

SOME COMMUNICATION THOUGHTS IN JAINA PHILOSOPHY

□ Kapil Kumar Bhattacharyya
□□ Biplab Loho Choudhury

Abstract: Not much inquiry into the 'philosophical' school of communication has been attempted so far. Though some communication scholars have attempted exploration of a few ancient Indian philosophical schools since the latter half of the twentieth century, no such attempt has been made exclusively from the Jaina philosophical perspective. This paper makes the first such attempt based on a reading of the available primary texts. However, the attempt is largely limited to presenting communication thoughts from one particular canonical text of the Jaina philosophy, the Ācārāṅga Sūtra, and hence, should only be taken as an intermediate report on communication wisdom from Jaina Darśana. In doing so, the researchers have followed in principle the ancient Indian five-stage research found in the Sāṁkhya Tattva Kaumudī by Vācaspati Miśra.

Key words : Vedas, Philosophy, Methodology, Jaina Darshana

Introduction :

Communication scholarship was largely limited to an understanding of the discipline from the standpoint of the 'process' school and the 'semiotics' school during the 20th century. [Refer to (Fiske, 1990, p. 2)] However, a 'paradigm' shift towards the inclusion of the acceptance of the 'philosophical' school of communication seems to be on the horizon in the new millennium courtesy the efforts of a few scholars across the globe. 'Indian philosophical thought which is the nucleus round which all that is best and highest in India has grown' (Dasgupta, 1922, p. vii) has much to offer to the understanding of the 'philosophical' school of communication. It includes two distinct sets of ancient Indian philosophical schools based on the principle of 'authority of the Vedas' (Sanyal, 1983, p. 5): the six orthodox schools of thought that believe in the ultimate authority of the Vedas (Nyāya, Vaisesika, Sāṁkhya, Yoga, Mīmāṃsā/ Pūrva Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta/ Uttara Mīmāṃsā) and the three heterodox schools of thought that reject the authority of the Vedas (Cārvāka, Bauddha and Jaina).

Though each of the schools has much to

offer to modern communication scholarship, they have largely remained unexplored barring a few exceptions. These include the attempts by Aoki (1991), Chuang (2002), Chuang & Chen (2003), Dissanayake (1983a, 1983b, 1985, 1988, 1991, 2003, 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2010, 2016), Gunaratne (2009, 2015), Gunaratne et al (2015), Ishii (1992, 1998, 2001), Jayawardena (1986), Kinsky et al (2000), and Thirumalai (2002) to explore the Buddhist philosophy, Jayaweera (1986, 1988) and Stroud (2009) to explore the Advaita Vedānta philosophy, Lloyd (2007a, 2007b, 2015) and Bhattacharyya (2015) to explore the Nyāya philosophy and Adhikary (2012) to explore the Bhāṅga Mīmāṃsā sub-school within the Mīmāṃsā philosophy.

Seemingly, no such attempt has been made exclusively from the Jaina philosophical perspective. Jain & Matukumalli (1996, 2014) sought "to discuss the major functions of silence in India especially among the Hindu and Jain [sic] segments of Indian society" (Jain & Matukumalli 2014, p. 249). However, their attempt to explore 'silence' from both Hindu and Jaina philosophical perspectives was limited "primarily to a review

□ Senior Research Fellow (Indian Communication Thought), Centre for Journalism & Mass Communication, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, India, Email: kapilkrbhattacharyya@gmail.com

□□ Professor, Centre for Journalism and Mass Communication, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, India, Email: blcpal@gmail.com

मीडिया मीमांसा

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Research Stage	Research Activity	Details of Research Activity
Tāram	Pratyaka	Identification of the area of concern, the research problem
	Śabda	Approval of the supervisor and determination of appropriate methodology and possible research design
Sutāram	Anumāna	Initial inference through review of existing works
	Arthapatti	Statement of hypothesis or research question
Tārtāram	Upamāna	Collection, comparison, analysis and interpretation of data
Ramyaka	Suhrtrpṛāpti	Presentation of results in front of well-wishers
Sadāmuditam	Dānam	Submission of the work with a pure mind for contribution to social welfare and possible replication by others

Fig. 1: An Ancient Indian Five-Stage Research Design

of literature available in the American libraries” (ibid.) owing to their inability “to review several primary sources published in India” (ibid.) concerning the topic. Apparently, their future intention to pursue their “research on silence using Indian sources” (ibid.) was never fulfilled. Thus, the present work seeks to make the first exclusive attempt towards exploring communication wisdom from the Jaina philosophical perspective based on a reading of the available primary texts.

Research Methodology

In the present work, only a brief overview of communication concepts available in one particular canonical text from the Jaina philosophy, the Acaranga Sutra shall be given. The same shall be discussed in detail in future works. For the present work, two translations of the Acaranga Sutra have been consulted: the Oxford Edition published in 1884 (Jacobi, 1884) and the Padma Prakashan Edition published in 2000 (Muni & 'Saras', 2000). The attempt follows in principle an ancient Indian five-stage research design (Figure 1) found in the Saṃkhyā Tattva Kaumudī by Vacaspati Miśra. The five-stage research approach, in which “the modern day research steps are implicit” (Bhattacharyya & Lohochoudhury, 2014, p. 112), is as follows: (ibid.)

The present work is part of a

comprehensive exploration of 'Indian Communication Thought' (Bhattacharyya, 2015, 2016a, 2016b). It reviews the relevance of thoughts from one of the nine established schools of ancient Indian philosophy for the communication 'field'. Sufficient collection, analysis and interpretation of 'communication' thoughts available in the various Indian philosophical traditions (both ancient and modern) remain to be explored and accomplished. Upon doing so, the stages of ramyakaḥ and sadāmuditam will duly follow. A plausible blue-print of the roadmap of exploring 'Indian Communication Thought' in terms of the ancient Indian five-stage research design is given in Figure 2.

The work in progress has made use of research activities which fall under three stages of Tāram, Sutāram and Tārtāram as shown in Figure 2.

Communication Concepts in the Ācārāṅga Sūtra

The Ākārāṅga [sic: recte Ācārāṅga] Sutra contains two books, or Srutaskandhas, very different from each other in style and in the manner in which the subject is treated. (Jacobi, 1884, p. xlvii) The first Śruta-skandha belonging “to the c. 5th-4th B.C. ... deals with the spiritual preachings alongwith the basic principles of non-violence and ethical code of conduct, prescribed

Research Stage	Research Activity	Details of Research Activity
Tāram	Pratyaka	The research problem in the present case is that very few attempts have been made towards exploring 'Indian Communication Thought'.
	Śabda	The research problem has already been duly recognized in the earlier works. So, further exploration is desirable. The research design followed in the study was given by Vācaspati Miśra, an <i>āpta-vyakti</i> (trust-worthy person) concerning Indian philosophy. So his word may be taken as <i>śabda</i> (verbal testimony) of appropriate research methodology considering the observation given in the Nyāya Sūtras: <i>āptopadeśa śabda</i> (NS, 1.1.7).
Sutāram	Anumāna	The review of existing works suggests that 'Indian Communication Thought' stands to offer considerable insights to the communication 'field'.
	Arthapatti	Therefore, the hypothesis is: 'Indian Communication Thought' has plenty of insights to offer to the communication 'field'.
Tārtāram	Upamāna	This stage would involve collection of 'communication' thoughts available in all the Indian philosophical traditions (both ancient and modern) followed by comparison, analysis and interpretation of the data.
Ramyaka	Suhrtrprāpti	Upon fulfilling the earlier conditions, the results are to be presented before peers.
Sadāmuditam	Dānam	Upon validation of the results, the same is to be submitted with a pure mind for contribution to social welfare and possible replication and improvement by other scholars.

Fig. 2: Blue-Print of the Roadmap of Exploring 'Indian Communication Thought'

for Jania [sic: recte Jaina] monks and nuns” (Jain & Singh, 1998, p. 4). The second Śruta-skandha “mainly deals with the detailed rules and regulations or the code of conduct of Jaina monks and nuns alongwith some of the events of the life of Mahāvīra” (ibid.) and “was composed during the c. 2nd-1st B.C.” (ibid.). We are presently concerned with only one chapter from the second Śruta-skandha of the Ācārāṅga Sūtra titled Bhāṣājāta (lit. characteristic/s of speech). This chapter, dealing with various aspects of speech, consists of two lessons. The first lesson concerns “the codes of proper use of language by explaining sixteen grammatical classifications” (Muni & 'Saras', 2000, p. 278). The second lesson concerns “the origin of language in context of the mental states like anger and details the code of desired and censured use” (ibid.). Though the assertions in the Bhāṣājāta are essentially meant

for Jaina monks and nuns, they hold considerable relevance for all human beings.

The Bhāṣājāta begins with (Aphorism 180) a definition of undesirable speech citing six types of speech that are to be always avoided: 1) Speech inspired by anger/ wrath; 2) Speech inspired by pride/ hubris; 3) Speech inspired by deceit/ deception; 4) Speech inspired by gain/ greed; 5) Speech with harshness both knowingly or unknowingly regarding the communicatee's position; 6) Speech reflecting positive/ certain hope regarding uncertain things. Thereafter, the sixteen grammatical classifications are given in the Bhāṣājāta (Aphorism 181). They are as follows: 1) Singular number; 2) Dual number; 3) Plural number; 4) Feminine gender; 5) Masculine gender; 6) Neuter gender; 7) Spiritual words; 8) Words of praise; 9) Words of criticism; 10) Words of praise mixed with criticism; 11) Words of

criticism mixed with praise; 12) Past tense; 13) Present tense; 14) Future tense; 15) Direct speech (First person); and 16) Indirect speech (Second and third person). (ibid. p. 282)

That the communicator “should have complete knowledge of the language, grammar and other related subjects in order to be able to express his ideas with clarity and accuracy” (ibid. p. 283) is also emphasized in aphorism 181. The Bhāṣājāta then goes on to list four kinds of speech (Aphorisms 182 & 184): 1) Truth; 2) Untruth; 3) Truth mixed with untruth (Half-truth); 4) Neither truth nor untruth. A monk or nun is generally expected to speak the truth. However, if a truth may disturb the communicatee, he/ she may consider the fourth kind of speech. However, untruth and half-truth are to be avoided always.

The four-fold speech classification in Bhāṣājāta merits attention in contemporary media reality. It must be remembered that the “emergence of new media has challenged every conceivable concept of communication in the wake of expansion of communication functions like wildfire (from 'inform, educate and entertain' to 'ensure security, monetary transaction, simulation and so on). Communication is also realizing traits hitherto unrealized in its print, audio, visual and audio-visual avatars. The traits like interactivity, instantaneity, time-neutrality, seamlessness, decreasing centre-periphery distinctions, democratisation of production, and multiple actor production across geographical zones can be seen as realization of potential that communication has”. (LohoChoudhury & Bhattacharyya, 2014, p. 65) Naturally, the scope of the media message dissemination has extended beyond the conventional mass media forms. It is in this broad scope that the observations given in the Bhāṣājāta gain greater significance.

Deaver (1990, p. 1) classifies media communications into three headings: truth, half-truth, and untruth. Observing that untruths may

be of two types: 1) untruth 'with no intent to deceive'; and 2) Untruth 'with conscious intent to deceive', he classifies the functionality of communication into four broad categories: (ibid.)

1. Truth: with intent to be open and fully honest;
2. Half-Truth: with intent to be honest but with selective use of information;
3. Untruth: with no intent to deceive; and
4. Untruth: with conscious intent to deceive.

However, the present researchers opine that 'neither truth nor untruth' may also be included to the list of media communications. Truth, of course, refers to factual reporting that is the staple of the media. But then, the media is also accused of distortion and misrepresentation of facts at times. Silverman (2015, p. 1) concludes that the “online media frequently promote misinformation in an attempt to drive traffic and social engagement”. Such practices naturally qualify as untruth.

While truth is the staple of the media, it depends a lot on half-truths (truth mixed with untruth) as well. This is owing to the need for balancing between accuracy and persuasive capacity. While accuracy calls for presenting the truth only, persuasive capacity more often than not demands a subjective presentation of the truth to serve the ends of the concerned stake-holder/s.

The last type of message, that is, neither truth nor untruth, is particularly interesting. As mentioned earlier, a communicator may seek recourse to 'neither true nor false' if a truth may disturb the communicatee/s. Such practice merits significance particularly during 'crisis'. While honesty is generally the best policy in crisis communication, it may not always be so in actuality. Besides honesty, tactfulness and compassion remain vital to crisis communications.

Notwithstanding the virtues of truth, it must be accompanied by the touch of desirability. The Bhāṣājāta too recognizes this fundamental

principle. In aphorism 184, it is said that the use of truth that is “sinful, inspiring sinful action, rough, harsh, rude, bitter, causing inflow of karmas, shrill, splitting, hurting, disturbing and provocative to beings” (Muni & 'Saras', 2000, pp. 286) is to be avoided.

Thus, the need for taking recourse to 'neither truth nor untruth' may be attributed to the condition for balancing between accuracy and desirability. While accuracy calls for presentation of the truth only, desirability involves being responsive to the actual situation and the communicatee's feelings. In judging the desirability of a truth during crisis communications, the following factors may be thought over:

- Is the truth dispensable to the present situation in terms of addressing the crisis?
- Is the truth going to have a positive or negative impact upon the audience?

Thus, we find that the four-fold speech classification in Bhāṣājāta offers a more hands-on approach to contemporary applied communication practices. The rest of the aphorisms of the first lesson (185-191) essentially elucidate on the observations made in aphorism 184.

The second lesson of Bhāṣājāta (Aphorisms 192-210) essentially deals with the subject of contextual communication in light of human situations, behaviours and emotions. Contextual consciousness has an important role to play in communication. Contextual consciousness refers to the sensitivity of the communicator towards the communication background, both in terms of the physical setup and the communicatee's position. Unless the communicator puts himself/ herself in the position of the communicatee/s and pays respect to the communication background, he/ she is unlikely to be able to frame desirable message fulfilling the need of the communication exercise that he/ she finds himself/ herself in. Much importance has been attached to this pragmatic

approach to communication in the second lesson of Bhāṣājāta.

Accordingly, it recommends eight points of prudence while speaking/ communicating: (ibid. p. 306): 1) Be free of anger, conceit, deceit and greed; 2) Premeditate and deliberate in context of the subject and person; 3) Acquire complete and authentic knowledge of the subject and avoid ambiguity; 4) Avoid speaking words that are offending, insulting and harmful to any being; 5) Avoid speaking fast and incoherently; 6) Speak with prudence; 7) Observe code of self-regulating related to speech; 8) Speak with discipline or in a few words.

The second and third points may be noted in particular. Premeditating and deliberating in context of the subject and person and acquiring complete and authentic knowledge of the subject before getting involved in any communication exercise essentially mean that the communicator puts himself/ herself in the position of the communicatee/s and pays respect to the communication background before actively engaging in any communication exercise.

When we read other Jaina texts such as the Samaṇa Suttaṃ, almost same suggestions for the monks and nuns are seen. Going through the Samaṇa Suttaṃ, one comes across the concept of aṣṭa-pravacana-mātā (Eight Mother Precepts) in the samiti-guptisūtra. The aṣṭa-pravacana-mātā are divided into two groups, five samitis (acts of caution) and three guptis (acts of restraint). Of the five samitis, one is called the bhāṣāsamiti which calls for exercising caution in verbal communication (speech). The three guptis have been classified as follows:

- maṇaṃ gupti – Restraining one's mind from evil thoughts
- vyaṃ gupti - Restraining one's speech from evil expressions
- kāyaṃ gupti - Restraining one's body from evil actions

The first gupti clearly concerns intra-personal communication. The second and third guptis refer to the higher manifestations of human communication, verbal and non-verbal respectively. Needless to say, all the three guptis are guided by the sense of compassion, care and concern for one's fellow beings.

Conclusion

Having followed in principle the two intermediate steps (sutāram and tārāram) of the ancient Indian five-stage research design borrowed from the Sāṃkhya philosophy, it is not proper to draw any definite conclusions. Thus, the present work should only be taken as an intermediate report on communication wisdom from Jaina Darśana. Seemingly the first attempt in contemporary communication scholarship to inquire exclusively into the Jaina philosophy, the present work has essentially been exploratory in nature, the key focus being on presentation of concerned ideas rather than on in-depth analysis of the same. Recognizing the need for further deliberation, the researchers aim to take up the subject in detail in the near future.

To know how the author/s of the Jaina Sūtras reached conclusions as discussed in the previous pages would require an in-depth study of the socio-cultural-religious context of Jaina philosophy and the challenges in the practice of Jainism. However, from the discussion so far, it is clear that the communication wisdom in the Sūtras spanned from intra-personal to interpersonal and group spheres of human

interaction. It also looked into the moral and ethical aspects of communication from a pragmatic approach.

The present work has attempted to present some communication thoughts available in the Jaina philosophy based on insights largely from the Ācārāṅga Sūtra. However, many other Jaina texts such as the Dasaveliyā-sutta, the Paṇḍavaṇā-sutta and the Samaṇa Suttaṃ offer considerable communication insights that have remained hitherto unexplored. To their illustrious contemporaries in the field of communication studies who may be kind enough to go through the work and point out its flaws, the researchers offer their humble submission for generosity following in the footsteps of Ācharya Hemacandra, an acclaimed authority on Jaina philosophy itself:

pramāṇasiddhāntaviruddhamatra
yatkiñciduktam matimāndyadoṣāt |
mātsaryamutsārya tadāryacittāḥ
prasādamādhāya viśodhayantu ||
Translation: Going against
established theories and means of
valid knowledge here, if we have
uttered anything erroneous owing
to the fault of dull intellect, may
the noble-minded scholars
having set aside their ill-feelings
extend us the favour of removing/
correcting that (the error/s).

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Endnote

- 'Indian Communication Thought' refers to "the scholarly academic field of study devoted to the understanding of the communication phenomenon from the Indian socio-ethno-cultural and, in particular, from the Indian philosophical point of view" (Bhattacharyya, 2016b, p. 124).
- Several scholars of Indology have tried to establish the presence of another heterodox school in ancient India since the start of the last century. Basham (1951) refers to this philosophical system as "Ājivikism". However, inadequacy of information deprives us of clarity regarding the exact details of philosophical system.
- The word 'communicatee' to the authors' understanding may be ably used in relation to the word 'communicator' in the English lexicon as is the case with the words, 'addresser' and 'addressee'. Thus, 'communicator' refers to 'anyone who communicates' while 'communicatee' refers to 'anyone to whom something is communicated'. (LohoChoudhury & Bhattacharyya, 2014, p. 72)