

Taking Morality First in Rural Governance in the New Era

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Abstract: The Strategic Plan for Rural Rejuvenation (2018-2022) issued by the State Council of the Communist Party of China has refined the general idea of enforcing the rule of virtue as well as the rule of law into adhering to the unification of the rule of law and the rule of virtue on the basis of autonomy, making rural governance more operable in the new era. Under the new situation, to strengthen and improve rural governance and to consolidate the grass-roots foundation for rural rejuvenation, we should adhere to "taking morality first" and give play to the "leading," "prior," and "transcendental" roles of morality.

Introduction

The Strategic Plan for Rural Rejuvenation (2018-2022) issued by the State Council of the Communist Party of China clearly stated that “adhere to rule by law and rule by virtue on the basis of self-government so as to improve and innovate the dynamic villager self-government mechanism led by the village party organization, to strengthen the status of legal authority as well as to nourish the rule of law and self-governance in the whole process of rural governance with the rule of morality”. This clearly defines the status and role of autonomy, rule of law, and rule of virtue in rural governance in the new era. The general policy of “enforcing the rule of virtue and the rule of law” is detailed and actualized, highlighting the priority of the rule of virtue. Therefore, how to recognize striking effect of rule of virtue, and how to adopting the principle of "taking morality first" in rural governance? This paper holds that the practice of “taking morality first” "guider", "precursor", and "transcendent".

The Guiding Role of Morality

A precursor means that one thing is a prerequisite for others, playing a role of guidance, demonstration and regulation in the entire system. Marx once put forward that the accumulation of capital is a necessary guide for the division of labor, the circulation function of industrial capital is the guide for the function of production capital and the behavior of currency capitalization is the "guider of the capitalist production process" and other important ideas. Comrade Xi Jinping also said: “The idea is the precursor of action”, “the comprehensive and deepening reform must be guided by theoretical innovation”, literature and art must "become the precursor of the changing times and social changes." In terms of rural governance, the guiding role of morality embodies in guiding the social value, shaping personality as well as setting examples.

The Guiding Role of Morality in Value Guidance. The primary role of morality is to provide a stable, universal and practical value system for human beings. In rural rejuvenation, firstly, we must insist on arming party members and educating people with Xi Jinping's new era of socialist ideology with Chinese characteristics, guiding moral pursuits and the direction of life with scientific theory and faith. Secondly, we must continue to deepen the propaganda and education of socialist core values, integrating patriotism and hard-working, integrity and friendliness, fairness and rule of law, civilization and harmony as well as other values into our daily lives so that socialist core values would habitually become the code of ethics as well as the principles of self-cultivation. Moreover, we must vigorously promote the national spirit centered on patriotism and the spirit of the age centered on reform and innovation, and advocate people to establish concepts such as diligence, courage, self-reliance, hard work, and dedication, as well as build a spiritual home for rural people.

Finally, we should promote the traditional family virtues of the Chinese nation. Most of all, we should inherit Chinese tradition of filial piety, promote the good qualities of filial respect for parents, and elders, and guide all families to construct good family tradition.

The Guiding Role of Morality in Shaping Characters. Morality, after all, is to make individuals' moral judgments and behaviors show meaning to themselves and others. In rural governance, we must focus on the moral personality leading function in three aspects: forming moral behavior, reinforcing moral will and updating the moral ideas with the times. Firstly, good moral behavior is formed under the guidance of socialist morality. In ancient China, “three enduring contributions” i.e., moral contribution, military achievement, and intellectual creation are the greatest ones recognized by the authorities. Among the three, moral contribution ranks first. It emphasizes the fundamental and prerequisite role played by morality in life, work, and intellectual research. In contemporary China, the core values of socialism have achieved the organic unity of virtues of the country and those of individual. Therefore, we must persist in the practicing the rule of virtue in rural governance. Secondly, to reinforce moral will. According to this requirement of both public morality and strict private morality, we need to abide by the ethical norms and moral requirements in public life and remain steadfast in the face of any obstacles. Thirdly, we should update the moral ideas with the times. The concept of virtue cannot be constructed like the castles in the air. It is necessary to combine the implementation outline of civic moral construction in the new era with the concept of virtue, taking the promotion of moral practice ability as the focus. Not only should we advocate everyone to serve the motherland and serve the people, but emphasize the cultivation of noble moral personality and the shaping of moral self. In such ways can we form a powerful force of seeking truth, goodness, and beauty in the whole society.

The Guiding Role of Morality in Setting Example. To strengthen and improve rural governance, it is also necessary to use morality to clarify and consolidate the desire and pursuit of multiple subjects for to be models. Firstly, it is necessary to propagate advanced models such as moral models, hero models, wealthy proficient individuals, and wise villagers. Employing reporting speeches, news coverage, literary and artistic works, public service advertisements in an integrated way to guide people with correct public opinion, to inspire people with a noble spirit and to set a clear goal orientation for villagers. Secondly, it is beneficial to arrange a series of meetings honoring good daughter-in-law and good parents-in-law, awarding the most beautiful rural teachers, the most beautiful rural doctors and the most beautiful village officials. Therefore, we can lead the moral style with those examples so as to promote ideas of truthfulness, goodness and beauty as well as to spread the positive energy. Thirdly, through the establishment of demonstration villages of democracy and rule of law, demonstration villages of civilized home, demonstration villages of peaceful construction and other kinds of demonstration villages, mass spiritual civilization creation activities promote the overall improvement of social morality level, establish a new trend and correct the evil one.

The Pioneering Role of Morality

A Precursor have to make exploration, experimentation and piloting before large-scale decision-making and formal deployment. The ancients often say that “the grain and grass must be arranged before mobilizing soldiers and horses”, which is to emphasize that grain and grass as well as other logistical supply guarantees the victory of the war. Likewise, pilot project first is also an important experience in the success of China's reform and opening up. From the pilot special zones in Shenzhen, Shantou, and Xiamen to the comprehensive, multi-layered and wide-ranging counterparty opening pattern of special economic zones-coastal economic open zones-coastal economic open cities-free trade pilot zones, for instance, pilot projects play a significant role in China's reform and opening up. Today, the pioneering role of morality in rural governance should be realized in following three aspects:

The Pioneering role of morality in the Construction of the Rule of Law. Putting morality first is not to replace the rule of law with the rule of virtue, but to protect and strengthen the rule of law with morality so as to achieve both the rule of virtue and the rule of law. In rural governance,

we must first promote the legalization and standardization of morality, and promptly raise and transform the moral requirements which are widely recognized, mature and operational into legal norms. It follows that the moral system is connected to and adapted to the legal system in a harmonious manner. Secondly, we must promote the legislation of virtues such as social integrity, righteousness, helping others, and taking care of the young, give play to the functions of strict law enforcement of rewarding virtue and punishing vice, and penetrate the moral awareness through legislation, law enforcement, justice, and legal compliance. Finally, we must pay attention to the active role of social norms such as village regulations, community conventions, family rules and education in rural governance, strengthening the sense of rule and contractual spirit of rural society. Morality must be taken a useful complement to the construction of the rule of law to achieve the unification and mutual-benefit of the rule of law and the rule of virtue.

The Pioneering Role of Morality in Economic Construction. Moral standards are influenced by the level of economic development but undoubtedly have effect on economic development. Therefore, we must give full play to the role of morality in guiding and regulating economic behavior, and provide a harmonious human environment for rural economic development. On the one hand, it is necessary to promote the concept of integrity and culture compatible with the socialist market economy. Chinese traditional virtue to keep promise is of great use in building a rural social credit system that covers government affairs, business integrity, social integrity, and judicial credibility in order to motivate people to speak honestly and keep promises. On the other hand, it is necessary to establish and improve the normal mechanism for punishing dishonesty and unethical behavior, and to use economic, legal, administrative, and supervisory means comprehensively in order to deepen the rectification of crucial issues in moral areas such as lack of integrity, fraud and fabrication in taking self-interest as the top priority. Those who lose morality and the law should be punished and pay the price.

The Pioneering Role of Morality in Social Construction. The key to rural governance lies in social construction. In the construction of social systems, it is to penetrate morals through the entire process of designing and implementing rural public policy systems, so as to better comply with public policies involving major livelihoods especially in employment, schooling, housing, medical care, income distribution, and social security. People's moral expectations fully reflect the value orientation of maintaining social fairness and justice, and realize the organic unification of policy goals and moral orientation. As to the construction of social organizations, ethics councils, township councils, and the association of gambling and drug control should be widely established. In cultural construction, we must deeply explore the traditional virtues of self-improvement, dedication and filial piety so that the Chinese cultural genes can be better rooted in people's ideological concepts. At the same time, we should resist superstition and backward concepts, break the old habits of extravagance while strive to cultivate civilized rural customs.

The Transcendence of Morality in Social Construction

Transcendence means prior to experience and prior to practice. Although it does not come from experience, yet morality does not divorce from experience and is effective for experience. Here, to play the transcendental role of morality is not to argue whether morality is transcendental or empirical but to emphasize the transcendental nature of moral obligations and moral responsibilities as well as to emphasize that the individuals innately responsible for the deeds of others and society. From this perspective, the transcendental role of morality is embodied in fostering and nurturing patriotism in the context of rural rejuvenation.

Taking the Moral Responsibility as Basis for Family Education. The root of the world is in the state, the root of the state is in the family and the root of the family is in cultivating oneself. Comrade Xi Jinping pointed out: "The destiny of the family is closely connected to the future of the country and the nation. Only families are satisfied with their life can the country be good and the nation be good." Therefore, in rural governance, we must emphasize the role of family, family education and family style, giving play to its unique role of "the core of family spirit". In this case,

each family member understands their moral responsibilities and obligations, and consciously implements family virtues including “respect for the elderly and love children, equality between men and women, harmony between husband and wife, diligence and frugality in managing household as well as the solidarity among neighbors”. We strive to form a spiritual atmosphere among families, friends, neighbors and cultivate good local customs, folk customs, political style, and party style with family style.

Taking the Moral Responsibility as Basis for Patriotism. General Secretary Xi Jinping also pointed out: "patriotism is the deepest and most enduring emotion in the world and the source of a person's virtues and meritorious actions." “Think of the country and its people every time and everywhere, and integrate the personal ideals with the future of the country and destiny of the nation”. Responsibility and obligation are the essence of patriotism. In rural rejuvenation, we must strive to make every moral subject always cherish the patriotism, which promote them to integrating the future of the individual with the destiny of the country and encourage them to pursue the dream of national rejuvenation the country. Subsequently, not only would morality be an obligation of filial piety, respect for the elderly and the prosperity of the family but the responsibility of governing and benefiting the people.

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