

Teachings of Chikuro Hiroike on Supreme Morality: Its Relevance in Contemporary World

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Abstract

Conventional morality is regarded as non-conducive to happiness, because they are egoistic. The corrective is the principle of Supreme Morality, which is analysed by Dr. Hiroike, into renunciation of self, belief in the benevolence of God, the precedence of duties over rights, respect for the evolutionary strands of personal relationships which secure the continuity of the past, present and future and finally enlightenment and salvation. In the contemporary world of imperfections, the teachings of supreme morality calls for a critical scrutiny, issues like environmental degradation, consumerism, blunt industrialization, acquisitions of more and more etc are of critical concern. Dr. Hiroike's observations on all these are pertinent. He suggested qualitative improvement rather than quantitative expansion of production, ideal employer-employee relationships. He insists that man's moral sense is the most important factor in different troubles as financial panics, trade depression, lack of credit and bankruptcies. In the present corporate situation, the importance of corporate social responsibility and other recent developments are significant.

Chikuro Hiroike (b. 1866) is recognized as an architect of the philosophy of Supreme Morality. Simply speaking, it suggests that we have to put aside selfish instinct or egoism and in its place, place in our minds 'Divine Benevolence'. Egoism is principally due to instinct of self-preservation (*The Characteristics*, p. 135).

Endeavour will be made here, firstly, to reflect on the basic concepts and principles of Supreme Morality and then try to articulate its relevance in contemporary world.

1. The basic concepts and principles of Supreme Morality

Unlike conventional morality based upon the instinct of self-preservation and egoism, supreme morality is altruistic by nature. Moralogy is a science of morals. It is a positive and synthetic science. It is positive, simply because the analysis conforms to the principles of empirical observation, classification and then, explanations. It is synthetic because it synthesizes the teachings of the sages along with relevant data available on modern science.

Moralogy is often described as a method of arriving at right conduct by working out the implications of certain basic principles. Moralogy is a moral science, not a religion. It is also important to note that supreme morality is distinct from conventional morality.

Morality was used merely as a matter of personal conduct for one's soul's salvation. But Supreme Morality, as developed by Dr. Hiroike is chiefly concerned with public or collective aspect—from the happiness of the individual to the welfare of the community at large. It is the public aspect of morality which has been neglected so far in the past.

Dr. Hiroike presented five principles of supreme morality extracted from the teachings of great Sages of the world like Socrates, Jesus Christ, Sakyamuni and Confucius. This is an adaptation of ancient wisdom for modern conditions. The thoughts of the sages are conflated in the supreme morality. They are as follows:

(1) Self-renunciation

It is important for us to do away with ego-centric self which will lead us to the improvement of our character and personality. This corresponds largely to Buddhist and Hindu teachings about detachment.

(2) Acceptance of “the belief in the Benevolence of God”

God is equated with reality. It is not something as absolute. God is the creator who is personal and to whom prayer may be addressed. We must develop a spirit of benevolence and love towards all living creatures to nourish everything for others which is the way to our real happiness.

(3) Precedence of Duties over Rights

The rights of man should be preceded by the performance of his duties. Rights should accrue to those who first fulfill their moral obligations. This is much neglected or even denied by our present self-seeking society.

(4) **Respect for Ortholinons**

Dr. Hiroike coined the term 'Ortholinon' (line of succession) from the Greek word *orthos*, meaning 'straight' and *linon* meaning 'thread'. We are inseparable parts of the whole of creation and involved in the evolutionary process; to respect the ortholinons and repay the debt to the ortholinons is to participate in that process. It is to be rationalized according to the basic idea of the Shinto outlook. In order to understand the question of conduct, it is true that we cannot start from a void; we have to take into account of the common store of experience, so the thread runs through personalities rather than through the abstract ideas.

(5) **Enlightenment and Salvation**

We have to develop in ourselves the spirit to pray for the happiness of others by transplanting the above four principles in their spirit. The good we do to others confers a reciprocal benefits to us and at the end all are united with God. This is a reflection of the Buddhist principles that all souls must be saved from the endless round of ignorant and purposeless existence and that by doing so, we incidentally procure advancement for ourselves. We are all members of one of another. So the good I do to you confers a reciprocal benefit on me.

(6) **Moral Causality**

Actions tend to have material results according to morality or lack of morality with which they are performed. This is something like the Hindu or Buddhist doctrine of Karma. Again, actions have their effect not only on the soul, but also on the body. Good actions are conducive to bodily and mental health and bad actions to neurosis and diseases. This anticipates modern psychological and medical theory. Hiroike reinforces this in a most interesting way by reference to the theory of Darwinian Evolution—the higher the morality, the greater the survival value in the struggle for existence.

2. The relevance of supreme morality in contemporary world.

Today, we live in a world of imperfections. We recognize people are facing a variety of crises and concerns that are agitating the minds in the contemporary world like how to create national or international integration/to create borderless economic structure. The crises are as follows:

- how to minimize the imbalance or inequality in economic development among different countries,
- how to address the issues like trade deficit, declining rate of unemploy-

ment/economic slowdown, bankruptcy etc.,
how to take care of global issues like environmental degradation,
how to promote the creation of common international value or culture
system,
how to reduce conflicts that generate from ethnic or religious issues etc.

All these need to be addressed. At the same time, we also witness—all the ethics and values are under attack, traditions are subjected to ridicule, moral standards have slipped to an appalling degree, openly advocating hedonism, and belief in God is evaporating etc.

(1) The issue of international relations

Attempt will be made first of all to try to explain the issue of international relations, because even the national situation of a country today is not exclusively determined only by its own domestic factors/values. International factors play a role precisely in a globalized regime.

Nationalistic competition creates trade barriers and may undo the advantages of free trade and creates tensions which may lead to economic retaliation and possibly even war. It is not fair enough to view international competition in nationalistic terms. However, it might be prudent to look upon international organizations as truly internationalized. Interests of the international stakeholders for the success of the international companies through open competition should be recognized. National prosperity must be achieved through integration. Competing nations are a symptom of imbalance. The need is to establish a world wide harmony.

In terms of business, it is understood that if it becomes more global, employee honesty may tend to rise, bribery may decrease, trust-based organizations may achieve comparative advantage and discrimination based on taste or misinformation may decrease. An international firm will be economically viable through combination of different features on mind-set and entrepreneurial ability of different nations of the world.

As one Indian born engineer is quoted as saying “my body was made in India, my science learnt in England and my management philosophy comes largely from the Japanese, but I am putting it altogether in California.”

Dr. Hiroike is a global man. He was not lacking in world views on different issues even though he talked about the spirit/strengths of nationalism. But if we look at the world today, the strength and spirit of nationalism is gradually eroding for different reasons. Firstly, we witness today the proliferation of different international organizations/trading blocks, irrespective of geographical or national territorial boundaries. Secondly, globalization

regime and mass communications have impacted on our outlook towards international understanding. Again, there are some problems of global significance like environmental crisis which calls for international collaboration. But doubts are there about their effective functioning.

Dr. Hiroike was sceptic about effectiveness of institutions like League of Nations, disarmament conferences, non-war treatise etc for the attainment of absolute peace, security and happiness of human kind. This is, he believed, because of the collisions of interests between groups and also lack of cultivation of one's fortune with supreme virtue/lack of spirit of enlightenment of members of each group. He, therefore, suggested that 'solution lie in the enlightenment of the people by means of supreme morality' and to practice the ortholinon principle. National ortholinon should be integrated with the international ortholinon.

(2) **Hiroike's ideas of economy and morality**

Dr. Hiroike recognized the 'economy' and morality are not contradictory rather complementary (*Towards Supreme Morality*, Vol. 3, pp. 208-209). Hiroike made a critical study of the fundamental economic ideas developed by economists like Adam Smith, Menger, Marx etc. He observed "economic ideas of Smith were built upon the individual self-interest/egoism". He did not agree with the criticisms leveled against the capitalists by Marx.

The heterodox system together with liberalism, socialism and capitalism have stimulated human desire and so, destructive. So, it is better to accept orthodox learning. We shall be able to build a society with security, peace and happiness by organized, constructive, steady, eternal and peaceful means.

He was not in favor of the rapid expansion or quick enlargement of a nation or an enterprise. Rather he suggested expansion in 'the natural course of events' through inner control by means of morality. If it is developed quickly, he argued, many people may tend to join the enterprise out of their own exclusive selfish interest and may cause sufferings to many others within and outside the particular enterprise (*Towards Supreme Morality*, Vol. 3, p. 363).

He also maintained:

In every country from government offices, schools, firms, banks and private houses to roads, bridges and entertainment facilities—are made far more grand, magnificent and normal than the practical living capacity of the people can sustain and this necessarily results in the increase of national expenses, taxes and living costs. (*Towards Supreme Morality*, Vol. 3, p. 204)

This is how excess capacity or surplus production is generated. And for

these situations, multinational corporations' role is notable. The multinational corporations are dominant factor in the production system. They are the main sources of surplus production. It is pertinent to regulate and design appropriate kind of production behaviour.

The implications of this are vast and varied. In order to make more, it becomes necessary to throw products away more quickly than before. This is a contradiction facing modern economy. Companies try to overcome competition by increasing investments, promoting mass production and lowering unit costs of products. Mass production develops until products are overflowing in the market.

The society is now facing an unsurpassable contradiction i.e., the impossibility of making products without throwing them away. If an economy aims at quantitative growth, it is not an economy in the true sense. The economy should aim at qualitative uplifting and providing better and more beautiful goods. Then an economy actualizes its true nature and transforms itself into a true economy. In reality, when an economy reaches saturation, competition changes from quantitative expansion to qualitative refinements.

Quantitative expansion of production may lead to over-production, over-saleable, in the market and consequently fluctuations in market prices take place. Excess production, as we see today, is creating a problem of disposable issue. Blunt indiscriminate industrialization emits pollutants and aggravates global environmental crisis. It threatens human life. It also creates a society of consumerism. We have institutionalized wasteful consumption. The replacement of home electronics product is often encouraged even they are usable. The principle of more and more is believed to be a case of human alienation by depriving human goodness from humankind. There should be definite limit to growth. We listen sometime to the idea of "*mottai-nai*" in Japan. The existence of unutilized capacity is undesirable.

Incidentally, it is pertinent to note that Dr. Hiroike was not approving the plucking of flowers from his garden and throw them or did not allow cutting of trees from his garden. He was conscious about the impact of all these activities even though the science of ecology was not born in proper form that time.

(3) Management based on moralogy.

Besides theoretical aspect of economics, Dr. Hiroike suggested some ideas about management based on the principles of moralogy. Dr. Hiroike maintained:

According to supreme morality, one's business or professional office must be devoted chiefly to assisting the work of God, increasing

the convenience and benefits of the whole mankind to their satisfaction, while one's spirit is devoted to the bringing of spiritual salvation to people of everyday contact in accordance with supreme morality. (*Towards Supreme Morality*, Vol. 3, p. 550)

He identified three features.

① Character as capital

Character, implies both mental and human abilities—it is scholarship, intelligence and ability. It is the result of the accumulation of moral practices —by the parents, ancestors of each person.

He believed that the company is for human development and salvation. It means to foster and grow men of higher character. Necessarily, a manager is to try for happiness of the employees. In this way, he cultivates direct benevolence. Enlightened in this way, employees will also conform to the manager's mind and do their best.

② Innovation

Again, what is indispensable for the manager is always to nourish human abilities necessary for the development of the enterprise. An enterprise may fail simply because of its ignorance of “the tendencies of the times” (*Towards Supreme Morality*, Vol. 2, p. 81). We cannot safely live in the past. As the teachings of the sages are the natural law of the universe, things (goods and service) are the appearance of its principles. And the concrete method of dealing with these things or productive method have to be improved, according to the evolution of human spirit. This is where the issue of innovation emerges.

③ Triadic justice

The business activities should take care of the interests of all sides—self, the other party and the third party.

In *Towards Supreme Morality* (Vol. 3, p. 208), Hiroike says that supreme morality intends to enlighten all people concerned with the same principle: the seller the buyers and all others merchants, users, capitalists, workers etc even if whose interests may be in opposite position. The purpose is to give peace and happiness to everybody. Otherwise, it will create problems and instability.

We can summarize the key points as in the following: In order to cultivate character we need to think of the future of the employees, and to enlighten each party all by supreme morality. If we do not, we lack respect for humanity, and cannot cultivate the spirit of benevolence.

Companies today are being engineered by business associates to look increasingly green and responsible. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Socially Responsible Investments (SRI) are ideas that have attracted world

-wide attention today and acquired a new resonance in the global economy. It is also true that CSR and SRI perceptions and practices may vary across different nations and cultures. The moral obligations and commitments are confined within the community of interests. Society's needs have far exceeded the capabilities of Governments to fulfill. The spotlight is increasingly turning to focus on the role of the business in the society.

Companies/management are required to see the world beyond their companies. It is true that an enterprise for its sustainable development needs a solid support and co-operation of the people and society around it. It is to take care of the interests of the society to provide essential commodities at reasonable prices to look into the interests of customers, employees, stockholders etc., and to help society and nation for improving moral level. There is a need to reexamine and reconstruct the nature of behaviour of business organizations.

Lock-outs, strikes, lay-offs, bankruptcy, corruption have become the order in the business world or economic world today. The form of economy that we see today has been substantially impoverished by the distance that has grown between economy and morality. It is difficult to organize a true organization, social or economic unless the human beings restrain their self-instinct.

Dr. Hiroike believed "man's moral sense is the most important factor in preventing recurrence of such troubles as financial panics, trade depressions, lack of credit and bankruptcies..." (*The Characteristics*, 1966, p. 34). So, he called upon to develop economic systems and industrial and economic organizations on the firm foundation of supreme morality and on the basis of the principles on natural sciences.

True, in any new system, the relics of the old takes a long time to disperse or achieve a full integration into the new. Progress may be gradual. The ideas and principles of supreme morality developed by Dr. Hiroike were under the restrictions of time. But even then, there are certain fundamental principles which will make enormous contributions, if rightly followed, to the creation of a society with deep human kindness and a world with peace, security and happiness.

In *An Outline of Moralogy* published in Japanese by the Institute of Moralogy in 1982 and translated in 1987, we can see the statement about the supreme morality as the universal moral criterion as follows:

The present situation seems to demand, therefore, that we establish the necessary criteria for a universal morality. The moral criteria fit for an international age must be ones which can first of all integrate the cultures of the East and the West; they should be built on

a spirit of respect for human beings and on rationality, transcending sectarian faiths, factionalism, and ideologies. (*An Outline of Moralogy*, p. 11)

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