



Education in Plato's Republic

Kongbrailatpam Vidyarani*

Assistant Professor & HOD

Waikhom Mani Girls' College, Thoubal

Okram, Manipur

Dr. Sarat Sarma

Associate Professor & HOD

Dhanamanjuri College of Arts,

Dhanamanjuri University, Imphal, Manipur

**Corresponding author Email ID: vranishrm@gmail.com*

Contact No.: +91 70051 86907

ABSTRACT

Plato's idea holds that education is the process by which individuals are shaped to fulfil their duties within the state in a way that best suits their natural abilities. Plato separates society into three classes: producers, auxiliary, and rulers. The development of discipline, wisdom, courage, and ultimately justice is the aim of this education. Plato offers a philosophical model of education that seeks to change both individuals and society by emphasising the development of the body and mind in order to produce morally pure, knowledgeable, and capable citizens. Plato's educational system is meritocratic but highly hierarchical. Education is a continuous process of moral and intellectual development that lasts from early childhood to advanced dialectical instruction. His theory of education aims at the all-round development of human personality. Plato rightly realized that physical mental and moral growth are necessary for a man to become a complete human being. Women's education is also one of the important features of Platonic scheme of education. According to Plato, despite the physical differences between men and women, their souls might share the same qualities, such as justice, bravery, and intelligence. He spoke of Equality Based on Natural Ability, Equal Education and Training, Participation in Military and Government, Shared Roles and Responsibilities by women in the society. Among all the primary criticisms are that it disregards individual differences and requirements, gives too much weight to state control, uniformity, and the potential for censorship, and prioritises theoretical knowledge above practical skills and the demands of the "productive classes." Plato is still right, though, if we look at his philosophy from his own point of view. Despite all of the criticisms, it is indisputable that Plato's educational philosophy is growing more and more important and relevant in the contemporary period.



Keywords: allegory, wisdom, justice, auxiliary, skills

1. INTRODUCTION

In Plato's Republic, education is essential because it sets the groundwork for creating a society that is perfect and just. Through Socrates' voice, Plato portrays education as a profound process of directing the soul toward virtue, truth, and the Good rather than just imparting knowledge. According to his theory, education is the process by which people are moulded to carry out their responsibilities within the state in accordance with their innate skills. In addition to outlining a strict educational program specifically for the guardian class, which comprises both future rulers and troops, Plato divides society into three classes: producers, auxiliary, and rulers. The goal of this education is to develop discipline, wisdom, courage, and eventually justice. By focusing on the growth of the body and mind, Plato presents a philosophical model of education that aims to transform individuals and society alike with the goal of creating morally upright, intelligent, and competent citizens. Plato believed that education should shape people's souls and guide them toward justice and truth, not only teach them information. According to Plato, the ultimate purpose of education is to foster virtues like wisdom, courage, and justice as well as to assist people in comprehending the Form of the Good, which is the highest reality. His Allegory of the Cave serves as a metaphor for how education should guide individuals from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge and truth. In addition, the philosopher-kings, in particular, who are destined to be the state's protectors, are the main emphasis of Plato's educational program. Education is a demanding and drawn-out process for these future leaders with the goal of honing their moral judgment and reasoning skills. It culminates in a philosophical comprehension of the ultimate truth: The Form of the Good. It involves physical training (gymnastics), artistic and musical development, mathematical studies, and dialectical thinking. In this sense, education is the means by which the soul moves from the world of appearances to the world of eternal truths; Plato's Allegory of the Cave serves as a powerful example of this process. Plato illustrates in this parable how education frees the soul from ignorance's bonds and guides it toward insight and understanding.

2. HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO EDUCATION

No study of human thought is complete without the Greeks; and without Plato, the Greek thought always remains disorganized and deformed. In fact, Plato occupies a very prominent place in the history of human thought. A N. Whitehead has very rightly remarked that the whole western Philosophy of two thousand years is nothing but a series of footnotes to Plato. The greatness of Plato



and the vastness of his thought still increases with time. His mind touched almost all the important areas of human thinking. Right from the very simple and common facts and experience of human life to the most subtle and difficult problems of life and existence, he tried to give the best of his thought to mankind. One simply has nothing but to wonder at the greatness of this man. Plato contributed his best to almost all the important areas of philosophical thinking. He is one of the pioneers in all these fields. His contribution to education is also a landmark in the history of education.

Plato's famous dialogue Republic discusses varieties of philosophical issues. The philosophy of education also occupies a prominent place in it. Rousseau even goes to the extent of saying that "Republic is the finest treatise on education that was ever written." Plato's theory of education as we find in the Republic is mainly concerned with the education of the guardian class to produce philosopher-kings. He had firm belief that a state can achieve the goal of justice only when the philosophers become the king or the kings become the lover of philosophy. Otherwise, justice will never be achieved; society will become completely disorganized and degenerated. Therefore, Plato said, "Until philosophers are kings, or kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, cities will never rest from their evils". Plato clearly knew the importance of education for the realization of the social goal of justice and the perfection of the individual human beings. He took education as the positive means by which the ruler can shape human nature in the right direction to produce harmony and stability in the state. According to him education can make anything. With a good system of education every improvement is possible. If education is neglected it matters very little what else the state does. Therefore, education is that most important function of a State. Some critics even go to the extent of saying that according to Plato the state is primarily an educational institution. Plato, therefore, thinks that education should not be left to private initiative and personal decision. A state system is to be established; and education must be compulsory and state-controlled. Furthermore, In Plato's Republic, education is presented as a fundamental pillar of a just and well-ordered society, designed to cultivate virtue and knowledge in all citizens, particularly those destined to rule. The goal is to shape individuals into philosopher-kings who are both wise and just. Plato advocated for a comprehensive curriculum encompassing physical training, music, mathematics, and dialectical reasoning, all aimed at development of a well-rounded individual capable of discerning truth and governing effectively.

Plato wisely developed the stages of Education-The phases of Plato's educational curriculum are designed to reflect the soul's development:



A. The Early Years (0–6 years) Pay attention to moral development, play, and stories. Heroic myths to help mould one's character.

The purpose of censoring harmful stories is to safeguard the child's spirit.

B. Foundational Education (ages 7–18) Poetry and music have the power to uplift the spirit and foster harmony.

Gymnastics: to develop discipline and build physical strength.

C. Military and Ethics Education (18–20 years) For people who are energetic (possible auxiliary).

Instruction in bravery, devotion, and compliance.

D. Advancement (20–30 years old) study of harmonics, astronomy, geometry, and mathematics.

Intended to enhance abstract reasoning and mental acuity.

E. Philosophy and Dialectic (30–35 years) For the best pupils only. An introduction to dialectic, which is the art of intellectual argument and reasoning.

Causes the soul to reflect on the Good's Form.

F. Practical Training and Public Service (35–50 years) Get experience by being involved in public affairs.

At fifty, those who perform well return to become philosopher-kings.

In Plato's scheme of education, we can also see a very close link between education and human life. For him education is not a mere imparting of information. It has to make a man completely human being in all respects. His theory of education aims at the all-round development of human personality. Plato rightly realized that physical mental and moral growth are necessary for a man to become a complete human being. He believed that the literary, visual and musical arts have also an immense power to shape and form character. Therefore, he thought, they have also an important role to play in education. But he put strict censorship on all literary and artistic works before exposing them to young children and youths because he wanted to maintain a moral standard among them. Plato thought that exposing a child to random collection of literary, musical and visual art works is an educational folly. So, there must be careful selection of the art works to which children are to be exposed. According to Plato, telling lies about Gods in the stories is also unsuitable as educational materials. He insisted that stories about gods must be truthful; and stories of divine in morality of gods who are deceivers' thieves and liars should have no place in education. Stories must have a suitable moral content so that they may not undermine the moral development of the child.



In his educational scheme besides introducing music for training the mind, Plato also introduced gymnastics, as mentioned above, for training the body. Both are necessary for the full development of human personality. These trainings are really intended to serve a moral purpose. Both are means to the formation of character. Gymnastics includes mainly the teaching of the self-discipline and other human virtues. In Barker's words 'Gymnastic is a training of the body for the sake of mind. It is meant to elicit the qualities of endurance and courage, it is meant to give the element of spirit its due temper.' Gymnastics is an indirect training of the mind through the body whereas music is a direct training of the mind intended to temper and correct the elements of spirit.

Women's education is also one of the important features of Platonic scheme of education. Here Plato seems very much modern in outlook. In The Republic (Book V), Plato argues that the key qualification for education and leadership is natural ability, not gender. He writes:

"If women are to have the same duties as men, they must have the same nurture and education"

According to Plato, despite the physical differences between men and women, their souls might share the same qualities, such as justice, bravery, and intelligence. Therefore, in order for a woman to fulfil her duty in society, she should obtain the same training and education as a male if she has the same natural potential. At a time when women were almost confined to the home, Plato offered a completely different image of the state, one in which they might actively engage in its administration, military, and educational system. His theories represent a substantial break from ancient Greece's established gender roles, particularly those described in Book V of The Republic. He spoke of Equality Based on Natural Ability, Equal Education and Training, Participation in Military and Government, Shared Roles and Responsibilities by women in the society.

Plato's perspective on women is not without flaws, while being progressive for his time: He continues to believe that women are generally weaker than men. Not all women in society (such as producers or artisans) can benefit from his views; they are mostly applicable to the guardian class. Instead of being presented as persons with independent rights, women's positions are still largely defined in terms of their service to the state.

Another important contribution of Plato to education is his doctrine of Higher Education. Plato's vision of higher education, which is specifically intended for the philosopher-kings who would eventually rule his ideal state, is the pinnacle of his educational philosophy. He links education to the growth of reason, the search for truth, and the final comprehension of the Form of the Good in Books VI and VII of The Republic, which are where this concept is mainly outlined. According to Plato,



higher education is a soul transforming path toward wisdom and enlightenment rather than just the acquisition of knowledge. Higher education, according to Plato, should aim to raise the soul from the world of appearances to the world of actuality. His goal was to develop leaders capable of comprehending the timeless principles that underpin the physical world. These facts are not found by sensory experience but rather by logical investigation. One can only learn about the Form of the Good—the ultimate object of knowledge and the foundation of all justice and truth—by undergoing a demanding philosophical education. The Cave Allegory: A Sign of Higher Learning Plato uses the Allegory of the Cave as a metaphor for the educational process in Book VII. The realm of appearances and ignorance are symbolized by the cave. The inmates stand in for illiterate individuals who accept shadows for reality. The philosopher's elevation via education is symbolized by the trek out of the cave. The Form of the Good, the ultimate truth, is represented by the sun outside the cave. Plato's view that education is a journey of intellectual emancipation is demonstrated by this tale. A groundbreaking approach that connects education to leadership, virtue, and truth is Plato's philosophy of higher education in The Republic. Its goal is to produce philosopher-kings with moral rectitude and intellectual understanding. Plato's higher education educates people not only to think deeply but also to live sensibly and govern justly by guiding the soul from illusion to reality. Despite being selective and utopian, his educational philosophy has had a significant impact on Western philosophy, particularly in discussions about leadership, liberal education, and the place of philosophy in public.

3. CONCLUSION

One of Plato's most significant and enduring contributions to Western philosophy is his notion of education, as presented in The Republic. According to Plato, education is a moral, psychological, and political process that goes far beyond a system of teaching or training in order to develop the soul and create a just society. According to Plato, the ideal state must be constructed on the basis of education. It is the process by which people are roused from ignorance, brought into harmony with their innate roles, and led to the discovery of virtue and truth.

The idea that the human soul is made up of several components—reason, spirit, and appetite—and that each has to be appropriately nourished and balanced is at the heart of Plato's educational philosophy. Education is the means by which reason is cultivated and given the authority to govern the other aspects of the soul in both individuals and society as a whole. Political and personal justice can only be attained via such internal harmony.



Plato's educational system is deeply hierarchical yet meritocratic. From early childhood through to advanced dialectical training, education serves as a lifelong process of intellectual and moral refinement. Particularly notable is his plan for the education of the guardian class, culminating in the emergence of the philosopher-king—an individual who has undergone years of disciplined study and contemplation, and who is uniquely suited to lead the state with wisdom and justice. The highest aim of education, then, is not mere knowledge but the cultivation of character and the vision of the Good. In addition to his endeavors, Plato's ideal educational system—especially as it is presented in *The Republic*—has come under heavy fire. Some of its main objections are that it prioritizes theoretical knowledge above practical skills and the demands of the "productive classes"; it ignores individual differences and needs; and it places too much emphasis on state control, conformity, and the possibility of censorship. However, if we examine Plato's philosophy from his own perspective, he is still correct. It is impossible to dispute that Plato's philosophy of education is becoming increasingly significant and applicable in the modern era, despite all of the objections. Because the crisis of human personality is a continuation of the crisis of modern civilization. Our educational system does not aim to develop a person's personality holistically. Character development is not prioritized; we strive to understand the outside world completely, but we never attempt to understand ourselves, which is the driving force behind everything. Therefore, a reform of our educational system is what we most urgently need today. Plato's notion of education may serve as an influence for this. He can still serve as our guidance.

REFERENCE

- 1.Plato. (2004). *The Republic* (C. D. C. Reeve, Trans.). Hackett Publishing Company. (Original work published ca. 380 B.C.E.)
- 2.Ferrari, G. R. F. (2000). *City and soul in Plato's Republic*. University of Chicago Press.— Deep analysis of education as part of the larger theme of soul-crafting in the ideal city.
3. Annas, J. (1981). *An introduction to Plato's Republic*. Clarendon Press.
-A clear and accessible overview, including education and the role of the philosopher.
4. Nettleship, R. L. (1935). *Lectures on the Republic of Plato* (2nd ed.). Macmillan. – A classic interpretation with detailed discussion of Platonic education.
- 5.Klosko, G. (1981). *The Development of Plato's Political Theory*. Routledge & Kegan Paul. – Discusses the evolution of educational themes in *The Republic* and other dialogues.



- 6, Bloom, A. (Trans.). (1968). The Republic of Plato. Basic Books. -Includes an interpretive essay focusing heavily on education and political philosophy.
- 7.Dien, P.B. (2012). Plato's educational thought through the work "The Republic", Master's Thesis in Philosophy. Hanoi National University, Hanoi University of Social Sciences and Humanities.
- 8.Nash, P., Kazamias, A., & Perkinson, H. (1965). The educated man: Studies in the history of educational thought. New York: Jon Wiley.
- 9.Powers, E. (1996). Educational philosophy: A history from the ancient world to modern America. New York: Garland Publishing.
- 10.Cordasco, F. (1991). Greek education. In Johnson, J., DuPuis, V., & Johansen, J. (Eds.). Reflections on American education: Classical and contemporary readings (pp. 12-126). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

