**Aristotle’s Theory of Revolution: Causes and Methods to Prevent Revolution**

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**Aristotle’s Theory of Revolution: Causes and Methods to Prevent Revolution!**

Aristotle explained in great detail the theory of revolution. It is his study of nearly 158 constitutions that helped him understand the implications of revolutions on a politi­cal system. In his work, Politics, he discussed at length all about revolutions. Based on his study, Aristotle gave a scientific analysis and expert treatment to the subject of revolu­tions. He gave a very broad meaning to the term ‘revolution’ which meant two things to him.

Firstly, it implies any major or minor change in the constitution such as a change in monarchy or oligarchy and so on. Secondly, it implies a change in the ruling power even though it did not lead to a change in the government or the constitution. He further stated that a revolution could be either direct or indirect, thereby affecting a particular institution.

**Causes of Revolution:**

According to Aristotle, the two categories of causes of revolution are general and par­ticular.

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**The following is a brief explanation of each of the causes of revolutions:**

**General Causes:**

According to Aristotle, revolutions take place when the political order fails to correspond to the distribution of property and hence tensions arise in the class structure, eventually leading to revolutions. Arguments over justice are at the heart of the revolution.

Generally speaking, the cause of revolution is a desire on the part of those who are devoid of virtue and who are motivated by an urge to possess property, which is in the name of their opponents. In other words, the cause of upheaval is inequality.

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Aristotle listed certain general causes of revolutions that affect all types of govern­ments and states. They are: the mental state or feelings of those who revolt; the motive, which they desire to fulfill; the immediate source or occasion of revolutionary outburst.

The mental state is nothing but a desire for equality and it is a state of disequilibrium. Another clear objective of those rebel or revolt is to gain honour. Apart from these, Aristotle provided some more reasons, which are psychological as well as political in nature that lead to revolutions. As far as psychological factors are concerned.

**They are as follows:**

1. Profit means that the officers of the state try to make illicit gains at the expense of the individual or of the public. It puts the latter to an undeserved loss and creates a mood of discontent.

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2. Rebellions occur when men are dishonored rightly or wrongly and when they see others obtaining honors that they do not deserve. If like-minded people join the movement when the government fails to redress their grievances.

3. Revolutions occur when insolence or disrespect is displayed by the other members. A revolutionary climate would be soon created, especially when the state officials become haughty, arrogant and drunk with power, or pay no attention to the genuine problems of the people.

This leads to a deep divide in the society, especially between the state and the people. Over a period of time, people’s complaints against corrupt officials increase which culminate into revolutions.

4. Fear is a genuine and a worst enemy of man and human institutions. It disturbs peace of mind and other emotions. Revolutions can occur either out of fear of punishment for a wrong actually committed or a fear of an expected wrong to be inflicted on the person who is afraid.

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5. Contempt is closely related to revolution. This contempt can be towards rules, laws, political and economic situations, social and economic order. The contempt is also due to inequalities, injustices, lack of certain privileges and the like.

6. Finally, revolutions are also the result of imbalances in the disproportionate increase in the power of the state that creates a gap between the constitution and the society. In the end, the constitution reflects social realities, the balances of social and economic forces.

If this balance is disturbed, the constitution is shaken and it will either get modified or will perish. For instance, if the number of poor people increases, the polity may be destroyed. Similarly, if there are more numbers of rich in the government, it may lead to an oligarchical set-up. Thus, any sharp differences in the polity would result in revolutions.

As regards the political factors, issues such as elections intrigues, carelessness, neglect­ing small changes, growth in reputation and power of some office, or even balance of parties lead to deadlock and finally foreign influence.

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**A brief explanation of these factors is as follows:**

1. Election maneuvering greatly disturbs people’s faith in the constitutional process. If they succeed, they prevent the constitution from functioning efficiently or else they create much more troubles. These election manipulations not only frustrate the public opinion, but also destroy virtue and good life and they generate new social issues such as corruption, bribery, nepotism, favoritism and the like.

2. The foundations of the state can be devastated due to carelessness or willful negli­gence leading to revolutions. If the rulers are careless while selecting the officials, anti-social elements would creep in and subvert the entire constitution. In such conditions, a trivial matter of just selecting suitable officials with little care proves to be the most fatal.

3. A statesman must never neglect any small issue relating to the governance. If decisions are made in haste without considering its implication such actions are likely to lead to an uproar. It is for this reason; Aristotle stated that a need for over­hauling the entire system actually comes when small changes are overlooked. He also warned leaders that appearances are deceptive and can create problems.

4. As regards the influence of the powerful neighbouring states, which have an impact on the constitution, especially when the constitution of the other nation happens to be of a different type.

**Particular Causes:**

Apart from the general causes of revolution, Aristotle also gave certain specific causes in various types of states. For instance, in democracies, discontentment is bred by the demagogues who attack the rich either individually or col­lectively and build hatred among the people who become revengeful and violent and this situation leads to conflicts.

In oligarchies, revolutions occur when masses experience an unpleasant treatment by the officials resulting in dissensions within the governing class. Personal disputes may further the flames of fire and though imperceptible, changes in the class structure of society may invisibly alter the ethos.

Aristotle further believed that it is not necessary that oligarchy become democracy or vice versa, but they might change into a completely different system altogether. In aristocracies, revolutions occur when the circle of the rulers get narrowed down and become thinner and thinner. It is, in fact, the disequilibrium in the balance of the different elements or parts of the constitution that causes revolutions.

As far as the monarchies and the tyrannies are concerned, revo­lutions are caused by insolence, resentment of insults, fears, contempt, desire for fame, influence of neighbouring states, sexual offences and physical infirmities.

**Methods to Prevent Revolutions:**

**Aristotle in order to ensure that there are lesser chances of revolutions suggested the following methods to prevent them:**

Aristotle called upon the kings to believe in one principle maxim that ‘prevention is better than cure’. He wanted the rulers to obey laws even in smallest matters. He believed that transgression, of even in small amounts, would sooner or later result in total disre­spect and violation. Further taking cue from the rulers, if people start breaking the laws, the entire social order would be at stake.

He strongly advised the rulers that they must believe that they can fool some people all the time, all the people for some time and not all the people all the time. In other words, people should not be taken for granted, and sooner or later they will explode with suddenness that might take the rulers by surprise.

He also stated that the rulers must provide due care to all those people in their domain. They should not discriminate between the officer and commoner, between governing and non-governing and the like. The principle of democratic equality must be followed.

Further, every citizen must be given a chance to express their opinions about the government and that the tenure of the officials must be short-term. By this method, oligarchies and aristocracies would not fall into the hands of the families.

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As the internal feuds among the rulers would sap the energy and unity of a state, the ruler must be on constant vigil and keep all quarrels and seditions among rulers at a distance. No person or official should either be raised to the highest position or suddenly stunned. There has to be a balance.

Those who have acquired too much wealth or amassed great wealth must be ostracized or banished and no single society should be allowed to establish its dominance over the other. To achieve this, offices must be given to the opposite elements like the rich and the poor, in order to maintain a balance. Aristotle further stated that public offices must not be made lucrative. By doing this, the poor would not be attracted and the rich might occupy them without any additional advantage.

The poor then stick to their work and grow rich, and the rich would occupy offices without getting richer. Under these conditions, the poor would have satisfaction that they all have jobs, and the rich, on the other hand, would be satisfied that they occupied high positions.

Thus, democracy and aristocracy would be combined to pro­duce a stable polity. The retiring officer should hand over the charge of public funds to another in public, and the officers whose performance was good must be honoured.

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He further stated that the rich should not be allowed to exhibit their riches as it rouses jealousies among others. Finally, a statesman interested in avoiding revolution must pre­vent extremes of poverty and wealth, as it is this condition that leads to conflicts. He must encourage colonization as an outlet for a dangerously congested population and he should foster and practice religion.

Secondly, Aristotle opined that quality ruler would never be able to stop revolutions. So to ensure this quality, rulers, must be first loyal to constitution, secondly, they should be competent, able and worthy and perform their duties, thirdly, they must have goodness and justice that is suitable to the nature of each constitution, if there is any lack of an able person to serve as the ruler, a combination of persons will also help to prevent revolutions.

Finally, Aristotle argues that a correct system of education is the most effective instrument for curbing the revolutionary instinct and preserves social order.

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