

## Conceptual Framework of Political Elites and its Levels in Democratic India

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### Introduction

In any society there are some people who control the society. They have the leadership of that community. Such a group of people is called elite class. Some people have special qualities and skills in any field of society or system. They are the elite in the field and they are directly / indirectly leading the field. This means that the concept of aristocracy has been around since the beginning of human life has come into existence. Although the concept of aristocracy exists in various fields, the aristocracy in every field acquires a political form because a certain kind of power comes to them because of their superiority. Harold Laswell, Robert Dhal, and a few other thinkers have preferred to think of the elite from a political point of view. The formation of political elites depends on who holds power in the political society. The political elite are the group or group of individuals who consume or use real power. That is to say, the minority group that dominates the majority of the people is the group of political elites.

According to elite theory, some people are superior to the common people. And others base their thinking and perspectives. Such great people are creating an elite class. Which members of the society belong to the elite class? The answer varies from society to society. The aristocracy also has a special significance in the social sphere. The aristocracy also has an important role to play in the political and administrative spheres. As the importance of the political sphere grows, so does the importance of the political elite<sup>1</sup>. Among the thinkers who have written extensively on the aristocracy are Harold Laswell, C. Wright Mills, Schumpeter, Pareto, James Burnham, Mosca, and Robert Mitchells.

### Elite class:

The word elites were first used in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to describe the finest objects as well as their properties. In that sense the word is used for high level individuals. Primarily, the term elite appear to be associated with leadership<sup>2</sup>. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, aristocracy is the most important selected part of a society<sup>3</sup>. The idea of aristocracy seems to have been thought of directly and indirectly by ancient political thinkers as well. The concept of elite was reflected in the thinking of thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle in ancient times. He strongly supported the idea that certain people possess the qualities and skills to govern. And it is right to run the government from them. From this it can be said that the aristocracy is the superior class in the society. This has social values under its control, which have attained a high position and respect in the society. Even though their numbers are small, political decisions and political movements are made by them and their rule over the majority class<sup>4</sup>.

### Political elite: Conceptual Framework

The study of elite theory is an important component of modern political system. The concept of elite is not latest. It is evident in the views of Plato and Aristotle. The term Elite is used in different perspective under varied conditions for identifying its role and nature in the particular political system.

However, it received serious attention during 19<sup>th</sup> century because of two great Italian thinkers viz., Vilfredo Pareto, a Sociologist and Gaetano Mosca, a Political Scientist. The Social scientists like Robert Michels, Harold Lasswell, C.Wright Mills James Burnham, and Ortega Gasset have developed the 'Elite Theory' based on sociological, economic and psychological dimension. Karl Mannheim, Joseph Schumpeter and Anthony Downs are other leading

exponents, who developed this theory under different political systems.

The term 'Elite' is derived from Latin word 'Eligere' which means to choose or pick. The term elite were first used in Military administration as a choice of persons. The Concise dictionary defines the term Elite as choice, select few or pick. According to Harper's English dictionary elites are 'Cream of Working class'. International Encyclopedia of Social Science describes 'Elite' as a group of persons possess certain fundamental features of life. It is used as 'Choice' in 14<sup>th</sup> century and Best of the best in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The term elite were introduced to describe standard of excellence and latter extended to refer greater social groups such as highly victorious military units and upper ranks of aristocracy. The nature of elites slowly shifted from upper-class and oligarchic elements since 19<sup>th</sup> century towards democratic elements.

It shifted from Plato's aristocratic wisdom and Aristotle's dignity of ancient period to superior groups of medieval era and then towards different and exclusive quality as the base for elites identification. The study customary serious attention and gratitude in every form of political system and became more popular in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The concept of political elite is used for a high level great person in the political arena. Who have made an impact in politics, and those who control politics.

Harold D. Lasswell explains the ruling elite in the political system is the political elite, the ruling class in the ruling class and so on. Social community comes. From which the aristocracy was formed <sup>5</sup>.

Vilfredo Pareto also revealed that Politics to the aristocracy in terms of politics are called elites and by whom political power is exercised in the political system. The creation of this class from them yes, despite being a minority group, the political elite effectively controls all the centers of political power <sup>6</sup>.

Rupert Wilkinson sets out to explain elite as a distinctive group holding high status in its community and knit together by a strong group feeling, ethos and style<sup>7</sup>.

It is clear from the above interpretation that some of the characteristics of the political elite are

based on the fact that the political elites are related to the political system and political power.

1. The political elite are the minority in the society. Who is directly involved in the operation of the political system and in the decision-making process.
2. The power of the political elite is legal. They are the majority who keep the common people separate from us and rule over them do.
3. Political elites survive on the support of the people. But their individual qualities are impressive.
4. Due to the high prestige and respect gained in the society, the elite are given superiority by the society.
5. Although influenced by different ideologies, all members of the aristocracy are interested in each other when needed.

**Levels of political elites in India:**

People who excel in the political arena fall into four major categories according to their scope of work and power in India. They are the political elite at the local level, the elite at the divisional level, the elite at the national level and the elite at the international level <sup>8</sup>.

**1. Local political elite:**

A person, who has influence in politics, mainly at the district level or below, belongs to the local political elite. In a democratic country like India, they are seen as an elite class that introduces the democratic process to the general and local people in a literal sense. The local political elite include Sarpanch, Panchayat Samiti Members, Zilla Parishad Members and other local office bearers.

**2. Divisional level political elite:**

Regional or divisional level political elites are mainly influential people in the politics of those constituent states or territories. Their scope is wider than that of local political elites. He is involved in policy making in those areas. The task of accelerating and giving a definite direction to the development of the constituent states is being done by the political elites at the divisional level. It consists mainly of the Chief Minister, Cabinet, Members of the Legislature and other office bearers.

**3. National level political elite:**

The workings of the political elite at the national level are extensive. At the same time,

as they aim to be active at the national level, they abandon local and narrow-mindedness and support and pursue the principles of a national identity. This category includes all politicians working at the national level. This includes the Prime Minister, Cabinet, Members of Parliament and other national level political office bearers as well as persons working in political organizations. They play an important role in giving a definite direction to national development. They influence the internal and external policy of the nation.

#### **4. International political elite:**

Considering this level of superiority, it appears that it includes elites with the widest scope. These are famous and influential personalities working globally. Their work and ideas are recognized all over the world. Primarily, they have a vision of what is happening in world politics. Global change is the result of the performance of such personalities. Primarily the skills to deal with issues related to the entire human community and the solutions to global problems are found through thought and action. International elites include some of the most influential and talented leaders from developed and developing nations, as well as Includes a few individuals working internationally.

#### **Conclusion**

The concept of political elite has evolved from the thinking of several thinkers including Vilfredo Pareto, Gaetano Mosca, Robert Michels, Harold Lasswell, C.Wright Mills, James Burnham, and Ortega Gasset. The concept of political elite seems to change according to the changing social context, but it is clear that this class has the task of guiding the society. Political elites work to politically literate the entire system from the local to the national level. At the local level, local leaders strive for political socialization of the people. Senior leaders who are familiar with the regional and national levels introduce wider, national and international social and political factors to the general public through their dealings. Different levels of political elites work to create and modify the political culture which is crucial for a democratic system

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