Political Thought of Plato.

Plato's Theory of Justice

Brief Introduction of Plato:- in Athens, Greece

Plato was born in 427 BC. He was highly influenced by Socrates. He received his education from his master, Socrates, ⇒ He established an institution named The Academy or 'Gymnasium'. He wrote the famous 'The Republic'. While interpreting the nature of justice, he followed the dialectic method.

Quality of Soul:- According to Plato, in a society different classes must be given what is due to them and that no class shall be allowed to dominate the other classes. To him, justice is the quality of the soul. It does not depend upon any external source or power and is the voice of conscience of the man. ~~He stated that human personality~~ is a result of ~~three tendencies~~

Tendencies of Human Personality:- Plato stated that human personality is a result of three tendencies: knowledge, Physical tendency and spiritual tendency. The tendency of spirit should rule the other tendencies. In a society, people with high spiritual tendencies must rule the state and follow the ideals of reason, justice, courage and temperance. Justice means harmony among the people and between people and society.

Organic Theory of Society:- Plato considers justice as an ethical concept and stresses on following one's duties with morality. His theory of justice on the basis of organic theory of society resulted in totalitarianism which infringes all the freedom of a person. In his ideal republic, guardians were given the power to rule and people could not criticize them in any way. He tried to create an ideal society with the help of social justice but could not do so as it created practices that contradicted his idea.

Integral approach:- Plato opted for an integral approach that analyzes all the attributes of the personality of a person and the body politic. It aims to achieve justice for every individual in every class of society. Talking about the verna system in India or a hierarchy in any society, he said the concept

sid was opposite to his initial idea of justice.

Characteristics of Justice:

1) **Social stratification:-** His theory of justice is based on the social stratification given by him. On the basis of elements of soul, he gave three social stratifications namely:
   1) Guardians
   2) Soldiers
   3) General people like artisans, farmers etc.

   Justice meant fulfilling all the duties by people belonging to each social strata without interfering in the duty of another.

2) **Innate Tendency:-** According to Plato, justice is innate. It is the quality of soul and voice of one's conscience.

3) **Functional specialisation:-** He classified society into three classes:
   i) Cognitive represented by guardians.
   ii) Conative represented by soldiers.
   iii) Affective which was represented by the general public.

4) **Philosopher King:-** He believed that justice was possible only if the state was ruled by a philosopher. He considered philosophers the wisest among all.

5) **Communism:** He suggested the communism of women and property among guardians and soldiers. This was done to keep them away from any kind of emotions, worries & envies.

6) **Universal** He considered the principle of justice universal. It is the same for everyone in any place or society at any time.

7) **Moral concept:** His concept of justice is not jural but moral. While achieving justice, it is mandatory to fulfill the moral obligations and not jural duties.

8) **Freedom of women and Education for Justice:-** He said that in order to achieve justice, it is necessary to provide freedom to women. They should be given equal rights to participate as men. He suggested an advanced scheme of education to help people realize the importance of justice.

Types of Justice

Plato classified justice into two types, which are reduced to each other to a great extent.

i) Individual Justice

ii) Social Justice.

i) Individual Justice: Justice, according to him, is the spirit that helps the individual to fulfill his duties. There are three elements in the human mind: Reason, spirit and Appetite.

- Wisdom is the virtue of reason; the courage of spirit; and temperance, which is of appetite.

- Justice maintains harmony among the three.

- He believed that each part of the human mind must be satisfied so that there is harmony in every part.

- People who are harmonious can create a harmonious and peaceful state.

- According to him, when a person is able to serve all his needs according to his virtue, spirit and appetite, he would be satisfied. For Example, the basic needs of an individual in the contemporary world are to have a stable job with good pay, own a house, and a family. He would be satisfied and live a decent life.

Social Justice:- It is dependent on individual justice. A society where there is individual justice can achieve social justice.

- Like the three elements in an individual, there are three types of men in society:

★ <u>Rational</u>: These have strong reasons or rationale.

★ <u>Spiritual</u>: These are strong in spirit and active.

★ <u>Passionate</u>: Neither strong in reason nor in spirit and are controlled by the other two.

- He classified people in society and gave a 3-fold functional social stratification. a) Philosophers b) Soldiers c) Artisans, farmers etc.

- He believed that man should carry on the activity which is best suited for him.

- In a society, people belonging to each strata fulfill their duties honestly without disturbing and interfering with people in other strata, social justice is achieved.

- He recommended that philosophers must rule the state as they are wisest of all and wisdom is the virtue of the ruler and justice is the virtue of the wise.

- He considered individuals as a complex whole and not a single unit. His aim must not be a personal pleasure but should realize the importance of satisfaction which results in the harmony of all his parts.

- This theory can be easily related to the caste system in India. In earlier times, people in india used to believe that a son of Brahmin must be a Brahmin and a son of Keshatriye must only fight for the country. So, if analysed this theory says that If people belonging to different castes perform their functions without interfering with the work of a person belonging to another castes then social justice is achieved.

Criticism of Plato's Theory of Justice:

- Plato laid more emphasis on the duties rather than the rights enjoyed by the people in a society. Rights keep the society united and bring solidarity among people. Thus, both rights & duties are important and interconnected in a state.

- He gave enormous powers to the philosophers king but failed to realize the principle that absolute power corrupts absolutely. Thus, even the wise. t king can become corrupt if given absolute powers.

- He divided society on the basis of tendencies of the personality. But heredity is not solely responsible for personality traits. As a result, ne laid the foundation of such a system of education in the society which develops one-sided personalities and does not give any importance to the environment which is yet another important feature responsible for the personality of a person.

- The theory given by Plato lays the foundation for fascism according to which each citizen is expected to show loyalty towards the state. On the other hand, modern thinkers suggest that the state must not be given absolute powers which might also curb the rights and freedom of people in society.

- He considered guardians above law. What Plato calls justice is the dictate of guardians ~~above~~ in the state. His theory does not provide a reasonable basis for law and justice cannot be dependent on personal will and conscience. He also neglect to differentiate between moral and legal obligations.

- His concept of justice is passive and cannot form a basis for jural regulation. He does not provide any solution if there is any conflict b/w the desire and duty or duties & rights.

- He laid too much stress on the unity of state and thus, gave absurd ideas of communism of women and abolition of marriage and family.