Question Of Distinguishing Right From Wrong

I

History shows that man has, since his origin, lived and developed by upholding the principle of distinguishing right from wrong in dealing with every phenomenon (natural and social) concerning its theory (i.e., its quality, character or nature), practice and organisation. There is no moment in human life (i.e., social engagement or personal activity like eating and even resting), when this question does not confront any human being.

II

History further shows that, like every phenomenon, the question of differentiating right from wrong has constantly gone on changing. Thus, various types of ideas, discerning right from wrong, have existed in different social stages in history. For instance, in the ongoing capitalist stage, we come across five varieties of basic ideas, each of which contends to represent the truth of our times, while dubbing all its rival ideas as falsehoods. These five varieties are: (1) corporate, (2) communist, (3) religious fundamentalist, (4) political and economic fundamentalist and (5) free ideas not attached to any ideology.

Corporate theory says that capital is the deciding factor in perceiving right from wrong, that the growth of capital indicates development, prosperity and progress and that its highest growth is attained under private ownership and free political competition.

Communist theory too holds that capital growth constitutes the measure of testing development, prosperity and progress of the people. It further adds that the tasks of monopolising political power by the communist party and the means of production by the state are the pre-conditions for generating high capital growth.

Religious fundamentalists also subscribe to the theory of capital growth as the basis of social development. But, according to them capital generation can only be increased by adopting the path of their respective religious fundamentalist faiths.

Economic fundamentalists, such as adherents of privatisation, liberalisation and restructuring maintain that the application of their concept alone can maximise capital growth, while the adherents of nationalisation, government ownership or public sector claim that only carrying out of their theory can lead to the highest capital generation.

Free thinkers, while giving the highest priority to the idea of capital maximisation, project a jumble of confused concepts, leading to nowhere.

The above-said theories, while suggesting different routes, are basically in agreement that capital represents their common objective, i.e., their defining value for identifying right from wrong in the present society.

In contrast to the theory of capital as the deciding factor of judging right from wrong, the newly-arisen nature-human centric theory holds that capital (i.e., money or wealth) represents only the medium of exchange and not any precious thing in society. According to it, only the human and environmental resources constitute the two basic factors for the existence and development of everything in society. Except these two factors, nothing (wealth, money or anything else) has any value in society.

III

In the pre-capitalist era, the human society was characterised by the feudal order which did exist for thousands of years and was characterised by the existence of a very large number of kingdoms, big and small, with each ruled by a king. The unique characteristic of the kingship as projected by the different religions was their common concept of the king having been the personal representative of the God, meant to rule the people (called the theory of divine right of kings). Despite the deadly hostile relations between different varieties of religions, the king was their common defining-point

for separating right from wrong. Unstinted loyalty to the king constituted the common cause of every religion, while opposition to him was a sin and crime.

IV

Prior to the feudal era, tribalism symbolised the mode of human society the world over. Under this mode, loyalty to the tribe represented the criterion for making out right from wrong. Any disloyalty to the tribe including its head was considered an immoral and illegal act.

V

Reverting further back, we come to the clan society which consisted of a number of blood-related families (called gan-gotra in Sanskrit). In the clan social formation all members of the clan had equal rights in all respects with the clan leader having the power to take the final decision. The members of the rival clan were, whenever seen or captured, treated as enemies and thus mercilessly killed. The clan social formation lasted for lakhs of years. The defining principle of judging right from wrong in clan society was collective welfare and prosperity of the clan as a whole, while violation of this principle constituted a crime.

VI

Stepping back to his earliest past, when human being roamed about in his elementary social formation of human herd (comprising a group of male and female humans linked through genetic and sexual relations, which later developed into the social formation, called the family) all over the globe, the human principle of discriminating right from wrong was to further and defend the interests of the concerned human herd which also met all the three basic biological urges of every member.

VII

A look at the various principles of discerning right from wrong in various stages of human society—e.g., feudal, capitalist etc.—shows that the principle was chiefly related to the welfare of the whole given society (i.e., its given social system called in ancient Sanskrit literature as Rajya Dharma). It served all the basic biological human urge of every human individual member of that society—i.e., (a) the basic biological human urge of security of life from any confronting danger, (b) the basic biological human urge of meeting the physical and psychological needs through the availability of required material things, i.e., food, shelter, clothing, etc., as well as the psychological concepts, i.e., social identity, justice, freedom, equality, fraternity, etc., and (c) basic biological human sex urge by having a legal and moral code of joint sex living.

It is evident that none of the three basic biological urges of man had ever played the role of a defining principle distinguishing right from wrong.

VIII

The fundamental idea of distinguishing right from wrong pertaining to a given society is not an ordinary notion, but a concept of the highest importance for the concerned social community. This is because the whole social structure of such a social formation is based, guided, practised and organised on the basis of this principle. In other words, the entire political field, economic domain and cultural circle of any formation is structured on the basis of its respective fundamental idea of distinguishing right from wrong. This can easily be seen from the basic theory and practice of our existing corporate capitalist society where our whole politics (comprising the whole constitution, laws and rules), the entire economy (comprising all sectors like manufacturing, services, agriculture etc.) and complete culture (ideas, customs, arts, education, science, technology, research, manners, etiquette, etc.), have been founded on the basic principle upholding capital as our lifeline and anything counter to capital as an evil. The whole theory and practice of justice, liberty, equality, fraternity and development of our existing corporate model has been guided by this fundamental idea of distinguishing right from wrong.

That is how and why the corporate capital owners and its political, economic and cultural puppets today ride roughshod over the backs of the common people in every country while the ordinary masses are crying under the yoke of their (corporate) unbounded oppression and exploitation.

A similar role has been played by various defining ideas of distinguishing right from wrong in their relevant times in history.

IX

Differing strikingly from the corporate fundamental idea of distinguishing right from wrong, the nature-human centric fundamental idea maintains that every type of justice—political, legal, economic, ethical, etc.—and the basic human rights of freedom, equality and fraternity must be based on the basic principle characterising natural and human phenomena as the nerve centre of human life and anything contrary to it as wicked and devilish.