

Elite theory and democratic of political science



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It is obvious that the theory of elites (Rule of the few) is opposed to democracy because democracy is a government of the people, by the people and for the people. However, Kari Mannheim (1893-1947), who in his earlier writings had connected elite theories with fascism and anti-intellectualism, played an important role in advocating this reconciliation." The actual shaping of policy," he wrote, " is in the hands of elites; but this does not mean that the society is not democratic". He asserts, " For it is sufficient for democracy that the individual citizens, though prevented from taking a direct part in government all the time have at least the possibility of making their aspirations felt at certain intervals— in a democracy the governed can always act to remove their leaders or to force them to take decisions in the interest of the many.

" Mannheim came to believe that " Preto was right in stressing that political power was always exercised by minorities (elites) and Michels in his evolving the law of the trend towards Oligarchic rule in party organisations, and in his later writings, he sees no contradiction between the theory of political elites and democracy. The difference between totalitarian system and democracy was that whereas in the former the minority ruled despotically, in the later it could be removed by the majority or forced to take decisions in their interest". A similar attempt has been made by two economists, Schumpeter and Anthony Downs. Joseph Schumpeter (1883-1950) is certainly more realistic than Michels in his application of the same empirical insight towards a reformation of the democratic creed: Schumpeter affirms his faith in " democracy" in a sense that takes cognizance of the fact that as Michels saw, leadership is indispensable in a state as in any other organisation.

Schumpeter deliberately throws out the moral content that John Stuart Mill in the nineteenth century and writers like L.

T. Hob- house, A. D.

Lindsay, Earnest Banker, Woodrow Wilson, John Dewy and R. M. MacIver had put into the idea of democracy. Democracy for his is simply a market mechanism; the voters are the consumers; the politicians are the entrepreneurs. Anthony Downs expounds economic theory of democracy.

“ Parties in democratic politics”, writes Anthony Downs “ are analogous to entrepreneurs in a profit-seeking economy. So as to attain their profit ends, they formulate whatever politics they believe will gain the most votes; just an entrepreneurs produce whatever products they believe will gain the most profits for the same reasons”. Dr. S. P. Verma observes, “ As different groups of men look for different ways of obtaining support from the masses, different political parties are formed and enter into competition with each other.

This leads to a plurality of elites and a kind of system of checks and balances in the democratic societies, which are, on this account, often described as pluralistic societies. Associations of all kinds, professional as well as political, are formed and the government becomes a business of compromises.”

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