

Q: Write a note on Plato's concept of Justice.

Plato's Concept of Justice

In "The Republic," Plato expresses his concept of justice. According to Plato, justice in a state exists when everyone performs his role according to his own nature and dominating force. He classified the society into three classes as artisan class, military guardian class and ruler's class, on the basis of dominating force in each individual. He contended that there are three motivating forces: **desire and hunger, courage and wisdom**, in human soul. He argued that justice exists when all (for) individuals work according to their dominating force.

Explicating the Background of Plato's Concept of Justice

Plato ^{got} (gave) the concept of justice through a dialogue between Socrates and other interlocutors. Cephalus defined justice as "telling truths and paying debts." Polymarchus agreed to his father and defined justice as "justice is giving someone

what is his due right." Thrasymachus defined justice as "justice is the interest of the strongest." All these explanations were protested by Socrates because they defined justice as something apart from human soul. While Socrates contended that justice is an integral part of human soul. Plato derived an idea of justice from this dialogue that "to establish a just state, justice in an individual is to be discovered." According to Plato, justice in a human exists when reason governs and he acts wisely and virtuously due to harmony in all three motivating forces of human soul.

Illucidating Highly Structured Society of Plato

Plato argued that society must be highly structured so that everyone works on the principles of non-interference and meritocracy. He classified society into following three classes.

- 1- **Artisan class**: He called it the "stomach" of a state because the individuals of this class ^{would} have "desire and hunger" as motivating force and their function would be providing community with basic

necessities of life.

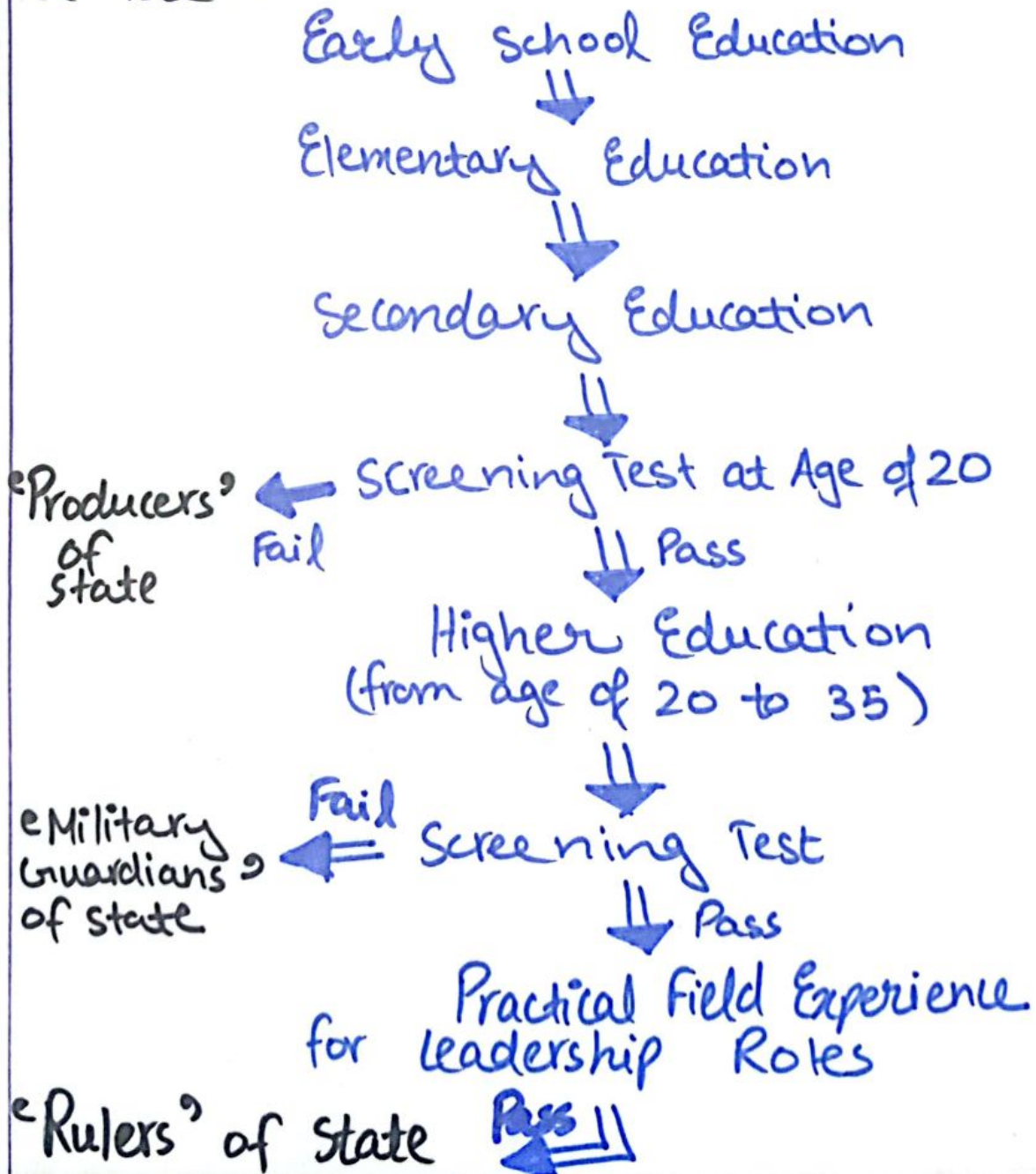
2. **Military Guardian Class**: Plato called it 'heart' of the state because the dominating force in its individuals would be 'courage'.

Its function is to protect the state from external threats.

3. **Rulers' Class**: Plato called it 'brain' of the state because dominating force in its individuals is 'wisdom'. They are decision makers of the state.

Expounding Plato's Education System

To cultivate virtues of each class, Plato gave an education system. According to Plato, there are following levels of education system: ^{Early school education} Elementary education, Secondary education, (35) Higher education and practical field training for leadership and management roles.



Plato's Concept of Communism

This concept refers to his vision of ideal just state where 'Guardians' and 'rulers' would live communally to avoid corruption and conflict of interests in a state. There are two aspects of Plato's communism: Communism in property and communism in families.

→ **Communism in Property:** Plato contends that 'Guardians' and 'Rulers' would not be allowed to own any property. Their right to private property would be abolished. This idea stems from his belief that right to private property is the main source of distraction for these two classes.

→ **Communism in Family:** Plato advocates for dissolution of family structures among 'Guardians' and 'Rulers'. He argues that they would be allowed to engage in permanent marital relationships and traditional parenting. Their children would be raised communally by the state.

Critical Analysis of Plato's Concept

→ **Anti-democratic Nature of Plato's Concept of Justice:** According to Plato's concept of justice, only 'rulers' should be allowed to rule the state because they are the wisest persons of a

state. They are the only decision-makers of state and others like "producers" should not be allowed to interfere in their absolute rule. This concept is totally impracticable and invalid in this 21st century when there are 167 democratic states in world because Plato's concept is similar to Hobbesian concept of absolute authority of Leviathan.

→ Exhaustive Education System given by Plato

The education system proposed by Plato is very exhaustive and is not valid in this contemporary era. Plato contends that children will have their elementary education till the age of 20 and after age of 20, only two subjects that is mathematics and astronomy would be taught to them, for ten years during their higher education. Then for next five years only dialectics and philosophy would be taught. Then from age of 35 to 50, practical field training continues to identify real leaders and decision-makers. This rigid education model is incompatible with this modern world.

→ Static Mode of Life Suggested by Plato

Plato gave static mode of life in which everyone will perform the same task throughout their life. This is absolutely against human nature because a human can never continue same job throughout his life. Moreover, this mode of life also lacks opportunities for improving oneself and leads to an incompetent society. Such

society can never encourage new advancement or entrepreneurship which is the heart of modern 21st century. Thus, static mode of life given by Plato is incompatible with contemporary societies which encourage opportunities and multi-tasking.

→ Impracticable Nature of Plato's Communism

Plato's concept of communism is impracticable because it is not feasible with human nature.

Aristotle has criticized his concept of communism.

He questioned the practicality of abolition of private property and family structure in rulers and guardians of Plato's ideal state. He argued that such arrangements can never be made as they are totally contrary to human nature.

A human can never survive without the warmth of family and children so this idea is invalid

(in) and impracticable.

Criticism On Plato's Concept of Justice in Light of Theories of Philosophers

→ Critique of Karl Marx:

Marx theory of 'communism' which favors a classless and stateless society is in contradiction with Plato's concept of justice because Marx criticized highly structured society. He

that such a 'structured society' leads the society towards oppression of the 'proletariat' and rule of 'Haves'.

→ Critique of John Locke:

According to John Locke 'it is people who are actual source of power and they have authority to overthrow the government if it fails to protect their rights.' While Plato argued that only 'rulers' are decision makers and have absolute authority in a state.

→ Critique of Rousseau:

Plato was in favor of absolute rule of only 'one class (rulers' class)' and only they would have right to make decisions about the state. This is contrary to Rousseau's concept of **General will** which ensures wider participation of public in decision-making.

→ Critique of Confucius:

Confucius was a Chinese philosopher who critiqued Plato's communism that abolishes family structure of society. He emphasized on importance of family structure in nation-building. According to him:

'The strength of a nation is determined by integrity of the home.'

Concluding Thoughts

Although Plato's concept of justice is highly criticized by philosophers due to its impracticality and his assertion on dissolution of traditional family and parenting relationships in a society, but still the importance of Plato's theory can not be denied because of principles of meritocracy ^{being} emphasized in his concept of justice and ideal state.