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## RELEVANCE OF PLATO IN MODERN EDUCATION AND CURRICULUM

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### Abstract

The paper is about the opinion of Plato- the great about education, system and method of education, philosophy of life and the ultimate aim of education over all. Education is not an artificial process through which the student will get information only but education is the process about man-making, character building, development. Education is life- long assimilation of knowledge. The soul prospers and spiritual enhancement occurs with the acquiring of knowledge. Mental and spiritual development is not enough without physical development. Plato also said about ‘gymnastic’ for physical development. Real education makes teach the student how to survive in all aspect of life in the mundane world and it is the ultimate aim of education. The proposed paper is going to study all the educational aspects given by the great philosopher Plato. Though we are living in the postmodern virtual world, the relevance of the educational beliefs of Plato is very prominent even today. The researcher has gone through closely few articles, journals, books, papers which help him to engrave the concerned article. This paper will investigate the relevance of Plato in the post modern education which will help the reader to understand not only the flow of education through the ages but also the significance of ancient educational system in the post modern education system. The student will be acquainted with the ancient educational thought; will give the value of modern education system by understanding the ancient educational philosophy.

**Keywords:** Philosophy of Life, Philosophy of Education, Method of Teaching, Aim of Education, Relevance.

### Introduction

Greek civilisation is one of the ancient civilisations in the western world. The country Greece is located in south-east in Europe surrounded by countless islands by the side of Aegean and Leonean sea. The countrymen of Greece are known as Greek. Greek Civilization was flourished in between 12<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> century. Greek culture and civilisation was the mother of western culture and civilisation which was not only imitated by the other western countries but also gradually followed by the whole world. Greek culture was standard and yardstick to the contemporary civilisations. The place is Muse’s blessed. It was the centre of culture and education of ancient western world. This place had given the whole world great educational thinkers. Their innovative thinking enriched not only their country but also the whole world. This holy place invented the fire of knowledge and lightened the whole world with it. Ancient Greek had left its golden footprint in every field of knowledge and aspect of all social and cultural phenomenons like philosophy, arts, science, medicine, mathematics, logic, astronomy, literature, politics, history and grammar. Ancient Greece was the birth place of the great educational philosophers, poets, writers, dramatists, lyricist and political thinkers. Herodotus is known as the “father of History” even today. The great blind poet Homer wrote two great epics “Illiad” and “Oddessey” based on mythical story which were regarded as best religious epic of the then contemporary west world. ‘Theorem’ of ‘Pythagoras’ is base of many geometrical low and he was also well known for his political and religious thinking. Pinder had a huge contribution in ancient lyric poetry; Aeschylus marked Greek tragic drama to another level which was popularised by Sophocles. Aesop introduced new literary genre of writing poetry known as fables by taking the character of animal and beasts with a moral message.

### Objective(s)

- I) To know the ‘philosophy of life’ according to Plato.
- II) To know the ‘aim of Education’ according to Plato.
- III) To know the ‘educational philosophy’ of Plato.
- IV) To know the relevance of Plato in modern education.

### Methodology

The researcher is depended on close reading of related literature of Plato. The secondary source of data is handy for this study. The researcher has taken inductive method to make his observation concrete regarding Plato.

### Analysis

#### Philosophy of Life

Philosophy of life is a special kind of thinking on the basis of which the person lives his life. The individual follows and performs such rules and principles in his personal life. And upon these principles he can make his own observation or opinion. Plato



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was the first idealist philosopher. He was the greatest among the idealists from the ancient time and for all time. Idealist philosopher believes on some principles, discipline and rules to be followed from the very beginning of life. He introduced the concept of ‘real world’ and ‘spiritual world’. ‘Real world’ is the mundane world, actual world or the factual world. Spiritual world is a world of state of mind, a different world, concept of mind about living life, a bunch of socio-political concepts, a state of ideas. According to him, such kind of ideology and principles must be followed in every field of life. The spiritual world is more prominent than the real or factual world to him, better to say about the idealist philosophers. The basic philosophy of life is ‘simple living and high thinking’.

All Though Plato had written almost thirty-four books based on the dialogues of his teacher, Socrates; “Republic” has a special regard. Gradually Plato and Republic have gradually become identical. If one wants to know the Plato properly, he must go through the “Republic”. Though each book is thematically different from each other but one can sketch the character of Plato as an individual if the person read the concerned text. Plato as a human being emphasises on the virtuous qualities of human beings. He asked to his reader to be more humane because ultimately virtue rewarded and vice punished. He is highly ethical and human morality and ethics get much more importance to him. The first chapter of Republic of Book - I entitled as “Cephalus. Justice as Honesty in word and deed.” Here he says, “Justice” means: observant of custom or of duty righteous: fair honest; legally right, lawful”. Next in the very second chapter entitled as “Polemarchus. Justice as Helping Friends and Harming Enemies “the conversation is going on about the helping. He advises here one should help not only his friend in distress but also his ‘Harming Enemies’ also. Here, according to him ‘friend’ means ‘good people’ and ‘enemy; means ‘rouge’. He makes conscious every parent about the attitude to their off springs in the field of pre - schooling because charity begins at home. Young aspiring minds are the wealth of the state and always ready to dedicate their lives for the welfare of the country and countrymen. So, according to him the duty and role of the guardian is very crucial. ‘The Rewards of Justice in this Life’ and ‘The Rewards of Justice after Death.’ evokes very significant meaning in the context of their conversation. To become ideal citizen, one should be well educated. If we lead better life in being a sinner then common people will do the same job. Such kind of event or incident must not be presented.

### Philosophy of Education

Plato was very much influenced by the philosophy of pre-Socratic philosopher as Thales, Anaximander, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Pythagoras, and Anaxagoras. His educational philosophy is influenced by them also. The educational philosophy of Plato is reflected best in his ‘Republic’. He has given the ‘theory of ideas’ or ‘theory of Mimesis.’ When God created the universe, this conception came in his mind in the form of idea. And then he gives the concept of ‘real state’ and ‘ideal state’. He is an idealist in his philosophical belief. He says, ‘To have a good society, we must have a good citizen. To have good citizens, children must be well educated.’ We know education is such kind of process which makes human resource out of human being. Human being is not become a wealth unless he becomes human source. Such kind of wealth is most important to the development and betterment for the country. So he talks about the education, curriculum, and educational method. He had chosen such kind of subject which has practical utility in life and rejected few. He is very much conscious not only the mental or spiritual development of the pupil but the physical development of the student. Healthy mind lives within healthy body. He himself was an acrobat. He prefers “gymnastic for the body and music for the soul”. Gymnastic means physical or acrobatic activity and music means art and literature. According to him physical exercise is essential as spiritual exercise. As ‘Gymnastic embraces all forms of physical education and discipline and music includes more than literal music, it includes all form of literary culture.

A state belongs to his countrymen and the young generation is the future of a country. So, he talks about the ideal citizen in his idea city. So according to him young mind should teach the lesson of patriotism so that they come to know the glorious history of their motherland and always be ready to dedicate their lives for the sake of motherland. He also asked to teach the mythical stories from the concerned religious book so that the people can understand the rule of ideal state. He is very much conscious here also he says good stories should be chosen and bad stories must be rejected. For there are few wars among the Gods and bad incidents which may harm the mind of the young people. Good stories which are healthy for the state and people must be taken because ideological state apparatus create the ideology of his countrymen. Education shapes the mind of the young people. The stories, poems, myth and song that are exposed to young people must be politically beneficial for the city. In childhood if the child is told good or bad stories the character stay in his mind permanently.

He had a special regard for the women in the society. He was worried about the position of women in the society. He realized the fact that the development of the society as well as country is impossible without the development if the ‘weaker sex’. In the patriarchal society the position of women was not so well. They were ignored and neglected. They were not given equal social position as men were given. They were deprived of education. In the very ancient period, he realizes the importance of women in the society. Men and women should be treated alike by the guardian. He patronizes radical attitude of feminism when such kind of thinking came even in the



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mind of the women. He then asked to destroy the organization of marriage. There should be some political contribution of women. Plato then make some great valuable observation regarding censoring in his ‘Republic’ which is actually highly applied to education. He wants to banish the poets from the ‘ideal state’ because they lie; they imitate which is not original, twice removed from reality. He suggests the child in the nursery level aged from 3-6 yrs. will play game for physical development. Then in elementary level aged from 7 – 10 yrs. will learn basic level reading and story-telling. Next in the secondary level aged from 11 – 17 yrs. th gymnastic, music, introductory mathematics and literature will be taught. Then finally in the territory level aged from 20 -25 yrs. the student will learn higher mathematics, astronomy and philosophy.

Plato is the first and best idealist philosopher. In idealistic philosophy teacher has special significant. Actually, idealistic philosophy believes in teacher centric education. We see the same thing in the works of Plato also. Socrates is given most importance; he is the centre of the education as well as the conversation and quenches the thirst of knowledge of his students. According to the idealist philosophy of education and educational method the teacher is in the centre of educational process. He is given more impotence rather than the students. In the social life the teacher also leads a respectful and prestigious life. He is not only respected by his students but by all. The teacher should lead and behave in such a way that could be imitated by all. He is the idol of the society. The darkness of ignorance can be wiped out with the light of knowledge of the teacher. Same as Plato also believed. Teacher is in the highest position in the social hierarchy of respect. And his advice is identical with preaches delivered by the monk or nun in the society. The teacher is next the God in social life. Actually, he talks about teacher centric education. In the field of Indian education teacher centric education started from the Vedic period and continued so long. Though Vedic education was more ancient than idealist philosophy of education but we find some similarity between the two.

Student is the second important element of educational system after teacher, according to Plato. The aim of education is to make well educated civil citizen for the state. The child would follow the advices given by the teacher in his educational life as well as the social life. Each child should become the wealth of the state and dedicate the life for the welfare of the state. The child should nurture human virtues, values and moralities in his heart beside the educational orientation.

Plato prefers discussion method to teach the students. Most of his books are written in the form of dialogue or conversation or discourse where his teacher answering the questions asked by the pupils along with Plato. In the Republic it is most prominent. Discussion, narration, explanation and questioning are the four methods teaching appreciated by him. He has chosen play-way method in the very early period of the children when he will send for elementary education. Plato is best regarded for his discourse method of teaching. Besides, he talks about play-way method to teach the pupil in nursery level.

**Aim of Education**

The aim of education, according to Plato has multiple aspects in life not any singular or particular. According to Plato the aim of education is intellectual development of the child, and then come the physical development. Here he is pretty much conscious that physical development is essential part of all round development of the child. After that, moral education should be enhanced so that the child can understand the value of life and human relation in society through moral development. The human vices and morality make a human being a real human being. The child should always be prepared for leading holy life. The child would cherish truth, beauty and goodness in his heart because “truth and beauty” are highly related with divinity. Idealists believe in the existence of God. In this way the child will learn universal concept of education. If the children go through this educational process, he will realise himself and his relative existence with other thing. In this way, the child will able to understand his own culture. The he will develop himself to be a ‘self – realised’ man. The ultimate aim of life, according to Plato is ‘self –realization’ and ‘self – actualization’.

**Relevance**

Though Plato was the first educationist of the ancient time his thinking is very relevant with present educational scenario even today. He influenced educational system through the ages not only in India but also almost all over the world. His thinking is very prominent in today’s education. His thinking regarding educational system, method, curriculum, teacher, student and educational environment are seen even in modern education. If we think deeply about many projects introduced by our government are the primary concept of idealist philosophy propounded by Plato. In the post modern virtual world, the concept of education has quiet changed where smart class room are introduced. Even in this environment he is equally important. Knowledge gathering can never be the aim of education. The aim of education is psychological and physiological development as well as knowledge gathering.

Among the Greek philosophers Socrates, Plato and Aristotle were most familiar. Plato was the worthiest disciple of “the father of philosophy”, Socrates. Plato established ‘Academos’ or ‘Academy’ an educational institution for philosophy, logic, mathematics and



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scientific research in Athens in 387 B.C. Aristotle was another literary giant who joined Plato’s “Academos” and proved himself as the best student of this institution. It is better to say Plato was the student of Socrates and teacher of Aristotle. Aristotle is famous for his book “Poetics” which tells us how to write poetry; distinguishes Epic Poetry, Tragedy and Comedy. Plato wrote almost thirty-four books which were written in dialogue or conversational form where Socrates instructed his disciples and answered the questions asked by the pupils. The period in which all the books were written in the form of dialogue by Plato can be divided in three parts. In the first period ‘Apology’, ‘Chamides’, ‘Crito’, ‘Euthyphro’, ‘Gorgious’, ‘Ion’, ‘Laches’ and ‘Protagoras’; in the second period ‘Gorgias’, ‘Meno’, ‘Apology’, ‘Crito’, ‘Phaedo’, ‘Symposium’, and ‘Republic’ and finally in the third period ‘Philebus’, ‘Sophist’ and ‘Permenides’ are remarkable works. In his “Republic” Plato talks about “real state” and “ideal state”. In the field of the education of his “ideal state” Plato gives his own opinion regarding educational philosophy, education system, teacher, duty and principle of the teacher, student, curriculum, method of teaching, ideal citizen and the contribution of the ideal citizen to the welfare and development of the country. From this book we get the actual opinion regarding all aspect of education of Plato particularly.

‘Academos’ or ‘Academy’ established by Plato was the first systematic educational organisation which gave the concept of systematic, institutional or organizational education for the people. Education always holds a purpose and to fulfil purposes it sets a curriculum in a healthy environment. Teacher-centric organisational curriculum always touches the goal. This concept of institutional, curriculum based, teacher centric education system in a healthy atmosphere was immediately imitated by the state. State ensured the education of the people for the welfare of the people as well as for the development of the state. Entire world believes in the institutional education.

Plato was the first educationist who realised the importance of education for the state. And this urge produced the concept ‘education for all’. Education is not for any particular gender, age and race of people. All the people should have the right to access education. It is very important to the development of the country. It enriched the mind of the people which give the wings to creativity and imagination of the people with the help of which the person can taste aesthetic pleasure of knowledge. In the post modern education system it is very pertinent; education will be ensured for all by the state. The phrase ‘education for all’ has become a slogan to the education.

- i. **Institutional Education:** ‘Academos’ or ‘Academy’ established by Plato was the first systematic educational organisation which gave the concept of systematic, institutional or organizational education for the people. Education always holds purposes and to fulfil purposes it sets a curriculum in a healthy environment. Teacher-centric organisational curriculum always touches the goal. This concept of institutional, curriculum based, teacher centric education system in a healthy atmosphere was immediately imitated by the state. State ensured the education of the people for the welfare of the people as well as for the development of the state. And this spreads widely gradually; continued through the ages. Entire world believes in the institutional education.
- ii. **Nursery Education:** In the very beginning of education in the nursery level the child aged about 3 -6 years will go to the school and learn from the environment through play way method. Physical development and activity is more important rather than the theoretical education. The child will learn by itself. Not any particular curriculum is issued by him at this stage of learning. Nursery or Kindergarten education is pretty much popular in today’s child education. It plays positive role the development of brain and psychology of the student. There are so many governmental and private nursery schools in our country. ICDS projects which was launched in 1975 to make children (0 – 6 years) healthy from malnutrition and physical development is an example of such kind of education. Besides, New Education Policy (2020) structured pre primary education for the child (3 – 6 years). According to ‘Early Childhood Care and Education’ (ECCE) the child will play and learn language, number, colour, shape, drawing, logical thinking etc in pre – primary schooling.
- iii. **Education for All:** Plato was the first educationist who realised the importance of education for the state. And this urge produced the concept ‘education for all’. Education is not for any particular gender, age and race of people. If we imagine the society to a bird then men and women are the two wings of the bird. Without a wing or with a single wing the bird can never fly. Similarly, only with the development of the male or without development of the female either the society or the state can never be able to prosper. All the people should have the right to access education. It is very important to the development of the country. It enriched the mind of the people which give the wings to creativity and imagination of the people with the help of which the person can taste aesthetic pleasure of knowledge. Plato talks about the position of women and equality of women in his Republic, (book – iv, chapter – xv). In the post modern education system it is very pertinent; education will be ensured for all by the state.. In the educational institution all are equal without any kind of discrimination. Women are given equal importance as the man in society.
- iv. **Women Education:** Women are same important as the man is in the society. In the male dominated patriarchal society women are marked as ‘weaker sex’ or ‘second sex’ because they are lacking something. Plato talks about woman education and “equality of women” and ‘education for all’ in his ‘Republic’ (book- iv, chapter- xv). Women should be educated with the man with same



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manner. And this hoarse reality was first understood by Plato. He emphasised strongly on woman education. He was modernist thinker in the then society in the field of education. His far–stretched thinking is relevant even in this period. Women and women education are given much priority. Central and state government has taken some effective steps to improve the quality of the education of women. The phase ‘education for all’ has become a railing cry of feminist thinkers. Many well adored schemes, projects, loans, and scholarships have been introduced by the central as well as the state government for the development of the women in India. A several disciplines has been introduced in university level named as “Women Studies”.

- v. **Curriculum:** Education is always a purposeful activity. Mankind is given any kind of education with a particular cause. When state provides free and compulsory education then the main purpose is the development of the individual along with the prosperity of the state. The aim of an education is reflected in curriculum which is incorporated in the mind of the student by the teacher. Plato in his ‘Republic’, (book- v, chap. - xxvi) suggested few general principles and rules for curriculum development of educational institution. He has chosen few particular disciplines for primary and Higher education such as art and literature, grammar, mathematics, logic, geometry, Astronomy and physical science. And at the same time, he also advises which type of incident or subject should not teach to the students. Primarily all the educational institution more or less follows him in the field of curriculum development.
- vi. **Physical Education:** There are well known proverb that, “Healthy mind lies in the healthy body” and “health is wealth”. Physical education has got some special attention in the curriculum of education by Plato. Plato in his “Republic” “Physical Training, Physicians and Judges’ (book- iv, chap- ix) says, “gymnastic for the body and music for the soul”. According to him, every child should engage in some acrobatic activity from the very childhood when the body and the limb are in developing state. He had chosen literature, art, logic, mathematics, and astronomy, physical science for the mental or psychological development of the student and physical or acrobatic activity for the development of the body of the student. That is why; physical education, games and sports, Gymnastic, and PITI play a pivotal role in the curriculum from the primary to university level of education.
- vii. **Vocational Training:** Vocational training is very important part of learning period. During the course and curriculum some vocational training and lesson should be provided so that after the end of the course the child can earn his livelihood. Plato says about vocational training in learning period. At present vocational training has introduced from the school level of education. So that after the course the student can be self- dependant. Learning with earning has become possible for such kind of positive step taken by the government which is nothing but the imitation of Plato’s educational concept.
- viii. **Spiritual Education:** Many states in the country have introduced spiritual education in educational institution. Religion centric educational institutions are pretty much conscious regarding this fact. We have seen the recommendation of some committee, commission and policy about it. ‘Yoga Education’ has been incorporated in the syllabus of the school and college curriculum. We know that the ultimate aim of ‘Yoga Education’ is to connect the soul with the soul of Almighty God.

### Findings

- i. Ancient educational thinkers along with Plato are very prominent even to the modern education.
- ii. Plato would believe in ‘simple living and high thinking’.
- iii. Plato would believe in not only mental development and physical development but also spiritual development.
- iv. Plato was pretty much conscious about the women and their education.
- v. According to Plato teacher is an ideal person who must be respected, followed and imitated.
- vi. The life of the students should be committed to the country and countrymen. According to him.
- vii. According to Plato ‘discussion’ and ‘play -way’ method are the best way to teach.
- viii. The ultimate aim of education is ‘all-round development’ of the child.
- ix. The philosophy of ancient educators is very clear in the contemporary education system
- x. The doctrine of Plato regarding education caused renaissance in India.
- xi. The educational thought of Plato influenced many educational committee, commission and policy of Eastern as well as Western countries.

### Conclusion

Ancient Greece was the harbinger of knowledge, culture and creation. It is the birth place of the great philosophers, thinkers and educationist like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Alexander – the great. Naturally, the land was ‘muse’s blessed’. Such kind of great educationist had not only advised or given lesson to others but they practiced whatever they said to their disciples. The innovative thoughts of Plato are very much relevant today in the field of education. His educational philosophy enriched the mind of the Indian Educationists and Philosophers of 18<sup>th</sup> century which causes renaissance afterword in India. ‘Institutional Education’ has become conventional tradition to teach through the ages. Post Modern Educationists are pretty much conscious about ‘Women Education’. ‘Education for All’ has become almost a slogan now in the society. The Curriculum has been prepared keeping the point of ‘all round



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development' in mind by the Educationists. In the curriculum, there are few aspects of 'Vocational Training' so that the student can earn his livelihood after the end of the education. The educational philosophy of Plato influenced directly and indirectly many Education Commissions, committees and policies. If one can study few reports of the educational policy, committee and commission after independence he/she will surely understand that how much relevant Plato is in the contemporary education. The researcher has tried to unfold few aspects of it.

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