Pakistan to make the country “a true democratic state”. Pakistan was conceived on the basis of Islam, which is democratic both in letter and spirit. It is indeed very unfortunate that the plant planted by Quaid-e-Azam and watered by the blood of millions of Muslim men, women and children has not thrived in the country. In other words, we have not proved worthy of the freedom achieved after immense sacrifices. After the sad demise of Quaid-e-Azam and Shaheed-e-Millat Liaquat Ali Khan, the spirit of freedom movement died down and selfish interests and political intrigues dominated the national scene.

Democracy has its origin in ancient Greece. However, other cultures have contributed significantly to the evolution of democracy such as ancient Rome, Europe and North and South America. The concept of representative democracy arose largely from ideas and institutions that developed during the European middle ages and the age of enlightenment and in the American and French revolutions. Democracy has been called the last form of government and has spread considerably across the globe.

Democracy ensures balance among all the organs of the state. It comes from rule of law, supremacy of the constitution, independence of judiciary, public participation in decision making, accountability and transparency. Its advent is ensured when decision making and policy formulation are done keeping in view the aspirations of the common man. It is the power to govern as per the consent of those being governed, that is why it is called as the government of the people, by the people and for the people.

One of the factors which can be held responsible for the failure of democracy has been the weak and fragile political fabric that has led to repeated interventions

and punctuations in democratic governments through military coups. Out of a total six decade history, this country has remained entrapped in the oppressive clutches of dictatorship for more than three decades. Unfortunately, whosoever assumed the government, strived for the satisfaction of his own politically, materially and financially charged vested interests at the cost of country's progress and economic development? There ill-designed ruling techniques brought in the culture of extremism, religious and ethnic prejudices and violation of the constitution. Whether it was Zia's slogan of islamisation or Musharraf's propaganda of being non NATO ally of the US in war on terror — all contributed negatively and adversely to the cause of national development.

Democracy is regarded as the most fabulous principle of modern governing system but unfortunately, the need of establishing a true democracy has been a dream ever since Pakistan came into being. Democracy is the culmination of freedom and development in advanced countries. In Pakistan however, the already difficult situation has been aggravated by constant failures which never let democracy survive. The development of democracy has been hampered by the troublesome legacies of the military regimes, including ethnic fragmentation, provincialism, sectarianism, concentration of wealth and privileges in the hands of a selected few.

Democracy in its simplest basic form is about giving people the right to elect their government. The aim is to create stability and certainty in the society by establishing a system under which a government can be created and changed peacefully. While thinking in Pakistani perspective, the question about democracy points towards what it could and must have done instead of inherent weakness in the system. It is debatable whether military dictators have outperformed civilian governments or vice versa. But realistically, except for the government that came in 2002, no civilian government after 1985 was allowed to complete its tenure. The issues of economic growth and investments were highlighted more during democratic periods than during dictatorships.

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Historians and analysts are also of the view that democracy is an evolutionary system that does not come as a template. There may have popular principles like sovereignty, or representative governments but these have to be rooted in the socio-economic culture of the country.

The quality of democracy and its stability has thus depended generally on the growth of the middle class which has expanded and continues to rise. But the fact of the matter is that middle class is neither organic nor ideologically homogeneous. The Pakistani middle class may not be seen as yet in the elected assemblies but it occupies alternative spaces of influence in the robust civil

society movements.

Pakistan may remain a transitional democracy until it has at least the peaceful transfer of power through elections. Our elected representatives have a heavy burden to disprove the sceptics inside and outside the country by forming coalitions.

The dire need is to utilise the democratic system for the betterment of a common man. It is a collective social enterprise that cannot be left for the powerful elites. To make the country vibrant, viable and prosper, drastic measures need to be applied. The education should be circulated from the top to the bottom. The opportunity to get education should be on equal basis for the rich and poor. Education is the only tool through which we can attain our cherished goal by making our country prosperous developed and progressive. As the literacy rate is increased in the country, the true democracy and effective democratic political process would begin.

Good governance makes stabilised institutions and fix roots of democracy deep in the corners of the countries. Bereft of good governance in Pakistan, our nation cannot establish its supremacy in the world comity. It is the good governance that can make democracy viable in the successive futures.

Moreover, feudal system should be abolished to make fair and square elections so that rural and urban inhabitants would choose the capable candidates for them. The remedy lies in the words of Lord Beveridge,

“Power as a means of getting things done appeals to that men share with brutes; to fear and greed; power leads those who wield it to desire it for its own sake, not for service it render, and to seek its continuance on their own hands. Influence as a means of getting things done appeals to that which distinguishes men from brutes. The way out of world’s troubles today is to treat men as men, to enthrone influence over power and to make power revocable”.

If we want to make Pakistan a really lasting democracy, we must act on the above advice. Then only, we shall enter in the reign of true democracy and the people will manage their own affairs instead of being dupes and pawns in the hands of dishonest men.

Democracy is a way of life. It is not just about documents or governments. It is about the things we do everyday that contribute to society and make it a better place to live.