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Platonic Concept of Communism of Family and Private Property: From Islamic Perspective

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Abstract

Plato according to his prevailing socio-political environment tried to introduce reforms to restore a peaceful and harmonious society wherein man could a happy life without any sense of insecurity. For this, he introduced various concepts – Ideal State, Justice, Education, Classification of Society into three classes, Functional specialization, Communism, etc. – based upon imagination; and these are not workable in the modern society in their true spirit. In this piece of work, the main focus is on Platonic concept of Communism and its evaluation in the light of Islamic teachings. His concept of communism given in his famous work Republic contradicts with Islamic social and economic systems.

Keywords: *Plato, socio-political, environment, harmonious, imagination*

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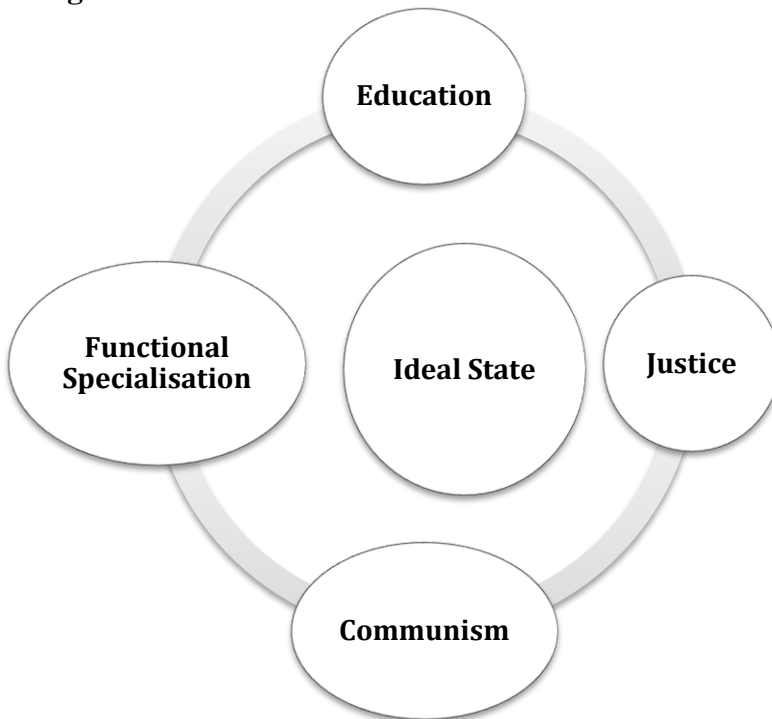
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Introduction:

Plato was a Greek philosopher born in Athens. He was the disciple of Socrates and teacher of Aristotle. Plato wrote several Books. The famous works of Plato are *Republic*, *The Statesman*, and *The Laws*. In *Republic*, he put forwarded many concepts like ideal state, justice, functional specialization, education, and communism (Figure-1).¹ In this piece of research work, the main focus is on his concept of communism of private property and family.²

Figure-1³

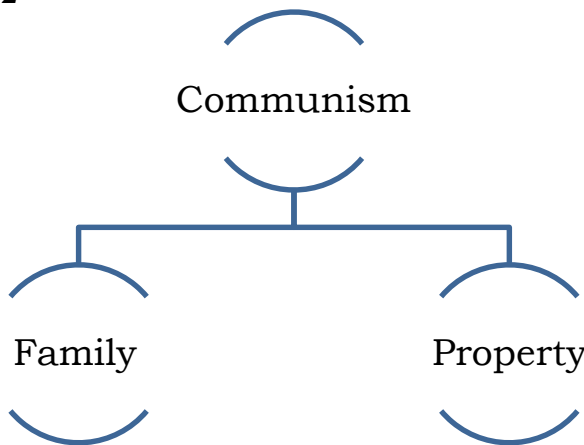


Basic Postulates of Plato Communism

It is worth to mention that Plato through his educational scheme – consisted of two stages/phases – divided the society into three classes – the Philosopher Kings, the Warriors/Soldiers, and the Artisan class or

Producers. The Philosopher King was the main decision-maker because he was perfect as he had highest intellectual capability and carried command over his emotions and appetite. Contrary to this, soldiers were to their emotions and they failed to get further intellectual training as given in the Platonic Education Curriculum; and Producers were subordinate to their appetite. Simply, Plato stratified the society on basis of functional specialization and faculty of intellect, spirit, and appetite.⁴ In addition to this, Plato forwarded the concept of Communism. Platonic communism has two broad aspects – Communism of Family and Communism of Property. Platonic communism applies only to Upper two classes – Guardian Class/Philosopher King and Soldiers – and the lower class (Artisan Class) was allowed to possess both family and private property.⁵

Figure-2⁶



Communism of Family

Plato believed in abolition of monogamous sexual relation and the introducing a state’s regulated breeding at the behest of rulers for the purpose of securing the best possible offspring.⁷ Judd Harmon in this regard states:

Neither matrimonial relationship nor any form of monogamous union were allowed among men and women in the ruling and military classes. State had to regulate breeding so as to produce best offspring for the

welfare of the state. Parentage should be unknown; and neither the parents should know their kids, nor the kids should know their parents.⁸

Communism of Property

Plato's communism of private property is the abolition of private property – houses, land, or money; and applicable to upper two classes. They would live in barracks and would be served with meals.⁹

Rational Behind Plato Communism

The basic rationale behind communism was to purify the upper two classes – Philosopher King and Soldiers – spiritually and psychologically from the lust for sex and financial benefits. He considered matrimonial relationship and possession of property as major hurdles in their way to concentrate on their allotted functions and might lead to corrupting the soul and minds of these classes. Plato regarded possession of private property as source of dissention.¹⁰

It is also worth to mention that Plato in his another famous work *The Laws* allows the right to possess private property and institution of family and marriage in his Model state.¹¹

Plato Communism: From Islamic Perspective

Islamic social and economic systems are distinctive in nature. Platonic concept of communism is in contradiction with the Islamic teachings. Islam provides two aspects of human rights – Rights of Allah and rights of people. Here is a brief discussion on its various aspects.

1. Violation of Fundamental Rights

Platonic concept of communism entails violation of fundamental rights as guaranteed by Islam. Allah has put boundaries around human activities. Islam retrains its believers from doing wrongs and permits to do good so that social life becomes beneficial both for the individual and the society. Sex is the genetic, biological and psychological need of not

only men but also of Jin, birds, and animals. Allah has created all creatures in couples. Allah commands in the Holy Quran:

وَمِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَا زَوْجَيْنِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ

“And of everything We have created pairs, that you may remember (the Grace of Allah).”¹²

Plato concept of family is clear violation Quranic injunctions with respect to fundamental right of human being to legitimate sexual relationship.

2. Promoting Illegitimate Sexual Relationship

Plato encouraged illegitimate sexual relationship in the society which is forbidden in Islam. Islam encourages pure and lawful sexual relations and restrains to go near adultery or fornication. It allows satisfaction of normal sexual appetite through lawful wedlock. Allah commands in the Holy Quran:

And marry those among you who are single (a man who has no wife and the woman who has no husband) and (also marry) the *Salihun* – pious, fit and capable one – of your (male) slaves and maid-servants (female slaves). If they be poor, Allah will enrich them out of His Bounty. And Allah is All-Sufficient for His creatures’ needs, All-Knowing (about the state of the people).¹³

3. Attack on Family Structure

Family is the fundamental unit of Islamic social system. There are number of Verses in the Holy Quran regarding family, parents, children, their mutual relationship and their mutual rights and duties for the smooth and successful social life and harmonious social order in the society. Holy Quran states:

And Allah has made for you *Azwaj* (mates or wives) of your own kind, and has made for you, from your wives, sons and grandsons, and has

bestowed on you good provision. Do they then believe in false deities and deny the Favour of Allah (by not worshipping Allah alone).¹⁴

On another place, Holy Quran says:

O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person (Adam), and from him (Adam) He created his wife (Eve), and from them both He created many men and women...¹⁵

S. D. Islahi regarding importance of family says:

The civic or social structure emerges from the companionship of a man and a woman. The social circle which comes into existence with this companionship forms the link of the social order. This social order is called family life and the laws which govern it are known as family laws. This permanent companionship of a man and a woman emerges from an open contract which is known in technical terms as “*Nikah*” or *marriage*. It is a sacred relation which is formed with the mutual consent of the two partners and through an open declaration.¹⁶

4. Absence of Parentage

In the absence of family, parentage will be unknown and that of children. It is repugnant to the teachings of Islam as given in the Holy Quran. This is the gross violation of the commandments of Allah. Holy Quran says: And those who say: “Our Lord! Bestow on us from our wives and our offspring the comfort of our eyes, and make us leaders of the *Muttaqun* (the pious).¹⁷

5. Attack on Right to Private Property

Modern communism also discourage concept of possession of private property. It emphasizes on state’s ownership of private property. In this regard, Dr. Syed Bacha Agha and Dr. Amir Ullah Khan say:

“Communism is basically politico-economic ideology. Plato had the credit to introduce the concept of communism of family and property. In modern times, Karl Marx’s famous work Communist Manifesto brought revolution in the realm of European political thoughts. Communist school of thought views property as a social and economic evil; and

advocated its abolition of right to property because it causes large scale injustice and poverty in a society.¹⁸ Adam Smith is famous for his capitalist ideology and his famous work *The Wealth of Nations* written in 1776. He viewed individual as an ‘economic being’ due to his unending greed for maximization of economic benefits. He was of the view that ‘state had three major functions – defense, justice, and construction of works.’¹⁹ Ricardo also divided the society into three classes – landlords, capitalists, and laborers; and he considered property as sacred institution and a source of felicitation.²⁰

Islamic economic system guarantees the right to private property.

6. Lack of Inheritance

Islam gives a comprehensive scheme of inheritance. Inheritance is impossible without possession of private property by oneself. Ultimately, the denial of right to private property is like to deprive an individual from his right to inheritance which is not permissible in Islam. Holy Quran says:

And to everyone, We have appointed heirs of that (property) left by parents and relatives. To those also with whom you have made a pledge, give them their due portion (by will).²¹

7. No Zakat System

Platonic communism of property also negates the Islam principle of *Zakat* (an obligatory charity which is clearly ordained in the Holy Quran; and the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ also gave his instructions in this connection.²² Allah in the Holy Quran regarding *Zakat* commands:

فَسَأْأْتِبُهَا لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِنَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

“Therefore, I shall ordain it (mercy) for those who ward off (evil) and pay the poor-due and then who believe in our signs (or verses).²³

In addition to this, there is also concept of optional charities (*sadaqaat*) in Islam.²⁴ Islam encourages spending on needy people in a society and declared it as source of pleasure of Allah. Holy Quran in this regard says: “Ye spend not save in search of Allah’s pleasure”.²⁵

Conclusion

Islam encourages purification of soul from the greed of wealth and other material things in this world and discourages piling of wealth and also concentration of wealth, and announces chastisement for those who avoid spending money in the way of Allah.²⁶ In Holy Quran, Allah commands:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْأَخْبَارِ وَالرُّهْبَانِ لَيَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَيَصُدُّونَ
عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يَنْفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ
بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ

Islamic economic system leaves no space for concentration of wealth but provides a mechanism of circulation of money in a society. It commands its believers that the rich must pay charities – obligatory and optional – to the needy people in a society. This will help to create a harmonious environment in society and the rich and poor will live together with love and affection.²⁷ Islam discourages the capitalist tool of Usury or interest of concentration of wealth in society; and declared such practice as a major sin.²⁸

The aforementioned comparative study of Platonic concept of communism of family and private property in the light of Islamic principles reflects that his concept is against human intellect and instinct. It is unnatural. Islamic economic system is natural and practicable in all respects. One hand, if Islam permits the rights to family and private property then the other hand, it ordains strict admonition to observe commandments of Allah and His Last Prophet Muhammad ﷺ with respect family affairs and possession and spending of wealth.

¹ M. Judd Harmon, *Political Thought: From Plato To The Present*. Lahore: Nizami Press, 1988, 33-31. Cited hereafter as Judd Harmon, *Political Thought...*

² *Ibid.*, 38

³ Dr. Amir Ullah Khan's compilation

⁴ *Ibid.*, 34-38

⁵ *Ibid.*, 38. See also George H. Sabine, *History of Political Theory*. Islamabad: Farhan Raza Printers, 2000, 56-59. Cited hereafter as Sabine, *History of Political Theory...*

⁶ Dr. Amir Ullah Khan's compilation

⁷ Sabine, *History of Political Theory...* 56

⁸ Judd Harmon, *Political Thought...* 39

⁹ Ref. No. 7

¹⁰ Judd Harmon, *Political Thought...*, 38-39

¹¹ *Ibid.* 46-47

¹² Al-Quran. 51:49. See also Amir Ullah Khan, Hifazat Ullah, Muhammad Imran, Muhammad Yaseen, Farzana Iqbal, & Sheraz Ahmad. "Islamic Concept of Global Human Health Security and Zoonosis: A Case Study of Corona and Hanta Viruses", *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/ Egyptology*, 18(10), 2021, 2170

¹³ *Al-Quran*, 24:32

¹⁴ *Al-Quran*, 16:72

¹⁵ *Al-Quran*, 4:1

¹⁶ S. D. Islahi, *Islam At A Glance*. Lahore: Islamic Publication Limited, 1981, 110

¹⁷ *Al-Quran*, 25: 74

¹⁸ Parveen Shaukat Ali, "Human Rights in the Western Traditions" in *Human Rights in Islam*. Lahore: Aziz Publisher, 1980, 19. Cited hereafter as Dr. Parveen Shaukat Ali, *Human Rights in Islam...* See also Dr. Syed Bacha Agha & Dr. Amir Ullah Khan, "Islamic & Western Concept of Economic Security: A Brief Comparative Analysis", *Al-Azhaar*, 1 (2), July –December, 2015, 145. Cited hereafter as Dr. Syed Bacha Agha & Dr. Amir Ullah Khan, "Islamic & Western Concept of Economic Security ...

¹⁹ *Harold J. Laski, Political Thought in England: Locke to Bentham*. London: Oxford University Press, 1961, 192-193; See also Dr. Parveen Shaukat Ali, *Human Rights in Islam...*, 20

²⁰ *Philip Charles Newman, The Development of Economic Thought (New York: Prentice Hall, 1952)*, 87; See also Dr. Parveen Shaukat Ali, *Human Rights in Islam...*, 21-22;

²¹ *Al-Quran*, 4: 33

²² *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, Vol: 2, Book of Zakat No 24 gives a detailed account on the subject of Zakat.

²³ *Al-Quran*, 7: 156

²⁴ For details see *Al-Quran*, 2:177; 3:92; 2:215; and 2: 219.

²⁵ *Al-Quran*, 2: 272.

See also Altaf Ahmed Kherie, *Islam: A Comprehensive Guide-Book*, Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1993, 326

²⁶ *Al-Quran*, 9: 34

²⁷ Dr. Syed Bacha Agha & Dr. Amir Ullah Khan, "Islamic & Western Concept of Economic Security ...", 146. See also *Al-Quran*, 59: 7

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 147. See also *Al-Quran*, 2: 275