DEMOCRACY IN PAKISTAN

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“Government of the people, by the people, for the people”

This is what Lincoln has to say about Democracy. The above statement of this great statesman says it all. A form of Government which is made for the people by the people around and it consist of the people from within.

It is the most basic form of Government which is praised by many in our times. The adults have their say in the important decision making of their lives and this is how the rules of the Government are made. The adults of a nation give their votes to the leader and the leaders then drive the Government for the betterment of the people.

This is what Democracy is all about but it is not in the purest of its form at this moment. A huge total of 167 countries in the world are running under the form of Government which is called Democracy and Pakistan is one of those countries.

Different types of democracies prevail in Pakistan at different times. The constitution of Pakistan is now a backing a Parliamentary form of Government but in the previous constitutions like 1962 and 1956, we had Presidential form of Government. The constitution at this moment is an amended version of 1973, which is following the Parliamentary form of Government.

According to Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the Quaid-e-Azam,

“Pakistan is made for the betterment of the people living in it. People will themselves select their Leader and it’s the responsibility of the Leader to fulfill the needs of the people and work day and night for this Motherland.”

From the day of inception of Pakistan, the people are struggling for a better form of Government and they have selected Democracy as the best one. But it’s a misfortune for the people of Pakistan that the democracy could not continue for long and it is derailed off and on. Military rules have dented Pakistan’s Democracy 3 times in the history of just 65 years. People like Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto struggled a lot for the revival and sustainability of Democracy. According to him,

“People of Pakistan deserve better fortune when it comes to Democracy. It is a great nation and Democracy is the best system for this nation. Let the Democracy prevail and see the Nation flourish in front of your eyes.”

In another address, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto explained the importance of Democracy for Pakistan

“The only solution for the problems of Pakistan is the sustainability of Democracy. This will help reducing the monsters like Corruption, Poverty, illiteracy and unemployment and Pakistan can get back to the track of prosperity.”
According to the Democratic index of 2011, Pakistan is on the 106th number in the world with a democratic score of just 4.55. Norway is at the top of the chart with a score of above 9.5. When we see the poverty index, we see Norway at the top with least poverty and Pakistan is above 100th ranking again. We can clearly see a connection between democracy and poverty reduction. According to Prosperity Democracy theory by Robert Petric:

“A country having a better ranking in the Democratic index will be having a better ranking in the Poverty reduction index. So there is a connection in both and we can clearly obtain a result that Democracy is a solution for poverty reduction in a nation.”

The actual democratic states are the one which are also the welfare states. The states like Norway, Denmark and Finland are the welfare states. The people select the people who are going to lead the country and the people then work hard for the betterment of the people who select them. They work for the welfare of the people and take the leadership as a pure responsibility towards the state and towards the people as well.

Leaders in Pakistan also promise the well being of the people of Pakistan in their speeches. They use to use the word ‘Welfare State’ for Pakistan but still they are unable to perform the same. According to Mian Nawaz Shareef,

“We will make Pakistan a Welfare state through our policies and hard work”.

Still Pakistan is waiting for this promise to be fulfilled.

General Pervez Musharraf dethroned Nawaz Shareef to capture the steering of the Government. It was the time when the leaders of Pakistan who support Democracy came up and started yelling about the importance of Democracy. Benazir Bhutto also started her campaign against this brutal act of Musharraf and asks the people of Pakistan to help them keep democracy on track. In an address, Benazir Bhutto once said,

“This act by Gen. Pervez Musharraf turned out to be a real brutal act towards the prosperity of Pakistan. People of Pakistan need their mandate to be given respect and Musharraf has tortured the mandate under his boots. Let the Democracy prevail in Pakistan”.

Many people didn’t like the act of dethroning the democracy in Pakistan but many had other views. According to a school of thought, Musharraf overpowered Nawaz Shareef for the betterment of the country which is the real crux behind the concept of Democracy. Democracy means the betterment and prosperity of the nation and Musharraf did it well. Nawaz Shareef government was indulged in Corruption which was the reason of its discontinuation.

According to an article in The World Today by Senior Columnist,

“On paper, Musharraf’s act was not praised as it was the discontinuation of Democracy in Pakistan but in real sense he followed the rules of Democracy in his regime. People get jobs, HDI get better,
Foreign direct investments increase, people get prosperous and Pakistan was doing good, which is the real democracy.”

This article started a new debate in the corners of the country. People started thinking what actually is democracy? Is it the way we select the Leaders or is it the way they actually run Government? Is our prosperity important or the system? Is the system built for the people or the people are made for the system? These questions are still unanswered and these are the real talking points about the system of government.

According to the thinkers and decision makers, Democracy is still the best revenge. It is the best form of Government in a country like Pakistan. According to many of those, it is an extension of the form of Government which was established in Islamic states at the time of Khalifa. 4 caliphates followed Prophet Muhammad PBUH, and all of them were selected or elected through different forms.

After the death of Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him, each one of the four Caliphs who ruled after him, differed from one another about the leadership. Let us briefly examine what they did:

1- Abu Baker was elected by the majority of the Muslims right after the death of Prophet Muhammad. He however, served until he died.

2- Omar was given the leadership by Abu Baker. Muslims were not given the opportunity to vote for Omar or for anyone else. Omar was imposed upon them.

3- Uthman became the leader in an awkward way. Omar had 6 elected representatives from the Muslims, and he purposely made their number even, to vote for the next Caliph or leader, because Omar was very sick and was about to die. Three of those representatives voted for Uthman and the other three voted for somebody else. Ironically, Omar brought his son, who had no political influence or power and didn't represent anyone what so ever, and he had him choose between Uthman and his competitor. Omar's son chose Uthman, and this is how Uthman became the leader.

4- Ali became the leader after revolutionists killed Uthman for causing so much corruption by bringing his family to power and gave them all kinds of wealth from the Muslims' State's Wealth. They simply voted for him and he became the leader. Hell broke loose after wards, because Muslims thought that Ali killed Uthman. The famous battle of Camel was declared and around 60,000 Muslim lives were lost in that terrible war.

So, there are different schools of thought on it. Some people say that the system in Pakistan is not according to the teaching and preaching of Islam but many of them think that the democracy in Pakistan is the extension of the Islamic laws. We cannot deny any of these two schools of thought.

The citizens of Pakistan are important component of the Democracy in the country. They choose their leaders through voting and the leaders then steer the Government in their own way. So, citizen can be blamed if the democracy in the Pakistan is not working well. They are the one who are responsible for the selection, so they are the base of the system. They should select people who are more capable and
better among all. How can they blame the Government when they are the one who chose them?

According to Churchill,

“Citizens are the most important component of Democracy. They need to strengthen themselves up if they want democracy to be strong. They should choose better people among themselves, who will then run the country for them.”

Women also play a very important role in democracy and its continuation. It was Magna Carta when Women got their right to vote for the first time. Then many revolutions see the continuation of this act and Pakistan also have this right in their constitution. Women are a very important component of the Pakistani model of democracy. They have reserved seats in National assembly as well as in senate. There are many prominent names in the history of Pakistan who worked really hard for the sustainability of democracy in Pakistan. Many of them went to Jail. Benazir Bhutto went to exile for the struggle for democracy. She was the first even female prime minister in South East Asia. So, Pakistani model of democracy has a real impact of women on it.

Role of Minorities in Pakistani Model of Democracy is also worth appraising. They have their reserved seats as well. They got the right to vote in the constitution of Pakistan in 1962. From then on, we can see the struggle by the minorities for the democracy in Pakistan. We have seen people like Kamran Micheal who worked very hard for democracy. According to Nawaz Shareef,

“Minorities in Pakistan are a very important component of our democracy. We cannot forget the role they are playing for the betterment of the country and also for the continuation struggle of democracy in Pakistan.”

Youth are the future nation builders of Pakistan. From the day of inception of Pakistan, youth have been working really hard for the betterment of the country and at this moment, we can see the real spark of youth in our political system. Many people believe that they will be the turning point of these elections. Youth is the 65% of the country’s population, and this is where the importance is. According to Quaid-e-Azam,

“We need our youth to be politically aware and sensitized towards the Nation building. They are the future and the future needs to be bright for Pakistan.”

Youth’s struggle in different campaigns like Judiciary campaign can never be forgotten and this is one proof of their important role in the Pakistani model of democracy.

On a concluding note, we can say that Democracy is one of the best system of Government for Pakistan, according to many. It is denied by many critics on sound bases but still Pakistan need its continuation for the betterment of the country. We really need to work hard for the better system implementation of Democracy in Pakistan which is the dire need of this time.