

# SPACE AND TIME IN HINDUISM: IMPLICATION FOR THE *SADHARANIKARAN* MODEL OF COMMUNICATION

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**Abstract:-** This article presents an explanation on why the *Sadharanikaran* Model of Communication (SMC) is of non-linear structure. It is a part of the series of works on the SMC<sup>1</sup>. Here, the discussion is focused on approaching 'space' and 'time' from Hindu perspective. In this course, the article outlines the fundamentals of Hindu worldview regarding space-time thereby providing a basis for further discourse on communication from the perspective of Bharatavarshiya/Hindu philosophy.<sup>2</sup>

**Keywords:-** Sadharanikaran, perspective, Bhavatavarshiya

## Introduction

Hinduism is extensive, rich, pluralistic, and complex. However, this does not make Hinduism imprecise entity. Rather, a common stamp of Hindu culture, Hindu civilization, Hindu philosophy and Hindu religion – Hinduism being recognized. Though the term 'Hindu' itself is non-Vedic in its origin, and its meaning has been problematic, it is considered as the name of the civilization, culture and religion as well as philosophy rooted in the Vedas (Adhikary, 2006; Ayod-Dhaumya, 2000). Hinduism should be viewed as the consummation of different Vedic and post-Vedic schools of thought – from extreme spiritualism to extreme materialism and customs rituals, and traditions that have acted and reacted upon each other, giving rise to a sense of oneness.

The life is considered three-dimensional in Hinduism: *adhibhautika* (physical or mundane), *adhidaivika* (mental) and *adhyatmika* (spiritual). And, the life is aimed for the attainment of the four goals of life – *purushartha chatustayas*, namely *artha* (material wealth), *kama*, *dharma*, and *moksha*. The three dimensions and four goals of life are interrelated. In other words, any endeavor in human life should lead, or at least, be in consonance with the attainment of the *purusharthas*, which encompass all *adhibhautika*, *adhidaivika* and *adhyatmika* dimensions of life. Of them, *artha*,

*kama* and *moksha* are generally the goals of *adhibhautika*, *adhidaivika*, *adhyatmika* lives respectively. *Dharma* is essential in all respects. And, it is to note herein that the significance of *dharma* is in guiding humans for proper acquisition and distribution of *artha* and its proper use (*kama*), and finally to the attainment of *moksha* (also known as *mukti*, *Brahmajnana*, salvation, liberation, freedom, etc.).

## Space and Time

According to Swami Sachchidananda Vishuddhadev, time (*kala*) is represented by *Sudarshana Chakra* (n.d., p. 13). He interprets time as a circular motion of the universe (p. 14). From this perspective, space seems primary and time is the outcome of the motion of space.

In Vedic Hindu philosophy, though it is necessary for attaining *moksha* to transcend time and space irrespective of bodily existence *artha*, *kama* and *dharma* owe to space and time (Adhikary, 2007b, 2010b, 2010c, 2012b). Similarly, though *adhyatmika* life may transcend space and time *adhibhautika* and *adhidaivika* lives are within the scope of space and time (Adhikary, 2012b). More specifically, any communication act takes place in space and time.

Different cultures have different notions of time and space. Since the notion of time and space has direct impact on human practices as well as concepts both communication acts and communication concepts are also affected by

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time-space perceptions. "The contrast of time and space invokes other dualisms" (Peters, 2003, p. 397).

Let us take the case of time firstly. As Atmarupananda (2007) says, All of our perceptions, thoughts and actions take place in time and so our concept of time obviously has a profound influence over us. ... We grow up with a particular concept of time which we have unconsciously imbibed from our culture. It is just there, determining our mental and physical experience without our knowledge and without our conscious consent. Our life proceeds within this culturally defined sense of time, and we are quite unconscious of its nature unless it is brought to our attention. (pp. 25-26)

Joseph, Reddy and Searle-Chatterjee (1990, p. 9) criticize 'inappropriate universalism' of the implicit assumption that considers the time effects as "universal and free of cultural constraints." They emphasize that- time itself is a social construct. Each culture works out a concept of time acceptable to the vast majority of its people as a regulator of their day-to-day activities. Even allowing for noticeable variations by class, age or origins in the perception of time within the same culture, there is a uniformity in the concept which can only explained by the inculcation into all members of the society ... (ibid.)

Approaching time as culture specific and socially constructed has deep implications. Such approach demands considering various dimensions of life ranging from day-to-day activities to value system of the society. Joseph, Reddy and Searle-Chatterjee observe- 'There is the way in which activities are arranged in relating to one another which constitutes the timing of these activities. There is the manner in which individuals or groups space and synchronize their activities which relates to the organization of time. There is the innate human capacity to envisage occurrences in the future and plan accordingly, which involves forecasting over time. There is the historical vision of time, which may vary from a pessimistic version of

retrogression from a lost golden age to a middling version of cyclical peaks and troughs of human achievement to an optimistic version of a steady progress to an ultimate utopia. Finally, there is the value imputed to time, which raises questions regarding evaluation, compartmentalization and utilization of time – all of which are culture specific. (ibid.)

Atmarupananda's observation (*our life proceeds within the culturally defined sense of time though we may be quite unconscious of the fact*) has fundamental implication for communication. Both content and context of communication owe to time considerations. Moreover, time's physical, social and cultural dimensions influence all of the three dimensions—*adhibhautika*, *adhidaivika* and *adhyatmika* – of human life.

Space is not an exception. Just like time, space also has a profound influence over us. The space, together with time, sets the context of communication – a physical setting as well as a sociocultural site in which communication happens. Thus, construction of any theory and model of communication needs the understanding of the notion of time and space in the particular culture.

Hinduism approaches time and space uniquely. There is always a sense of reverence to time and space in Hindu life. According to Misra (2008, p. 14),- The measurement of Time and Space starts from the infinite and comes to the particular finite, passing through several concentric circles, denoting more and more finite and concrete dimensions of time. For example, the measurement of Time starts from the exact moment of creation and then goes through mega-periods (eons) and comes into the particular year, month, day, hour and to the exact position of planets at the particular moment of time. In a way it is a linkage of the Super-finite and Super-infinite. Similarly when space is described, it begins with the entire cosmos and comes to the exact geographical location, be it a home or the vicinity of a shrine which could be a small corner within a house, some sacred river bank, tree or a

hill, a rock, a hermitage, or a temple. The keenness of perception of finiteness is an important characteristic. This keenness evolves into a sense of reverence for time and space, thus providing an appropriate scenario for divine communion.

The appropriateness thus envisioned is not limited for 'divine communion' only. As mentioned in previous works on the SMC (Adhikary, 2003, 2004, 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2012a, 2012b), *sahridayata* is characterized by human communion. In other words, the SMC envisions communication between humans as communion of *sahridayas*. And, the *sahridayas* accomplish the *sadharanikaran* process within time and space. Thus, 'a sense of reverence for time and space' is vital in case of human communication too.

In Hindu world view, time is a never ending cyclical process<sup>3</sup>. Jayaram (n.d.) rightly observes, - Hinduism perceives time as cyclical. This is based on our own experience of time in terms of days and nights. We see this cyclical pattern in days, weeks, months, years, seasons and yugas or epochs. So from this perspective, time is a never ending cyclical process, which is both repetitive and exhaustive.

Though some *Puranic* and mythical texts tell the story of creation at certain juncture of time the orthodox Vedic worldview does not consider such stories valid. In Vedic Hindu belief, it is understood as a process having no particular beginning. According to Chatterjee and Datta (2007),- It is not possible to ascertain the first beginning of creation. It would be arbitrary to think that creation began *at first at some particular time* and not earlier. As there are no data for fixing the *first* beginning of the universe, Indian thinkers, in general, look upon the universe as beginningless (*anadi*). They try to explain the beginning of the present creation by reference to previous states of dissolution and creation and think it idle and meaningless to enquire about the *first* creation. Any term of a beginningless series can only be said to be earlier

or later in *relation* to others; there is nothing like an *absolute first* in such a series. (p. 23)

The particulars – years, months, days and so on – are just an attempt to approach the infinite in a finite manner because the worldly human life is finite. Such attempts help humans to perceive the beginningless (*anadi*) and never-ending (*ananta*) time in relation to the space they are living in. However, such perception does not hinder a Hindu to consider the eternal reality:- 'The cycle of the year or the cycle of years' in the Indian world-view is not merely the spinning of inert spheres round a lifeless ball of fire, it is the cycle of life. Life precedes, outlives and pierces every single entity. It runs like a thread, it runs like a stream without a beginning and without any end. (Misra, 2008, p. 25)

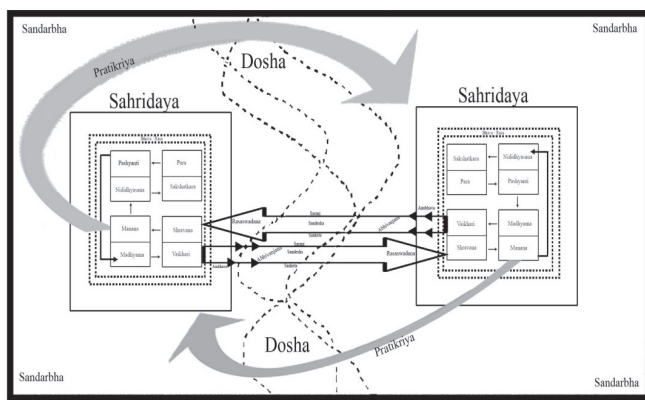
Atmarupananda (2007) observes Judeo-Christian, Darwinian and Marxist view of time as linear. Acknowledging that Greco-Roman time was generally considered to have been cyclic, he argues, "but that has had little or no influence over the present sense of time in Western civilization" (p. 26). In contrast, the Hindu view of time is cyclical. In his own words,- We often hear about Western, linear time as opposed to Eastern, cyclical time. Linear time has an absolute beginning, a progressive development, and an absolute end. Cyclical time sees universe after universe arising, developing, decaying, and being destroyed, without beginning and without end. The difference is real and significant. (pp. 25-26)

Considering time as cyclical implies that there exists no starting and ending points. As Atmarupananda (2007) clarifies - In cyclical time there is no absolute beginning or absolute end. ... Every creation is followed by destruction which is followed by creation. Summer is followed by winter which is followed by summer. The sun rises and sets only to rise and set again and again. (p. 27)

He sees profound effects on human's inner and outer lives due to these differing views of time. "They are not just philosophical ideas to play with," he says (p. 27). Rather, "Differing views of time cause us to experience time

differently, and thereby to experience events – all of which take place in time – differently" (p. 31). According to Chatterjee and Datta (2007, p. 24), "The general influence of this outlook on metaphysics has been to regard the present world as the outcome of a past one and explain the former partly by reference to the latter." In this background it is evident that different notions of time have implications for communication too. Thus, communication from Hindu perspective cannot be a linear process.

Sadharanikaran Model of Communication



Now, let us take the case of space. Atmarupananda (2007) discusses two concepts of space – physical and mental, and acknowledges that Hindu view of space develops a sense of internal space. This leads to "a sense of having an inner center of gravity" (p. 34). It is not the same in case of the West. Such 'inner center of gravity' is not envisioned there; rather, there seems the identical view of time and space in the West:- 'In the West people are looking to the future in time, and looking outside of themselves in space for fulfilment. Since the Renaissance, and particularly since the European Enlightenment, Western people have looked outside in space for adventure and conquest as well. Nowadays in the post-colonial world, we look outside for business opportunities, ever seeking to expand into new markets. (p. 31)

The conceptualization of space is shaped by culture and this conceptualization deeply influences social and individual practices. For instance, the prevalence of particular geometric

forms (that is, representations/manifestations of space) in any society signifies the purposive manipulation of space. According to Hofmann (1999),- 'People build their houses, temples and monuments according to their belief systems, and contrary to what one might first assume, the outcome depends very little to the assumed actual need. Religions with a major concentration on death construct temples that look more like grave tombs. Christian temples constitute examples of this outlook. Religions that are more life-oriented build open temples with a strong connection to nature or they do not use a stone building at all because for them all of nature is holy instead a limited aggregation of stones.

The manipulation of space in 'physical construction' in secular arena also shows same kind of cultural and social contextuality. Again, according to Hofman (1999),- In those societies oriented in a materialistic and patriarchal direction, where greed for material goods are positively promoted and where the control of objects by male persons is a dominant aspect of social life, there is a high probability that a preference for buildings with 90 degree angles and straight walls will be manifest. ... If politicians force hierarchical order onto a culture, round shapes are dismissed, because the circumference has equal distance to the center for each point, and equal rights for all is just what the controlling influences do not want. Square and rectangular shapes are preferred, smooth surfaces without décor, because these forms communicate the social value of independence and they are easier to control.

In such societies, Hofmann argues, circular shapes are not desirable because a circle "carries the message of cooperation and equal rights for everyone." He further says that in such society where there is an orientation towards spiritual development and cooperation more round shapes will occur along with more variation of a theme, less uniformity, and considerable inter-correlation between different parts of the construction. Every point on the circumference has the same distance to the center.

For this reason the circle (sphere) is seen as a symbol for cooperation.

Hofmann's observations are remarkable: "Societies based on coercion and violence avoid round shapes. They prefer rectangles, long halls or long tables to create distance and a head seat for one person only." And, "Societies based on cooperation and peace on the other hand, have a preference for round forms like ovals, circles, spirals or egg shape." In this light, it is pertinent to argue that space (more pertinently, differing views of space) has profound effects on human's inner and outer lives, and communication is not an exception.<sup>4</sup>

Atmarupananda (2007) discusses how the notion of time and space has profound consequences for the Western worldview.- 'Tied in with time and space is the concept of self. The Christian saints may be pictured with their eyes open, either looking towards the heavens or looking in love on fellow beings<sup>5</sup>. That is wonderful. But implied ... that looking inside is selfish. This is a presupposition which is seriously challenged by Eastern thought. In spite of the Western glorification of the individual, which came largely through the Classical influence as it developed in the Renaissance and more particularly during the European Enlightenment, the West looks with suspicion upon introspection. (p. 31)

The Hindu sense of space is not outward-oriented. Rather, it is experienced within: "the Hindu yogi looks within, not to hide from life nor out of narcissism, but in order to find the ground of existence; and that, the yogi believes, unites him with all existence" (p. 32).

Atmarupananda's remark (*Hinduism has a sense of internal space that lead to a sense of having an inner center of gravity*) has fundamental implication for communication in Hindu milieu. The 'inner center of gravity' certainly demands spiritual exploration within – an effort to know *atman*. Thus, here is more emphasis on internal communication<sup>6</sup>.

The concept of space in Hinduism

prevents us from considering a particular point of space as starting point of any phenomenon and another point of space as its ending point. Thus, as in case of 'time', the Hindu notion of 'space' also rejects models of communication-as-linear-process, which starts here by the sender and ends there with the receiver. And, in this light, communication is not aimed for manipulation of time and space in order to transmit "signals or messages over distance for the purpose of control" (Carey, 2009). Rather, the space–time continuum is perceived with 'a sense of reverence' for its appropriateness in the attainment of human communion by means of communication<sup>7</sup>.

### Conclusion

'Communication studies'/'Communication theory' needs to develop a broad and deep appraisal of indigenous intellectual history, philosophy, arts, literature, and religion, including other branches of knowledge, to the study of communication. While exploring Hindu concepts on communication in 2003 (Adhikary, 2003), I sought to construct and develop a true 'Vedic Hindu' communication model. The concepts (including *sadharanikaran* and *sahridayata*) I have constructed for the SMC are formal concepts that are firmly established on Sanskrit poetics as well as Hindu religious-philosophical knowledge systems.

Likewise, the Hindu approach to time and space, too, is of fundamental importance for consideration. In fact, this is one of the reasons why the *Sadharanikaran* Model of Communication is constructed as a non-linear model. I assert that any future communication model from Hindu perspective must consider the nature of time and space according to Hinduism. A verse from *Sanchar Mimamsa* clarifies the same - 'Vedic (Hindu) thought should be taken in order to understand why the structure of it (the *sadharanikaran* model of communication) is not linear. How can communication, which happens in time and space, be linear when both time and space are considered cyclical in Hinduism? (Adhikary, 2011b, page 9)

## Note -

1. For further discussion on the *Sadharanikaran* Model of Communication, see: Adhikary, 2003, 2004, 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2012a, 2012b.
2. Also see: Adhikary and Shukla, 2013.
3. It is worth mentioning here that "time is viewed as non-linear in Chinese culture" (Yin and Miike, 2008, p. 36). Consequently, it is considered that "History develops in a circular fashion" (ibid.).
4. Though Edward T. Hall (1959, 1966) has shed light on the significance of space/distance for communication it is yet to conduct comparative studies on the notion of space in various cultures and their implication for communication.
5. Contrastingly, Eastern saints are pictured with their eyes closed, engrossed in introspection. Two different ways of portrayal are due to difference in worldviews. To comprehend the difference, understanding of epistemological and ontological as well as ethical and axiological standpoint is needed.
6. "Eyes do see beautiful vision and the same has been seen somewhere before, is deeply connected to one from within. The ears hear melodious sounds, beautiful caroling and chirping of birds, hearing which again the psyche and the consciousness are transported, or to put it more accurately, are returned to their rightful state. This natural state is a pure, self-surrounding feeling, a feeling of sharing, of togetherness. You read a line of poetry, see a picture, listen to a music, watch a dance, observe a drama, look at the architecture of a temple, the metaphysical experience always takes place through the psychic experience originating in the physical experience." (Misra, 2008, pp. 35-36)
7. The communion is envisioned as *sahridayata* in the SMC. It is also to note that success of *sadharanikaran* process and attainment of *sahridayata* is not limited to human communion; rather, human (the *jivatman*) may attain *moksha* – oneness with the *Brahman*. For further discussion, see my earlier works on the SMC (including Adhikary, 2007b, 2010b, 2010c, 2011b).

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