

Q. Critically analyze the salient features of Plato's Republic. Do you think that some of its features are valid, even today?

Exordium

Plato is a Greek philosopher who was born in 427 B.C. He belongs to Athens. Plato contributes in construction of new state which is referred as 'Ideal state' is his great work 'Republic'. Modern critics argues this Ideal state as Eutopia. However, Plato's Ideal state is consisting of various features like rule of philosophy, justice, education and communism. The most significant feature of Plato's Republic is to achieve justice in society.

Background

In 'Republic', he presents a dialogue of Socrates and other Greek philosophers like Polymarchus and Thrasymachus. Polymarchus defines justice as to give just due to the individuals. Whereas, Thrasymachus called the 'interest of the powerful' is justice. Socrates denied all definitions and added 'human soul' in justice. The

Same idea is contributed by Plato in his ideal state. He divide society justly, as organs in body are divided in just manner.

Here is the salient Features of Plato's Republic
Philosopher King

The most significant feature of Plato's 'Ideal state' in "Republic" is rule of philosophers. A long procedure of education is designed to identify these philosophers. Plato gave fifty years to make a child into a philosopher. The reason is these educated persons will govern society justly. The philosopher kings can identify the difference between reality and appearances to understand the illusions of the world.

These philosopher kings are more capable and proved themselves through fifty years education. They will keep check on education as well to make new philosophers. He presented good qualities of philosophers to contribute his argument of philosopher king.

Education

Plato belongs to Athens where firstly the education was private and secondly only elementary education was available. He refined these issues and emphasized that education must be the subject of state. Also, higher level of education must be available in society to make it an "Ideal" society.

Plato designed a whole procedure for education. Starting from initial years, from birth till 7 years, the education will be the responsibility of parents. Parents can teach stories of bravery and patriotism. From 7 to 18 years, the education will be provided by state and it will include music and gymnastic. What will be the education of our heroes?....

The two divisions, music for the soul and gymnastic for the body.

Plato make it necessary to get military training for two years. From the age of 2 till 35, the education of mathematics and astronomy will be given in first ten years and philosophy in last five years. After that, 15 year of experience

In field is also important. Hence, by designing whole mechanism of education, he highlighted importance of education in his justice prevailing ideal state.

Division of classes

Plato divided the population into three main classes. The division is done on basis of their capacities. Plato followed sophocles definition of justice and for justice in society he did this division.

Firstly, those dominate with hunger and desire will make a class called artisans or peasants. Their work is material production for the society. Secondly, those with domination of courage and bravery made the ~~all~~ class called 'soldiers'. Their duty is to protect the society. Thirdly, domination of wisdom made a class of rulers. They will govern society. Plato declared artisans as stomach, soldiers as heart and rulers as brain of the society.

Plato by education system, explains that one can change their

class by changing the domination factor through education. So, this class division is not rigid.

Justice

Plato considered justice as most crucial factor of ideal state. To achieve his ideal state, he designed the mechanism of education and make philosophy king. He considered justice is to identify the domination factor ~~in~~ in one's personality. It will ease in performing duty in life.

Non interference

Plato emphasized that the division of class is important but there must be no interference among them. Plato give them absolute authority. They can do full jobs independently and authoritatively. One class has no right to interfere in jobs of the other class.

Gender equality and Meritocracy

Plato ^{did not} present any kind of discrimination on basis of gender. Plato consider female

as capable as man to govern and take decisions. He told that one must prove themselves by long procedure of education. Plato is bold in his concept here and focused on merit only not on gender. He encouraged females by this to work in field and no discrimination will be made on basis of gender.

Communism

Plato gave two divisions in communism. One is communism of property and other is communism of family. He explained the urge to hoard wealth can make a ruler corrupt. In his ideal state, soldiers and rulers were not allowed to own property. Artisans, whose dominating factor is hunger can own property. Plato restricted rulers and soldiers and they will be provided enough salary to live life.

Plato asked for communism in families as well and gave concept of temporary marriages for one year. The childrens will be then state's children and

State will look after them. Plato saves society from the love of wealth for well-being of children in the hearts of rulers and ~~soldiers~~ ^{soldiers}. As the rulers and soldiers are powerful and having absolute authority. So, power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

There are some of the features of Plato's 'Ideal State' in present time as well.

Education

As Plato education must be controlled and supervised by the state. State must provide education till higher level.

Meritocracy

Plato was not biased in his judgement on basis of gender or class. He allowed all classes, all genders to prove themselves. Modern society has in dire need of this because there is no meritocracy and gender discrimination as well.

Justice

Modern era is lacking in justice and powerful defines justice here. There is need to give everyone even from lower

class to prove themselves and achieve good positions in society.
Philosopher kings

As Plato mentioned philosopher kings, in modern time it can be moulded as that rulers must be educated. Education changes the whole personality and educated rulers can govern society differently.

Communism

From communism the first division is applicable in society of today. The voracity of politicians to hoard wealth can cause a decline of a country, like Pakistan. So, politicians and higher official restricted to have limited number of property.

Criticism

Plato's 'Republic' faced criticism and modern philosophers claim it as utopia. He presented very lengthy procedure of education. It is specially not applicable in today's world when life span shortened. Plato gave absolute authority to institutions which can make them corrupt. There is need of check and balance.

System. In short, Plato's 'Ideal state' is impracticable and his communism is more social and political. He also demanded individuals sacrifice for state.

Demerit

Plato in his work 'Republic' prevailed justice by different institutions. He divided society on basis of domination factor and justice in division. He allowed all institutions to have full autonomy and philosopher king for better governance. Even though Plato's state is difficult to achieve and impracticable. But, ~~it~~ we can be extracted few points and apply them on modern society by little change.
