

Political Science

Question No. 2: What is the Aristotelian classification of state?

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Identification of state with constitution
- 3) Basis of classification of state
- 4) Classification of state
- 5) Cycle of states
- 6) Criticism
- 7) Conclusion

1) Introduction

Aristotle was born in 384 B.C. and died in 322 B.C. He is considered as great philosopher and political thinker. At the age of 17, he joined Plato's Academy and he was in Academy for 20 years. After the death of Plato, he left Academy. King Philip of Macedonia called him to teach Prince Alexander in 338 B.C. Aristotle opened his own school named Lyceum. It was a public school unlike Plato's Academy which was private. He wrote 31 books. and he has a great influence till date. Poetics, Ethics, Politics and metaphysics are his great writings. He gave the concept of classification of state. Till date his classification of state is considered valid and his classification

was based on the thorough study of constitutions and government.

2) Identification of state with constitution

Aristotle gave the classification with the help of different constitutions. According to him government and constitution have same meanings. Now-a-days scholars distinct the government and constitution but according to him the both have same meaning.

3) Basis of classification

He gave the two basis for the classification of state, one is quantitative and the other is qualitative. According to him the pure form of government is that in which ruler works for the benefit of others and if ruler will work for himself, it will be a corrupt form of government.

4) Classification of state

The classification of state is according to pure form of government and its perversion.

⇒ **Pure form of government:-**

The pure form of government consists of three types which are given belows-

- Monarchy
- Aristocracy
- Polity

Perversion of each forms

Each form of pure form of government has its perversion which are given belows

- Tyranny
- Oligarchy
- Democracy

Explanation :

According to Aristotle the best and pure form is monarchy in which only one person works for the society or community but when that one person works for own benefit it converts into tyranny which is about selfishness. He further stated that when more people work for the benefit of others it called aristocracy but when they people work for their own sake it is called Oligarchy. Furthermore, he stated that when a large group of rulers work for society it is called polity and its opposite is democracy where people work for themselves.

	The one	The few	The many
Work for the Common interest	Monarchy	Aristocracy	Polity
Work for the rulers own sake	Tyranny	Oligarchy	Democracy

These classifications are borrowed from the Plato's Statesman. Plato used the terms moderate democracy which Aristotle called aristocracy. and extreme democracy to which he called Monarchy.

Similarities ~~between~~ between Plato and Aristotle's state

There are many distinctions between Plato and Aristotle's classification of state but there are also some similarities which are given below:

1) Monarchy:

The concept of Aristotle's King matches with the Plato's concept of philosopher King.

2) Tyranny:

The perverted form of monarchy is tyranny in which the one man works for own interest.

3) Aristocracy:

Aristocracy means here the rule

by few people for common interest.
Plato called it moderate democracy.

4) Oligarchy :-

The opposite of aristocracy is oligarchy.

5) Polity :-

The more people rule for citizen and state's benefit, then it is called polity.

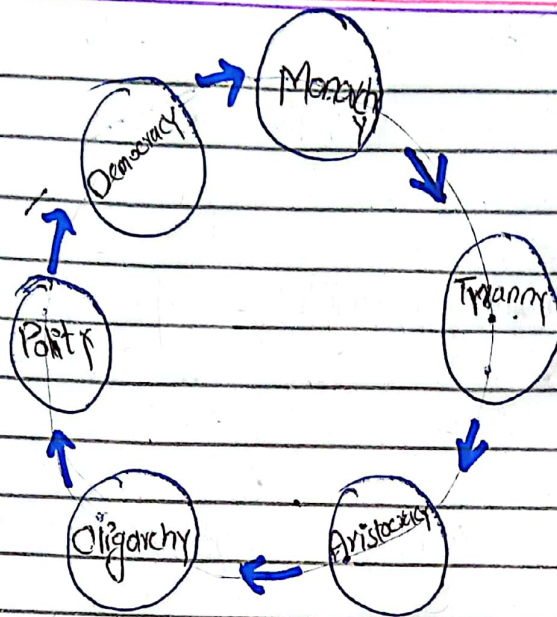
6) Democracy :-

According to Aristotle rule for the poor by the poor people.

5) Cycle of states

The famous cycle is given by the Aristotle which is based on the six forms of government. According to cycle the first form of government in history is monarchy in which a wise man ruled for the interest for all but when the wise man fell a prey in selfishness it was converted into tyranny.

The other two forms are aristocracy and polity which have perverted forms known as oligarchy and democracy. This is the cycle of government which goes on.



Criticisms:-

The famous classification of state by Aristotle is criticized by many modern scholars who think that there are many new forms of state which is not discussed by Aristotle which are totalitarianism, dictatorship and federation etc. The second criticism is about democracy which Aristotle stated as government by poor, modern scholars argued that it can be by the rich and prosperous people of state.

Conclusions:-

Aristotle's concept of state is still considered valid. The six folds which he gave are very important. Monarchy, Tyranny, Aristocracy, Oligarchy, Polity and democracy are his six basic forms of government. He also gave perverted

Forms of government. They are also criticised but on the other hand many consider them valid.
