

Mindful Communication for Asian Development: A Buddhist Approach

Sugath Senarath, PhD

Department of Mass Media, Sri Palee Campus, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

Abstract

Most of research in communication are western centric. Even Asian scholars are also under the influence of western centric theories of communication rather than finding their own traditional philosophical knowledge roots. There is a debate on de-westernizing of communication theories. However, we cannot keep western theories away from us but balancing of East and West is acceptable for the development of Asian research and scholarship. It is important to free oneself from colonial-mindset of the scholars.

This paper examines an Asian approach to communication arguing for new thinking in social science theory with input from Asia. This new approach can be called Mindful Communication. This Mindful communication is based on Buddhist phenomenology implicit in Theravada Buddhism.

Key words: Mindful communication, Middle Path, Kalyanamitta, Asia

Introduction

Evidence shows that Britain and the United States are the two social science powers of the world, with France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the Netherlands in the second tier (Gunaratne,2010).

Asian human sciences are based on Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian and Daoist philosophical teachings and ideas, and the big question is whether contemporary Asian communication scholars are well versed in these philosophies (Seneviratne, Sinthuphan & Phokaew, 2016).

Most research in communication studies show an Anglo-American bias (Gunaratne, 2015). In the mass communication discipline Asian communication scholars have been mostly dependent on Western based research and research publications. Meanwhile mostly are peer reviewed by Western scholars with their western oriented perspectives, as a result Asian communication syllabi have been developed with remarkable portion of western influence. Asians have long been deprived of their roots of knowledge, which developed over thousands of years.

“Until today there have been few communication theories that can be labeled undoubtedly ‘Asian’. This is serious because theories have a specific role to play in social scientific research: they are not just demonstration of original thinking, but determine the direction and the structure of inquiry. Every time ‘Western’ theories were shown to be inadequate in explaining changes in Asia, and every time Asian values and traditions were mentioned to suggest theoretical development, those in the Asian academic community are confronted with the question” where is ‘Asian’ communication theory?” (Wang and Shen, 2000).

McQuail (2000:6) argues that *“It is hard to ignore the fact that most media theorizing has been done by ‘Western’ scholars, living in and observing the media of their own countries and inevitably influenced by their own familiar social cultural context and its typical values”*. In this regard, Asian scholars specially should have to dig their roots planted over the last hundreds or thousands of years and disseminate them at least in their own region.

In the past two decades, as mass communication departments and schools across Asia grew there has been an increasing debate about de-westernizing communication theory (Seneviratne, Sinthuphan & Phokaew, 2016). However, the authors argue that it is important balancing eastern and western theories rather than de-westernisation.

The time is appropriate for the emergence of [a new] genre [of communication studies] based primarily on the Middle Path principles outlined by the Buddha (Gunaratne, 2015). The field of communication needs revision with complementary research incorporating the Eastern phenomenological perspective. Buddhist phenomenological approach could be one of the best ways to uncover the universal problems which Western based scientific method alone cannot explore (Gunaratne, 2015, Senarath, 2015).

It is this question that will be explored in this research paper with ideas drawn mainly from Asian communication scholars.

Mindful Communication

Mindful communication is based on the Middle Path (Arya Astangika Marga or the Noble Eightfold Path) (Senarath, 2015).

According to the traditional Buddhist texts mindfulness is shown as “Satipatthana” which means paying attention to the things that you do (Rewatha, 2009). Two discourses in the Pali cannon — “*Satipatthana Sutta*” and “*Maha Satipatthana Sutta*”– provide four foundations of mindfulness (*Cattaro Satipatthana*); (i). Contemplating on the body (*Kayanupassana*); (ii). Contemplating on the feelings (*Vidananupassana*); (iii) contemplating on the mind (*Cittanupassana*; and (IV) Contemplating on mental phenomena (*Dhammanupassana*) (Rewatha, 2009, Dhammananda, 1987).

“Mindfulness can be developed by being constantly aware of four particular aspects. These are the applications of mindfulness with regard to the body (body postures, breathing and so forth), feelings (whether pleasant, unpleasant or natural); mind (whether the mind is greedy or not, angry, dispersed or deluded or not); and mind objects (whether there are mental hindrances to concentration, the Four Noble Truths and so on) (Dhammananda 1987, p. 84).

The communicator and the recipients of the message(s) are not just senders and receivers of message(s). When the two ends of the communication process represent humans, the communication become more complex. They are not merely senders and receivers of the message(s). There are human communicators and receivers. So, messages need to be designed very carefully considering both parties psychological, cultural, social and other related backgrounds.

Gunaratne, Pearson and Senarath (2015:18) described the theory of mindful journalism based on the Buddhist Four Noble Truths. Accordingly, “*Mindful intercultural communication requires the communicator to understand the reasons for sorrow/unhappiness, and to desist from using his/her craft to increase desire (tanha) and clinging (upadana). The mindful journalist must distinguish between pleasure and happiness to understand the reality that cyclic existence (samsara) means suffering (dukkha)*”.

Most human beings are clinging on to pleasure. Pleasure is physical and short-lived while happiness is mental and long-lasting. The mindful communicator must not mislead the people that lasting happiness is attainable without purifying their minds from defilements.

The communicator should understand the reasons for the existence of unhappiness (*dukkha*), and desist from using messages to knowingly promote attachment (*upadana*) and desire (*tanha*). The whole practice of

Buddhism is based on morality (*Sila*), concentration (*Samadhi*) and wisdom (*Panna*).

According to the Buddha, with regard to life and the enjoyment of sense-pleasures, that one should clearly understand three things (1) attention or enjoyment (*ass?da*), (2) evil consequence or danger or satisfactoriness (*?dinawa*), and (3) freedom or liberation (*nissarana*) (Rahula, 1996).

A happy feeling, a happy condition in life, is not permanent and not everlasting (Rahula, 1996). It changes sooner or later and when it changes it leads to every one's pain, suffering and unhappiness. "What we 'being', or an 'individual', or 'I', according to Buddhist philosophy, is only a combination of ever-changing physical and mental forces of or energies, which may be divided into five groups or aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*)" (Rahula, 1996: 20). These five aggregates of attachment are *dukkha*.

Mindful communication also accepts differences among human beings but it does not promote any discrimination based on caste, religion, ethnicity, skin color, social or political class, and gender. It promotes the relationship of *Kalyanamitta* –one who seeks the respect of others with the qualities of compassion (*karun?*) and gentleness (*mudit?*). S/he protects others from ignorance (Senarath, 2015).

Mindful communication and the existence of the world

According to Buddhism Man or Woman's highness or lowness has to be judged only on his/her behavior (*Vasala Sutta, Suttanipata*) (Nanayakkara, 2013) not by birth "One indeed, is one's own protector" (*att? hi attano n?tho*) (Dhammapada, 1993). Human beings are free to attain the highest, materially, mentally, morally and spiritually and the ethical assumption is more relevant at the social level (Perera, 1995). However, this does not indicate that Buddhism denies differences (Nanayakkara, 2013, Perera, 1995) "in the sense that man's essential nature is the same whether the individual differences are due to heredity, environment or karatic factors needs, material, psychological and spiritual are also fundamentally the same although differ in their interests and capacities due to their divergent historical evolution..." (K.N. Jayatileke as cited by Perera, 1995: pp.5-6).

Buddhism rejects the beliefs in both God and the Soul and the Buddha also rejected consequently causation connected with these beliefs. Even though the Buddha showed that the causation is a natural event he did not agree with the view that causation takes place as an accident (Nanayakkara, 2013). Accordingly, objectivity (*tathata*), necessity (*avitathata*), invariability (*anannathata*) and conditionality (*idappaccayata*) were pointed out by Buddha as marked features of this process of causation.

In this regard, Buddha made a formula to explain this doctrine of causation.

When that is present – this comes to be (*Imasmin sati-idam hoti*); from the arising of that – this arises (*Imassa uppada-idam uppajjati*); when that is absent- this does not come to be (*Imasmim asati-idam na hoti*); With the cessation of that – this ceases (*Imassa nirodha-idam nirujjhati*) (N?nananda, 1974, Nanayakkara, 2013). This formula can be used to explain the causation of anything including spiritual, secular, moral, social, political, economic.

According to Buddhism, life is a combination of mind (*n?ma*) and matter (*r?pa*). "Mind consists of the combination of sensations, perceptions, volitional activities and consciousness. Matter consists of the combination of the four elements of solidity, fluidity, motion and heat" (Dammananda, 1993:73).

Form of matter (*r?pa*), sensation or feeling (*vedan?*), perception or conception (*sañña*), mental formations or impulses (*sankh?ra*) and consciousness or discernment (*viññ?na*) are the five aggregates/functions that constitute the human being. The Buddha's main objective was to the prevalence of suffering in existence and to explain the possibility of putting an end to this suffering. Therefore, the main thrust of the *Dhamma*

(the teaching) is about suffering (*dukkha*) and its cessation (*nirodha*). In his first discourse namely, *Dhamma –cakka-pavattana-sutta* itself he presented this teaching with the paradigm of Four Noble Truths: The Noble Truth of *Dukkha*(Suffering), the Noble Truth of the Cause of *Dukkha* (Suffering), The Noble Truth of the End of *Dukkha* (Suffering), The Noble Truth of the path leading to the cessation of *Dukkha* (Suffering)” (Dammananda,1993:75).

Paticca Samuppada formulation “dependent coarising” backs up the “no self” (*anatta*) conclusion in a dynamic form – the dynamic causal process involving 12 *nidanas* (conditional factors) that condition a “being’s” *bhavacakra* (wheel of becoming)as “s/he” circles through *samsara* (cyclic existence). These *nidanas*, gives rise to the following conditions:

1. Through ignorance are conditioned volitional actions or *karma*-formations (*Avijj?pacca? samkh?r?*);
2. Through volitional actions is conditioned consciousness (*Samkh?rapacca? viññ?nam*);
3. 3.Through consciousness are conditioned mental and physical phenomena (*Viññ?napacca? nr?pam*);
4. Through mental and physical phenomena are conditioned the six faculties (i.e., five physical sense –organs and mind) (*N?mar?papacca? sal?yatanam*);
5. Through the six faculties is conditioned (sensorial and mental) contact (*Sal?yatanapacca? phasso*);
6. Through (sensorial and mental) contact is conditioned sensation (*Phassapacca? vedan?*);
7. Through sensation is conditioned desire, ‘thirst’ (*Vedan?pacca? tanh?*);
8. Through desire (‘thirst’) is conditioned clinging (*Tanh?pacca? up?d?nam*);
9. Through clinging is conditioned the process of becoming (*Up?d?napacca? bhavo*);
10. Through the process of becoming is conditioned birth (*Bhavapacca? j?ti*).
11. 11; through birth are conditioned:
12. 12) decay, death lamentation, pain, etc. (*J?tipacca? jar?maranam*).

This is how life arises, exists and continues. If we take the formula in its reverse order, we come to the cessation of the process (Rahula, 1996:53-54).

The mindful communicator and receiver should not be biased to any culture or any extreme end. If the person inclines towards one extreme, that person may not be able to display a correct vision . In this regard, we can say no two people are alike or similar in what they do and/ or think (Senarath, 2015).’ *nanaththa kaya nanaththa sanna*, it means that each different body (a person) is with different abilities.

The mindful communicator should not enforce or be the cause of suffering of people. In this regard freedom of expression is valued. In *Ambatta Sutta* Buddha said even a quail has freedom in her nest.

Western sociology is revolved around factors whose relationship social scientists try to uncover and these are called variables. The theories were initially developed during the industrial revolution when people moved from rural to urban areas creating many social transformations. The Buddhist concepts based on impermanence as discussed above are important elements that need to be incorporated into modern social science theories. The Buddhist thinking based on the ever-changing nature of life and how to respond to this state of impermanence should form a major component of the way in which social scientists as well as communicators move about in the formation of hypotheses, because the changing nature of life, lifestyles and environment has existed ever since the dawn of civilization.

Mindful communication in Middle Path

The Middle Path (*majjhim? pa?ipad?*) is the precious way to apply in solving every problem, including communication any time. The Middle Path is not a condition between two extremes like the Daoist *yin* and *yang* opposites or complements. It also different from the Aristotelian “The Golden Mean1 and the “Confucian doctrine of the Mean”. The Buddhist view on middle path doesn’t mean that someone who

maintains the middle path will, to some extent adhere to some qualities representing the two extremes. Because this is about transcending both axes of extremes. The Buddhist Middle Path is choosing the correct path, when two extremes exist abandoning both of them (Senarath, 2015; Gunratne, Pearson & Senarath 2015).

The Buddhist middle path is the most effective way leading to the cessation of *dukkha* (un -satisfactoriness) that lies between the extremes of searching for happiness through the pleasures of the senses, and the other extreme searching for the same through self-mortification in different forms of asceticism.

According to the *Dhamma Cakkappavattana Sutta* (Setting in Motion of the Wheel of *Dhamma*). Buddha started this sermon with the statement “Monks, there are these two extremes which should not be practiced by a recluse” (*dive me bhikkhave ant? pabbajiteneva na sevitabba*). What this really means is listening to the *Dhamma* with a clear mind and cleansing it of all ideologies. It is with a free mind that one should accept something correct. When we accept something extreme, then we tend to believe it as true.

In this regard, a question may arise on how to generate knowledge if behavior in the media would badly affect the mass audience in contemporary society. The Buddhist middle path emphasizes the importance of transcendence of extremist paths to find truth and serve the well-being of not only for humans but also other creatures in the world. The communicator who walks the middle path doesn't follow any extremes but remains in the middle, which is the 'third path' that emerges as transcendence extremes.

Kalama Sutta clearly shows that if we abandoned those two paths there will only be emptiness and the Middle Path becomes the crucial factor. “When a person needs logic in presenting some idea, s/he should use it with the conviction that logic is not the only truth. Logic is only one method of reaching truth. Logic could be true or it could also be untrue. Conclusions made through logic could be related to the external world. Sometimes, it is possible that it could be impossible” (Senarath, 2015: p. 132).

The Noble Eightfold Path can be seen as a road map that shows the path to reach the final goal in the life of a human being. One must progressively overcome all the roadblocks along the way by adhering to a disciplined set of three-dimensional directions encompassing the virtues of *Sīla* (Morality), *Samādhi* (Concentration) and *Paññā* (Wisdom)—to reach the ultimate destination called *Nibbana*, the state of supreme bliss or non-existence (Dhammananda, 1993).

As Nanayakka, 2013:37-38) argues “this threefold training has to be observed, not in a successive manner, but together, laying special emphasis on one particular kind of training the occasion requires. However, as the practice has to begin at some point, cultivation of virtue is given priority, yet always keeping in focus the other two trainings”.

As discussed earlier, it is this middle path that could be incorporated into a secular social science theory of social cohesions, social interactions and social transformations, all of which would have elements of impermanence underpinning it.

The Noble Eightfold Path can be divided to three dimensions in mindful intercultural:

Sīla {Right speech (*samma vaca*), Right action (*samma kammanta*) and Right livelihood (*samma ajiva*)}
Morality

Samādhi {Right effort (*samma vayama*), Right mindfulness (*samma sati*), Right concentration (*samma samadhi*)}
Mental culture

Panna { (Right view (*samma ditthi*), Right thought (*samma sankappa*)) } **Wisdom**

Training in virtue consists of developing right speech, right bodily action and right livelihood. Cultivation of virtue generally means the observance of five precepts: refraining from, killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and consuming intoxicated drinks.

Panna Dimension

Panna (Wisdom) dimension, which consists of *Samma Ditthi* (Right understanding) and *Samma Sankappa* (Right thought) and *Samma Ajiva* (Right livelihood). Understanding of merit and demerit, as well as how it is expressed through mind, body and word, too belongs to Right understanding (*Samma Ditthi*) (Dhammananda 1987). Right thought “denotes the thoughts of selfless renunciation or detachment, thoughts of love and thoughts of non-violence, which are extended to all beings” and according to Walpola Rahula Thero (1959:49), “*This clearly show that true wisdom is endowed with these noble qualities, and all thought of self-desire, ill-will, hatred and violence are the result of a lack of wisdom – in all spheres of life whether individual, social, or political*”. Good thoughts will generate in the person who acquires the Right View. *Good thoughts help prevent occurrence of evil thoughts and generate pure thoughts. Right Understanding is a vision of reality, but Right Thoughts are inner yearnings, aspirations and wishes* (Fernando, 1985:80).

Sila Dimension

The *Sila* dimension of the *magga* comprises three paths—*Samma Vaca* (Right speech), *Samma Kammanta* (Right action/effort) and *Samma Ajiva* (Right livelihood). Aforesaid three paths are essential for a good moral life. Buddhism highly respects the freedom of expression .

Right speech originates from right thoughts and it's a path of utmost significance for communication. The *S?maññaphala Sutta* in the *Digha Nikaya* mentions the kind of speech a person should avoid: *Mus?v?d?* (false speech), *Pisun?v?c?* (slandering), *pharus?v?c?* (harsh words), and *sammapphal?p?* (gossip) (MN, 252).

Truthfulness is important. ‘*Saccavadi*’ means speaking only the truth. There is no dispute over the fact that a communicator should always speak truth. ‘*Saccasando*’ means matching truth with truth. ‘*deda*’ is firm words. It is very important that one thinks and considers well the idea one intends to state. Further it should be ‘*paccayika*.’ Speech that will be credible for the listeners is ‘*paccayika*.’ One should refrain from ‘*mugga suppada*.’ This means leaving out what should be included in the message. Further he should be a person who does not cheat the world “*avisanv?dako lokassa*.’

‘*Pisunav?ca*’ means communication that causes disharmony among men. This is not suitable for intercultural communication and s/ he should communicate in a way to ‘*bhinn?nam va sandh?ta*’— for the unity of those who are divided’ and attempt to ‘*sanhit?nam v? anuppad?t?*’- enhancing unity through agreement, ‘*samagga nandi*’, (enjoying in victory), ‘*sammagga karanam vacanam bh?vit?*’ (speaking words causing harmony) ‘*samaggarato*’ (peace loving).

Using words that cause anguish is ‘*pharusavaca*.’ Here attention should be paid to the contextual meaning as well as to the semantic meaning of a word. In this regard, ‘*n?l?*’ or the correctness is important. Every mindful person should strive to avoid errors in a sentence, errors in pronunciation and errors in writing.

‘*kanna sukha*’ means speech that is pleasant to the ear. What is meant by this is communicating a message which would be pleasant to the receiver. It is important to select words carefully so as to please the mind. This is called ‘*pori*’. Words carelessly used in a message could cause serious damage to society. ‘*bahujana kanta*

' means communicating a message to be pleasant to majority of the hearers.

Another form of speech a communicator should abandon is '*sammapphal?p?*'- or 'useless talk'. Number of reasons why should a communicator use meaningless words. In a message the '*k?lav?di*' –timely- quality is important. This means sending the message at the right time. The message which is not timely will be useless.

Similarly the '*bhutav?di*' (*Bhutav?di* means reporting what has really happened) quality is also important. Further the words of a communicator must be '*nidh?navatim*' or worthy of retaining in mind. Words should be used in the proper way. This has been described as '*pariyantavatim v?cam.*'

In the Noble Eightfold Path, in using the '*samm?v?c?*' or the right speech, it is necessary to consider the nature of the receiver groups.

Four kinds of groups have been mentioned in the '*Catukka nipata*' of *Anguttara Nikaya* who can serve as 'receiver groups'. *Uggatitaññu*– intelligent people who can understand something quickly. *Vipacitaññu*– those who understand slowly and gradually. *Ñeyya*- those who understand with great effort by repeatedly learning and *Pada parama* are those who are unable to understand however much they try (Attanayaka, 1990).

In the '*Panchaka Nipata*' of the *Anguttara Nikaya* we find five qualities of a good communicator of *Dhamma* (*Teachings*). Although these are stated in regard to a communicator of *Dhamma* or doctrine, I feel that they are relevant for modern communicators as well. Following are those qualities;

1. Presenting the message of *Dhamma* having carefully planned the method of communication.
2. Presenting the message of *Dhamma* giving clarifications of each point.
3. Presenting the message having compassion in his mind
4. Presenting the message of *Dhamma* without any intention of gaining profit.
5. Presenting the message without praising oneself and degrading others.

At the very inception of meeting the five great disciples – namely Kondanna, Bhaddiya Vappa, Mahanama and Assaji,- the Buddha wanted them to go forth for the sake of welfare of masses (*charatha bhikkhave charikan charamano, bahu jana hithaya, bahu jana sukahaya*). In this process, the intention of this wayfaring was to disseminate not only the message of the Buddha, but also to perceive more on social issues in order to address them more suitable equipped with a better understanding of the human behavior (Mahendra, 2009). The mindful intercultural communication also ia about communicating across diverse social settings for the welfare of the every member of the society/community.

In the *Duteyya Sutta* of the *Anguttara Nikaya* qualities of a '*Dhammaduta*' engaged in missionary work have been given. These qualities will be useful for a missionary even today: "...He will listen (*sot?*) and cause others to listen (*s?vet?*). He will learn (*uggahet?*) and retain in memory *dh?ret?*. Being '*viññu*' (understanding what is useful and what is useless), he will educate others (*viññ?pet?*). He is skilled regarding what is beneficial and what not (*kusala sahitâhitassa*) is. He is not quarrelsome (*no kalaha,k?riko*).

Samm? kammanta (Right Action) is very important not only for mindful intercultural communication practitioners but also for each and every member of the human society. In this regard the term '*kammanta*' is used in a broader sense. It is here that the basic teachings of Buddhism *pancha sila* (five precepts) are important. The actions that *pancha sila* recommends entails respect for life, respect for property, and respect for personal relationships. These five precepts to be practiced by every Buddhist includes abstinence from killing (*Pan?tip?t? veraman? sikkh?padam° sam?diy?mi*), stealing (*Adinn?d?n? veraman? sikkh?padam° sam?diy?mi*),

sexual misconduct (*K?mesu micch?c?r? veraman? sikkh?padam° sam?diy?mi*), lying (*Mus?v?d? veraman? sikkh?padam° sam?diy?mi*) and taking intoxicants (*Sur?meraya majjapam?datth?n? veraman? sikkh?padam° sam?diy?mi*).

Samadhi Dimension

The Samadhi (Mental Development) dimension of the *magga* comprising three paths – *Samma Vayama* (Right Effort), *Samma Sati* (Right Mindfulness), and *Samma Samadhi* (Right Concentration).

Right Effort means that we cultivate a positive attitude and have enthusiasm in the things we do, whatever in our career, in our study, or in our practice of the Dhamma.. When discussing the ‘*samma v?y?ma*’, an understanding of the special four stages the Buddha has explained is important for the communicator as well as for the receiver:

Dhammananda Thero (1994) refers to four aspects of Right Effort, two of which refer to evil, and the other two to good. First is the effort to reject evil that has already arisen; and second, the effort to prevent the arising of evil. Third is the effort to develop unrisen good and the fourth, the effort to maintain the good which has arisen.

In this regard, one must avoid from four wrong paths “(*Cand? dos? bhay? moh?-yo dhammam° ati vattai , Nibh?yati tassa yaso-k?lapakkheva candim?*)” called the wrong path of greed, wrong path of hate, wrong path of cowardice and wrong path of dilution.

Chandawimala(2014:103) explains these wrong paths as: “wrong path of greed is acting in a manner surpassing property and favoring a particular person because of attachment toward him and disadvantage to another. Wrong path of hate is acting surpassing property to cause disadvantage to another. Wrong path of cowardice is acting in favor of someone surpassing property because of the fear of him. Wrong path of delusion is acting in a manner surpassing property due to the lack of intelligence to differentiate between what is proper and what is not proper.”

The Mindful communicator should take right effort (*sammavayama*) aiming spiritual and physical wellbeing of the audience. When we are doing intercultural communication, we have to pay much attention on others cultural values, norms, customs etc. The communicator effort leads to respect other cultures and assure wellbeing of the people.

Samm? Sati has been rendered as Right Mindfulness in Buddhist documents. Here it will be clear that the principle Buddha has alluded to is the *Satipatthana Sutta* (MN, Sutta 10, DN,Sutta 22). Right mindfulness is useful in our day-to-day life as well. We must be mindful not only on our actions, feelings but also on our natural surroundings as well.

Samma Samadhi (right concentration) brings two advantages. “*First, it leads to mental and physical wellbeing, comfort, joy, calm and tranquility. Second, it turns the mind into an instrument capable of seeing things as they truly are, and prepares the mind to attain wisdom*” (Dhammananda, 1993, p.84).

It can be argued that Right Mindfulness is directing our attentions to our body, feelings, mind or mental object or being sensitive to others, in other words, putting our attentions where one chooses to. While Right Concentration “*is the sustained appreciation of that attention on the object without the mind being disturbed* (Fernando, 1985: 101)”

Communicator To Be A Kalyana Mitta

In Mindful communication the relationship between communicator and the people need to be *Kalyanamitta*.

Buddha believed that by the power of loving kindness a person could tame enemies and even wild animals. The Commentaries often describe a spiritual friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) as “a slayer of evil and provider of good” (*aghassa ghātā hitassa vidhātā*) (Fernando, 1985:106).

As Senevirathne (2015:180) pointed out ‘*The kalyana-mitta must lead the way in exposing the failure of conventional journalism to recognize the power of mind-generated energy in relation to matter-generated energy. A major reason for this might well be traditional journalism’s deference to West-centric philosophy and science. Although Western thinkers and neuropsychologists disagreed widely about the nature and function of mind consciousness—or even about the existence of such a thing—journalism virtually ignored the Buddhist concept of mind that withstood the challenges of Western science and epistemology for more than 25 centuries*’.

The *Sigalovada Sutta* describe the qualities of good friends as: good friend should be generous to the other; be courteous; be benevolent; should show equality to the other; and should be truthful. In this regard other also should show his/her response by: protecting the friend when he/she is not heedful; protecting his wealth and property; becoming a refuge when in danger; not forsaking during hardships; and showing respect to those who are related to him.

The kalyanamitta concepts need to be brought into social sciences in measuring variables and relationships.

Conclusions

This paper has discussed from a Buddhist philosophical context how modern communications could use eastern wisdom incorporating these into crafting modern communication theories that take into account the intercultural nature of the contemporary global communication sphere.

Right at this moment there is much debate about “fact” and “truth” in mass communication discourse across the globe. As Hoover and Donovan (2011:39) says “the word ‘truth’ is red meat for philosophers” but science “prefers to operate in the less lofty region of ‘falsified statements’ that can be checked by someone else.

But, for the Buddha and Buddhism truth is not a permanent fact. The above philosophical concepts from Buddhism, pivoted to the ‘kalama sutra’ (and other sermons of the Buddha) should be important elements in new social science and cross-cultural communication theories. Buddhism though forming the basis/roots of these theories need not be emphasized as these are theories that can be easily identified as secular in modern society, like how Christian/Abrahamic concepts crept into western social science theories.

Kalama Sutra – the Buddhist theory of free inquiry – could be incorporated into modern intercultural communications to recognise different cultural nuances in communications. In the sutra the Buddha encourage free inquiry taking fully into account different perspectives in resolving conflicting issue. This theory could provide much needed improvements to methodologies of investigative reporting/communication considering multiple perspectives.

At the root of the Buddhist philosophy is the theory/concept of “impermanence” and “dependent origination” both of which are important to understand the major problems the global community is facing today – climatic change and sustainable development– the changing nature of the environment is changing social and behavioral norms of humanity. The United Nation’s SDGs(sustainable development goals) involve 17 goals that are interdependent where first goal ‘No Poverty’ cannot be achieved without addressing the other goals. Thus, the very word “sustainable” is dependent on addressing at least 17 areas that is driven by its impermanent (changing) nature. Thus understanding the theory of impermanence would assist in crafting development communication methodologies that could assist in a sustainable development

paradigm that reflects in communications to assist humanity to adjust to changing nature of the environment and social systems.

The Noble Eight-Fold Path consisting sila, samadhi and panna aspects of the Buddhist philosophy provides a good road map into developing “mindful” intercultural communication methodologies and models. This should not be seen nor argued as “de-Westernising” social sciences or mass communication theories. This paper reflects that Buddhist teaching is eminently applicable for teaching communication theories both in the East and the West. Moreover, Buddhist communication theories are liberal in its interpretations and do not reject other religious perspectives.

Acknowledgement

Dr. Kalinga Senaviratne for his valuable inputs and editing this manuscript

References

1. Combs, S.C. (2005). *The Dao of Rhetoric*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
2. Chandawimala, R (2012). *Four Noble Truths*, Pokunuwita, Sri Lanka: Sri Chandawimala Dhamma Treaties Preservation Board.
3. Chandawimala, R (2014). *Handbook of the Buddhist*. Pokunuwita, Sri Lanka: Sri Chandawimala Dhamma Treaties Preservation Board.
4. Dammananda, K. (1993). *What Buddhists Believe*, Taipei, Taiwan: The Corporate Boy of the Buddha Educational Foundation.
5. Dissanayake, W. (2007) ‘Nagarjuna and Modern Communication Theory’, *China Media Research* 3(4): 34–41.
6. Fernando, A. (1985). *Buddhism Made Plain: An Introduction to Christians*, Indore, India: Satprakashan Sanchar Kendra.
7. Gunaratne, S.A. (2005). *The Dao of the Press: A Humancentric Theory*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
8. Gunaratne, S.A. (2010). De-Westernizing communication/social science research: opportunities and limitations. *Media Culture & Society*, 32 (3) 473-500
9. Mapatuna, P. (2014). *Dependent Arising*, Dehiwala, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Cultural Centre.
10. Nanayakkara, S. (2013). *Theravada Buddhism: Basics of Doctrine and Social Philosophy*. Nugegoda, Sri Lanka: Sarasavi Publishers.
11. Nanananda, K.(2011). *The Magic of the Mind: An exposition of the K?lak?r?ma Sutta*, Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society.
12. Miike, Y. & G.-M. Chen (Eds.) (2007). *Asian Contributions to Communication Theory*, special issue, *China Media Research* 3(4).
13. Perera, L.P.N. (1995). *Democracy*. . *Encyclopedia of Buddhism Extract –No.3, Social Dimensions of Buddhism*. Colombo: The Department of Buddhist Affairs, Ministry of Buddhasasana.
14. Rahula, W.(1996). *What the Buddha Taught*. Dehiwala, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Cultural Centre.
15. Rahula, W.(n.a). *What the Buddha Taught, First Noble Truth*. Available: https://sites.google.com/site/rahulawhatthebuddha/the-first-noble-truth#_ftn40 [accessed, 20 October, 2017].
16. Rewatha, K(2009). *A Mindful Journey from Birth to Death*. Colombo: Sadeepa
17. Senarath, S.M.(2015). *Mindful Intercultural communication: A Buddhist philosophical Approach*. The paper presented at the 8th International Intercultural Communication Conference, Wuhan University, Wuhan, and P.R.China November 2015,
18. Senarath, S(2015). *The Journalist and the Middle Path*. In Shelton Gunaratne, Mark Pearson and Sugath Senarath (Eds), *Mindful Journalism and News Ethics in the Digital Era: A Buddhist Approach*. New York: Routledge
19. Senaviratne, K. (2015). *Wisdom in Journalism*. In Shelton Gunaratne, Mark Pearson and Sugath

- Senarath (Eds), *Mindful Journalism and News Ethics in the Digital Era: A Buddhist Approach*, New York: Routledge
22. Seneviratne, K Sinthuphan, J and Supaporn Phokaew, S (2016), *Mindful Communication For A Re-Emerging Asia: Building A New Asian Journalism Curriculum Paper prepared for the World Journalism Education Conference, Auckland, New Zealand, July 2016*.
 23. Wang, G and Shen, V (2000), *East. West, Communication and Theory: Searching for the Meaning of Searching for Asian Communication Theory*, *Asian Journal of Communication*, 10 (2), pp 13-52, AMIC, Singapore.
 24. Wijesekara, O.H.De.A (2008). *The Buddhist Concept of Mind*, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society