From polis to village republic: reimagining ideal societies through Plato's Ideal State and Gandhi's Ramrajya

Abha Chauhan Khimta & Suresh Kumar

ABSTRACT

This study contrasts the different societal visions put forth by Mahatma Gandhi in his Ramrajya vision and Plato in The Republic. A structured, hierarchical society headed by philosopher kings men of great wisdom whose wisdom is deemed essential in the creation of a just and orderly state is at the core of Plato's ideal state. According to Plato, justice is achieved when every class contributes to the totality in a harmonious manner. But Gandhi sees a completely different ideal state: one that is decentralized, based on village self government, and guided by the values of moral rectitude, truth (satya), and non-violence (ahimsa). Gandhi emphasizes moral leadership that emerged organically from the people rather than depending on intellectual elitism. The two philosophers' projections of knowledge and advancement also diverge. Gandhi's symbol of the charkha (spinning wheel) represents independence, simplicity, and a strong moral commitment to communal life, while Plato's Allegory of the Cave projects his optimism on enlightened leaders guiding others out of darkness. Despite their divergent worldviews, Plato's ideas on order, education, and reason, as well as Gandhi's on individual accountability, moral conduct, and opposition to centralized, authoritarian authority, have much to teach modern governance.

Keywords: *Justice, Ethical leadership, Ideal Society, Moral Responsibility, Social Harmony, Capability Approach*

INTRODUCTION

The quest for an ideal society has been a central theme in philosophical discussions throughout history. Over the ages, many thinkers have sought to define what a just and harmonious community looks like, with Plato and Mahatma Gandhi standing out as two of the most influential figures in this conversation. Their seminal works Plato's Republic and Gandhi's Ramrajya offer distinct yet revolutionary visions of governance, justice, and moral leadership. While Plato's ideas emerged in ancient Athens during the classical period and Gandhi's in colonial India in the early 20th century, both philosophers share core principles that continue to resonate in today's debates on

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political philosophy and social justice. The objective of this article is to critically examine the philosophical underpinnings of their visions, examining their ideas on governance, justice, leadership, and social harmony in their respective eras. Plato's Republic (2007) is a foundational text on the Western canon of philosophy. In its pages, Plato describes his conception of the ideal state, ruled by philosopher-kings, who are the best rulers to be able to comprehend the natures of justice, truth, and goodness. The reasoning Plato provides is that a just society is one in which each member performs his/her natural task within the social order, with order being obtained by a division of labor that is in accord with the natural character of each class (Plato, 2007 pp. 189-195). By employing his philosophical and theoretical thought, Plato argues that only philosopher-kings, due to their intimate knowledge of the Forms, possess the capacity to lead society towards a just and stable reality. The core of Plato's theory of justice is the proper ordering and balance between the three classes of society rulers, auxiliaries, and producers each contributing their share to the common good of the state (Bloom, 1968 pp. 309-311).

On the other hand, Mahatma Gandhi's critique of British colonialism and the social structures that ruled Indian society in the early decades of the 20th century gives rise to his vision of the utopian society known as Ramrajya. Gandhi's ideas on social structure and governance, as articulated in his numerous works, including Hind Swaraj and My Experiments with Truth, advocate for a decentralized, self-governing community on moral and spiritual grounds while denouncing centralized, hierarchical systems of authority (Parel, 2006, pp.117-121). Gandhi's Ramrajya stresses the value of local self-rule, self-reliance, and moral leadership founded on truth and non-violence, in contrast to Plato's hierarchical model, which is based on a well-organized society ruled by a philosopher-king. Gandhi envisioned a society in which individuals exercise collective self-rule and accept moral responsibility for their own actions, eschewing industrialized, exploitative forms of government in favor of a more straightforward, human-centered system of social organization.

This article's goal is to examine the two opposing but complementary philosophical paradigms, highlighting the fundamental parallels and divergences between Plato's and Gandhi's respective philosophical systems. This study compares and contrasts their perspectives on leadership, authority, and justice. It also takes into account the historical backgrounds that shaped their philosophical ideas, such as Gandhi's opposition to British colonialism and industrialization and Plato's reaction to the alleged failure of Athenian democracy. Understanding these histories is crucial because they clarify the reasons behind each philosopher's emphasis on particular principles and governmental structures.

Gandhi's Ramrajya and Plato's Republic both seek to create just societies, but they approach the task in different ways. The rational and intellectual framework of Plato's ideal society selects leaders based on their wisdom and understanding of universal truth. Gandhi's philosophy, on the other hand, is founded on moral

and spiritual principles that uphold both individual and societal accountability. Furthermore, Gandhi envisions the restoration of decentralized, independent communities, in contrast to Plato's recommendation for a rigid, nearly utopian hierarchical order. Notwithstanding these distinctions, both philosophers place a strong emphasis on the value of social harmony, moral leadership, and justice; as a result, their theories are universally relevant to contemporary political discourse (Neu, 1971, pp. 238-254). The purpose of this article is to critically examine how these two theoretical frameworks interact with the concepts of justice and governance. This study investigates the applicability of their theories to contemporary governance by carefully examining primary texts, such as Plato's Republic (1992) and Gandhi's Hind Swaraj (2009), as well as secondary sources on the philosophical and historical context of their ideas. This article explores the practical application of idealistic models to modern political systems, addressing important topics like democracy, human rights, and interdependence on a global scale. By working toward this objective, the article hopes to contribute to the current conversation about governance, justice, and the value of moral leadership in creating just and sustainable societies. The article draws on a wide range of secondary literature that examines Plato and Gandhi's writings in order to investigate these themes. For example, Radhakrishnan's (2020, p. 40) analysis of Gandhi's philosophy illuminates the spiritual elements of Ramrajya, while Bloom's (1968, p. 308) analysis of Plato's Republic emphasizes the significance of reason and wisdom in governance. The article also makes comparisons to political theorists such as Rawls (1971) and Chatterjee (1993), whose works offer frameworks for evaluating the relationship between pragmatic governance and philosophical ideals. By taking this approach, the article aims to enhance our comprehension of how Plato's and Gandhi's ideas are still pertinent in today's debates over justice and governance. The article improves our understanding of how historical conceptions of justice and governance can impact contemporary political theory and practice by addressing these fundamental philosophies. Through Gandhi's ethical teachings or Plato's rigorous philosophy, both Gandhi's Ramrajya and Plato's Republic provide priceless insights for tackling the political, social, and moral issues of our day.

This article compares Gandhi's Ram Rajya with Plato's Ideal State using seminal works. Gettel (1956) and Sabine (1973) are two works that offer profound insights into Plato's pyramidal conception of justice and philosopher king rule. Bluck (1959) and Martin (1981) delve deeper into Plato's model's conceptual depth and practical critique. Dhiman (1974) and Guha (2018) elaborate on Gandhi's fundamental tenets of truth, decentralization, and non-violence from an Indian standpoint. Gandhi's ethical democracy and Plato's structured idealism are contrasted in comparative works by Sharma (2020) and Satyanarayan (2020). Gandhi's nuanced view of caste in Ram Rajya is examined in Shankaran (2019). Chakraborty (2022) concludes by discussing Gandhian philosophies emphasis on civic virtue and moral responsibility. All of these works illustrate the article's main goal of assessing the two philosopher's current

relevance by offering insights into their conceptions of justice and the common good as well as the difficulties in implementing their theories in contemporary pluralistic societies. Although earlier academic studies have thoroughly examined Gandhi's ethical theory of governance and Plato's theory of justice as a hierarchical theory in different contexts, there are surprisingly few proper comparative studies that examine these philosophical theories side by side, particularly in light of their relevance to contemporary governance issues. The majority of comparative studies only look at ideological differences; they don't examine how the systems put forth by Plato and Gandhi can help clarify current discussions about decentralization, ethical leadership, and sustainable political systems in a world that is becoming more diverse and globalized. Core political philosophies that address concerns about justice, authority, and the moral underpinnings of governance must be revisited in light of the pervasive democratic regression, rising inequality, and ethical crises of leadership. By critically contrasting Plato's and Gandhi's utopian conceptions of the ideal state, this study seeks to close this gap and evaluate their philosophical, ethical, and practical significance in promoting inclusive and sustainable forms of governance in the modern era.

Objective of the study
1. To compare the philosophical foundations and historical contexts of governance in Plato and Gandhi, highlighting how their ideas were shaped by their respective eras.
2. To examine the role of leadership and justice in their models, focusing on Plato's intellectual elitism and Gandhi's ethical and participatory approach.
3. To evaluate the practical applicability of their visions in addressing contemporary challenges such as democratic participation, inequality, and sustainable governance.

Research question
1. How do the historical contexts and philosophical foundations of Plato's Republic and Gandhi's Ramrajya influence their respective models of governance?
2. In what ways do Plato's concept of intellectual leadership and Gandhi's emphasis on ethical, participatory leadership differ in their approaches to justice and authority?
3. To what extent can the political visions of Plato and Gandhi be applied to contemporary issues such as democratic participation, social inequality, and sustainable governance?

Research methodology
Plato's 'Ideal State' and Gandhi's 'Ram Rajya' will be examined using the qualitative method, with an emphasis on how applicable they are to modern governance. In addition to examining academic interpretations of philosophers' theories on social organization and governance, a comprehensive literature review will offer background information. The study looks at the historical,

political, and social contexts that shaped Plato's and Gandhi's political theories using contextual and historical analysis, which is based on Quentin Skinner's methodology. Without forcing current meanings on their original contexts, the goal is to restore their original functions by analyzing the context in which their minds were formed.

Additionally, the study compares Gandhi's and Plato's perspectives on social structure, justice, and authority using the Comparative Method. The study aims to more precisely determine where their ideas converge or diverge when applied to current governance concerns by examining their similarities and differences. The study examines the metaphysical foundations of Plato's and Gandhi's political systems using philosophical critique and Eric Voegelin. This approach evaluates these ideals' feasibility by identifying the conflict between philosophical principles and the demands of real politics as well as their suitability for application in modern governance.

Lastly, the study critically assesses the practical applicability of Plato's and Gandhi's ideas toward the resolution of modern issues like inequality and globalization using an analytical and critical method**.** The method finds new applications, limitations, and synergies for sustainable governance by critically examining their underlying principles and contrasting them with current political realities.

Philosophical basis of Plato's ideal state & Gandhi's Ramrajya

Based on a well-structured, hierarchical society run by philosopher-kings, Plato's Republic is a blueprint for the ideal state. According to Plato, these rulers are better equipped to make decisions for the benefit of society because they have a deeper understanding of the eternal truths. Harmony is the foundation of such a state's justice; each individual plays their assigned role within the state, and the end result is a system that is well-organized and harmonious (Kirichenko, 2022, pp. 150-155). In Plato's ideal state, justice is attained through the division of labor, with producers providing the state's material sustenance, rulers providing governance, and warriors providing protection. Because of their intellectual prowess, philosopher-kings are best suited to lead society and ensure that its many components coexist peacefully and in balance (Plato, 1992). Since wisdom is crucial to establishing and upholding the state's order, this vision is top-down and centralized. According to Plato's Republic, an orderly society where justice is attained through the proper arrangement of its components is the ideal state. Three classes make up the state: producers (farmers, artisans), auxiliaries (warriors), and rulers (philosopher-kings). Every class has a role and a virtue: producers are moderate, auxiliary members are brave, and rulers are wise. According to the principle of specialization, justice is attained when each class effectively fulfils its role, resulting in people remaining on the tasks for which they are ideally suited.

Virtue	Soul	Class
Wisdom/Knowledge	Rational	Rulers
Courage	Spirited	Soldiers
Temperance	Appetitive	Artisans

Source: Martin, 1981, p. 6.

The ideal state is not achievable rather, it is an idealistic concept. Plato, however, views his concept of a philosopher king a ruler who possesses a profound understanding of the good as the means by which this state can be realized. This ruler would ensure the welfare of the entire society by enforcing laws that are informed by wisdom. However, because of the limitations of human nature, even this earthly representation of the ideal state will eventually fall apart. According to Dordevic (2014), Plato depicts a cycle of decay that starts with timocracy, or the rule of honor, progresses to oligarchy, or the rule of wealth, democracy, or the rule of freedom, and ends with tyranny, or the rule of despotism. The Republic is a profound critique of human nature and the impossibility of its actual realization, in addition to being a schematic illustration of an ideal state. The dialogue concludes with the presentation of the Myth of Er, which highlights the importance of philosophical knowledge for everyone in society, not just the ruling class. Since even members of an orderly society will err if they are not given the right guidance, it is assumed that the ideal state should cultivate its citizens' capacity for sound decision-making (Bloom, 1968, pp. 426-432).

In this treatise, Plato defines the tension between theory and practice, defining a utopian model of the state and acknowledging the limits of human capacity. The Republic is a model of justice and a discussion of the difficulty of its implementation in real contexts (Jowett, 1908, pp. 159-163).

Mahatma Gandhi's concept of Ramrajya differs from Plato's in that it aims to establish a decentralized, self-governing society based on moral principles such as truth (satya), self-ruling (swaraj), and non-violence (ahimsa). Gandhi envisions an order where local communities, particularly villages, serve as the fundamental units of a governance system, rejecting the notion of a central authority (Gandhi, 2019, pp. 28-30). Gandhi envisioned a society where people actively participated in moral leadership and each village was self-sufficient, looking out for its own welfare. Gandhi believed that attaining true justice required moral and spiritual development, which is the main theme of his Ramrajya. Gandhi's philosophy of governance encourages a bottom-up strategy in which local communities and the populace hold the power rather than a select group of intellectuals who rule from above. Gandhi's opposition to the British colonial regime, which he believed to be exploitative and disconnected from the needs and values of the local community, is a clear example of his criticism of central rule (Parel, 2006, pp. 52-57). Gandhi promoted swaraj, or self-rule, as an alternative to a centrally planned political system. He believed that a return to

rural self-sufficiency would best achieve this goal (Gandhi, 1997). He claimed in Hind Swaraj (Gandhi, 2009) that independent villages were the fundamental units of a just society, where local people could manage their own resources and reach morally and peacefully agreed upon decisions as a group (Gandhi, 1927). Gandhi maintained that the only way for India to achieve true freedom was to break free from the repressive structures of centralized power and adopt a different system of local self-governance, which would enable individuals and communities to take charge of their own destiny. Gandhi's long-range critique of industrialization aligns with this feature of decentralized governance. Gandhi maintained that the exploitation of both people and the environment resulted from industrialization, which was founded on mass production and central control (Chakrabarty, 2006, pp. 34–36). In contrast, Ramrajya emphasizes small-scale, neighborhood-based solutions to social and economic issues and is a symbol of sustainability and simplicity. Gandhi believed that a village economy should be centered on local manufacturing, handicrafts, and agriculture in order to foster sustainability and self-sufficiency. Plato's paradigm, which is based on an overly regimented intellectual elite at the top of the social pyramid, stands in stark contrast to this vision (Neu, 1971, pp. 247-254).

Plato's Republic and Gandhi s Ramrajya offer twin visions of an ideal state; yet, while Plato's ideal state imposes a strict intellectual hierarchy, Gandhi's regime is based on ethical values, decentralized power, and community-governance. In Plato's ideal state, the ablest and the wisest will exercise leadership, whereas Gandhi's government entrusts power to the masses, particularly the people living in the countryside, to take charge of their own government. This philosophical divergence highlights the tension between intellectual elitism and ethical self-governance, two of the fundamental principles that have shaped political philosophy through the centuries.

Philosophical differences: justice, leadership, and authority

Their different historical backgrounds and ethical concerns, the Platonic and Gandhian philosophical perspectives on justice, authority, and leadership show significant differences. The foundation of Plato's theory of justice, as presented in The Republic, is a highly hierarchical, structured state in which everyone performs their natural duties and justice is realized (Annas, 1981, pp. 109–111). According to Plato, the philosopher-king, an intellectual aristocracy with great wisdom, rules the ideal state using knowledge of the eternal Forms and rational principles. According to Plato, justice is a structural idea that establishes the harmony between the state and the individual. It materializes when producers, warriors, and rulers all carry out their duties in accordance with their inherent natures (Bluck, 1959, pp. 167-170). Being the epitome of wisdom, the philosopher-king ensures that decisions are made for the benefit of all by exercising authority based on knowledge. Authority in this hierarchical system is inextricably linked to intellectual superiority, and the leaders' intelligence and sanity determine the state's prosperity (Taylor, 2001, pp. 97-100).

However, Gandhi;'s conception of justice transcends the reductionist notion of structural harmony or social order. Gandhi's ethical and spiritual conception of justice is intimately tied to both individual and collective moral obligation. In his conception of Ramrajya, moral behavior takes precedence over formal legal frameworks, and justice is seen as an expression of truth (satya) and non-violence (ahimsa) (Chakraborty, 2022, p. 132). In Hind Swaraj, Gandhi asserts that people must exercise self control, develop moral character, and cultivate cordial relationships with one another in order for there to be true justice. This theory of justice emphasizes the application of virtues that result in moral transformation on both an individual and a collective level rather than a rigid social order. According to Gandhi, justice is not the province of the state; rather, it is the individual's sense of duty to act morally and to take restorative measures that result in healing and transformation (Sharma, 2020, p. 4).

The idea that leadership is best left to those with greater knowledge and intellectual superiority is presented in Plato's philosopher-king model (Bloom, 1968, p. 147). According to Plato, leaders have power based on wisdom and reason, and leadership is fundamentally an intellectual and hierarchical issue. Gandhi, on the other hand, views leadership as centered on moral representation. According to Gandhi, the ideal leader is not only a sovereign but also a teacher who sets an example of moral behavior and selfless service that encourages others to follow. According to Gandhi, leaders behave in a way that fosters social cohesiveness and spiritual development, connecting moral authority to leadership rather than intelligence (Parel, 2006, pp. 87-90). Gandhi's view of leadership differs greatly from Plato's elitist model of government in that it holds that qualities like compassion, humility, and a strong commitment to justice qualities that are based on the principles of truth and non-violence are the sources of true authority.

The role of ethics and knowledge in administration

Gandhi's Ramrajya and Plato's Republic have quite different views on the relationship between state, morality, and knowledge. Plato's philosophers are powerful not only due to their knowledge of the intellect but also because they are aware of the metaphysical Forms, which are the world's most profound truths (Plato, 2007, pp. 192-196). Plato's ideal rulers are men who understand the nature of justice itself, not just administrators. Plato's philosophy revolves around the Form of the Good, which directs the philosopher-king in his reign. Under this regime, knowledge is metaphysical and guides all of the ruler's decisions; it is not just political or utilitarian (Sabine & Thorson, 1973, pp. 60-61).

Gandhi, however, takes a moral and spiritual stance. His system of government is founded on moral self-governance rather than intellectual elites or metaphysical realities. Gandhi encourages people to master their desires and passions in order to live good lives, and his concept of swaraj (self governance)

goes beyond political independence (Gandhi, 2019, pp. 22-24). Gandhi's Ramrajya emphasizes moral leadership over power. In his Ramrajya, people live simply and independently, coexist peacefully with the environment and one another, and have a government founded on morality and respect.

Contextualising ideal governance: Athens and colonial India

Understanding the historical background of Plato's and Gandhi's ideas about ideal governance is essential to comprehending the philosophical underpinnings of their writings. Following the devastating effects of the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BCE), Plato's Republic was developed during a time of extreme political unrest in Athens. The war exposed the internal weaknesses of Athenian democracy, particularly its susceptibility to populism and demagoguery, leaving Athens demoralized and weakened (Powell, 2016, pp. 61-65). Plato saw democracy as an institution fueled by ignorance and ephemeral passions rather than reason and wisdom as a result of his involvement in Athenian politics and the execution of his mentor Socrates. According to him, "the complete happiness of the society is achieved only when philosophers become kings, or kings become philosophers" (Sabine, 1973, pp. 37-42). Plato creates an alternative form of government in his Republic that is based on an intellectual hierarchy and has philosopher-kings as rulers who have attained the knowledge and wisdom of timeless principles. Because of their logical and philosophical understanding, these leaders would govern in the interest of the general welfare, establishing the state's stability and justice (Martin, 1981, pp. 11-12). Plato's criticism of Athenian democracy is predicated on his conviction that the populace, motivated by populist rhetoric and baser passions, is incapable of governing. During the period of political turmoil that followed the collapse of Athens golden age, Plato argued that the general populace lacked the intellectual capacity to make wise decisions on behalf of the state (Powell, 2016, p. 281). According to Plato, democracy was an institution where the majority, motivated by base desires and immediate objectives, had the authority to create policies. He believed that only a select few, those with extensive philosophical training, could be trusted to hold positions of authority because they would be able to make decisions based on logic and foresight rather than the fleeting feelings of the general public (Plato, 2007, p.63).

Gandhi, on the other hand, was greatly influenced by the experience of British colonial rule in India, which produced a highly centralized system of governance that prioritized exploitation and control over the well-being of the populace. Gandhi's opposition to British industrialization and centralization served as the foundation for his criticism of British colonialism (Gandhi, 2019, pp. 28-30). Gandhi believed that colonialism had displaced Indians from their innate moral and ethical moorings by introducing foreign political institutions, economic patterns, and values into Indian society. Gandhi thought that India's traditional, independent village system offered a realistic substitute for the British state's industrialization and centralization (Gandhi, 1938, pp. 67-70). His idea of Ramrajya aimed to bring back a decentralized form of government in which

local communities, especially the villages, held the majority of the power. His philosophy was based on the ideas of individual responsibility, self rule, and collective autonomy that are ingrained in rural life rather than the concentration of political power (Gupta, 2011). Gandhi's political beliefs were greatly influenced by the colonial experience. He believed that the Indian people's independence and dignity were being undermined by the British colonial apparatus. Since he felt that the British system promoted materialism and exploitation rather than moral and spiritual well-being, his criticism of industrialization was scathing (Wolpert, 2001, pp. 135-140). Gandhi's Ramrajya vision, which called for an agrarian society system with self-governance, a strong emphasis on moral leadership, non violence, and self-reliance, was a reaction to this exploitation. The foundation of this strategy was the restoration of the more straightforward, sustainable way of life of the pre-colonial Indian village, as opposed to the industrial, centralized models that were common during colonialism (Gandhi, 2019, pp. 75-77).

The political climate of their respective eras had a significant impact on both Plato and Gandhi. Plato's response to the shortcomings of Athenian democracy and his suggestion for an intellectually oriented society are documented in The Republic. Gandhi, on the other hand, advocated for a decentralized form of government that prioritized moral principles and local self government in response to colonialism and industrialization. This is known as Ramrajya. Though their approaches to governance were very different one focused on intellectual issues, while the other was ethical and centered on local self-government both thinkers attempted to address the political and social demands of their respective eras despite the stark differences between their respective contexts.

Models of governance: Gandhi's ethical decentralization and Plato's rational hierarchy

Gandhi's community based and decentralized system contrasts with Plato's meritocratic and hierarchical system, highlighting the stark differences between their conceptions of political organization. In Plato's Republic, society is distinctly split into three groups: producers, warriors, and rulers. Justice is attained by the proper operation of each of these groups. The selection of rulers is predicated on their capacity to think through timeless truths and lead society toward harmony (Satyanarayan 2020, pp. 1298-1301).

However, Gandhi's conception of Ramrajya disavows the ideas of centralization and class distinction. Moral self-control and leadership based on ethical obligation rather than cognitive superiority would be the norm in his ideal society. Gandhi's administration, which is predicated on local autonomy, bases its authority on villages. His concept of swaraj, which includes ethical and personal freedom in addition to political freedom, places a higher value on self-control and service than on power and control (Gandhi, 1997, pp.188-194).

Revealing the Symbolism and Ideology of Politics a closer look at the symbolic components of the two philosophers' writings reveals additional differences between their governing models. The pinnacle of the philosopher-king's journey from ignorance to wisdom is Plato's cave allegory, which represents intellectual upward mobility to enable just governance. The cave itself symbolizes the limitations of ordinary perception, while leaving it signifies the philosopher's capacity to see the world through the lens of truth (Plato, 2007, pp. 235-240).

Gandhi's use of symbolism highlights the importance of moral and spiritual principles. One important emblem of independence and resistance to colonialism was the spinning wheel, or charkha. Gandhi's use of the symbol also reflects his belief that his political philosophy must be based on simplicity and non-violence (Gandhi, 2024, pp. 434-438). Gandhi established the moral and religious foundation of Ramrajya a system of governance that prioritizes the cultivation of virtues over the enforcement of laws through the use of such symbols (Parel, 2006).

The vision of justice: structural harmony vs. moral transformation

"Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, just as truth is of systems of thought" (Rawls, 1971, p. 3). The idea of justice has evolved across civilizations, reflecting changing understandings of ethics, governance, and human flourishing. In imagining ideal societies, both Plato and Gandhi present influential but contrasting models of justice. Their visions offer foundational insights that continue to shape philosophical and political discourse today.

The main focus of Plato's conception of justice is structure. It is accomplished when the state is set up using the division of labor and order principles (Bluck, 1959, pp. 166-168). According to Plato, justice is about preserving the appropriate roles that each class plays within the state, not equality in the contemporary sense. To maintain social harmony, producers (farmers, artisans, merchants) must perform productive labor, auxiliaries (soldiers) must defend bravely, and rulers (philosopher-kings) must govern wisely (Plato, 2007, pp. 149-153). It is not democratic equality but natural aptitude that justifies this distribution. In order to maintain internal harmony, Plato compares the just state to the just soul, where reason governs spirit and appetite (Cornford, 1970, pp. 139–140). A just state is reflected in a just individual, whose soul is governed by reason, bravery, and restrained desire (Cornford, 1970, p. 111). Plato stresses that each component of society must fulfill its assigned role rather than emphasizing equal rights or participation. Accordingly, justice ceases to be distributive fairness and instead becomes a condition of harmonious function (Annas, 1981, p. 87). Gandhi's idea of justice, on the other hand, is based on morality and personal accountability. His vision is restorative, focusing on the moral transformation of both individuals and society rather than punitive legalism (Chakrabarty, 2006, pp. 34-36). Gandhi's justice is based on the fundamental ideas of satya (truth) and ahimsa (non-violence). True justice, in his opinion, comes from inner transformation and self-discipline rather than from

outside institutions or courts (Iyer, 1986, p. 64). Gandhi's ideal society, Ramrajya, is based on mutual respect and moral development rather than hierarchical control, and justice is communal and participatory (Parel, 2006, pp. 117-121). Intellectual elitism is replaced by ethical leadership; service, simplicity, and a dedication to moral truth are the ways that justice is practiced. Gandhi's leaders, in contrast to Plato's philosopher-kings, have given up their own interests in favor of the material and spiritual advancement of the underprivileged (Iyer, 1986, p. 96).

John Rawl's liberal theory of justice provides a modern framework that shifts from moral and metaphysical ideals to political fairness. In A Theory of Justice (1971), Rawls argues that justice should be seen as fairness, defined by two principles: equal basic liberties and the difference principle, which permits social and economic inequalities only if they benefit the least advantaged (Rawls, 1999, pp. 52, 266). His "original position" and "veil of ignorance" constructs a hypothetical scenario where rational individuals would choose these principles without knowing their social status, ensuring impartiality (Freeman, 2007, p. 136). While Rawls' approach upholds liberal individualism and institutional justice, it has been critiqued for its abstraction and neglect of communal ties. Responding to Rawls, communitarian thinkers such as Michael Sandel and Charles Taylor argue that justice cannot be separated from the values and identities formed within communities. Sandel critiques Rawls' idea of an "unencumbered self," arguing that moral reasoning is embedded in shared cultural narratives (Sandel, 1982, p. 65). Similarly, Taylor emphasizes the "socially embedded self," contending that justice must acknowledge the historical and cultural contexts that shape human identities (Taylor, 1989, p. 207). For communitarians, justice is not only about fairness but also about belonging and recognition within a moral community.

Amartya Sen's conception of justice, particularly as outlined in The Idea of Justice (2009), represents a significant departure from the ideas of previous philosophers such as John Rawls. Sen finds this approach to be overly theoretical and disconnected from the actual issues people face on a daily basis, whereas Rawls envisioned justice based on ideal institutions selected by rational people under a "veil of ignorance" (Sen, 2009, p. 7). Sen contends that rather than striving for an entirely just system, we ought to concentrate on lessening the glaring injustices that we observe all around us, like inequality, hunger, and poverty. We refer to this more action-oriented and pragmatic approach as a comparative approach. According to him, the true lives people can lead and the true freedoms they experience should be used to determine what justice is. His capability approach examines people's actual abilities. According to this perspective, justice is about providing people with genuine opportunities to live the lives they value, not just about laws or resources (Sen, 2009, p. 231). Gandhi's emphasis on human dignity and independence is somewhat similar to Sen's viewpoint. Sen, however, favors a more quantifiable and policy-driven

approach to achieving justice than Gandhi did. According to Martha Nussbaum, this method also makes it easier to compare the ways in which various societies promote human development (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 24). To put it briefly, Sen provides a workable and adaptable framework for justice that can direct actual behavior and judgment in diverse and democratic communities.

These earlier models are expanded upon and diversified by modern theories of justice. Traditional distributive justice models are criticized by feminist theorists like Iris Marion Young for failing to acknowledge systemic injustices like marginalization and oppression. Young (1990, p. 173) makes the case for justice as inclusion and equal participation in decision-making. Nancy Fraser asserts that justice necessitates both resource redistribution and identity recognition by fusing economic and cultural dimensions (Fraser, 1997, p. 11). One of the most important modern issues is environmental justice. Justice now encompasses ecological sustainability and equitable access to resources because vulnerable populations are disproportionately impacted by climate change (Schlosberg, 2007, p. 3). Algorithmic justice and the fairness of data-driven systems have grown in importance in the digital age. Under the pretense of objectivity, Cathy O'Neil cautions that opaque algorithms have the potential to uphold systemic biases and sustain inequality (O'Neil, 2016, p. 29). Last but not least, theorists such as Thomas Pogge contend that global institutions themselves are a factor in the enduring injustice and poverty. He promotes a rethinking of international justice that tackles systemic injustices in the global order and cuts across national boundaries (Pogge, 2002, p. 11).

In conclusion, Plato's ordered polis, Gandhi's moral village republic, Rawls liberal fairness, and Sen's capabilities all offer distinct visions of justice. Contemporary theories deepen these insights by incorporating identity, participation, environment, and global equity. In an age marked by inequality, environmental crisis, and digital surveillance, justice must evolve to address the plural, interconnected realities of modern life ensuring dignity, agency, and fairness not just in theory, but in practice.

Practical implications: aspirations vs. reality

Both Plato's and Gandhi's conceptions of the ideal state represent profound philosophical visions of justice, harmony, and moral governance. However, translating these visions into real-world political systems encounters significant challenges, especially in the context of modern democratic societies and global interdependence.

A tripartite division of society rulers, auxiliaries, and producers that represents the three facets of the soul reason, spirit, and appetite is the foundation of Plato's ideal state as outlined in The Republic. According to Plato, in addition to being extraordinarily intelligent, philosopher kings with high moral standards are in charge of governing. These leaders are taught to prioritize the needs of the community over their own. Plato's ideal society, as Klosko noted in 1981, is unconstrained by long-standing traditions or customs; rather, it is a "romance of

free intelligence," in which reason prevails over inherited values. Plato's educational philosophy, which is essential to the formation of the guardian class, is a significant component of this logical approach. Plato outlines a comprehensive, state run educational system in The Republic that emphasizes the development of justice and virtue. His approach blends gymnastics, which fosters physical strength and discipline, with music, which cultivates moral sensitivity, in order to establish equilibrium within the soul. Philosopher-kings' moral and intellectual development was influenced by this educational framework, which still has an effect on education today. It promotes organized curricula, equal learning opportunities for men and women, and the significance of civic values. The concept of using education to shape society and promote moral development was developed in ancient Greece, but it is still highly relevant today when discussing national education systems and ethical citizenship.

However, implementing such a system in contemporary political contexts presents a number of challenges. First, the notion of delegating power to a select few intellectuals is problematic in societies that place a high importance on equality and democratic participation. It ignores the diversity and complexity of human motivations to assume that philosopher kings will rule justly because they are wise. The text raises some important questions about paternalism and authoritarianism (Popper, 1945, pp. 86-89). In societies where ideas of moral and intellectual superiority are regularly disputed and capricious, the legitimacy of those in positions of authority may be called into question. Gettel (1956, pp. 46-51) makes a strong case that Plato's hierarchical governing model is diametrically opposed to democratic ideals, which place a premium on accountability, equality of representation, and inclusivity. Plato's vision also fails to adequately account for the diverse and dynamic nature of modern societies, where various value systems coexist and there is no universally accepted definition of what constitutes the good life. Plato's rigid social structure restricts the freedom of movement and individual autonomy that are prized in most liberal democracies, where tasks are assigned based on purportedly natural qualities. Plato's model is even less adaptable and sensitive to societal demands because it cannot take into account political upheaval or public dissension. Furthermore, the degree of specialization and bureaucracy required for contemporary governance is too great for philosopher kings or a guardian class to manage alone.

In contrast to Plato's vision, modern political systems required a more dispersed and multidimensional approach to leadership because of their close connections to economic systems, foreign relations, legal frameworks, and digital technology. Similarly, there are major practical obstacles to Gandhi's idea of Ramrajya, which he defined as a just and moral social order. Gandhi's model advocated for ethical leadership, local administration, and little intervention from centralized authority. It was founded on the ideals of truth (Satya), non-

violence (Ahimsa), self reliance (Swaraj), and local autonomy. Gandhi envisioned a society in which people lived in harmony with one another and with environment, communities ruled themselves, and economic activity was limited, as observed by Parel (2000, pp. 103–107). While Gandhi's vision is inspiring, it also faces real-world limitations that need to be addressed.

Relevance in contemporary governance

Despite coming from very different historical and cultural contexts, Plato and Gandhi philosophical philosophies have some striking similarities and differences. Though their approaches to these issues differ greatly, both thinkers had a strong interest in issues of justice, morality, and the well-being of society as a whole. The foundation of Plato's Ideal State is the rule of philosopher kings who are morally and intellectually enlightened (Plato, 2007, p. 80). He believed that a small group of people with a deep awareness of the Good must lead because the majority of people lack the wisdom and mental capacity to govern effectively.

Gandhi's vision, on the other hand, disavows the idea of centralized or exclusive authority. His idea of Ram Rajya places a strong emphasis on Swaraj, or self-rule, in which each person's moral and spiritual discipline naturally leads to governance (Gandhi, 1946, p. 72). The upliftment and well-being of everyone is the guiding principle of this decentralized, grassroots leadership model. Although both thinkers view justice as social harmony attained by each member of the community functioning properly, their models are different in terms of structure and focus. Plato's justice is fundamentally hierarchical and requires a strict social structure in which every class fulfills its assigned responsibilities (Kirichenko, 2022, pp. 150–155). Gandhi, on the other hand, envisioned an egalitarian society founded on ahimsa (non-violence), respect for one another, and collaboration.

Furthermore, an abstract, metaphysical understanding of the Good that is only available to a select few through philosophical enlightenment forms the basis of Plato's Ideal State. Gandhi's Ram Rajya, on the other hand, is based on moral and spiritual precepts that everyone can understand. His emphasis on ahimsa (non-violence) and satya (truth) provides a moral foundation that uplifts each person, making his vision essentially inclusive. Therefore, Gandhi's ideas support inclusive and participatory governance, whereas Plato's political philosophy tends toward exclusivity and authority. The sociopolitical environments that influenced each of their visions are still relevant in discussions today. Plato's defense of a meritocratic and morally educated leadership is still pertinent today in light of issues with governance, corruption, and moral failings in public life (Kraut, 2008, p. 122; Taylor, 2004, p. 97). His focus on education and the development of virtue is becoming increasingly significant in light of the political unrest occurring globally. Gandhi's vision, however, explicitly responds to modern movements that place a higher priority on decentralization, sustainable living, and equitable development. His idea of

moral living and village-based self sufficiency offers a compelling substitute in the face of growing ecological and social problems (Chakravarti, 2012, p. 201). His focus on human dignity aligns with contemporary human rights discourses and justice-based activism (Iyer, 2000, p. 63).

In an attempt to bring traditional Western philosophical concepts into line with modern Indian political philosophy, Plato's Ideal State and Gandhi's Ram Rajya are contrasted. By analyzing their similarities and differences, the study highlights the continued importance of morality, leadership, and justice while also enhancing our understanding of these concepts. In an era of environmental degradation, political unrest, and global inequality, a fresh look at these core ideas may offer valuable insights for creating a more equitable and peaceful world.

Finding of the study

The study emphasizes how Gandhi's decentralized self-rule through village republics and Plato's hierarchical model of governance led by philosopher kings differ in their perspectives on authority, fairness, and social order. The role of technocrats in modern government, where specialized knowledge and expertise affect governance, demonstrates the practical relevance of Plato's theories and reflects his emphasis on intellectual leadership.Gandhi's support for moral leadership based on Satyagraha and Ahimsa and Plato's emphasis on intellectual elites' logical rule create a dichotomy in contemporary governance that shapes discussions about leadership in democracies.

Both Plato's critique of Athenian democracy and Gandhi's resistance to British colonialism shaped their political visions, providing insights into contemporary struggles between centralized, expert driven governance and grassroots political movements.

The practical applicability of Plato's intellectual elitism and Gandhi's moral decentralization is debated in relation to contemporary challenges like inequality and environmental sustainability, with Plato's model resonating with the reliance on experts and Gandhi's model becoming more relevant in sustainable development. Both Plato and Gandhi emphasize the importance of education in shaping political ideals Plato's structured education for philosopher kings and Gandhi's focus on moral and ethical education, highlighting the ongoing relevance of education in shaping leaders and citizens in modern governance.

Limitation of the study

It is critical to comprehend this study's limitations. First of all, because the philosophers involved come from very different historical, cultural, and political backgrounds, it is challenging to make direct comparisons between colonial India and ancient Greece. Both Plato's and Gandhi's theories are fundamentally philosophical and idealistic, which restricts their applicability in contemporary politics. The study mostly relies on textual analysis and lacks real-world case

studies to back up its theoretical claims. Additionally, the study's narrow focus precludes a comprehensive analysis of institutional, legal, or economic factors. Finally, the complexity of many democratic frameworks, globalization, and technological advancement may be oversimplified if their models are applied to the modern world.

In conclusion Plato's Republic and Gandhi's Ramrajya are two different but equally important ideal society models, each with its own cultural and historical foundations. While Gandhhi's vision of Ramrajya is centered on intellectual leadership, structural hierarchy, and the rational pursuit of justice, Gandhi's ideal of Ramrajya emphasizes decentralized government, moral leadership, and the ethical responsibility of both individuals and communities. These divergent opinions continue to influence political philosophy and offer valuable insights into contemporary governance. Plato's focus on philosopher kings and the importance of knowledge in governance aligns with current discussions regarding the role of expertise in governance. His idea of a logically organized society is still applicable in these difficult times when sensible choices are crucial. However, Plato's rigid hierarchical structure may conflict with modern democratic values of equality, political pluralism, and participation. Plato's ideas need to be adjusted for modern contexts, where balancing democratic principles with intellectual authority is necessary. The centralized power structures that are common in the modern world, however, can be effectively replaced by Gandhi's theory of moral, decentralized governance. Gandhi's focus on local autonomy, self-sufficiency, and moral leadership addresses issues such as social justice, environmental sustainability, and the growing disenchantment with centralized governmental power. Gandhi's ideas are consistent with contemporary movements for participatory democracy and community empowerment, where moral leadership based on honesty and non violence provides a promising substitute for political corruption and inequality.

Despite the difficulties their principles encounter in modern governance, Plato and Gandhi both provide timeless frameworks for considering leadership, fairness, and social peace. Even though their ideas can seem idealistic, there is no denying their applicability in the current political environment. Their theories make people think critically about the kind of government and leadership that are needed to solve the moral, social, and environmental issues that our planet is currently facing. In the end, their theories support an intellectually demanding and morally sound quest for justice, providing insightful guidance for building a more equitable and harmonious society.

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