

AN OVERVIEW OF PLATO AND ASPECTS OF THE HINDU POLITICAL THOUGHTS

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Abstract:

The Generalized Notions of the Hindu Political Thought: India, with an area as extensive Europe minus Russia and with a large and diverse population, has had an active political history. The existence of autonomous oligarchy city states is recorded in the earliest Hindu tradition. As early as the fourth century B.C. Hindu empire of the Mauryas has established which include a more extensive territory than the present India. In the following centuries kingdoms and empires rose and fell, warfare among the various principalities was almost constant, and frequent attempts were made by ambitious rulers to unite India into a world empire. State systems were not long-lived, and dynastic revolutions were numerous. The political development of India resembled in many ways that of Europe, and was marked by a growing political consciousness and by the creation of a considerable amount of political philosophy.

Key words: Hindu Political, Mauryas, empires, philosophy

Introduction:-

In contrast to the other oriental political systems, the Hindu states were not theoretic. Religion in India did not dominate politics. The state was independent of the church, and the priest did not interfere in administration. The dictates of religion were limited to principles of moral guidance for ruler and subject alike. Because of this condition, political speculation was permissible and was able to reach advanced conceptions. Political philosophy was recognized as a distinct field of knowledge created on extensive literature, and was considered by some of its founders the most important of sciences.

Hindu political thinkers viewed the original nature of man as essentially selfish and wicked. They agreed with the church fathers and with Hobbes, rather than with Locke and Rousseau, in considering the state of nature a condition of violence, injustice and the rule of might. They had no rosy conceptions concerning a Golden Age or Garden of Eden. In the absence of authority, they believed that the stronger would devour the weak like fishes in water, and this figure of the struggle for existence known as the 'Logic of the Fish', (Natsya-Nyaya) frequently recurs in both political and popular literature.

To prevent this condition authority and punishment were required. Law, supported by force, was necessary to prevent private vengeance, to safeguard property, to secure justice, the state arose, therefore, because of needs growing out of the original nature of man, and its authority rested upon its ability to coerce and to impose penalties. The Hindu theory of sanction and punishment is correspondents closely to the majesties of Bodin, the gamma protests of Grotius, and the modern concept of sovereignty.

Objective of the Study : Following objective will be framed the study :

1. The Paper deals to study Platos Political though.
2. The Paper also deal comparative study on Plato and aspects of the Hindu political thought

Methodology :

The methodology used is descriptive and analytical. The data is collected from both primary and secondary sources. The data is later analyzed and final conclusions are drawn.

Discussion :

According to Hindu political thought, authority was enough. In the second place we must make up our minds precisely where his philosophy fails. True democracy is un-Platonic, because it springs from the Christian notion of personality; an end it is only if we believe in this notion that we can refuse Plato and show that his philosophy has no sufficient message for the modern world. If this is true, it should come as a shock to discover how well Plato's philosophy is adapted to our Christian theory and practice is indistinguishable from it. For this reasons as the true democrat must start with the assumption that the world has still to be made democratic, so the Christian must assume that it is still pagan, despite the existence of 'Christian' churches. Only a revolutionary democracy and a revolutionary Christianity can hope to prevail today. Institutionalism will kill them both, if its gets the chance, and turn them into 'noble lies' which modern Platonists can use to defend the status quo.

For fundamentally both are the assertions of incredible. Against the realism of those who accept the existing order and seek to maintain it, they preach impossibility and try to make it come true. The true democrat and the true Christian admit the Platonic analysis of man as he is, but they know that they can change him by their faith in man as he ought to be. It was this faith which Plato lacked. He felt himself to be a member of a dying order in which the good was only a survival from a previous golden age; and so his philosophy and his political career were devoted to the defense of dying values against the corrosion of history. Truth and justice in his view must be rescued by elite. The sphere of freedom must be contracted until it includes only those few elect spirits who are worthy of it.

A real democratic philosophy will be resolutely opposed to such an outlook. It cannot be content to defend a social order by the maintenance of an authoritarian tradition; diplomacy. The military aspects of Hindu theory resembled the byakurgan creed of Sparta, the Bushido of Japan, and the modern doctrines of Treitschke.

With these generalized conceptions of Hindu thought we will discuss at some length the ideas of Plato in the comparative context of the Vedic political notions and Gandhism.

Plato's significance is all most universal. Not only did he systematize pre-Socratic and Socratic philosophy but he was the real founder or metaphysical idealism in the est. A.N. Whitehead holds that the whole of modern philosophy is a series of footnotes on Plato. 'The Divine Plato', although stigmatized as a fascist and a totalitarian apologist by some pseudo-critics like popper and others, remains for all times to come the arch-prophet of a moral and volitional approach to politics. The supreme artist and the great mathematician (Plato), champions the cause of virtues in immensely poetic terms and at a critical time like ours we can learn a lot from him. To Vedas, condemn by some as the primitive remnants of Indo-Aryan

Barbarians, have exercised a very powerful influence on the thought of India. We don not accept the mystical interpretation of the Vedic hymns as put forward by Aurobindo, nor do I think that they are the literary prevalations of divine to the Aryan rishis as advocated by Dayanand. We take the Vedas at their face value and still believe that modern Indian can learn something from some of the profound and vitally inspired mantras of the Veda. In attempting this comparative study of Plato and the Veda we are not unmindful of the vast differences that we find in them. The logical consistency of Plato and the unity of thought that we find in his dialogues, we do not in the Vedas. Plato is a first-rate metaphysician while the Vedic rishis were at best, only poetic singers.

Plato accepts the theory of ideas. The immutable archetypal ideas are the ultimate reality according to him. The Vedas also teach the supremacy of Dharma and Vrata- the moral categories of existence.

Anthropology and historical sociology do give as evidence to show that man progressed because of the influence of the evolution of an ethical code by superior moral heroes and teachers. If moral power is not to remain an important factor then it is possible to visualize the combination of dialectical philosophy and political rulership. Plato's concept of the philosopher ruler provided inspiration to Cicero and Fichte. The Vedas also visualize the harmonious fusion of Brahman and Kshatra.

The Atharava Veda states that only by conformity to the moral code of discipline and self-restraint can the ruler attain the power to protect the kingdom. We find that, thus there is a remarkable similarity between the political philosophy of Plato and the Atharava Veda because both accept the canon of the combination of spiritual reasons and political force and authority. While it is trying to focus and the Veda it is not unmindful of several weaknesses in their thought- structures. Plato could not absolutely eliminate from his thought the distinction between the Hellenic and the barbarians and the citizens and the slaves. The Rig-Veda postulates the distinction between the Aryan and the Dasyn. Hence in both Plato and the Veda we find some narrow localism and limited patriotism. Plato's authoritarianism revealed in his proposal to vest the guardians with absolute power is indefensible in a modern democratic context. Similarly is indefensible the monarchical orientation of the Veda.

But the in spite of these and several other weaknesses, what still attracts me to Plato and the Veda is their gospel of vitality, strength and moral power. Notwithstanding several logical, scientific cosmological, historical and other errors in Plato and the Veda, we feel tremendously inspired by these words of precious wisdom. They provide us an invincible moral strength, the capacity to stand in the face of authority and to resist it is the name of truth and justice.

Our country is passing through an epoch of formlessness, confusion, and weakness. We need the political and moral philosophy of Plato and the Veda- the two great architects of two of the greatest cultures and civilizations on the earth. Prophets of doom may declare the cult of moral inertia and historic illnesses or the blind worship of the west to be the only paths of salvation for us. But a source of tremendous optimism, moral faith and spiritual grandeur is contained in Plato and the Veda. A political philosophy in India does not have to repeat the morally damaging doctrines of the western scholars and thinkers like Machiavelli, Hobbes and Nietzsche and neglect the inspired the vital teachings of the great sages, philosophers and prophets like Plato and the authors of the Vedic Samhitas. For political success we need faith

in the spirit of man. Only a strong humanist faith and only a mighty ethical and spiritual teaching can provide a galvanizing creed. And only that which provides strength to a nation and to individuals is truth and is worth surviving. Gandhi and Plato:

Both Gandhi and Plato have an integral comprehensive approach to the problems of man and society. Hence in the Republic and the Laws, Plato simultaneously discusses political, economic, moral and educational problems. Gandhi also is concerned with all dimensions of human problems. We have seen, hence, that no study of his political theory is possible without a probe into their metaphysical, religious and ethical foundations and their social and economic implications. Contrasted to the modern approaches to political science which are highly specialized and consequently intensive but narrow, the methodology of Plato and Gandhi is more inclusive, generalized and wide.

Both Gandhi and Plato have a spiritual approach to predominance of reason in their being are to be appointed guardians, while those with the predominance of courage are to be appointed soldiers. Gandhi also was a great advocate of justice as a lawyer, by profession, in his earlier days, he always justice to prevail. He also pleaded for justice to the suppressed and backward sections of the Hindu society, but the overwhelming and the predominant emphasis on justice that one finds in Plato's Republic is not to be met with the Gandhi. The central concept in his ethics and politics on the other hand, are truth and non-violence. It must be stated, however, that both Gandhi and Plato were in favour of the social structure being based on the concept of division of labour. Plato, however, was more radical in his social philosophy because he believe in the possibility of transposition of ranks in his society. In other words, birth is not the determining criterion belongingness or social stratification, according to Plato. In Gandhi, on the other hand, the theory of varna is based on occupational organization to be determined by one's birth.

Abayam as emphasized by Gandhi is a richer and nobler conception than courage as advocated in Plato's Republic. Plato proposed a system of communism for the two higher classes of his society. He also made the revolutionary suggestion of community of wives and children for the guardians in his ideal polity. Gandhi would have revaluated with horror at this latter suggestion. In matters of marital relations, he was the follower of a very rigorous and chaste code of morality. In place of the communication of property, Gandhi would advocate the notion of trusteeship which implies at least, nominal individual ownership and the use of wealth for social purposes. Both Gandhi and Plato are agreed, however, that man's life should be one the practice of the principle of simplicity, and unnecessary accumulation must be avoided at all cost.

Plato's very important theme the theory of philosopher- ruler may, to some extent, be compare to the Gandhian notion of Ramrajya, if the latter conception is interpreted in the traditional Indian sense to signify benevolent monarchy oriented to the realization of the good of all people. There is no doubt that the rule of the philosophers would demand the necessary existence of a reformed political system. But the Gandhian notion of Ramarajya may also be interpreted as signifying a state of enlightened anarchy that would be characterized by the absence of governmental coercion. If this second interpretation is emphasized then, Ramrajya cannot be compared to the notion of the philosopher- ruler. There are two interpretations of Ramrajya one is the traditional interpretation as formulated in the Ramayana of Valmiki or in the Adhyatma Ramayan or in the Puranas or in the various Ramayanas in the Indian languages.

According to this interpretation, Ramrajya is a political system based on benevolence, consideration for good, peace and social amity, the king is there at the top, more or less, as a father of his subject. Secondly, there is the Gandhian conception of Ramrajya whereon the influence of anarchists like Tolstoy may be seen. Those passages in Gandhi's writings which bear the influence of western anarchist school will justify an interpretation that will be totally different from the ideal of the rule of the philosophers.

Plato was a trenchant critic of democracy. How could he support democracy which had the audacity to put to death his teacher Socrates in 399 B.C. Although in the statesman Plato has moderated his criticism of democracy, in the Republic, he almost totally condemns it. Gandhi, on the other hand, although not a complete admirer of the modern system of parliamentary democracy based on direct election and universal adult suffrage was; so far as India was concerned, an advocate of parliamentary democracy and adult suffrage. He was far more sympathetic to the democratic institutions like the functioning of a legislature, the independent working of the judicial system and the operation of principles of the parliamentary democracy than Plato. Both are apprehensive of democratic excesses. Nevertheless, Gandhi had far more of the democratic spirit of identification with the masses than the Athenian aristocrat.

In the Republic, the husbandmen have no creative purpose of their own except producing for the two higher classes. Gandhi, on the other hand, was enamoured for identification with the semi-starved mute millions of India, and he was always stressing their rights and interests in India's Swaraj.

In the tradition of Herodotus, Plato has formulated a scheme of six forms of government in the statesman and five in the Republic. Out of these later five forms, four comprehended in the six fold schema of the statesman. Only timocracy is the novel concept in the Republic. The six forms of government in the statesman are monarchy, tyranny, aristocracy, oligarchy, democracy and perverted democracy. Gandhi has not gone into an elaborate and systematic study of the various forms of writings of Gandhi; however, there are references to the different forms of contemporary political systems with which he came in contact. We may find references to the system of the caliphate, then existing in the Turkey, the native states as operating in India prior to 1947-48, the system of crown colonies and responsible government as found in South Africa, the British parliamentary system with the constitutional monarchy and the patterns of dominion status in Canada, Australia etc. As a political leader, he has to express his opinions regarding the form of constitution contemplated in the Nehru report of 1928, the government of India Acts of 1919 and 1935 and Cripps and the Cabinet Mission proposals. These different constitutional measures either operating in India or contemplated for future implementation necessarily provided themes on which Gandhi gave his favourable or unfavourable reactions. So far as personal reference is concerned, Plato was for aristocracy, Gandhi, on the other hand, was for constitutionalism and the widest possible support of democracy.

At the operative and the institutional levels, Plato was an elitist. He wanted the rule of the selected few, of course the selection being made on the basis of cognitive superiority and virtue. Gandhi, on the other hand, was a mass leader and he wanted the creation of a political system on the basis of the widest possible participation of the citizens. While Plato was a supporter of inequality, Gandhi was a radical equalitarian.

Gandhi was more of a humanitarian than Plato. While Plato sanctioned defensive wars, Gandhi was, to a considerable extent, a pacifist. According to Plato the guardians, even of after the acquisition of dialectical cognition, can engage in military activities. But Gandhi felt that an entirely new awareness of cosmic fraternity dawns upon man by the practice of Ahimsa as creative love and dynamic beneficence. Plato and Aristotle were the teachers of the perfected and idealized Polis. But Gandhi was a world teacher and a humanitarian. In spite of all dialectical training and a transcendent vision of the idea of the good, Plato's highest guardians do not rise above the sense of aggression and defense. They are essentially watch-dogs or guards of the city.

Conclusion :

Furthermore, while Gandhi; always swearing by the canons of conscience was a resolute *Styagarhi* in quest of truth and Ahimsa. Plato the Greek was a dominant admirer of the community life of the Polis. To a Greek, the Polis was the uppermost consideration. Contrasted to the solitarian orientation of Plato, Gandhi was the great moral and in terms of resisting the established structure of political authority. Both Plato and Gandhi are agreed that it is essential to change the present human consciousness for effectuating a radical solution of political problems.

Suggestion and Funding :

But while Plato stresses an illumination of consciousness by dialectical reason, Gandhi emphasized the change of heart. The latter felt that reason has to be substantiated by the power of suffering. Where rational arguments do not carry conviction, suffering makes effective and spontaneous appeal. He realized that mere academic training and intellectual refinement is not of much avail because it does not impart the solidity of character which is needed to give a man moral strength to withstand temptations and fear. Hence, he was a little indifferent to mere accumulation of information about things. He, on the other hand, wanted training in moral virtues. He condemned mere 'book education'. He would never put that serious emphasis on the training in higher mathematics and dialectical philosophy that Plato does. He was a votary of chastity. He advocated the suppression of libidinal aberrations. He wanted to be an *Urdhvareta* and he, thus, subscribed to the Yogic belief that it is possible to transmute sexual energy into pure spiritual energy. The Athenian aesthete has no such exalted conception of *Brahmacharya*. Education, according to Gandhi, has to lead to purification of character and salvation of the soul. If moral teaching were practiced in life, a silent social revolution could be effectuated because of the individuals succeeded in building their character, society could take care of itself because, society is only the complex network of the response patterns of individuals. Hence, Gandhi taught that the transformation of individual character was essential for the moralization of society and politics. But in spite of difference at the level of views regarding governmental organization, public administration and the social system, there is widespread agreement in both of these writers with regard to the importance of virtue in politics, and both, essentially, belong to the tradition of the idealistic school of politics.

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--XX--