

Dimensions of Jain Philosophy and Indian Culture

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Communication and Our Relations

***Dr. Samani Aagam Pragya**

Abstract

Communication plays an important role in our life. It is the only mode through which we can connect with each other and express our feelings to other and maintain our relations but when communication is not proper, it can break our relations.

This paper discusses about various causes of conflicts in our relations. Moreover, it also contains the Jain ways about how one can avoid miscommunication and misunderstanding. At the end, some Preksha Meditation tips are also prescribed through which one can bring changes in self nature and a proper and smooth communication can be made.

Keywords: *Communication, Non-violent Communication, Relationship, Preksha Meditation.*

Introduction

Communication is the bases of all our relations. All other activities including eating, drinking, sleeping etc. are secondary. Among various dimensions of life, communication is the most important part of our life.

There are three types of communication.¹ They are Writing (one-way communication), dialogue (two-way communication) and Expression (unilateral communication). Expression is self-imposed labor. A dialogue is a 'craft' involving intelligence, creativity, and conversational skill. Writing is but the minor aspect of communication. Words, gestures, and visuals are the gross part of communication. They are the tools used in all communication. Among these tools, language is the organized form of communication while gestures and silence may not so systematized.

Jada Pinkett Smith says, "Communication is the best way to create strong relationship". Without communication, there will be no relation and without relation, there will be no friends, no family, no society, and no nation. All living beings have their own forms of language. Birds, animals, human beings, one-sensed living beings all have their own structure of language. On that basis, they understand and communicate with each other. It is the ability to communicate that distinguishes one individual from another. Communication cuts down distances whether they are direct or zigzag. It is the activity that creates bond between man and man.

Communication is important in all forms of relationships whether it is between husband and wife, father and son, boss and employee, etc. It allows us to share interests, aspirations, and concerns, to support each other, to organize our lives and make decisions, and to work together. One of the important parts of having healthy relationship is having good and true communication. Good communication is about the way we talk and listen, and about our body language. Good communication results to good relations where as miscommunication leads to break of relations. True communication touches the hearts. We can get to the hearts of others only through our hearts. Thus, communication makes or breaks relations.

Causes of Conflict due to Communication fallacious

Firstly, we will discuss why communication creates conflicts in relations. There can be many reasons but the major causes can be as follow:

Speaking or listening the things from only one point of view

In communication speaker and listener both plays an important role. Mostly people are adamant about their view. They think that what they think is the only right and what they speak is the only truth. This happens when the level of ego is high. Often this type of interaction creates fear, difference, and separation. On the other hand, listening is also very important for good communication. It happens that each man has his own psychological framework, prejudices, interests, cultural background, etc. If the listener understands from his own viewpoint than also the communication is hindered.

Improper verbal communication

Today we see many conflicts, misunderstandings, quarrels, etc. due to improper communication. Here, improper communication refers – hidden intention, to speak without context, to speak unnecessary, to speak lie, to speak imprecise or unclear, etc. For example mother tells to daughter, ‘if you get time, clean up the house before I come from the market.’ Mother came back from the market and saw that the house is yet dirty. She started scolding the daughter. Daughter said that mom you said me “if you get the time’. Here, though it was quite specific but the intention of the mother was hidden and that was not caught by the daughter and thus it leads to conflict.

Improper non-verbal communication

When we communicate, we can say a lot without speaking. Our body posture, tone of voice and the expressions on our face all convey a message. If our feelings don’t fit with our words, it is often the non-verbal communication that gets ‘heard’ and believed. It should be noted that body language reflects what you are saying.

Significant portion of miscommunication occurs without recognition. Through nonverbal cues, communication is often misconstrued and misrepresented. An individual's facial expression and body language movement is a powerful message that is delivered involuntarily. So, one should concentrate on the tone of voice, eye contact and body language.

Messy Thinking

Messy thinking results to messy speaking. Too much detail can be a confusing as too little detail. For example, if you are driving down the free way, following the Google map, you hear "Bear the right". If there is only one road to the right, there's no confusion but what if the highway that bears to right splits into six lanes? Which lane you would take? GPS will speak all the details regarding destination. How will you decide? That's confusion that comes with information overload. Similarly, detail explanation with varied information creates great confusion in communication.

Misaligned Vocabularies

While speaking one should use the 'core vocabulary', so that anybody can understand in any context. While speaking one should see the audience in which he speaks. If the audience is teenager then the speaker should give the examples and vocabulary of the modern time and if the speaker is speaking among the academicians then he should speak the language of their level, so that they can understand the things in a proper manner.

Violent Communication

In Jainism texts, it is said that due four reasons person speaks lie. The causes are – anger, greed, fear and joking.² generally it is seen when person is angry, furious or frustrated he is not conscious of what he is speaking. In such a state, he uses abusing words, which are quite violent. Communicating desires as demands.

Tips to overcome Communication fallacies

In order to avoid such miscommunication and misunderstanding, one should try to understand others points of view. Good

communication is between soul and soul. Everything else is a medium or a tool. There is no communication between tools. However, good communication is hindered due to ego. One thinks that his view is right. Human ego covers the soul and prevents communications from reaching there. Intellect takes over. Discussions and arguments takes place when one doesn't understand or doesn't want to understand others' viewpoint.

In order to solve this problem of communication Jaina principle of *naya* and *anekanta* can be very helpful. Firstly, let us understand these principles.

Anekantavada: Jain Principle as Solutions to Communication Fallacies

Anekantavada is the metaphysical principle. According to the philosophy of anekantavada, the real (object) is multi-faceted. Multiple opposite attributes co-exists in a single object. *Anekanta* means to understand or to perceive the things from multi-dimensional points of view.

Anekanta teaches us to realize that truth has its varied aspect. It shows that a thing can be considered from many points of views. That is why, it is advised that people should find out the truth about anything by taking into account several aspects of a thing. This obviously broadens the outlook of people as they are taught to look at a thing from different angles.

Anekanta holds that the people who maintain an absolutist view (*ekāntavāda*) are partially true. They are false only because they restrict to their own views by denying others views. *Anekanta* is nothing but the sum total of all these partial truths. At this point, one may ask that if all partial truths are false then how the sum totals of all of them can become truth. Answering this, Jaina Acharyas say it becomes true because it sheds off all sorts of absolutist claims. In fact, by adding all those partial claims, a new category of element is introduced. Actually, what was false was the absolutistic approach. It becomes true due to the non-absolutistic or relative approach.³

If one develops such attitude many communication problems can be solved. It is obvious that opinions won't always match. All

can't share the same viewpoint but with the help of this principle one will be open-minded and will always be receptive to here others viewpoint. Hence, the theory of *anekānta* dissolves all kinds of misunderstanding, mental stress, quarrels, and conflicts. Instead it develops understanding for others, mental peace, and harmony. It brings hearts close to each other.

Moreover, Jainism believes that one cannot express all the attributes at a single point of time. So, one expresses his views with the help of *naya*. The comprehension of reality from any one particular standpoint is called *naya*. According to the philosophy of *naya*, things are comprehended differently from different points of view. *Prameyakamala mārtanḍa*⁴ defines *naya* as the comprehension which the knower acquires about a part of the object, without discarding the other views.

In Jaina texts, *Puruṣārtha Siddhyupāya*, we come across the common but an interesting story of five blind men and an elephant that illustrates this doctrine. Ācārya says, "I bow down to *anekānta* which is the root basis of highest scripture, which dispels the wrong notions about the elephant by the persons born blind, and which removes the contradictions amongst all those who entertain a one-sided or limited points of view."⁵

The story runs as following - once five blind men surrounded an elephant and started describing the creature. The person touching the leg of the elephant said that elephant was like a pillar, and one who touched the trunk said the elephant was like a python. The person who touched the ear said it was like a fan while the other who touched the tail said it was like a rope. Still another who touched the torso said it was like a wall. They all started quarrelling because each believed that his knowledge was the only true and complete knowledge and should be accepted unconditionally. All these absolute different perspectives result to quarrel. However, as soon as each of the available view had taken as one of the many perspectives (*naya*), the quarrel stopped immediately. Consequently, we can say, *naya* is a perspectual knowledge that presents the truth relatively.

We all believe that there is the limitation of language. We cannot express all the things as it is. It's a famous saying that complete knowledge is like a water in an ocean, our knowledge is like a water in a river and from that we can express droplike. Whatever we know and express is only partial, the real being multi-dimensional. Our knowledge is selective because we know an object from a particular point of view, interest, mental framework, particular form of life, etc. In Jaina philosophy, it is called *naya*. *Nayavāda* is an attempt to understand some of the limitations of human knowledge and language. It contributes to the development of a sense of humility or human understanding with the tacit admission that there are others with other points of view. There can be as many *naya* as there are perspectives of knowing.

Thus, the philosophy of *anekanta* opens up the listener's mindset to listen others without any prejudice, ego or one-sided perspective and the *naya* expresses thoughts by knowing his limitations.

Non-violent Communication

On the basis of nonviolence, Lord Mahavir discussed minutely about two types of languages – violent and nonviolent. He said that to speak agreeable, respectful, loving, less, appreciating is a gross thing⁶. This kind of language can be ethical but nonviolent language goes more farther than ethics. He said that besides all these qualities, nonviolent speech is more important.

Even Lord Buddha said one should speak the language which constitutes the four things. 1. Truthfulness. 2. Righteousness. 3. Agreeableness 4. Nonviolence. Dasvaikalika Sutra states that the monk should not speak that language which leads to violence⁷. For example - one should not speak the blind as blind, thief as thief, ill as ill because this may hurt the respective person⁸. In Dasvaikalika Sutra, there are many verses in 7th chapter which suggests man, not to speak such words which cause violence.

When we use nonviolent language in our interactions we become grounded in our natural state of compassion – with ourselves, with another person, or in group.⁹ It is therefore an

approach that can be effectively applied at all levels of communication and in diverse situations like intimate relationships, families, schools, organisations, therapy, counseling, disputes and conflicts of any nature.

O.J. Harvey, professor of psychology did the research at the University of Colorado on the subject – the relationship between language and violence. He took random samples of species of literature from many countries over the world and tabulated the frequency of the words that classify and judge people. His study shows high correlation between the frequent use of such judgemental words and incidences of violence. It was found that there is considerably less violence in cultures where people think in terms of human needs than in cultures where people label one another as “good” or “bad” and believe that the “bad” ones deserves to be punished¹⁰.

Secondly, Marshall B. Rosenberg suggests that communicating our desires as demands is another form of language that blocks compassion and raises violence. A demand explicitly or implicitly threatens listeners with blame and punishment if they fail to comply. It is a common form of communication in our culture, especially among those who hold positions of authority¹¹. Jain texts¹² states that whenever one need someones help or want a work to be done by others than he should first ask others willingness in the form “Would you like to do this work for me” or “can you do favour for me?”

In the second chapter of the book “Nonviolent communication”, Marshall B. Rosenberg has identified specific forms of language and communication that behaves violently towards other and self.

Dasvaikalika Sutra states that one should not speak such language, which is doubtful¹³. It is also violent to speak the thing, which is doubtful. For example A, in a doubtful state calls B, a liar and B, a very sensitive, could not bear this blame and thus committed suicide. In this way, sometimes-doubtful statements result into violence. Jainism suggests that if one is not sure that the dog is he-dog or she-dog then he is not supposed to speak certainly that he-dog is coming. He should speak the species of dog is coming. One should

speaking certain language only when he is confirmed. In communication each person needs to clearly understand that whatever he/she has to say should belong to him/her; if not, the communication is never complete. Prashnavyakarana Sutra mentions that one should not speak harsh and hard words, hurting words, sinful words, without thinking, without certainty, etc. If one wants to speak, he should speak the truthful, noncontradictory, sinless, nonviolent, favourable, logical and less words.¹⁴

Control over Passion

Question is how can one develop these qualities? To develop the above qualities, one needs to control over passions as well as speech. If there is the control over ego, anger, passions then one will try to respect others' views and if there is control over speech, one will not speak unnecessary and violently.

Here, I would like to propose some of the meditative tips that are helpful to inculcate such communication skills. They are Relaxation (Kayotsarga) and Long Breathing.

Relaxation

In Preksha Meditation, relaxation is technically termed as Kayotsarga. Kayotsarga literally means abandonment of the body coupled with high degree of conscious awareness. Here, abandonment doesn't mean leaving the body but non-attachment with the body.¹⁵

In meditation, relaxation is one of the techniques, which is the basic step of all kinds of meditation. Without relaxation, one cannot enter into meditation for practising further techniques of meditation. There are two types of relaxation i.e. Relaxation of Body and Relaxation of Throat.

While relaxing body, one suggests and experiences that all the parts of the body, all the muscles, nerves, cells are relaxing. It is more restful than sleep. After relaxation of body, one is to do relaxation of throat.

In relaxation, one learns to stop all voluntary movements. Thus the turmoil due to restlessness vanishes and an acute sense of

relaxation and relief from tension is experienced. There is a progressive improvement in psychosomatic diseases as hypertension and in due course this becomes measurable.¹⁶

According to Acarya Mahaprajna, by relaxation one becomes stress-free and mentally balanced. Relaxation leads to steadiness of mind and steadiness of nervous system. These two kinds of relaxation will results into:

- a. Steadiness of body and mind
- b. Control over speech/Self-restrain of speech

Soothing effect on the nervous system improves bearing capacity, alertness, and sharpens the intellect. In this way, by relaxation man develops calmness, positiveness, alertness, which helps him to speak calmly, positively and openly.

Perception of Breath (Long Breathing or Breathing through Alternate Nostrils)

Breath is the bridge between the internal and the external world. Except the breath, there is nothing else, which comes out as well as goes in. That is why, breath is choosen as the object of perception. If one desires to stop the wandering of mind, the easiest way is to make it ride on the chariot of breath. One who knows to regulate the breath his mind becomes controllable and stable.

While perception of breath, one should be fully aware of each inhalation and exhalation. Scientific and complete breathing starts with fuller utilization of the vital capacity of the lungs by slow, silent, and deep breathing. It is the process of reinforcing and discipling the generation of vital energy – *prana*.

Alternate breathing is inhaling from the right and exhaling from the left and than inhaling from the left and exhaling from the right. Fresh air, inhaled in the lungs, contains oxygen, which enters the blood stream and is delivered to the cells in the active tissues. Cells use the oxygen and produce energy. Thus breathing is the source of vital energy.¹⁷ Regular practice of conscious breathing and its perception increases the alertness of mind and concentration too.

Long breathing results into balance of mind. This also reduces mental stress and cool down the mind. It is such a process that one decreases the frequency rate of breathing more; one gets more control over passions like ego, greed, anger, and deceit. Less passion or aggressiveness will lead to nonviolent and healthy communication. Speech is related to thinking. If mind is alert, concentrated then one can clearly express his views.

Conclusion

In this way, if two practices i.e. Relaxation and Long Breathing are practice daily and the principles of *naya* and *anekanta* is applied in communication then one can have good communication and hence can lead a happy and successful life. Thus, it is rightly said, “Being a good communicator is half the battle won.”

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