

PLATO (427-347 BCE)

The systematic study of ancient Greek philosophy begins with Plato's political thinking. Plato is recognized as an ideal thinker who gave his theory of ideal state, ideal citizen and issues related to harmonious and balanced relationship between an ideal citizen and ideal state. Plato was born in 427 BCE in Athens. He was disciple of Socrates and teacher of Aristotle. The condition of Athens during his early years of life shaped his thinking. Sparta defeated Plato's home state Athens in Peloponnesian war. Thus, this environment had influenced Plato's thinking profoundly.

Plato's important works 'The Republic' : - This is very important work of Plato written in dialogue form which deals with his ideas about virtues, ideal state, theory of justice, education system and communism.

- Barker says that, Plato's '**Republic**' deals not only with political, education, psychology, and metaphysics but with each and every aspect of life.
- A great philosopher Rousseau said that Plato's 'Republic' is the finest book ever written on education.
- His other important contributions are '**The Statesman**' and '**The Laws**'.

Social-political condition of Athens

Plato witnessed democracy of Athens where all major decisions were made by assembly or **ecclesia**. All citizens of Athens were members of ecclesia. All major decisions were taken by mass meeting of ecclesia. Council consisted of 500 citizens acted as steering committee of assembly. The population of Athens was 250,000 but only 50,000 were citizens of Athens. Rest of the people were deprived of citizenship.

Plato also saw the rule of **tyranny of thirties**. Thereafter, democracy again restored in Athens and the master of Plato Socrates was given death penalty by the democratic government. There was constant fighting between various city states and Plato said that **corruption, ignorance and factionalism** were rampant in Athens. These factors influenced idea of Plato.

‘Virtue is Knowledge’

It is popular quote of **Socrates** which was accepted by Plato. Virtue implies excellence. Since every individual is unique in nature and abilities, performing work as per one’s abilities or nature is virtue. By means of education good thinking and good knowledge can be attained.

Developing virtues or good conduct is ultimate goal and human being. According to him, working as per ones abilities is virtue and it will lead to formation of just society. According to him, amalgamation of wisdom, courage and patience will leads to development of Virtue in individual

Thus, Virtue implies just individual. Plato believes in operation and regulation of society on the basis of knowledge.

'Reality is Shadow of Ideas'

Parmenides says that reality is constant or static. On the opposite **Heraclitus** said that everything is in process of change and we can't step twice in same river. Plato **synthesize** between two opposite ideas. He said that idea is permanent but the object change continuously.

- Plato gave an analogy of **cave**. Thus divides the world in world ideas and world of objects. Idea of good is **supreme ideas**.
- According to Plato, whole world is expression of ideas. With the help of education, knowledge of idea can be acquired. **Material world** is reflection of ideas.
- Plato said that, idea is immortal and non-transitional whereas reality undergoes transformation.
- **Beauty** is immortal whereas beautiful object undergoes disintegration or transformation.
- Plato emphasized study of ideas and not the material objects which exist in this world because idea is an ultimate reality.
- For him, ultimate purpose of education is to give the knowledge of idea of soul.
- Ideal state, according to Plato, is larger expression of individual and it comes into existence through individual.
- According to him, good individual and good state is complementary to each other.
- He suggests that "**State doesn't emerge out of Oak or rock, but it is made by character of individual living in that state.**"

- **Stratification of society: -**

For Plato, **Community** is more important than individual in Plato.

Plato's satisfaction of society into three classes' correspondence to their characteristics of soul

- According to Plato individual soul has three elements of '**wisdom**', '**courage**' and '**appetite**.'
- But whose soul is dominated by the 'reason' will become '**philosopher king**.'
- The soul dominated by **courage** will become Soldier.
- The soul which will be dominated by **appetite** will become producer class.
- Plato has prescribed three stages of education. One who completes first stage of education will be eligible to become producer class. After completing second stage of education, he will be eligible to become Warrior class. One, who completes all the stages of education, will be qualified to become philosopher king.
- But it seems that individuals with wisdom are in minority and majority of individuals do not undergo formal education process as philosopher king.
- According to Plato, there is organic relationship between individual and state. Society is formed by all the three classes and each class fulfills the needs of other Classes.
- Material need is to be fulfilled by **producer class**.
- State's safety and security needs will be fulfilled by **warrior class** whereas philosopher king will exercise its control over other classes. For Plato, society should be governed by individuals who is endowed with wisdom Plato has rejected inheritance as criteria to determine individual's status in society.

Education system

There is elaborate description about Plato's theory of education in his work 'Republic'. Education according to him is means to develop individual internal faculties. Education should build individual character.

Purpose of Education: - Plato's thinking is centered around developing ideal state and ideal citizen. And relationship between ideal citizen and ideal state. In this context, he emphasized importance of education and gave detailed theory of education in his work 'Republic.' In his theory of education, he incorporated merits from educational systems of Athens and Sparta and discarded its demerits

Athens Educational System: - Athens emphasized on subjects like **literature** and **music**. Law taught through literature. In Athens education was **imparted up to 20 years**. According to Plato, Athens put more emphasis on mental development of its pupils. Education was private affair of individual and state played no role.

Educational system of Sparta- Plato's theory of education was also influenced by education system of **Sparta**, where education was responsibility of state. At the age of 7, the children were handed over to officials of state and were imparted rigorous **physical education** and **training to make them warrior** so that they could safeguard Sparta. According to Plato, there were many demerits in Spartan educational system where syllabus was limited, narrow and lopsided. There was over-emphasis paid to physical and military education whereas subjects like literature, logic and mental ability were largely neglected.

Plato adopted merits of educational system of both Sparta and Athens into his theory of education. He delineated his educational process into three stages. According to him, physical education will make healthy and music will lead to growth of internal faculties. Thus, Plato's laid stress on both physical and mental education of pupil.

Three stages - Plato delineated his educational system into three stages which are as follows:-

First stage- 10 to 20 years was decided as first stage of education. In his stage knowledge of **Gymnastics, dieting, physical education** and **music** shall be imparted. In order to keep body healthy, subjects of Medical Science shall be taught. Thus, there is no scope for any doctor in ideal state. He believes in moral development of children by making them imbibe spirit of tolerance, courage and enthusiasm in children. According to Plato, subject like music, literature, poetry, lyrics and other fine arts will harmonize soul. The musical knowledge will help them to recognize and compliment beautiful objects and also get mesmerized with it. Peace and harmony will reduce unrest in society and this will negate the need of law and courts. Music of food of soul and Gymnast is food of body.

Second stage of Education - The second stage of education will last from 20 years to 30 years. Plato lays greater emphasis on subjects like **mathematics** and **astrology** because the subject will help pupils to understand intangible and abstract components. Because reality lies in idea. Mathematics is also considered as strategizing and organizing military during war.

Third stage - After completion of 2nd stage of education. Only those who passed this examination were eligible for third stage of education. The third stage of education lasted for 30-35 years. At this stage of education, **philosophy** was considered as an important

subject through which real knowledge or real truth was attained. After 35 years education, Plato recommended 15 years of practical training.

Conclusion -

Problems like factionalism and ignorance is mental therefore education is mental cure for mental problems. Many successive scholars have accepted Plato's ideas as long-term reform is possible only through education.

PHILOSOPHER'S KING

Plato described about the five types of governments:- **Aristocracy, Timocracy, Oligarchy, Democracy and Tyranny**. Greek philosopher, Plato was disciple of Socrates. In his work 'Republic', he propounded the concept of 'Philosopher's king. It implies supreme, wise and knowledgeable ruler who is skilled in 'Art of Ruling'. Plato never accepted customs and traditions. These are ignorance's. Some important points about philosopher King are as follows: - Philosopher King emerges after acquiring knowledge and wisdom through education. Kings knowledge wisdom is more important than law. Plato places greater emphasis on Precedent, traditional and conventions are signs of ignorance.

- He believes that cobbler, tailor and Barber can't become a king.
- Plato said that since only doctors can treat ailments or diseases of the body similarly, only philosopher king can cure the diseases of society.
- Plato says that philosopher king is endowed with sense of justice, which is essential for running government.
- Plato says that, since education in philosophy inculcates tendency of non-attachment towards material world. Therefore Plato's philosopher king doesn't need property or family.
- Sabine says that, of philosopher king is an example of 'enlightened despotism' because philosopher king is rule of person and not the rule of law or constitution. Ruling is an art. Enlightened means rule by philosopher. Despotism implies that democracy is rejecting as form of government.

Sabine believes that Plato's governance system is absolute monarchy. According to Plato, administration of state must be based on wisdom of ruler and not in accordance with law. King alone is ultimate source of knowledge and truth and endowed with sense of Justice. By accepting concept of philosopher King, Plato has rightly rejected democratic system of governance. There was democracy in Athens and oligarchy in Sparta in ancient Greek. According to Plato, the rulers or kings were selfish, incompetent and ignorant. Karl Popper criticized Plato as an 'Enemy to free Society' because he has over-emphasised importance of duties and discipline in his thinking while rights and individual.

Thus, his thinking has been criticized as monarchial, totalitarian and influenced with fascist ideology. Greek society was communitarian so calling him an enemy of free society is unreasonable. He favored free and compulsory education for all without any discrimination. He held both Men and Women eligible to govern or rule. And He opposed slavery. Therefore, he was progressive thinker of contemporary Greek. In his work 'Republic', Plato gave his idea of ideal state and philosopher king for just society. However, in his later work 'Laws' he accepted the principle of '**Rule of Law**' and partially accepted concept of democracy.

COMMUNISM

Plato has accepted communism as a tool for just society. Communism, according to Plato was a medium to keep guardian class away from affectation and temptation. He believes that wealth and affection were biggest weakness of human beings and are impediment to ideal state. According to Sabine, 'In order to end harmful impact of wealth on guardian class, Plato has abolished concept of property.' Plato gave his theory of communism in his book 'Republic'. 'According to Plato, small-city states of Greek were divided into city of rich and city of poor. In order to resolve this problem he accepted theory of communism so that alignments, counter-alignments and conflicts amongst Greeks city states could be ended. The idea of communism of property in Greek city States is very old. In Athens, state exercised monopoly over forest and mines whereas Sparta has common dining system.

Plato's Communism implies "The guardian class will not have their family and private property." The whole state will be family of Guardian class and this will keep whole Greek city state united. Communism promotes the notion of **state-family**. Entire state is family for King. This is helpful for maintain unity in state. The producer class will fulfill physical and materialistic needs of Guardian class. Plato advocated two types communism.

1. Communism of Property.

2. Communism of Family. According to Plato,

Guardian class is comprised of philosopher King and soldiers. According to Plato, Guardian class will rule and provide security. Therefore, Guardian class has been kept away from private property. According to Plato, the soul of Guardian class was made up of **gold** and **silver** therefore they do not need materials.

- Plato has restrained ruling class and warrior class from keeping families and declared women as common property. Every woman will be wife of state and every children of state will be State's children. Neither children will have any information about their parents nor will parents have any information of their children. Family brings selfish emotions in individual which makes thinking narrow and prejudice. These selfish emotions are impediment to unity and integrity of society.
- According to Plato, Communism of family will provide superior breed to state. It is essential for freedom of females from homes.

Criticism of Plato's Communism –

According to Barker, 'for development of any Art, equipments are required like brush is required for painting, similarly, property is important instrument/means for moral development. According to Aristotle, state as an institution is made up to family and village and it was unnecessary to have concept of family and state for all sake of unifying

He believed that love and morality required for ideal state can only be attained through family. According to Barker, 'Plato's thinking is **abstract universalism** whereas Aristotle thinking was **concrete universalism.**' Despite of many shortcomings in Plato's thinking, it must be recommended that custom of communism of family and communism of property prevailed. In Therefore, Therefore, Plato advocated idea of communism for existence of just society and unifying state.

According to him, “**State is family, Church and University.**”

Comparing Plato’s Communism with Modern Communism-

- Modern Communism which emerged in the 19th century opposed capitalism and believed in creating stateless and classless society. Plato’s communism was a means remove impediment in way of Guardian classes in governance. It does not apply to everyone in society.
- Modern Communism is opposed to capitalism and aims to bring economic equality in society whereas Plato's communism aims at creating Virtuous society.
- Plato's communism of property and communism of family is only for Guardian class whereas modern communism believes in creating classless society by bringing all means of production under social ownership.
- Plato's communism is ideal and moral in nature whereas modern communism is scientific in nature which seeks to end economic inequality in society.

PLATO	MARX
(1) Unity of State	(1) Stateless, Classless
(2) Moral and spiritual	(2) Economics, material
(3) Education	(3) Class struggle

THEORY OF JUSTICE

Plato has given idea about justice in his work ‘Republic’ in. The **sub-title** of ‘The Republic’ is ‘**Concerning Justice**’ Plato rejected sophist ideas of Justice. It is based on his theory of education. The idea ‘knowledge is Virtue’ is taken from Socrates.

Plato believed that with the help of **Virtuous citizen**, state can be freed from many problems like ignorance and factionalism. Thus, Plato's 'Republic' is expression of his idea about **education** and education is prerequisite for character building.

Rejecting Sophist Justice

- In order to give his idea of justice, Plato enters into debates and dialogues (dialectics) with various characters in which he rejected sophists thinking. According to Barker, Plato was against individualistic and materialistic ideas of Justice. Sophist thinkers were materialistic and utilitarian.
- Cephalous says, **performing one's duties and paying ones dues** is justice.
- Polemarchus says, '**doing good to friends and bad to enemies is justice.**' Plato believes **giving everybody his due** is justice. According to him, fulfilling once selfish motive was not justice. Justice calls for performing one's moral duties.
- Thrasymachus says, 'Justice is an interest of stronger.' Thus he believed in '**might is right**'. Plato says, justice is Welfare of all in society and not just few individual or section of society.
- Glaucon's, 'Justice is results of **mutual agreement** among human being'. He believes that justice is need of weak people. Glaucon's ideas are closer to that of Hobbes. Thus, justice is internal, it is quality of soul. It is natural not artificial.

Meaning of Justice - According to Plato, performing one's duties without interfering in work of others is justice. Man has natural disposition towards justice. Man likes to do those works which is naturally suited to him. Justice stands for **harmony and proportion**.

Basis of Justice

- Harmony in there elements of soul and classes in society.
- Justice is based on two principles;
 - a) **Divisions of Labour**- All three classes are allocated there separate functions.
 - b) **Specialization of work**- Every class attains perfection in their stipulated work.

Means of Justice

- According to Plato, education is potent tool to attain justice where society will be delineated into classes on the basis of **education**. Where duties of every class will be determined. Spirit of virtue can be developed in individual only through education. Plato has not given any importance to law to attain justice.
- Plato has also used **communism** as a tool to establish justice. In his communism, guardian class is denied from having private family and private property. Economic needs of guardian class will be fulfilled by producer class. Thus, there is **organic** relationship between all the three classes.

Plato's justice and Modern concept of Justice

- Plato's theory of justice is based on duties whereas modern concept of justice is based on concept of freedom and rights.
- Plato's theory is based on moral principles whereas modern concept of justice is based on law and punishments.
- Plato has sought to create a just society through education whereas law and punishment are only a basis for securing justice according to modern thinkers. Plato's theory of justice emphasizes on social unity and harmony.
- Plato's disciple, Aristotle called his ideas of communism as extreme because he has ignored the institution of village community and family which is necessary to establish unity.
- In his theory of justice, rights and freedom of individual have been completely ignored.

Conclusion -

The ideas expressed by Plato in 'The Republic' are purely ideal and moral. He laid greater emphasis on how the ideal state should be? However, he was aware of the fact that practically there is great anomaly in nature and society. In order to remove this anomaly he wants to form an ideal state. **Maxey** calls Plato as **first 'utopian thinker.'**

Sub ideal state– (Second- best state)

- ‘Statesman’ and ‘Laws’ were written during his last years of life. He dealt with more practical aspects of state. In these books he gave importance to need of ‘Rule of Law,’ recognition to family and property.
- He gave his acceptance to family and property and refused to support communism.
- He recognized importance of ‘Rule of Law’.

Similarity between Fascism and Plato -

- **Karl popper** in his famous book-**open society and its enemies- Plato, Hegel and Marx**. Karl Popper said that Plato was **enemy of liberty, rights and democracy**.
- Plato is called as first fascist thinker and influenced the ideas of Hitler and Mussolini.
- Plato and fascist thinkers have recognized state as moral institution. State alone can ensure better life for people and everyone must obey the king. Fascism believes in Supreme and autocratic state uncontrolled by any law or constitution. Plato has full faith in wisdom of philosopher king and therefore made no description about law and constitution in his work ‘The Republic.’
- In Plato’s thinking, concept of freedom, rights and equality are absent. Throughout his life individual is confined to particular class controlled by the state. In similar way, concept of freedom and rights are completely ignored in fascist state. Plato was opposed to democracy and is supporter of monarchy. According to him, democracy is mobocracy in which there is no respect for competent individuals and there is ceaseless struggle and unrest in society.
- Concept of equality and freedom are completely absent under **Fascism**. Every individual was asked to obey leadership blindly. All social institutions like Schools, Press, Radio, Television and literature to be completely under state control. They wanted to these institutions as medium to spread propaganda. They wanted competent and brave children for custody of state.

Defence of Plato:-

Levinson and Gilbert Ryle said that Plato is not fascist.

- Although it seems there are many Partial similarities between ideas of Plato and fascism, there are many divergences between the two.

- According to Plato, wisdom is most important elements of human being and only those individual, possessing wisdom are eligible to become a philosopher king. Fascists, on the other hand considered human as an emotional being and the fascist strongly opposed to ideas of equality, freedom, socialism, democracy and above all, human rights.
- In Plato's opinion, women were also held eligible to hold position guardian class. Plato was in favour of liberation and freedom of women and gave his idea of communism whereas fascists have considered women merely as means or machine to produce superior breeds.
- Plato's ultimate objective was to end struggle to unify state which was possible only through education. He was opposed ultra nationalism and in favour of peace. On the other hand, fascists were ultra nationalist, blind nationalist and imperialist. According to them, 'Peace was dream of Plato's ideal state which was based on principles whereas fascist were principle-less and opportunistic.
- Fascist was in favour of monopolizing economic system and endorsed private property whereas Guardian class was denied of private property. Plato separated political power from economic power.

CONCLUSION

Plato's philosophy is synonymous with justice, wisdom, truth and beauty whereas fascist ideology is based on violence, falsehood, cunningness. Plato philosophy is a relevant model. Thus, there is vast divergence in between the two ideas.

KEY TERMS:-

- Organic state** - Plato and Aristotle both believed in organic state. For them state is like a human body. Various parts of human body are less important than whole body, similarly state is more important than individual. Plato and Aristotle never made any distinction between community and state.
- Idealism** - Idealist begins their thinking from idea which is abstract. For idealist material world is derived from ideas. Ideas refer soul, God (idea of good). Human body is reflection of soul. Idealists believe in morality. Therefore, deals with what ought to be rather than what is.

- (c) **Rationalist** - Plato believes in reason and never accepted customs and traditions. He said that law is also a custom and tradition. Therefore, he believed in the reason of philosopher king.

