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THE ROLE OF BUDDHIST ETHICS AND COMMUNICATION IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD CRISIS

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Abstract

In reality, man cannot live without communication; at least, he communicates something with himself, thoughts, for instance. In order to successfully communicate something as such, ethics concerning any kinds of communication should be taken into a critical examination; what kind of speech one should speak out, what kind of speech one should not speak out. In this article, an attempt was purposely made to discuss the role of Buddhist ethics and communication in the contemporary world crisis. In this, it is argued by Buddhist ethics that the communication should be subject to ethics because of man's ideal life, without it, such communication will pose the danger to the chance in obtaining the goal, ideal life.

I. Introduction

It is a well known fact that man is a social animal in many senses, political, economical, cultural and communicative sense, for instance. When it comes to communicative sense, while living as a member of society, he himself intentionally communicates what he really wants and what he does not really want to others. It can be claimed that the communication becomes inseparable part of man's life. At the present

time, man's communication has been being advanced through the most effective means provided by the miracle of science and technology such as the highest speed internet. Man in the present society can communicate faster than the past by the help of the mentioned technology. It seems that most of the contents man communicate with others are as the same as were done in the primitive times. What have been introducing into society are just only

varieties of channel wherein the roles earlier played by a sender-receiver are complicatedly bound by various technological roles. In connection with these ways, a question is put that should the communication be subject to ethics. On the one hand, some argued that the communication should not be subject to ethics because the communication is the only means not the end, on the other hand, some argued that it should be subject to ethics because the end expected by parties involved cannot be morally obtained unless the means in question is morally followed. Before, this article proceeds to discuss the role of Buddhist ethics concerning the communication; the types of communication are needed to be explained.

II. Result and Discussion

2.1 Types of Communication

According to the theory of communication,¹ six types of communicative ways are provided as follows:

1. **Intrapersonal Communication;** this basically means the communication one has within oneself relating to one's thoughts, feelings and the way one looks at oneself. Since this kind of communication involves with the communicator then the message is produced out of one's thoughts and feelings through one's brain. Although it does not directly involve with other, yet it by nature determines one's experience on how one thinks to oneself.
2. **Interpersonal Communication;** this kind of communication occurs one communicates on a one-to-one basis wherein the informal and unstructured setting are not usually made up. It is usually said that most of the times it happens

between two or more people depending upon situations coming up. According to this type of communication, all elements of communicative process are needed. Examples can be given as follows: while two or more people, friends, for instance, coming to meet, they certainly introduce their experiences to communicative processes. In conversation, each can become as a sender-receiver. In this matter, the verbal and non-verbal symbols are utilized in their messages. Since this communication involves with two or more people, then the chance in creating feedback is open.

3. **Small-Group Communication;** this kind of communication arises when a small number of people comes with a view to solve their problem. According to this, there should not be a big number of people because each member will not be able to get an opportunity in communicating what should be spelt out. The different channels are not found when it comes to channels used in this method comparing to the interpersonal method.
4. **Computer-Mediated Communication;** this type of communication arises out of a wide range of technologies facilitated by computer networks. In this regard, it basically refers to the utilization of e-mail, Web-page, online social media etc. It is said that at the present time our world becomes borderless owing the existing advancement of sciences and technologies. Consequently, most of communications have been being widely and normally made through the mentioned channels of computer applications including the present various brands of tablets, mobile handset and many more. By virtue of this, such

¹ Sandra, Hybels and Richard, L. Weaver II, *Communicating Effectively*, (8th Ed.), (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2007), PP. 15-20.

variety of communication contains very complicated ways whereby a sender-receiver would be made anonymous.

5. **Public Communication;** by and large, this communication has formal setting and in this communication, a sender-receiver just sends a message to the audience. The message delivered in this way is normally structured. The channels used by this are as the same as were used by interpersonal and small-group communication. However, the channels used in this communication are somehow exaggerated which are more public than the interpersonal techniques due to its audience. For example, the voice articulated in this way would be louder. Furthermore, many questions might be put by people who have some doubt.
6. **Intercultural Communication;** as it was said earlier, our world becomes global community wherein all people are politically, economically and culturally interwoven. Therefore, it is necessary for us to understand each other better. Based on this, it necessitates intercultural communication; such communication arises when two or more people from different culture need interaction. To understand each other rightly, the different systems of knowledge, values, beliefs, customs and behaviours followed by different groups of people should be fully made to be understood before. Otherwise, such communication would turn out to be futile.

From those categories of communication, no matter how reasonable they are, they can be summarized into the following specific purposes: 1) the communication is assigned to inform something to someone, 2) the communication is made to persuade someone to do or not do something, 3) the communication is made to convince someone to do or not to do something, and 4) the communication is done to entertain someone.² All communication is centred on human beings' purpose and it is deliberately made by a sender-receiver. Under these circumstances, it is subject to ethics because it involves with man's intention which is by nature derived from one's sets of belief and value. Let's see how can Buddhist ethics deal with the communication successfully.

2.2 Dimensions of Buddhist Ethics on Communication

When it comes to Buddhist ethics concerning main types of communication, there are many discourses given by the Buddha appearing in various Suttas, but here it is focused on particular one, Abhayarājakumārasutta.

In *Majjhimanikāya*,³ as it appeared when the Buddha had discussion with Prince Abhaya about what kind of speech he would utter, he said that:

“Whatever speech the Tathāgata knows to be not fact, not true, not connected with the goal, and that is not liked by others,

² Betty, M. Dietsch, Reasoning & Writing Well, (4th Ed.), (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2006), p. 7.

³ *Majjhimanikāya*. I. 395., “Evameva kho, rājakumāra, yaC tathāgato vācaC jñāti abhūtaC atacchaC anathasaChitaC sā ca paresaC appiyā amanāpā, na taC tathāgato vācaC bhāsati. Yampi tathāgato vācaC jñāti bhūtaC tacchaC anathasaChitaC sā ca paresaC appiyā amanāpā, tampi tathāgato vācaC na bhāsati. Yañca kho tathāgato vācaC jñāti bhūtaC tacchaC atthasaChitaC sā ca paresaC appiyā amanāpā, tatra kālāññū tathāgato hoti tassā vācāya veyyākaraGāya. YaC tathāgato vācaC jñāti abhūtaC atacchaC anathasaChitaC sā ca paresaC piyā manāpā, na taC tathāgato vācaC bhāsati. Yampi tathāgato vācaC jñāti bhūtaC tacchaC anathasaChitaC sā ca paresaC piyā manāpā tampi tathāgato vācaC na bhāsati. Yañca tathāgato vācaC jñāti bhūtaC tacchaC atthasaChitaC sā ca paresaC piyā manāpā, tatra kālāññū tathāgato hoti tassā vācāya veyyākaraGāya.

disagreeable to them, that speech the Tathāgata does not utter. And whatever speech a Tathāgata knows to be fact, true, but not connected with the goal, and not liked by others, disagreeable to them, neither does the Tathāgata utter that speech. And whatever speech the Tathāgata knows to be fact, true, connected with the goal, but not liked by others, disagreeable to them, the Tathāgata is aware of the right time for explaining that speech. Whatever speech the Tathāgata knows to be not fact, not true, not connected with the goal, but that is liked by others, agreeable to them, that speech the Tathāgata does not utter. And whatever speech the Tathāgata knows to be fact, true, but not connected with the goal, yet liked by others, agreeable to them, neither does the Tathāgata utter that speech. And whatever speech the Tathāgata knows to be fact, true, connected with the goal, and liked by others, agreeable to them, the Tathāgata is aware of the right time for explaining that speech”.⁴

The mentioned sayings can be further explained into six points as follows: 1) it is not good for the Buddha to speak about what is not of fact, of truth, of goal and it is not liked and agreed by others, 2) it is not good for the Buddha to speak about what is not connected with goal, not liked and agreed by others despite being fact and true, 3) it is not good for the Buddha to immediately speak about what is not liked and agreed by others despite being fact, true and connecting with the goal; he would find the appropriate time to utter it, 4) it is not good for the Buddha to speak about what is not fact, true and without the goal in spite of being liked and agreed by others, 5) it is not good for the Buddha to speak out what is of fact, truth, and yet being liked and agreed by others if it is not connected to the goal, and finally 6) it is good for the Buddha to timely

and rightly speak out what is of fact, truth, connecting with the goal and being liked and agreed by others.

Viewed from the aforesaid categories of what ought to be spoken out, it clearly showed that the last sixth one is better than the rest former ones because such communication done through words is of fact and truth wherein one's goal can be actualized. Moreover, it also is not contradictory to what is not disliked and disagreed by involved party. In Buddhist ethics, the word ‘goal’ used in this discussion actually embraces the ideal life where one's suffering is completely got rid of.

2.3 Relevance of Buddhist ethics in Communication

Here, it is necessary that those six categories of communication utilized by general people in our society should be taken into a critical examination in order to see the real benefit of the communication. Since in all kinds of communication both the sender and the receiver are human being then such communications, intrapersonal, interpersonal, small-group, computer-mediated, public and intercultural communication, should be actively done in the way that their ideal life can be actualized; it ought not to be done in the way that their ideal life is in danger. In this matter, it can be argued that while sending certain messages, a sender himself/herself has an important ethical duty to play not only to him/her but also to others; the harmful messages should not be sent to anyone even himself/herself. The online social media and Webpage in the present time can be given as the obvious evidences in the case wherein the message has been sent by certain sender without taking any responsibility on its contents as to whether it is going to harm other's benefit or not. If there

⁴ The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings (Majjhima-Nikāya), translated by I. B. Horner, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004), PP. 62-63.

are messages which are not conducive to human being's goal, perfect happiness, they will not ever be sent or delivered by the Buddha.

III. Conclusion

From the previous discussion, it can be concluded that according to Buddhist ethics, the communication in any form should be subject to ethics because it is deliberately articulated; it by nature contains certain purpose. A sender-receiver in the process of communication is a human being and a human being in Buddhist ethics needs ideal life wherein suffering is got rid of. As long as the communication in any form is being done in accordance with one's ideal life, then the prevailing intractable problems over the global world will be completely solved.

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