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Q7(c)

Discuss the concept of circulation of elite

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2019 · Sociology GS 1 · 10 marks · Sociology

Sociology - The Discipline: Modernity and social changes in Europe and emergence of sociology; Scope of the subject and comparison with other social sciences; Sociology and common sense.

Core demand of the question

- Discuss the concept of circulation of elite
- Keep the discussion within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

- **Pareto**: history as circulation of elites, lions and foxes.

Mosca and **Michels** add ruling class and oligarchy.

- **Mills**: circulation may stay inside institutional directorates.

Marx expected class abolition; **Pareto** expected a new minority.

Gender and property limit who circulates.

Introduction

Vilfredo **Pareto** argued that history is the circulation of elites, not the end of rule by a minority. Lions and foxes, residues of combination and persistence, replace one another. The concept is about organised minorities, not about the disappearance of class.

Body**The concept**

- Gaetano **Mosca**'s ruling class and Robert **Michels**'s iron law of oligarchy neighbour **Pareto**.
- Circulation can be slow infiltration or sudden replacement after decay and violence.
- **Elites are those who excel in the valued capacities of the time**: force, cunning, wealth, or votes.

Sociological use

- C. Wright **Mills** asked whether American directorates circulate among themselves rather than with the public.
- Indian political families, IAS-corporate doors, and caste associations show circulation inside a thin layer.
- **Karl Marx** expected class overthrow. **Pareto** expected a new elite with a new ideology.

Limits

- Psychological residues underplay property and gender. Sylvia Walby's structures are not a fox's trick.
- Democracy can widen recruitment without ending minority rule, which is **Michels**'s sting.

- **Census** occupational tops are not a full elite map; parties and honour matter, as **Max Weber** said.

Flow diagram

Mass -> Organised minority
Organised minority -> Circulation
Circulation -> New elite
Decay force cunning -> Circulation

Conclusion

Circulation of elites names the replacement of one organised minority by another. **Pareto**, **Mosca**, and **Michels** are the core. It warns against a simple mass age. It fails if it ignores class, caste, and gender as the soil of who can even enter the circle.

Facts & figures

Pareto

Circulation of elites; residues of combination (foxes) and persistence (lions).

Mosca

Organised minority as a ruling class in all large societies.

Michels

Iron law of oligarchy in parties and unions.

Mills

Power elite as a contemporary institutional reading of minority rule.