

The concept of democracy and its development in Pakistan

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Generally speaking, democracy means "government of the people, for the people, by the people". In other words, the general will of the people makes or unmakes the government of a country. Democracy is essentially the best form of the system, because it reflects the sharing of each individual in running the affairs of a country. Everyone has the fundamental legal right to express his opinion according to his own conscience and cast vote in favour of the party or a candidate for the formation of government.

Democracy as a system has numerous merits because in this system the common man is supposed to take active part in the affairs of the country. The representatives elected are expected to be highly responsible and well-enlightened people who are able to discuss in detail the problems of the country, put forward their suggestions, criticise the policies of the ruling party and thus force the government to respect the opinions of the masses and avoid taking arbitrary decisions. It is, therefore, logically natural that all problems are discussed and sifted through mutual negotiations and suggestions in a spirit of give and take. Another great characteristic of a democratic system is that the spirit of tolerance and respect for other's points of view should prevail. In a democratic system, parliament is, therefore, the sovereign body, which takes important decisions. The power is entirely vested in the supreme body of parliament. The prime minister is the executive head who is elected by the parliament. He forms his cabinet of ministers who are entrusted different portfolios. The government stands responsible to the people and the parliament.

However, the principle of checks and balances is essentially maintained for which the head of the state, called the president of the country, is elected by a two-third majority of votes. Whereas the government under the executive authority of the prime minister is free to run and manage the affairs of the country such as internal affairs, external relations, developmental projects, law and order, education and health, the head of the state reserves special powers under the constitution which bind him to have a watch over the performance of the government and not to allow it to violate the jurisdictions of the constitution. If the government is found guilty of violating the constitution, the president is bound to make it aware of its faults by issuing warning.

the parliament to call back Charles II who was then in exile and to recognise him as the symbol of England's unity; since then traditional strength and glory of monarchy began to crumble in England and democracy gained strength.

In France the glorious revolution, which had become a great source of future expectations for the rights of the individual, resulted in disgust which led the emergence of another monarchy in the form of Napoleon. However, the decline of Napoleon promised a new land of hopes for the people of France.

America inherited democracy from England because it was the same English race, which had migrated to the new world with their old traditions and beliefs. It was not difficult to introduce democracy as a firm institution there particularly in the United States where the bulk of the English-speaking migrants had settled. It was a vast land of natural and mineral resources, which was really a land of promise for the new settlers. Ethnic uniformity made it easier for the settlers in the USA to make democracy an effective political institution. The framers of the American constitution strictly adopted the check and balance theory of John Lock, which has been successfully functioning there since that time.

In Asia and Africa, democracy was almost non-existent till the beginning of the 20th century. However, the first and the second great wars played decisive role in introducing democratic system in Asia and Africa as a result of the British and French conquests in these continents. The colonial system introduced Western form of education and culture, which led to political awakening for individual human rights. At the end of the Second World War, democracy became a general aspiration of Asian and African people.

The United Nations Charter recognised the rights of liberty and independence of each nation within its ethnic and geographical limitations. Now there are very few countries where democracy does not function as a system of government. However, there are certain reservations for effective and fair functioning of a democratic system in a country.

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advantages, which the western world has. The result is that in most of the African and Asian countries democracy has not flourished on stable grounds. In these countries there are mostly false democracies is dictatorship under the guise of democracy. In Pakistan the situation is still worse; the whole history of Pakistan since its establishment has suffered dangerous upheavals for the evident reason that the first constitutional assembly could not give a viable constitution to the country, which should have been an unalterable permanent document for the people of Pakistan.

Pakistan is an ideological state, which came into being as a result of the hard struggle against the overwhelming Hindu majority in the sub-continent. The basic tenets of the ideology of Pakistan is that Hindus and Muslims are two quite different religions and cultural communities that can not live in harmony with each other in a United India. It was this idea, which gained momentum and led to the partition of India. At the same time, Pakistan is a multi-ethnic country with different languages and customs. There are certain parts of Pakistan where regional tendencies on linguistic and racial grounds are very strong. The exponents of regionalism believe that they are not given due opportunities of economic development with the result that they lag behind in education, commerce and other fields of life.

This trend has all along been exploited with created hatred among the different ethnic regions of Pakistan. It is all due to mismanagement, misrule and irresponsibility of the ruling class since the establishment of Pakistan. There were no powerful parties, which could make a constitution for the country. This situation provided opportunity to those forces, which had been opposing Pakistan before independence and favoured a joint India. They have made their own regional parties and demand decentralisation or in another form a weak centre with the maximum possible autonomy for the provinces. But they refrain from giving clear limits of autonomy. It is unthinkable to have a strong federation with weak centre. Weak centre is a first step towards disintegration.

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However, the principle of checks and balances is essentially maintained for which the head of the state, called the president of the country, is elected by a two-third majority of votes. Whereas the government under the executive authority of the prime minister is free to run and manage the affairs of the country such as internal affairs, external relations, developmental projects, law and order, education and health, the head of the state reserves special powers under the constitution which bind him to have a watch over the performance of the government and not to allow it to violate the jurisdictions of the constitution. If the government is found guilty of violating the constitution, the president is bound to make it aware of its faults by issuing warning.

The president can take action against the government under exceptional circumstances when he is convinced that the government is unable to manage the affairs of the country efficiently or it is losing the general confidence of the people appearing in the form of discontent. In the same way, the parliament may pass a vote of no confidence against the president if he is found to be making the misuse of his authority by two-third majority votes of the members of the parliament. Under such political dispensation the affairs of the country run smoothly with little or no dissatisfaction among the masses. Being a responsible system of government the constitution allow complete separation of the judiciary and the executive. Justice is undone where judiciary functions under the directives of the executive. It is also a procedure of check and balance, which keeps the executive within its limits.

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Democracy is apparently a simple term with simple meaning "the government of the people, for the people and by the people", but it is very difficult to fulfil the essential requirements of democracy. In the first place, a successful democratic system demands an enlightened mental level, which compels the voter to cast vote according to the impartial judgement of his conscience. Education is, therefore, a prerequisite for democracy, in addition to royalty to the country and social, political and economic awareness of the problems. The manifestos of the contesting parties must necessarily be kept in the light of these conditions while casting vote. A democratic system, which ultimately leads to chaos and confrontation between the opposition and the ruling parties following disastrous consequences of social and political uncertainty, is surely a useless exercise.

The party system must be effective which can be made possible if the number of political parties is limited, not more than two or at most three. A number of political parties play havoc with the democratic system. It frustrates the very purpose of democracy, which is social integration, political stability, economic development, educational reforms and scientific research in different fields. The ultimate aim is to achieve peace and prosperity for the common man with no threat to personal

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The absence of workable constitution reflecting the aspirations of all parts of Pakistan with sufficiently strong centre to exercise effective control over the developments in different fields such as education, exploitation of natural resources, health, poverty alleviation programmes, coping with the increasing unemployment, eradication of the deeply rooted germs of corruption, proper accountability process and numerous other public affairs, provided a congenial environment for the mushroom growth of small regional parties. How can a democratic system function where there is no clear overwhelming majority of a party, which may wield the affairs of the country with full confidence irrespective of the fear to the collapse of government or assemblies. A few strong and popular political parties not more than three is therefore, a sine qua non for the successful functioning of a democratic system.

Again, the rise of the religious parties, which are fundamentalists and oppose modernism, is another gloomy aspect of our political history. Their extremely orthodox outlook and narrow mindedness have tarnished the good image of Islam as a perfect code of life. The schism and division among these parties with different interpretations of Islam have made the matter worse. The trend of violence and terrorist activities among the religious groups have disillusioned the common man and he

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The spirit of democracy is contained in the Atlantic charter of UNO, which prescribes freedom from want, freedom from fear, freedom of religious worship and freedom of expression. A society bestowed with these blessings will really be a secure society with no complaint from any quarter. Historical background: Democracy has all along been the natural desire of man since the dawn of human civilisation, because it pleads for maintaining equality among human individuals and eliminates the distinction of class system which is imposed by those who enjoy the possession of power and authority. If implemented in true spirit irrespective of racial, ethnic and class distinctions with full recognition of human values and human rights then democracy is undoubtedly, the best system of government. The Greek civilisation flourished in all spheres of life under a true democratic system. In England, democracy established itself on firm ground after the execution of Charles I and the emergence of Cromwell. Cromwell's death created vacuum and as a result of the absence of a proper source of power led to political crisis which compelled the members of

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A host of parties with different manifestos weakens the roots of democracy because no party emerges with clear majority in order to manage the affairs of the country successfully. The success of democracy in the western world is due to the fact that it has a long history of regular development and the establishment of institutions under the influence of scientific outlook. Moreover, most of the independent western countries have their own ethnic uniformity, which keeps them united with common aims and objectives in view. The question of internal rift or schism on the basis of language and ethnic variations is, therefore, out of question there.

But the developing world does not enjoy these natural and social