

## **Plato's Concept of Justice and Current Political Scenario in Pakistan**

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### **Abstract**

*Justice is prerequisite for peace and harmony in the society. As every region of the world has its specific culture and civilization therefore the understanding of the concept of justice varies. When we start our discussion on the concept and theories of justice, following questions come to our mind: What is justice? Why is it so important in life? How justice can be attained? What will be the distinguishing features of a just society? Who is capable of ruling a just state? Is the cry for justice one of the top issues of the Pakistani society or not? The major purpose of this article is to answer the said questions, to examine the concept of justice in the perspective of Plato's Republic, to evaluate the feeble political setup of Pakistan and to examine the factors behind the disharmony and warfare in Pakistan.*

We always long for an impartial and fair treatment either in courts or work places. From the very beginning till now we cannot ignore the need of justice in our lives. Justice is a term used in a variety of perspectives. It is sometimes taken in the meanings of fairness and reasonableness. It could be a parameter which tells us about the validity of a law. Proper fulfillment of the duties and rights is also considered as justice. As far as the concept of justice is concerned, it is not easy to reach at a single and unified end. Justice is a concept which is speculative, not conclusive.

Every civilized society makes laws in order to achieve maximum good for each member of the society. A sense of satisfaction develops among the people when they obey laws. That level of satisfaction could be named as psychological and social justice. Locke is of the same view that when people respect the basic rights of others and provide security to each other then we can expect maximum good in the society. The good is basically meant to provide basic rights to the people. As Salmond says,

“Justice demands that freedom, equality, and other basic rights be accorded and secured to human beings to the greatest extent consistent with the common good” (Bodenheimer, 1962, p. 4)

If we trace back to the Greek history we would come to know that land of Athens was always in thirst of peace and justice. Plato (427-347 B.C.) is one of the big names in Greek history who presented his theory of justice a thousand years before to develop a just society. The main reason of turning towards the question of justice was the unjust trial of his teacher Socrates. Socrates' trial was a great tragic event which compelled Plato to think about the death of Socrates as an unjust act. The main question dealt with by Plato was “what is justice?”

One of the most influential works of Plato is *the Republic*. In this book Plato discussed wisdom, courage, virtues of justice and good life of an individual as well as a society. Plato discussed the above issues through the mouth of his beloved teacher, Socrates. He puts emphasis on a just society and the role of a just individual in that society.

Plato through Socrates defines justice by refuting the traditional definitions of justice. Cephalus is a character who represents the traditional ethics of the Athens which was prevailing at that time.

Cephalus says: Justice is “Speaking the truth and paying whatever debts one has incurred.” (Grube, 1992, p. 331c)

According to him justice is to follow the right conduct. Plato criticized this view of Cephalus on the ground that there may be some conditions where the rule of right conduct is applicable but we cannot consider it as a universal principle.

The second definition Polemarchus gives is:

“Justice ... gives benefits to friends and does harm to enemies.”(Grube, 1992, p. 332d)

Socrates again raises objection and says

“It isn’t the function of a just person to harm a friend or anyone else,

Rather it is the function of his opposite, an unjust person.” (Grube, 1992, p. 335e)

Plato refutes the definition of justice given by Polemarchus and holds the view that what if a friend is enemy in reality? Should we do good to that type of friend according to the definition or do evil to him? But to do evil is against the concept of morality. Thus this view promotes the individualistic principles. Thrasymachus represents the radical theory of justice. He considers justice as the view of might is right.

“Justice is nothing other than the advantage of the stronger.”(Grube, 1992, p. 338c)

Consequently what Thrasymachus wants to convey may become

“Justice is really the good of another, the advantage of the stronger and the ruler, and harmful to the one who obeys and serves.”(Grube, 1992, p. 343c)

Ruling party makes laws for its own interests and those who violate these laws are punished. Therefore, he concludes:

“A just man always gets less than an unjust one.”(Grube, 1992, p. 343d)

“Injustice, if it is on a large enough scale, is stronger, freer, and more masterly than justice.”(Grube, 1992, p. 344c)

Socrates refutes these definitions and says:

“No one in any position of rule, insofar as he is a ruler, seeks or orders what is advantageous to him, but what is advantageous to his subjects.”(Grube, 1992, p. 342e)

Socrates holds the view that as the physician practices his art for the benefits of his patients instead of his own interests. Similarly, the ruler makes rules not for his own welfare but for the welfare of the masses. Plato considers justice as the very true nature of man and rejects the external and conventional view of justice. In this way Plato through Socrates by concluding the argument gives his definitions regarding justice in the following way:

“Justice is virtue and wisdom and ... injustice is vice and ignorance” (Grube, 1992, p. 350d)

“Those who are all bad and completely unjust are completely incapable of accomplishing anything.”(Grube, 1992, p. 352c)

“A just soul and a just man will live well, and an unjust one badly ... a just person is happy, and an unjust person wretched.”(Grube, 1992, p. 353e-354a)

Plato is convinced of the inequality of man by nature. God has made each of us different from others both physically and mentally. Socrates explains that knowledge makes us aware of the good, so knowledge itself is the good. Therefore, it is concluded that knowledge is virtue and ignorance is an evil. Here a point to be noted is which Plato considers that lack of knowledge of justice was the reason of unjust decision of Socrates’ death penalty. Keeping in view the importance of knowledge, he suggests four virtues which are: temperance, courage, wisdom and justice.

Plato insists that one should perform the duty which has been assigned to him. Only then we can attain harmony among us and this harmony leads towards justice. Therefore, justice according to Plato is:

1. Justice is doing one's own job which one has been assigned
2. Justice is harmony

Plato uses two analogies in order to make the above phrases easily understandable. First one is the division of the parts of soul and second one is division of parts of the state. Plato divides soul into three parts, *reason, spirit and appetite*. According to Plato appetite is that part of the soul,

“With which it lusts, hungers, thirsts and gets excited by other appetites” (Bloom, 1991, p. 439d)

*Appetite* is that part which is full of emotions. At this stage man becomes full of greed, lust, and irrational decisions. Appetite enhances the worldly desires and selfishness. This leads towards immoral indulgence. To control this imbalance there is a part which is known as *reason*. It is that part of the soul which calculates and makes balanced decisions keeping in view interests of the whole soul. The third part is *spirit*, which is courageous, bold and has strong will. Plato maintains that the spirit automatically unites with the rational part if it is not corrupted by the bad upbringing. A similar kind of tripartite division can be seen in the theory of soul of Aristotle. His division is: reason, spirit and desire.

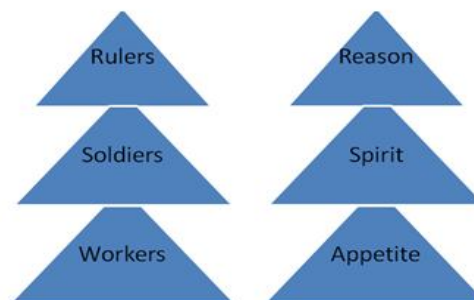
According to Plato soul is destined to perform some specific functions. A specific excellence or virtue is attained by the soul after performing these specific functions. Plato writes:

“A man should do his work in the station of life to which he was called by his capacities”  
(Bodenheimer, 1962, p.7)

For soul in order to do its work, it is necessary that soul must have its peculiar virtue. The more virtuous or just a soul is, the more contented it is. That is why a just person leads a happy life. Plato writes about happy person:

"Happiness surely does not consist in being delivered from evils, but in never having them."(Jowett, 1982, p. 470)

Plato's concept of ideal state resembles human soul. He divides state into three parts: *Rulers, Soldiers and Workers*. Ruling class or philosophers are the representatives of reason. Soldiers belong to that class which represents spirit while the lowest class is that of workers and farmers which represents appetite. In this way by developing a hierarchy on the same ground as he did in the parts of soul, Plato divides society into three classes and draws a strict line between these classes.



### ***Hierarchical Relationship of the Parts of Soul and State***

Plato thinks if appetitive part is given in the subordination of spirited part and spirited part in the subordination of reason, individual justice will be ensured. Similarly, if the class of peasants and laborers is given in the subordination of warriors and in turn the class of warriors is subordinated to the class of philosophers we shall have collective (or social) justice. For Plato, Justice has two aspects like the two volumes of the same book, one is social and other is individual. One aspect is larger than the other. At individual level we can define justice as a human virtue which makes an individual steady and excellent. On the other hand, at the level of society, it results in social consciousness and makes the society internally strong, happy and harmonious.

Working class is assigned a labor duty so that they provide food, clothes and other basic necessities to the people of the society. This class should be loyal and submissive to their rulers. Soldiers are courageous like a spirited soul and they even don't hesitate to sacrifice their lives for the state and rulers. The ruling class and the reason have similarity in guiding the lower classes and the whole state respectively. The task of rulers is to administer the proper peace and harmony in the society. Therefore, if a ruler is not able and wise, state will have no future and ultimately state will be ruined. Plato maintains that every class is bound to fulfill the functions allotted to it in order to attain harmony and a just society.

So in Plato's theory individual justice is a prerequisite of social justice and only that society can legitimately be called "just" in which wisdom reigns supreme. Or in other words justice can prevail only in that society which is ruled over by the King Philosopher.

James E Alvey has summarized parts of soul and parts of state as follows: (Alvey, 2010, p. 11)

Individual's Reasoning part	City's Rulers
Individual's Spirited part	City's Warriors
Individual's Desiring part	City's Artisans and other Moneymakers

Plato's concept of justice is graphically shown as: (John, 2013)

	CITY	CITY/SOUL ANALOGY	INDIVIDUAL SOUL
WISDOM	guardians know best for each part re: common good	rulers/learning part	[prudential] reason knows best for each re: common good
COURAGE	auxilliaris preserve correct beliefs taught by guardians about the fearful	soldiers/spirited part	spiritedness preserves correct beliefs taught by reason about the fearful
MODERATION	whole city agreement as to who should rule	workers/appetites	whole soul agreement as to who should rule
JUSTICE	harmony of whole city (each does natural task without meddling)	city/soul	harmony of whole soul (each does natural task without meddling)

In the Republic book VIII Plato presents five forms of governments in order to make distinction between justice and injustice. He also argues that how democracy turns into tyranny and why aristocracy is a better form. These forms are: *Aristocracy, Timocracy, Oligarchy, Democracy, and Tyranny*. According to Plato aristocracy is one of the best kinds of government for his just ideal state. Aristocratic ruler is a wise and intelligent person, whose rational, spirited and appetitive parts are in balance and through his philosophical skills he can better solve the problems and can take the decisions wisely. Plato dislikes democracy and maintains that democracy gives birth to *tyranny*.

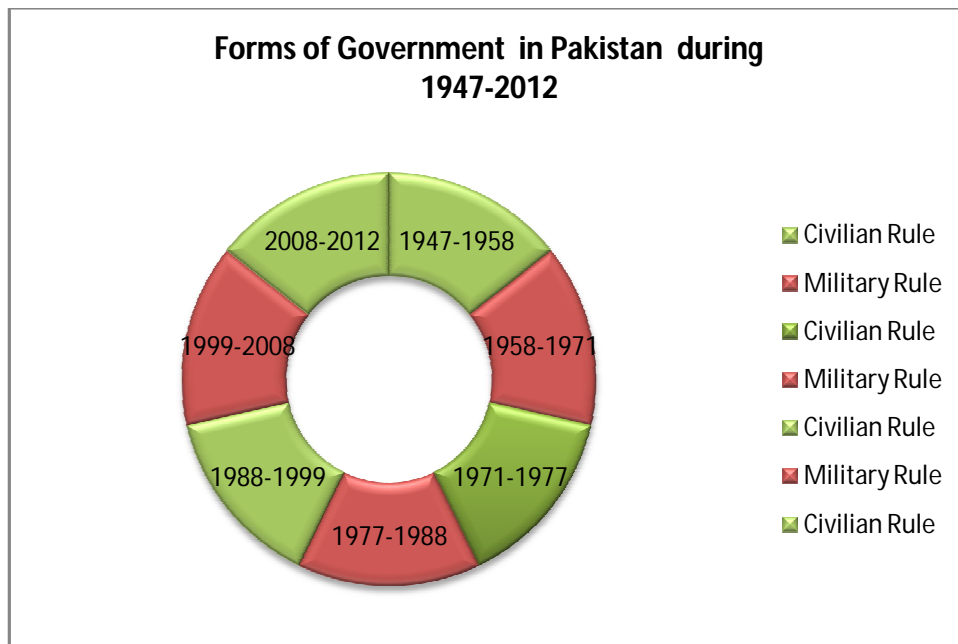
In *timocracy*, warriors become rulers. They just usurp and collect money, having no genuine concern in the matters of people. A timocratic ruler misuses his powers and creates a gulf between the people and the government. Ambitions of the state are being replaced by the personal ambitions. From here the timocracy degenerates into *oligarchy*. The greed for money makes the rulers selfish. Virtues are left behind and money becomes the sole target to be achieved. Lust for money stops people from paying taxes; ultimately leaving the state in complete despair. At this stage poor people express their angers and protest. In order to control anarchy state takes action. Cries for freedom, justice and equality get higher. It is the time when oligarchy degenerates into democracy.

Plato disapproved of democracy because it seemed absurd and irrational to him. He is against the rule of average people who are uneducated and unfit to make wise decisions. Eventually, tyranny comes out of democracy. In a tyrannical state one person rules the horde for his personal welfare. Apparently such type of regime looks very organized but actually the ruler works for his own interests leaving the rest of the state at its back.

The need of justice has always been realized not only by Plato but by the different scholars of different eras. According to Aristotle the justice has twofold functions. He named one as distributive justice and other as corrective justice. Distributive justice is to give equal rights and goods to the equal members of the society. When the equal distribution of benefits and burdens takes place, then the task of corrective justice is to protect, assure and preserve these goods from the attack of enemies.

Hobbes, Rousseau and Hume had also presented their views regarding the question of justice. Similarly in modern political philosophers, John Rawls and Robert Nozick are famous names. In the Muslim history Mutazilites hold a staunch belief in Divine Unity and Justice and call themselves *Ahl-al-tauhid w-al-'adl*. According to them due to God's justice it is obligatory on Him to act according to the moral laws. While Asharites hold an opposite point of view.

It is an agreed point that to establish a just and peaceful state, a just and harmonious atmosphere should work in the society. Now we have to look into our political system that how far it is fulfilling the said purpose. A figure showing the forms of government in Pakistan from 1947 to 2012 is as under:



During the 66 years of independence Pakistan has been ruled by the military for about half of the total years. Plato holds a view that warriors should not interfere in the ruling affairs of state, this proves to be true in the case of Pakistan. The military rule has weakened the foundations of Pakistan badly. In 1958 it was the first time when army intervened in the political structure of Pakistan. Here a question arises: why military declares martial laws and why warriors leave their barracks and enter the cities? Martial law is imposed when politicians start looting the state without thinking about country's future and fail to maintain peace and harmony. At this stage democracy degenerates into tyranny. Here referring back to Plato we can see that he has rightly said the excess of freedom in democracy leads towards tyranny. When politicians fail to uphold justice and harmony, army claims to be the best savior of the state. But unfortunately, it is evident from the history when military rulers come into power they also put aside the benefits of the people. Projects of development in different fields with other countries become on a halt which affect the graph of economic growth and standard of living of a common man regarding food, shelter and education.

Pakistan is a democratic country. It is mentioned in the constitution of Pakistan that the principles of democracy, social justice, tolerance, freedom and equality will be practiced as proclaimed by Islam. Unlike Plato we do not claim that democracy is not a good form of government. Democracy can be good for a state only if the principles of democracy are implemented honestly. In fact democracy is not a system which allows people whatever they want to do rather it is a system which helps in determining the good course of action. Perhaps what we need is to change the way we choose our leaders instead of changing our form of government.

The founder of Pakistan Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah during a broadcast talk to the United States in 1948 pointed out the democracy as:

“The constitution of Pakistan has yet to be framed by the Pakistan Constituent Assembly. I do not know what the ultimate shape of this constitution is going to be, but I am sure that it will be of a democratic type, embodying the essential principle of Islam. Today, they are as applicable in actual life as they were 1,300 years ago. Islam and its idealism have taught us democracy. It has taught equality of man, justice and fair play to everybody. We are the inheritors of these glorious traditions and are fully alive to our responsibilities and obligations as framers of the future constitution of Pakistan. In any case Pakistan is not going to be a theocratic State to be ruled by priests with a divine mission. We have many non-Muslims –Hindus, Christians, and Parsis –but they are all Pakistanis. They will enjoy the same rights and privileges as any other citizens and will play their rightful part in the affairs of Pakistan.”(Shoaib, 2010)

It is evident that Jinnah was in favor of democratic rule in Pakistan but unfortunately the democratic rule in Pakistan has failed to represent a condition of justice and harmony. Mr. Jinnah did not wish for such democratic system which has been working now a days. Keeping in view the concept of Plato’s justice, we can now easily examine the factors which cause failure of peace and harmony in Pakistani society. As the process of justice moves from individual to state so there is need to put emphasis on the duties assigned to individuals. Our main problem is that when we see corrupt people becoming rich day by day, we all wish to be like them. Political instability, corruption, misuse of power by feudal lords and religious intolerance leads towards the social injustice and warfare in the society. There is no way of progress for any nation with such an attitude.

This analysis of the theory of justice of Plato and social justice system in Pakistan dawns upon us a reality that justice is a fundamental pillar of the civil society. Like all other concepts related to the life of a man Islam addresses justice, too. God commands to be just and fair in dealings.

“God commands justice and fair dealing...” (Al-Quran 16:90)

In Quran it has been stressed to be just. Injustice is strongly prohibited.

“O you, who believe, be upright for God, and (be) bearers of witness with justice!”  
(Al-Quran 5:8)

Once, someone asked Hazrat Ali about the faith in religion. He said:

“The structure of faith is supported by four pillars endurance, conviction, justice and jihad” (Jafri, 1999)

At another place in *Nahjul Balagah* Hazrat Ali has defined justice very accurately. He says that justice is to put a thing in its right place while injustice is not to place a thing in its due place. He says:

الْعَدْلُ يَضَعُ الْأُمُورَ مَوَاضِعَهَا وَالْجُودُ يُخْرِجُهَا مِنْ جِهَتِهَا وَالْعَدْلُ  
سَائِسٌ عَامٌّ فَالْجُودُ عَارِضٌ خَاصٌّ فَالْعَدْلُ أَشْرَفُهُمَا وَأَفْضَلُهُمَا.

“Justice puts everything in its right place, but generosity takes them out of their places. Justice is a universal caretaker, but generosity will only benefit the one with whom you are generous. Therefore justice is nobler and more excellent”

It could easily be concluded that politically and socially speaking Plato’s division of the state is quite natural. We see that every society consists of such types of classes. From Plato’s Republic the practical lesson is that one should seek for knowledge in order to be wise and if he is not wise then he should follow a wise person who can be a good guardian. He stresses that acting virtuously is the key to success that is why the foundation of the city is the combination of cardinal virtues. It is an agreed conclusion that one should do the work what he has been assigned to do. As Kant says in the same context that ‘do thy duty though the heavens fall’

The contemporary situation of Pakistan needs a rational approach towards the problems of good governance. Pakistani society can be peaceful society if the 'honesty culture' is promoted and constitution is considered sacred. The implementation of the law and order should be equal for everyone. The role of independent judiciary should be based on honesty. There should be proper policies for lowering the rate of unemployment. Education sector should also be made strong so that people can take part in the development sector effectively. Role of media should be unbiased. Religious tolerance is very necessary to be promoted. Leaders should put the interest of the citizens prior to their own and should promote the collective benefits. Thus, the need of the time is to focus on independent foreign policy and provincial integration. Interference of different institutions in one another's domain should be strictly prohibited. Resolving these issues we can see peace and harmony in the Pakistani society.

As Helen Keller said:

“Until the great mass of the people shall be filled with the sense of responsibility for each other's welfare, social justice can never be attained” (Keller, 2001)

In a nutshell, Plato's philosophy of justice as harmony, virtue, selfless devotion of the ruler for his state and the fulfillment of the assigned duty are the tools which can help Pakistani society to gain its real identity, peace and harmony. The golden words of Muhammad Ali Jinnah support the thought of Plato. He said: “You have to stand guard over the development and maintenance of democracy, social justice and the equality of manhood in your own native soil. With faith, discipline and selfless devotion to duty, there is nothing worthwhile that you cannot achieve.”(Shoaib, 2010)

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