**Question: - Explain Plato’s theory of communism. How does it differ from modern communism? (2013)**

**Answer**

Plato was the first philosopher who said about the communism. But, his communism was called the half-communism. His communism did not cover all sections of people in society. Plato applied the principles of his communism only on one section of people i.e. the guardians. Again, his communism is also known as the communism of wives and property. Plato did not support that the administrators should retain private property and family. According to Plato there is close relationship between private property and family. There is every possibility that persons having family will involve in corruption. For ideal state a corruption free society is most essential condition.

The communism of property and wives are elaborately explained as follows:

1. **Communism of Property**

According to Plato private property is the stumbling block in the way of unity and integrity of state. Hence, he sought to eliminate the retention of private property through communism. His concept is that the possession of private property would create selfish motive in the mind of guardians and it would hinder them to serve for the community. So, he deprived of the ruling class from the possession of private property. Plato viewed that the guardians would live in a common barrack and would take meal in common table. Plato applied the communism of property only on the ruling class and the common people were debarred from that system.

1. **Communism of Wives or Family:**

Plato in his book *The Republic* mentioned some logical grounds for the abolition family for the guardians. Firstly, Plato abolished private property because private is property is needed for maintenance of family. So, if there is no private property, there will be no need of family. Secondly, the family creates narrow affection. If the guardian had their family it would be not possible for them to consider that the state as their own family and the citizens as their own children. It would promote the selfish motive and then it would be the causes of all social evils. Thirdly, Plato wanted to emancipate the women of Athens. Fourthly, the production of children is so important to the state that it cannot be left to the unregulated private enterprise or individual affection. Fifthly, the communism of wives brings unity in the state

**Principles of Plato’s Communism**

1. **Result of Social Justice:** Plato communism is the direct result of his concept of justice. He believed that without communism there would be conflict among the different classes of society, the guardians and producers. The existence of property and family would debar the philosopher king to give attention for the welfare of the community. Therefore, Plato provided his concept of justice and justice results the communism of property and family.

1. **Separation of Political and Economic Power:** Plato believed that union of political and economic power in one man is the fatal to political purity and it leads to corruption. The holder of political power forgets the needs of the common people. He only tries to fulfill his own needs. So it is disastrous for the state. Therefore, Plato viewed that separation of political and economic power is essential condition for communism.
2. **Half Communism:** Plato’s communism was half communism. It did not cover all section of society. Plato applied his communism on only one section, the guardians. The guardian was debarred to retain property and wife. The peasants and artisans were free from that restriction. He did not apply it to the vast of the people. The guardians to whom the system was applied were few in number.

1. **It does not Affect Economic Structure:** Plato’s communism does not affect the economic structure of state. The individualistic economic system was untouched by his communism. The peasants and artisans produced the goods without any restriction. There was no any state intervention on their economic system.
2. **Abolition of Permanent Marriage:** Plato was deeply interested in the preservation of racial stock. He believed that precious sperm should be used for the procreation of fine progeny. Therefore, in his communism he prepared temporary marriage to produce healthy children and it is possible only if children are born from healthy couples. Immediate after the business over they must depart. For that Plato viewed that marriage is not personal affair. It is social and should be arranged by that state.
3. **Communism is the way to reform minds:** According to Plato state is the product of mind. So, to change the state it necessary to change the mindset of the people. Then justice can be realized. Plato said that communism is the best way to change the mindset and then from pure mindset the desired ideal state is possible.
4. **Nourishment of Children by State:** The children born in barracks will be common to all. They will have no separate parents of their own. They will be the property of the state. The state will bring up the babies under the nourishment of nurse. No one would know who is brother and sister, who is father and who is father.
5. **Preservation of Racial System:** Plato was deeply interested in the preservation of racial stock. He believed that precious sperm should be used for the procreation of fine progeny. Therefore, to produce healthy children healthy couples is essential. By this process Plato tried to preserve the healthy race and sacrifice the physically disabled citizens.

**Criticism**

1. **Ignored the Majority People:** This is one of the most drawbacks of Plato’s communism. Plato applied his communism on only one class of society i.e. the guardian. Majority of the people, the peasants, workers and the artisans were excluded from communism.
2. **May Lead to Revolutionary Condition:** In Plato’s communism the guardians sacrifice more. They have to take education for a long period of time. They provide much labor for the welfare of the community. But, in comparison of their labor they get nothing. This situation may create discontent among them, which may lead to revolutionary condition.
3. **Property does not Brings Evils:** According to Plato Property brings evils. Therefore, the guardians should not have private property. But, Aristotle strongly opposed this view of Plato. He said that not property but it is the human wickedness which brings evils in society.
4. **For Unity Communism is not Necessary:** For Plato, Communism of property would bring unity in the ideal state. But, his disciple, Aristotle criticizing Plato said that it is not communism of property but means of education that good society can be achieved.
5. **Contradictory View on Richness:** Plato debarred the guardians from the right of property on the ground that it is the richness that create prolific ground of dissension. He allowed this right only to the third class i.e. the producers..
6. **Money and Family is Basic Psychological need:**  Acquisition of money and family is the natural and psychological need of human being. Without these two basic needs no incentive will grow in the mind people to do hard work for community. But, Plato deprived of the guardians from these basic human needs.
7. **Abolition of family has weakened the community:** Plato on the one hand deprived the guardians from the family life; on the other hand, he excessively permitted the woman to participate in the affairs of state. Women always render valuable service to family life. But, Plato introducing concept of communism indirectly weakened the community.

1. **Offence may Increase in Society:** There are some of communism of wives and children. It may lead commit offences against father and mother or relatives because nobody knows what the relationship among them is.
2. **Human being cannot be compared with Animals:**  In Plato’s communism no permanent marriage was allowed. Plato desired that the citizens of ideal state should be healthy and for that Plato said that healthy man and woman should be selected to produce healthy children.. This view of Plato is fully based on animal instinct.

1. **Children can be Better Cared by Mother than Nurse:**  In Plato’s communism of family the responsibility to brought up the children are given to state appointed nurse. After birth the children would be handover to the state and the father and mother nothing to do anything. This view of Plato is quite unnatural. It is only mother who can take better care of their children than the nurses.

**Difference between Plato’s Communism and Modern Communism**

* Plato’s communism is called half communism. Plato did not cover all sections of people within the fold of his communism. It was only the guardians on whom Plato imposed the principles of communism. He left the vast majority of the people from his communism. The peasants and artisans had not followed the communism. On the other hand, the modern communism covers all section of people. It is not applied on particular class of society.
* Plato’s communism believes on the existing of classes in state. He classified the people into three classes – the guardians, soldiers and producers. For making ideal states remaining of these classes are most essential. On the other hand, the modern communism does not believe on the existence of classes in society. It believes on the classless society.
* Plato gave importance on making an ideal state. He viewed that it is only ideal state where people can get a proper justice. But, the father of modern communism, Karl Marx viewed that the state is an institution of exploitation. Therefore, he said that the state should be withering away.
* Plato’s communism was political in nature. He wanted that the philosopher guardians should not have private property because possession of private by them will be detrimental for the common interest of the people. He allowed private property for the producers. This is fully antagonistic to modern communism. The modern communism does not believe holding of private property any section of people.
* Plato’s communism said about only the production system leaving the consumption untouched. It does say anything how goods produced by the workers should be distributed. But, modern communism emphasized both on the production as well as the consumption system.
* The modern communism believes the state should be ruled by the peasants or by the proletariat. It does not support the rule absolute monarchical system or the rule king. On the other hand, Plato said that the rule of philosopher king is the best one to establish ideal state.
* Plato did not believe any drastic change of the existing social system. He only wanted to bring change in the ideal through his reformed education system. Modern socialism, on the other hand wants drastic change in all sphere of life through revolutionary method.
* Plato’s communism was for only the Greek city state. Plato’s communism did touch the suppressed and exploited workers of the world. On the other hand, modern communism not only concern with national state. It is a worldwide movement.

**Conclusion**

Despite the above criticism of Plato’s theory of communism of property and wife we cannot deny that Plato seems to quite logical in emphasizing that the state could not get undivided loyalty unless the institution of property and family was done away with. But his theory is completely is unrealistic and devoid hard realities of life. According to Barker, “*by abolishing family and private property Plato destroys that instrument by which an individual can be known as individual.”*