

# Alternative Views on the Theory of Communication: An Exploration through the Strands of Buddhism

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## Abstract

Communication occupies a pivotal role in the total development of every human being. Communication as a basic social process is influenced by the philosophical and societal value system. The objective of this paper is to underscore the importance of Buddhism as a way of thought in the discourse of human communication. Buddhism, which has its origins in ancient India, focuses on the centrality of human effort in the attainment of salvation. That Buddhism has much to contribute to the understanding of the communication phenomenon is evident from the works of Dissanayake and others. This paper is furtherance in that direction. The author shall try to analyze the essence of communication from Buddha's teachings and thus explore and reinvent Buddhist view of communication in today's communication perspective through the method of discourse analysis.

**Keywords:** Buddhism; Human communication; Discourse analysis

## Introduction

It is no wonder that all the great religions of the world had their different models of communication. Religions have delivered reportiers of stories and accounts about their gods and the later association with the cosmos and with human being. The stories have been passed on by listening in on others' conversations or spoken revelations subsequently put into writing. In this regard, Buddhism is not an exemption.

Buddhism refers to the dharma that incorporates an assortment of customs, convictions and otherworldly practices to a great extent taking into account teachings ascribed to the Buddha literally, the 'Enlightened One'. Buddhism started in India, from where it spread through quite a bit of Asia, where after it declined in India amid the medieval times. Two noteworthy surviving branches of Buddhism are Theravada which is 'The School of the Elders' and Mahayana which means 'The Great Vehicle'.

The Theravada Buddhism is practiced in the countries like Sri Lanka, Thailand, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia whereas Mahayana Buddhism is practiced in the country like Tibet, Japan and South Korea. There are various distinctions between the two however both offer vital corollary for discourse of communication.

Buddhism is one of the great religions of the world that has profoundly affected humanity. It has impacted religious, philosophical, moral, moral, social and moral intuition in simple ways. For a religion to have that sort of effect, it must have extremely interesting ways to deal with the issue of human communication. The Buddha was a communicator with par excellence. He was a remarkably a compelling teacher and that impact is generally owing to his prosperity as a communicator.

The Buddha preached to the general population in a language that was promptly justifiable. He gave careful consideration to the mental foundation and noticeable aspect of his potential audience. He organized his messages in a way that would promptly speak to the laypersons. From a communication perspective, the expository systems embrace by the Buddha in his teachings are multi-faceted and most entrancing and justify close study. The way he utilized stories, moral stories, tropes, with amusingness, innovative story methodologies, parallelisms, merit a different study.

## Buddha - the Communicator

The Buddha himself was an influential communicator. He used to address the general mass in a very easy and understandable language. He planned his messages in a way that would engage conventional individuals.

According to Dissanayake [1] in terms of models of communication, he placed the receiver at the centre of his communication model—unlike most Western models, which, until recently, focused on the sender. The Buddha always conceptualized communication in terms of a specific context, the act of communication constituted an event, and the context was an integral part of the meaning. Finally, he placed great emphasis on the rhetorical strategies deployed by the communicator. The distinct ways in which he pressed into service allegories, parables, tropes, and stories bear testimony to this fact. Communication, then, is central to Buddhist thought (p. 84). Just to refer to a couple of illustrations from Dissanayake [2] let us first consider his utilization of parables.

*"Once a lady who was profoundly upset by the passing of her child came to the Buddha and begged his to re-establish his child to life. Understanding that she could be taught reality of presence, the Buddha requesting that her back track to the city, make the rounds of the total city, and to find a house in which no one had ever died, and fetch tiny grains of mustard city from that house. The mother, with incredible desires, went from house to house, be that as it may, couldn't find a house in which somebody had not died. Before long, she understood the lesson that the Buddha proposed to show her. Saying that demise jumps out at each one, she covered her. Buddhist writing is loaded with such illustrative stories that distinctively pass on religious messages" (p. 68).*

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Another distinguishing feature that marked the importance of the Buddha as a communicator was his effective use of diverse rhetorical strategies. As an especially attractive communicator, the Buddha regularly sent various narratives to convey his intended message. In the accompanying case, what we see is the striking utilization of emotional parallelism for dramatic parallelism. Buddhist teachings offer plentiful rules for how individuals ought to convey, or what norms and principles ought to guide people groups' behaviour.

As indicated by Konsky, Kapoor, Blue, and Kapoor, Buddhism firmly maintains, "ethical concepts of tolerance, non-violence, respect for the individual, love of animals and nature and a belief in the fundamental spiritual equality of all human beings." The ethical sources of Buddhism are for the most part stranded on the rule of Eight Paths that determine what is correct or wrong in managing someone else. Among them, the third, fourth, and fifth ways, including right speech, right action, and right livelihood, are particularly linked to communication ethics.

The underpinning of Buddhist perspectives of communication is the Buddhist perspective of dialect or language. Language is seen as continually advancing in connection to social settings and conditions. Dissanayake revealed that in the famous discourse on the origins (agganna sutta), the Buddha informs the two Brahmins, Vasettha and Bhadravaja, and that human society is a product of evolution [1].

Social institutions, including language, were not molded by some perfect creator but rather advance through procedures of social development. Language, then, is a social practice molded by tradition and concurred on by the general population who utilize it. In the Buddhist communication, there are bountiful references among users (*Sammuti*) and the practices of users (*Vohara*), evidence of the idea of language as a product of social evolution.

### The influence of Buddhism on human communication

The commonness of Buddhist teachings in East Asian societies represents its significant effect on individuals' day to day life. Three ontological uncertainties of Buddhist teachings are identified with human communications. Initially, the non-duality highlight of reality uncovers an all encompassing nature of human communications in which alternate extremes are risen above after some time and space. Second, *yuan* (dependent originations) directs that all components in the communication process are interrelated. Third, the idea of samsara (Wheel of Life) demonstrates that human communication is a perpetual cycle with no genuine starting or ending. The all around perspective of human communication in light of Buddhist teachings requests the interconnectedness between interactants in an always changing worldly and spatial environment.

In Zen Buddhist views, when two beings meet each other due to the formation of *yuan*, they begin to establish the experience of non-separateness [3]. This mutual dependence or dependent origination, in accord with non-duality or non-dichotomy, discloses the themes of rationality and circularity [4]. Relationality demonstrates that the significant presence of people is placed in a related and interrelated system whereas circularity gathers that the incredible quality of time and space gives a feeling of relatedness of the present to the past and the future, and a feeling of relatedness of the life world to the entire of nature. In a nutshell, human communication gets to be important just in connection to others agreeably.

In view of this, Ishii [5] builds up a model of tri-world correspondence which demonstrates the fabulous interfusion and

interpenetration among human beings' world, natural beings' world, and supernatural beings' world.

Chen and Starosta points that the Buddhist ethics of speech are quite consistent with the prominent universal principle of ethical communication that is comprised of four elements: mutuality, open-mindedness, honesty, and respect.

On the behavioral level, the Buddhist accentuation on harmony, mutual dependence, selflessness, compassion, and ethics that aim to reach enlightenment directly shows its impact on East Asians' communication behaviors. The influence leads to five characteristics of East Asian communication: intuition, emphasis of silence, empathic, emotional control, and avoidance of being aggressive.

The natural style of communication impacted by Buddhism rejects the Western linear or too the Confucian concern of traditional information. Rather, it is significantly related to Chinese Taoism underlining the inward freedom through an immediate comprehension of life or a unique suddenness to get each moment snippet of life.

Silence as a form of speech in East Asian cultures is greatly influenced by both the Buddhist and Taoist highlighting of integrating creative intuition and ontological experience based on silence. It is the mind sounding insider, rather than the mouth talking outside. To Buddhism, the internal mind working for a spiritual breakthrough in the quest of enlightenment represents a non-mechanical process to reach internal and external confirmation without relying on verbal expressions. Silence then becomes an effective nonverbal expression for mutual understanding [6]. In contrast, North Americans tend to interpret silence as critique, embarrassment, obligation, regret, and sorrow [7]. Wisdom and compassion are the two traits characterizing the Buddhist path stress the significance of empathic communication.

Buddhism is maybe one of a kind in the vital part it concurs human-to-human communication. The sutras, which record the teachings of Shakyamuni, are almost all in the form of questions and answers, the living dialogue through which the man who became known as the Buddha sought to bring hope, comfort and a renewed will to live to the people he encountered. Because he interacted with people from throughout the Indian society of his time, he responded to the full spectrum of human sufferings, anxieties and questions [8].

### Buddhist Phenomenology

Buddhists place three fundamental attributes as characterizing common presence. They are impermanence, enduring, and non-self [9]. These three characteristics color the Buddhist approach to communication. The thoughts of instability and enduring are integral to Buddhist phenomenology. The way out of a world of suffering, according to the Buddha, is by pursuing the *Noble Eightfold Path*, consisting of (1) right view, (2) right conception, (3) right speech, (4) right action, (5) right livelihood, (6) right effort, (7) right mindfulness, and (8) right concentration. Also, there is no everlasting own entity that can be called the *self* or *ego* [10].

Gunaratne (2005) offered this brief positioning of the Noble Eightfold Path (or the 'middle way') in Buddhist philosophy: The Buddhist *dharma* meant the doctrine based on the Four Noble Truths: That suffering exists; that the cause of suffering is thirst, craving, or desire; that a path exists to end suffering; that the Noble Eightfold Path is the path to end suffering. Described as the 'middle way', it specifies the commitment to *sila* (right speech, action and livelihood), *samadhi* (right effort, mindfulness, and concentration) and *panna* (right understanding and thoughts) [11].

A social approach is likewise essential to Buddhist thought. There are five principle assumption connected with the perfect social order, and these have suggestions for communication theory: (1) The human being is supreme, (2) reason and compassionate understanding rather than blind dogma should guide human action, (3) human beings need to be pragmatic in their behavior, (4) all forms of violence should be eliminated, and (5) peace and harmony are the ideals that underwrite society [12].

Buddhism is one of the great religions of the world that emphasis on the centrality of human exertion as opposed to perfect or superman intervention in the fulfillment of salvation. The ideas of impermanence (*Anitya*), suffering (*Dukkha*), and non-self (*Anamman*) lie at the basis of the Buddhist belief and are central to it. Everything that emerges unavoidably perishes and dies and no item or condition of being is safe to this transformational procedure. The happening to people is more key to Buddhist thought than their being. This is on account of Buddha's thought about the individual not as the independent and static element but rather as one that is unendingly gotten in the force of progress. These thoughts find expressive enunciation in one of the crucial ideas of Buddhism specifically Dependent Co-origination (*Pratitya Samutpada*). This idea conveys inside it an asset of thoughts and bits of knowledge identified with the progression of human communication [13].

## Buddhist Communication Model

Actually both the theories of interpersonal communication and intrapersonal communication are interconnected in an interesting ways in Buddhist thought. According to Buddhism, language and communication ultimately should pave the way to liberation. Therefore, self-reflexivity and critical introspection the spirit of intrapersonal communication assume a great importance.

For Buddhists, this self-reflexivity is incorporated with the very procedure of verbal communication. In conveying, one is not just hanging together a group of words additionally thinking about them and assessing them, to convey, to utilize language to interface with others, is to embrace a good position. From this streams the thought that linguistic communication includes the conferring of not just information additionally emotions and good appraisals. Hence to convey through language is to think about how one is constituted as a human being. This is a critical zone that has been more or less ignored by communication researchers.

Buddhism likewise contains an all around created model of interpersonal communication itself, scarcely shocking in perspective of the way that the point of Buddhism is to lead individuals far from common enduring; step by step instructions to live beneficially and concordantly with others in the public eye is tended to by Buddhism as a method for easing enduring. Besides, the ideas of torment, joy, rights, obligations, goodness, detestable, ideals, indecencies, prosperity, honesty, what's more, legitimacy are examined in ways that light up issues of interpersonal correspondence.

Buddhism also contains a well-developed model of interpersonal communication itself, hardly surprising in view of the fact that the aim of Buddhism is to lead people away from worldly suffering; how to live productively and harmoniously with others in society is addressed by Buddhism as a way of alleviating suffering. Furthermore, the concepts of suffering, happiness, rights, duties, goodness, evil, virtues, vices, well-being, truthfulness, and authenticity are discussed in ways that illuminate issues of interpersonal communication. The Buddhist model

Aristotelian Model	Buddhist Model
Emphasis is on Sender	Emphasis is on Receiver
Key concept: To influence	Key concept: To understand
To control is the main basis	To choice is the main basis
Outward process	Both outward and inward process
Asymmetrical relation between the sender and the receiver	Symmetrical relation between the sender and the receiver
Emphasis on intellect	Emphasis on empathy

**Table 1:** Aristotelian Model and Buddhist Model.

of interpersonal communication that lies behind moral injunctions, for example, focuses attention on the following components: the sensitive use of language, truthfulness and verifiability of communication, the achievement of consensus and harmony through interaction, the frames of intelligibility we bring to the communicative event, symmetrical relationships in communication, the importance of contexts of interface, and clarification and justification of moral principles underlying social intercourse [1].

Buddhist understandings of communication as a social and moral act have much to offer contemporary communication theorists. The modern communication scholars need to expand and relate it with our present mass communication model in order to outline the difference between the western and eastern models of communication. For this purpose, an attempt has been taken to compare the Aristotelian concept of communication which is basically a western model and Buddhist model from East Asia (Table 1).

The linear Aristotelian model points out that it is a speaker focused model where the speaker has the most vital part in it and is the one and only dynamic. It is the speaker's part to convey a discourse to the gathering of people. The role of the audience is passive, influenced by the speech. This makes the communication process one way, from speaker to receiver and thus asymmetric in its relation whereas in the Buddhist poly-directional model of communication the main emphasis is given on the receiver and a symmetrical relationship is enjoyed by the sender and the receiver with full sympathy and understanding. The model covers both the aspect of intrapersonal and interpersonal communication.

## Conclusion

Buddhism in East Asian context is a religion, as well as a method for living. Its pervasiveness is reflected in the culture and in the style of communication. Buddhist communication theory is unpredictable and versatile. The Buddhist approach to language and proposition of Buddhism for intrapersonal and interpersonal communication have been presented here as examples of the many suggestion of Buddhism for communication. It may sound differing but Buddhist understandings of communication discourse as a social and good act have much to offer contemporary communication scholar.

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