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Vasundhara Enclave, New Delhi - 110096 Phone : +91-11-22610552, 22610562

Website : mac.du.ac.in

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List of Contributors

- **Sunil Sondhi**, Principal, Maharaja Agrasen College
- **Prabira Sethy**, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Political Science, Maharaja Agrasen College
- **Mukesh Agarwal**, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Physical Education, Maharaja Agrasen College
- **Subodh Kumar**, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Political Science, Maharaja Agrasen College
- **Niraj Kumar**, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Political Science, Maharaja Agrasen College
- **Abha Mittal**, Associate Professor, Dept. of Commerce, Maharaja Agrasen College
- **Sudhir K Rinten**, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Journalism Maharaja Agrasen College
- **Kingaule Newme**, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Journalism Maharaja Agrasen College
- **Rachita Kauldhar**, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Journalism, Maharaja Agrasen College

Communication in the Global Family

Sunil Sondhi

Abstract

Global development has broken through the boundaries of space, time, cultural assumptions, and the scope, structure, and function of human society. It not only demands new ways of thinking and organization, but also opens up new imperatives for investigating linkages between thought and action, knowledge and being, structure and process. These new imperatives of global development demand a new way of communication in order to achieve skill in the process of intercultural interaction. It is the purpose of this paper to examine the principles and practice of intercultural communication skill in the context of the Indian concepts of Advaita, Sahridayata, and Samdarsana.

Introduction

We live in times of great change and transformation. The development of communication and transportation technology and numerous social, economic and cultural changes over the last decades have been globalizing the world into a closely interconnected society. The flux and complexity of the change will continue to increase in the years ahead and challenge the fundamental assumptions and beliefs on which modern people have learned to live with. To successfully ride this turbulence of global development, citizens of modern societies will be required to acquire a set of knowledge and practices that account for intercultural communication skill. Only through intercultural communication skill can people from different cultures communicate effectively and productively in the global family.

Knowledge and practice of intercultural communication skill will not only help

to transform individuals into multicultural persons by fostering multiple cultural identities, but also function to nourish an awareness of these multiple identities and extend to maintain a multicultural coexistence in order to develop a global civic culture. Therefore, intercultural communication skill is the key to cultivating ability of tolerance and mutual respect for cultural differences, which marks the enlightened global citizenship required at different levels of future human society and global family.

Global Development

Two major trends account for the emergence of global development in human society: economic transformation and technology development. First, the rapid development of communication technologies over the past century has fundamentally transformed human society by linking every part of international economy into an interconnected network. The introduction of telegraph in 1844 launched the first steps of change on the planet. Followed by the telephone developed by Alexander Graham Bell in 1875, the successful installment of submarine telephone cable in 1956, the first telecommunications satellite in 1960, the fiber optic communications system utilized in 1977, and the most recent electronic mail systems such as e-mail, bulletin boards, computer, and web pages, plus the development of transportation technologies, people with different cultural backgrounds around the world have been interconnected locally, regionally, and globally for education, business, travel, and social interactions. Technology development has made evolution of global family inevitable and irreversible.

Among these communication and information technologies, internet makes the most significant contribution to the global interconnectivity. With the extensive use of networked computers, internet has blurred the line between mass and interpersonal communication and enables both personal and public messages to flow across national boundaries faster and more easily by providing an opportunity for acquainted and unacquainted individuals to communicate from different societies on a regular basis. It has been absorbed into our daily activities and integrated into the routines and structure of domestic life. The transformation of physical settings and social situations due to the usage of internet not only redefines the concepts of space and time, but also creates a global town square in which people can enjoy the freedom of expressions. Through the process of self-image projection and reality

construction on the internet, our physical being and environment are extended and new communities, which bring together people of disparate groups, are established.

Second, the innovation of communication and transportation technology has led to a new landscape of economic world. For example, companies such as Amazon, Google, Citicorp, Coca-Cola, and Sony derive over 50% of business revenues from markets other than their home countries, and companies such as Marriott, AT&T and Wal-Mart have begun to make systematic efforts towards global development during the last decade. The old structure of national economies and markets has gradually been transformed into a globalized system. From the perspective of management and communication, the process of transformation of business organizations can be described as the movement from domestic firms, multidomestic firms, multinational firms, to global firms. A global company demands the ability of transnational dynamics to understand the potential clients' needs all over the world, and then quickly transform these worldwide needs into products and services and to deliver them to the clients in a culturally appropriate and acceptable fashion.

The economic shifts in global development inevitably change the contours of the world of work and bring in new consumers, new corporations, new knowledge, and new jobs. Because the new consumers are spreading throughout the world that are difficult to be concentrated, the global market represents a great challenge on almost every aspect of human society, including technology, management, culture, language, etc. The coming of new corporations indicates the challenge to the structure of organization that requires a new corporate culture to adjust to the new environment.

In other words, a new way of managing the diverse and cross functional employees has become basic tenet for the global business to survive. The new knowledge such as ideas, processes, and information have increasingly become intangible products accompanied with the traditional tangible goods. To effectively transfer this new knowledge, the process of global business transactions must be transformed and translated into a multiple cultural form. Moreover, the global new jobs reflect a diverse workforce in which a new kind of employment relationship, embedded in cultural diversity, will be developed. Thus, an innovative plan of employees' arrangement and managerial landscape is required to maintain the flexibility for handling the diversification of the labor force,

The process of global development not only abolishes the limit of space and time, but also extends human community into a global family. However, it also reflects a dilemma, which represents a pulling and pushing between local identity and global diversity, or between a homogenized world culture and heterogenized local cultures which may be called the dialectical contradiction between the two forces of “global paradox,” dictating the phenomenon that the more globalized the world is, the more powerful its smallest players will be. Global development then demands an integration of cultural diversity in the global community, but at the same time also reflects people's needs to develop a strong self or cultural identity. How people learn to integrate different cultural identities and interests and to negotiate and co-create cultural identity through communication in order to establish a new global civic community will decide the future of human society.

Theoretical Perspective

From the scholarly perspective, unfortunately, traditional studies have seldom connected well or integrated the concepts of “culture”, “communication” and “global development”. Three established academic fields on the study of these concepts include communication studies, media and cultural studies, and global development studies.

Communication studies began after World War II and become an academic field during the 1950s in the United States. Beginning with early studies focusing on international communication and speech communication and continuing on to recently developed intercultural communication, communication studies as an academic field tends to ignore the relationship between culture and media, or how people use media in different cultural contexts, and how that closely relates to the global development of human society.

The field of media and cultural studies emerged in the 1970s in Britain on the basis of resisting the dominance of communication studies in the United States, which was more oriented towards the empirical or discovery paradigm. Yet, most British media studies focus on the role media institutions play in the process of global development. Many scholars in this area tend to take global development for granted, by not making an effort to theorize the concept. As for cultural studies, originated from the Frankfurt School in Germany, the field suffers from the lack of concern about the impact media has on people. The

problems that exist in media studies and cultural studies are like those that appear between the studies of international communication and intercultural communication. Cultural studies in Europe and in the United States mainly pays attention to cultural issues instead of media issues(Longhurst, p. 191).

More than 50 years ago Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn (1952) presented in their article *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* 164 definitions. In cultural psychology culture is most commonly applied as the term for the patterns of knowledge, beliefs and behaviour, or the set of shared attitudes, norms, values, goals and practices that characterize a group. Everybody is born into a specific, but dynamic culture that cultivates the personality and identity of every human being. Language and culture have both emerged as means of using symbols to construct social identity. Children acquire language in the same way as they acquire basic cultural norms and values, through interaction with older members of their cultural group.

The study of global development began in the early 1990s, a time when the pace of global development significantly increased its impact on human society in terms of scope and scale. Nevertheless, although scholars from different disciplines are involved in the study of global development and most agree that without media and communication global development will not emerge as such a great impetus of the transformation of human society, the role of media and communication in the theorization of the concept of global development remains vague and less specified. The contribution of scholars from the field of media and communication to global development theories is far less than scholars from other disciplines such as anthropology and sociology.

The separation problem of communication studies, cultural/media studies, and global development studies in scholarly research has been gradually alleviated in recent years, but more studies in this direction are still needed. It is the purpose of this paper to integrate these concepts through the examination of the relationship between global development and intercultural communication from an Indian perspective.

As a universal concept, “communication” exists in all human societies. In other words, people in different societies must go through the process of exchanging symbols in order to achieve the goal of mutual understanding. Hence, the development of a universal model or theory of human communication is

possible, especially when applied to the explanation of, for example, the existence, nature and components of communication.

Nevertheless, while recognizing the fact claimed by scholars that “we cannot not communicate”, “Communication is symbolic, dynamic, and developmental”, or “Communication involves elements such as sender, encoding, channel, message, receiver, decoding, feedback, noise, environment, etc.”, it is important to know that the way to perceive the concept and to exercise communication activities is subject to the influence of the culture a person lives by (Adler and Rodman, p. 17).

Take one of the universal components of human communication as an example. “Encoding” is a necessary internal process of creating symbols in the sender's mind before a message can be developed and delivered to the receiver via a channel. However, in the process of encoding, Indian people are conditioned by their cultural teachings, such as “sincerity in speaking,” “silence is gold,” and “talking much errs much”, and therefore tend to be very cautious in creating symbols. The amount of self-disclosure reflected in the message is therefore less than that of Westerners, and the quality of the message tends to be more relational and other-oriented. Moreover, the belief of “harmony is a great virtue” also leads the Indians to be more restrained, indirect, and less confrontational in the process of feedback.

The diversity of languages, customs, and expressive behaviors confirms that much of our behaviour is socially and culturally programmed, not hardwired. Humans, more than any other animal, harness the power of culture to make life better. We have culture to thank for our communication through language. Culture facilitates our survival and reproduction, and nature has blessed us with a brain that, like no other, enables culture. No species can accumulate progress across generations as smartly as humans do, amongst other things, to the invention of written language. We can pass our experiences and transmit information and innovations across time and place to the future generations in a unique way. We needn't think of evolution and culture as competitors. Cultural norms subtly but powerfully affect our attitudes and behaviour, but they don't do so independent of biology. Advances in genetic science indicate how experience and activity change the brain and establish new connections between neurons .

Indian Perspective on Communication

One of the prominent trends in academic research induced by global development in the 1990s is the scholars' challenge, especially from the non-Western world, against the domination of Eurocentrism in social sciences by raising the question of appropriateness of the Eurocentric paradigm being used in different societies (Miike, 2002). The domination of Eurocentrism is caused by the attitude of Western triumphalism, which is illustrated through individualism, rationalism, and chauvinistic nationalism and eventually leads to the challenge from scholars in non-Western areas under the impact of global development.

The individualism embedded in the Eurocentric paradigm celebrates self-reliance, autonomy, independence and individual liberty, and all these tend to undermine the idea of human cooperation and tolerance; rationalism assumes that only Europeans have the right to define what and how to approach reality; and chauvinistic nationalism promotes the European-American idea as the most correct form of human societies. This dominance of Eurocentrism eventually leads to the marginalization, silence, and exclusion of other non-European paradigms. Therefore, in order to correct this problem, a culture specific approach is required to be adopted for the study of human communication (Servaes, 2000)

One way to understand more about what it means to communicate in different contexts is to look at some models that describe what happens when two or more people interact. Until about fifty years ago, researchers viewed communication as something that one person does to another. In this pipeline or linear model, communication is like a sender converts words into a message and sends that to a receiver who in turn converts the message into words and derives a meaning. The pipeline model represents a theory of information transfer. But the theory does not explain how information or the medium exist as things. Instead, both are active and dynamic (Wilce, p.11).

The transactional communication model seems to be better at representing the way most communication occurs. The transactional model reflects the fact that we usually send and receive messages simultaneously. The role of sender and receiver that seemed separate in the pipeline model are now superimposed as those of communicators. This could also be termed as a pragmatic approach to communication which treats communication as activity or practice. When we

communicate we don't just messages, we act in and on our worlds. This approach reflects something habitual and patterned and also to some extent reflecting shared patterns (Adler and Rodman, p. 10).

T. Oliver (1971) analyzed distinctive features of 'Indian' and 'Asian' rhetoric, and identified unity and harmony as the bases of rhetoric and communication in Asia. He argued that the manner in which Indians communicate is different from that of the Westerners. Hence, Oliver emphasized the need to understand communication in the context of culture. He further argued that by understanding the Eastern rhetoric the Westerners can better understand their own ideas of rhetoric and communication.

In 1980, the East-West Communication Institute in Hawaii hosted the first International Symposium on 'Communication Theory: Eastern and Western Perspectives'. The symposium bears significance for it marked first institutional initiatives regarding theorization of communication in different perspectives. J.S. Yadava presented a paper in the seminar and argued that *Sadharanikaran* is that concept which, in Indian perspective, refers to what is meant by communication today. Yadava considers *Natyashastra* as the source-book for theorizing communication in Indian perspective. In Yadava's words, "Bharat Muni, who is credited with the writing of *Natyashastra* codified the principles of human expression. ... Besides giving practical description of various aspects of dance and drama to the minutest details, the document is rich about the basics of human communication." (Yadava, p.177-195)

Natyashastra

The Indian concept of communication as described in *Natyashastra* is based on the '*ViratPurush*' (cosmic man) view. A natural extension of this concept is that it espouses the systems approach, the authority of Universal law, the law of *Dharma*. *Dharma* is the basic principle of the whole cosmos and it exists eternally. This natural law of *Dharma* regulates human existence and governs relations of individual beings; communication too is governed by the same law (Vatsyayan, p. 51).

In this concept, the world is an organism, a whole in which each part is interconnected and interdependent to a small or large extent. Thus, each part and activity at the micro and macro levels is interconnected and interdependent on all other parts to some extent. The neuronal networks in the brain, which determine the functioning of mind, are an example of such

connectivity. This interconnectivity and interdependence is basic and fundamental to the existence of each unit and the whole.

In this context, the concept of *bija* is a central principle of the theory of aesthetics and the process of expression and communication in Indian texts (Vatsyayan, p. 49). The word and metaphor of *bija* (seed) is used in *Chandyoga Upanishad* to symbolize the beginnings of the cosmos. In *Chandyoga Upanoshad*, Svetaketu tells his father Aruni that there was nothing inside the seed of the Banyan tree which Aruni had asked him to break and see inside. Aruni tells his son that the Banyan tree had grown from the subtle essence inside the seed which he did not see. The whole cosmic reality is that subtle essence.

The lesson of this example is that the cosmic process with its names and forms arises from the subtle essence of Pure Being (Radhakrishnan, p. 462). The three principles which emerge from single notion of *bija* are process, organic interconnectedness of the parts and the whole, and a continuous but well defined course of growth, change and renewal. The process of growth, the proliferation of each part being distinct and different and yet developing from the same unitary source, is fundamental. The complementariness of matter and energy, indeed, even the transformation of matter into energy and vice-versa, is implicit in this metaphor.

The concept of Indra's Net in *Atharva Veda* (Malhotra, p. 5-17) also symbolizes the universe as a web of connections and interdependences. It has a single glittering jewel in each "eye" of the net, and since the net itself is infinite in dimension, the jewels are infinite in number. In each jewel there are reflected *all* other jewels in the net, infinite in number. Not only that, but each of the jewels reflected in this one jewel is also reflecting all the other jewels, so that there is an infinite reflecting process occurring.

These concepts have been fully validated by modern science which has shown that every particle in the physical universe takes its characteristics from the pitch and pattern and overtones of its particular frequencies. American psychologist George Leonard (1978) writes that at the root of all existence there is play of patterned frequencies against the matrix of time. The deep structure of vibration and communication is the same as the deep structure of everything else.

Noble Laurate Ilya Prigogine has remarked that Darwin's theory of evolution

was an early step in the direction of recognition in modern science of the connectivity of all forms of life with each other (Prigogine, 1997). The metaphor of Indra's net seems to correspond precisely with the theories of quantum mechanics and the more recent findings of particle physics, which has developed theorems like the following: "Each particle consists of all particles," or "Each particle helps produce other particles, which in turn produce the particle itself." It appears as if these were verses from Indian scriptures, but in fact they are theorems of modern theoretical physics. Both have significant implications for developing intercultural communication skills in the global family (Berendt, 1991).

Vakyapadiya

Bhartrihari's *Vakyapadiya* is also a relevant text in this regard. Bhartrihari is much accredited for philosophical discussion on communication, especially the word (Vak). Dissanayake (2003) sees "a refreshing relevance" of *Vakyapadiya* "to modern communication studies". He claims, "Indeed, the basic thinking reflected in the *Vakyapadiya* is in perfect consonance with some of the modern conceptualizations in the field of communication". Dissanayake considers four vital strands of thought contained in the *Vakyapadiya* for students of communication:

1. Bhartrihari's contention pertaining to the role of language in humancognition that there is no cognition in the world in which the word does not figure and all knowledge is, as it were, intertwined with language.
2. Bhartrihari's emphasis on the total sentence as the unit of meaning as opposed to most other contemporary scholars' stress on the need to recognize the word as the unit of meaning.
3. The contextualization of communication pointing out that the contextualization of utterances facilitates in the circumscribing of the field of discourse, thereby eliminating ambiguities of meaning.
4. The notion of sphota, which can be taken in the context of linguistic meaning to suggest that which discloses thought.(ibid.).

In *Vakyapadiya*, Bhartrihari shows that communication involves a network of interdependent factors. From his writings it is clear that he identifies five such factors: Sound, which is primarily phonetic in nature; Words, which refers to the syntactic pattern of utterance; Meaning which is the semantic element; Intention, the pragmatic element; and Context, the situational element.

Sound occurs due to the flow of air through our vocal organ. The phonetic element is characterized by accent, pitch, and intonation that vary from speaker to speaker. Words consist of phonemes presented in a particular order. It is that to which the hearer pays attention when the speaker intends to communicate something. Thus it is the conveyor of meaning. Its role is crucial, as Bhartrihari points out, "both the speaker and the listener have to think of words first before thinking of the meaning" (Patnaik, p. 99).

Meaning is that which is conveyed and manifested through the words and sentences. The relationship between meaning and sentence is very close, because sentence has a correspondence to express the meaning. Intention of the speaker is the fourth constitutive factor. As Bhartrihari points out, "the uttered level of speech is possible because the speaker intends to communicate". The relationship between speech and intention is a relationship of cause and effect. Finally, context is the fifth constitutive factor. Bhartrihari says that meaning of an expression is not to be determined by its form only but by contextual factors also. Contextual factors like situation, propriety, place and time are more universal in nature and not related to a specific language (ibid.).

In Bhartrihari's opinion communication is not a process of directly transferring the contents of thought from the speaker to the listener. The skill to express the thought and grasp the meaning in a holistic manner exists as an inherent skill within human beings. So the expressive thought is made explicit through a stretch of words constituting the sentence. This audible stretch of words, and the sentence, presented sequentially, syllable by syllable, is the cause of the manifestation of the unmanifest and undifferentiated meaning to be communicated. But unless the listener understands the stretch of words as representing auditory and sequenceless meaning, linguistic communication is not achieved. On the other hand, such an understanding may be achieved even without hearing the complete sequence of words and sentence.

These insights from Indian texts on the structure and process of communication have been supported by recent advances and researches in neuroscience. Cognitive scientists have shown experimentally that to understand even very simple statements the brain performs a number of very complex processes, without any awareness that such processes are taking place. If we consider all that is going below the level of conscious awareness when we communicate, it is almost like a computer operating system doing

complex operations in the background as we do seemingly simple things apparently. Comprehending a stream of sound as language; assigning a structure to the sentence; giving meaning to words appropriate to the context; noticing the speaker's body language; and planning what to say in response, are some of the tasks that the brain does systematically in split second time frame (Garcia, p. 192).

The discourse on communication from Indian perspective has so far been confined to a limited domain. Such works have drawn on very few Sanskrit texts such as Bharata's *Natyashastra*, Bhartrihari's *Vakyapadiya*, and Panini's *Astadhyayi*. Few genres like rhetoric and poetics have been touched in this regard. Some have drawn on religion (*Dharma*) for understanding communication in Indian context. Among the orthodox Indian philosophical schools, *Vedanta* seems the preferred one. By virtue of its rich discursive tradition, Indian literature has far broader scope of study corpus than explored by now. Studying Indian perspective on communication needs a wider outlook because diverse and enormous sources are available in this regard and most of them are yet to be explored.

Advaita

Intercultural communication skill requires individuals to unfold and expand the personal characteristics, including flexibility, sensitivity, open mindedness, and motivation. As the centrality of the global society, the self must be mobilized to visualize its identity in the context of the unity of the underlying reality. Through the extension of personal attributes self-identity should be able to build a bridge between the personal and social life. A connection of I and thou is required to create a web of meanings shared by the global community. In other words, the ability of unfolding the self is an important way to promote creativity, learning, and innovation in the process of global development. Inability to unfold the self to face the challenge of constant changes and complexities of the globalizing society often leads to an unsuccessful ride of the wave of future society (Adler and Rodman, p. 33).

The concept of *Advaita* in *Vedantic* philosophy considers the individual human being as a co-creator, with heaven and earth, of the integrative whole of the cosmos, and he plays the most important and fundamental role in achieving the productive living of human society. Increasingly the interconnectedness of human society is creating situations and issues which

can be addressed through the principal idea of the solidarity of the universe emphasized in the *Upanishads*. Ignorance of this fundamental principle and reality is a cause of hatred and conflict (Selections Swami Vivekananda, p. 225).

Modern science has validated this principle of *Advaita* by recognizing that in order to fully unfold the potential of individual human beings, their self must be ceaselessly evolved, constantly liberated, and perpetually integrated with the Universal Self. Global development is a process in which the two extremes of extensionality and intentionality are being increasingly interconnected. In other words, the two forces of globalization and localisation are pushing and pulling, adjusting and readjusting with each other to search for an integrative and holistic future of human society (Chopra and Kaftos, p. 230).

Indian texts have described that the intrinsic value of the self is in congruence with the cosmic order, and the self is considered as capable of being mutually transmuted with the world to reach the level of ideal and authentic existence. The individual self can consciously choose to cast everything, including the development of the individual and other human companions, the frame of human society, and the achievement of value, into the mold of universal existence (Vatsyayan, p. 165)

Vedantic texts say that the individual self possesses four levels for consciousness: the level of gross things, the level of reason and manifest differences, the level of contemplation of unmanifested objectivity, and the level of undifferentiated Supreme Reality. The individual employs the level of gross things to empirically perceive the external world. Through human senses and their extensions, the individual comes to know the facts of the material world. This is the level of sensory experiences for the realm of time, space, and matter. The level of reason is used to attain knowledge of logic, philosophy, and mind. Through this mental eye, the individual walks into the realm of mind where memory, ideas, image, reason, and will reside. Although the level of reason often relies on the empirically sensory experiences for gaining information, it transcends the level of action especially in the areas of imagination, will, logical reasoning, conceptual understanding, psychological insight, and creativity. At the level of contemplation, the individual rises to the realm of transcendent realities that are beyond sense and reason, and reveal the truth of self-liberation. Finally, the fourth level is the spiritual experience of the real Self as an integral part of the Supreme Reality which demarcates the

sphere of time and place from the sphere of timelessness and all pervading Supreme Reality (Radhakrishnan, p. 75).

Consciousness of oneness of Self with the Ultimate Reality is dependent on the integration of three levels of action, reason, and contemplation. Unfortunately, the separation and confrontation of the three levels, represented by science, philosophy, and religion, characterizes the existence of human beings in modern age. This leads individuals to stay in the lower ladder of the development of human greatness and stop short of reaching higher levels. Common people at the first level of action can be cultivated into the second type, a learned and enlightened one, who maintain an insight of knowledge and a dignified action with the noble art of life. The continuous improvements will move the second type to an individual possessing a refined and discerning character and a balance of mind. Further refinement and cultivation transforms one into an individual whose actions are in harmony with the high standard of values that are universally acceptable in all human societies and whose thoughts and actions set a good standard for the global citizens without compromising his integrity.

In this context, there seems to be an urgent need to apply principles derived from *Vedanta* philosophy to the interpersonal and intercultural communication. The *Vedantic* concept of *Advaita* may be reduced in essence to five principles: There is the only one underlying reality there is none other; the world of plurality has only an apparent reality, like the waves of the sea; the individual ego is a transitory product of the ultimate reality individuality is ephemeral; *Atman* that appears as individual is a manifestation of the undifferentiated and unmanifest reality; *Brahman*, the ultimate reality cannot be known it can only be experienced and realised. These principles have far-reaching implications for communication theory.

One implication of the concept of *Advaita* for communication is that since there are no individual selves besides the universal self, such self-knowledge and communication within the self does not exclude what we call the world, but in fact includes and integrates them within one experience. Communication is then totally participatory, totally egalitarian, totally non-divisive and is not distorted by a false separation of subject from object.

Another implication is that *Advaita* as a mode of communication is not exposed to the risks of cultural and linguistic attenuation and it is the one that

transcends duality and multiplicity and seeks communion within. This does not require that we abandon the use of language, or abrogate any of the technologies of communication. But it does compel us to recognise that what passes for modern communication, because it is raised on a false understanding of reality, tends more and more to reinforce separation and isolation and misunderstanding, and is therefore inevitably oppressive.

According to the principles of *Advaita* once a person realises the unity of all beings then all differences, including the difference between one culture and another will vanish. It means that an individual will do the right thing in a spontaneous manner by overcoming the obstacles that the cultural barrier generally involves. There will be a rise from parochial consciousness to the universal consciousness. All his actions will arise from understanding and compassion and not just with sympathy and condescension. Such action is purely voluntary, which will arise out of love and compassion and not in obedience to any command or out of deference to any obligation. This is a state where he will overcome narrow loyalties and all kinds of hatred and create universal universal understanding with the vision of the unity of all beings (Sarvātmabhāva). And so there will be no conflicts in intercultural communication, and the consciousness of unity will lead to multicultural integration. Thus, the *Advaita* principles can act as a guiding light to develop intercultural communication skills. Such skills can positively contribute to multicultural discourse both in terms of thought and action.

Intercultural communication skill is a process of transforming and moving oneself from the lower to higher level of the developmental ladder of human beings, which represents the process of unceasingly edifying, liberating, and purifying personal attributes of the self. These personal attributes are developed under the umbrella of empathy which dictates the principle of unity within diversities and particularity identified with universality. In other words, the spirit of empathy is manifested by the interfusion and interpenetration of human multiplicities. From the human perspective, the great empathy formulates the ideal of fellow-feeling by expanding the self consciousness to the consciousness of one's fellow persons, and the entire universe.

At the global level, intercultural communication skill refers to the ability to look for shared communication symbols and project the self into another person's mind by thinking the same thoughts and feeling the same emotions as the other

person. In 1928 the English literary critic and author I.A. Richards offered one of the first—and in some ways still the best—definitions of communication as a discrete aspect of human enterprise, “*Communication takes place when one mind so acts upon its environment that another mind is influenced, and in that other mind an experience occurs which is like the experience in the first mind, and is caused in part by that experience*” (Gordon, N. 2016).

Individuals with consciousness of oneness of Ultimate Reality are able to show deep concern for others' feelings and reactions, to adopt different roles as required by different situations, to demonstrate reciprocity of affect displays, active listening, and verbal responses that show understanding and lead to the establishment of an intercultural rapport. Unfolding the self demands ceaselessly purifying oneself, continuous learning, cultivating sensitivity, develop creativity, and fostering empathy.

Sahridayata

As a psychological process, communication reflects patterns of individual or group thinking. Through perception and reasoning process, which is predisposed by culture, individuals and groups develop a mental frame that leads them to see things and events from a specific lens. The mental frame of seeing things in a particular way, then serves as a cognitive lens through which we look at the world around us. Because we acquire cognitive lens through learning, which is embedded in the process of socialization and personal experience, the more diverse the personal and cultural background is, the more different the thought world would be. Therefore, thought process can be used as a conceptual tool for examining why people look at a specific issue or act in a unique way in solving daily practical problems.

Ethnocentric persons tend to tie themselves closely with their cultural group members, and subjectively apply their cultural beliefs to interpret external stimuli and judge others' behaviors. Parochial persons see the world solely from their own perspectives without recognizing the different ways of living among people of different cultures.

Adler and Rodman (2014) have pointed out that both ethnocentric and parochial people are incapable of appreciating cultural diversity, one of the key elements of globalizing society. Holding the perception of “our way is the best way,” ethnocentric persons do not consider that cultural diversity will cause problems for individuals or organizations. They are inclined to live in the

monocultural cocoon. By believing that “our way is the only way,” parochial persons have a strong tendency to deny and ignore the potential impact of cultural diversity. They are often blinded by their own practice and unable to detect the changes and complexity of global development trends (ibid. p. 19).

The *Vedic* concept of *Sahridayata* shows the global reach of Indian thinking in this regard. The concept of *Sahridayata* has been very succinctly explained by Vidya Nivas Mishra. The word *Sahridaya* has two components: *Saman* which mean same, equal, harmony, being and *Hridaya* means heart, or becoming. He takes help of a *Rigvedic* sutra to clarify its: “*Samanivaakutihsamanhrydaya-nivahsamanmastusomano yathavahsusahasatih*,” that is “let our minds be in harmony, our hearts be in harmony, let our thinking be in harmony, our thought processes be in harmony so that we can live for a meaningful living of all-together” with positive attitude towards life (Mishra, p.97).

In order to foster the ability of global communication skill, the first step is to develop *Sahridayata*, referring to openness to other cultures that facilitates intercultural interactions. *Sahridayata* is the foundation of intercultural communication skill. A well-founded *Sahridayata* enables individuals to envision the coming of a global society, and then use intercultural communication skill appropriately and effectively. It fosters the ability to envisage the changing nature of the world and to engage in the process of regulating the change, and to drive for a broader picture of context in which diversity and cultural differences are valued and balanced.

In contrast to the closed worldview hold by ethnocentric and parochial thought processes, people with *Sahridayata* are able to foster a synergistic ability through a creative process of combining and balancing our own and their ways. Thus, cultural differences may lead to problems, but they as well provide advantages for nourishing personal and organization growth if we know how to recognize and use them to create positive opportunities. In other words, the openness embedded in *Sahridayata* allows change, improvement, and innovation over time, while facing the impact of cultural differences and other trends such as technological change.

Sahridayata calls for people to broaden and expand their thinking by eliminating those lenses one possesses about other cultures and their differences. It equips individuals with a mental ability to scan the world in a broad perspective and always consciously expect new trends and

opportunities, so that personal, social, and organizational objectives can be achieved in a harmonious way. Built on the foundation of openness, *Sahridayata* represents the decrease or absence of ethnocentrism and parochialism.

As the foundation of intercultural communication skill, *Sahridayata* is closely related to individuals' affective, cognitive, and behavioral abilities. In other words, *Sahridayata* forms a cycle of intercultural communication skill in which individuals learn to unfold the self via the internal illumination of personal affect or attributes towards global development, to reach the cognitive awareness of cultural varieties, and to develop behavioral skill of global interactions.

Sahridayas have “common sympathetic heart”. In other words, a *Sahridaya* is a “person who receives communication in a state of emotional intensity, i.e.. a quality of emotional dimension coequal to that of the sender of the message”. In such a background, *Sahridayata* can be considered as “emotional preparedness” that “entails living amongst people, sharing their joys and sorrows but encompassing the entire humanity within, becoming a citizen of a world. With such preparedness, universalization of *bhava*(nature) is possible and *rasa*(emotional) experience is successful” (Mishra, p.93)

The concept of *Sahridayata* is related to the concept of *Vak* in Indian texts. The *Vak Sukta* of Rigveda tells us that *Vak* (speech) exists in life like the life breath, but it is not there in one life alone but in all life and above and beyond life as well. In that sense, it is the object and motive for all human life, its very purpose. The very meaning of *Vak* is therefore mutuality, sharing and the recognition of this mutuality and sharing. Only through this consciously articulated voice or language does the desire for companionship and universal well-being gets expressed and known. But this thought occurs only to those who are companionable and who have the desire for sharing and fraternity (Mishra, p.67)

The speech of such communicator searches for its receiver, half known and half unknown. Its intended meaning becomes known only to the one who waits for the words to manifest their meaning. This receiver will be only the one whose heart is in tune with the speaker, who has learnt to recognize the spirit of the words, and who has acquired the experience of feeling the vibrations of the words passing through his heart. This communion between the speaker and

the listener is *Sahridayata* (Mishra, p.72).

Deriving from this, individuals with *Sahridayata* are considered to possess five personal characteristics: First, they are culturally sensitive. Global development brings people of different cultures together in every level of communication and all aspects of life, cross-cultural sensitivity becomes a great challenge for people to communicate constructively among one another. Individuals with *Sahridayata* not only have a well-developed ego and positive concept, but also possess a sensitive heart regarding cultural diversity.

Second, they are open. Openness refers to two meanings. Personally, it allows individuals to seek continuous improvements in the constantly changing environment that characterizes the process of global development. In communication, it concerns non judgmental attitude towards culturally different counterparts. Together, openness demands a strong motivation for perpetual learning to deal with cultural differences.

Third, they are knowledgeable. Individuals with *Sahridayata* are equipped with a driving force that impels them to broaden and deepen their perspective in terms of local and global events. Knowing cultural, social, business, and other similarities and differences ensures a sound action in making decisions, solving conflicts, and riding the wave of global development.

Fourth, they are critical and holistic thinkers. In addition to being knowledgeable in accurately perceiving cultural similarities and differences, individuals with *Sahridayata* have the ability to sort out the complexity of the changing world through critical and analytical thinking. They are able to see the world not only as one, but also as an orderly kaleidoscopic many, like *Indra's* net. That is, they have the ability to think deductively and inductively.

Finally, they are flexible. Individuals with *Sahridayata* tend to show conceptual and behavioral flexibility in the process of intercultural communication. They demonstrate abilities of accuracy and adaptability when attending to diverse information and rapid changing environment. The commonality in communication nourishes the person to see the uncertainty caused by the change of global development as an opportunity for moving forward. Moreover, they respond and adjust to the change efficiently, effectively, and comfortably by altering and co-occurring verbal and nonverbal behavioral choices that mark the complex relationships of interactants in the global communication(Adler and Rodman, p. 17)

To summarize, *Sahridayata* enables individuals to regulate the complexity, ambiguity, contradiction, and conflict embedded in the turbulent change of global development process. Moreover, it serves to impel individuals to drive for a broad perspective, to motivate individuals to learn how to respect and value cultural diversity, to expect individuals to balance contradiction and conflict inherent in the various demands for global competition and cooperation, and to propel individuals to flow with the globalizing wave as comfortable fish swimming in the ocean.

From the foregoing it is clear that communication does not depend merely on syntax, or eloquence, or rhetoric, or articulation but also on the emotional context in which the message is being heard. People can hear the speaker only when they try to move towards the speaker, and they are not likely to when the speakers words are chasing the listeners. Even the best words lose their power when they to coerce the listener rather than reach out for his heart. Emotional attitudes are the real figures of speech. It is not surprising therefore that recent studies have found that more than 90 percent of the impression that a speaker has nothing to do with what he actually says (Maxwell, p. 49).

Thus, *Sahridayata* is the ability to learn to connect with the people in their heart and mind. An understanding of *Advaita* and *Sahridayata*, can help in building cultural understanding, and cultural adjustment through *Samadarsana*.

Samadarsana

Global development involves increasing encountering of culturally diverse individuals and increasing demands of being aware of global interdependence of people and cultures. It not only requires us to develop a new mode of thinking, but also leads us to enmesh in external matters that are foreign to the city and community in which we have been living for many decades. In the process of reaching out, individuals are forced to experience different life styles, thinking paradigms, and expression patterns, and gradually broaden cultural understandings. Thus, with each new encounter, we begin to contrast cultural differences that may motivate us to prefer alternative styles of cultural expressions and engender in us a desire to retool, so that we can better function with those of unfamiliar counterparts. Cultural awareness is then a necessary mechanism, soothing the anxious and uncomfortable feelings caused by the ambiguous and uncertain environment due to cultural diversity in the globalizing process (Wilce, p. 249).

The concept of *Samadarsana* mentioned in *Bhagavadgita* is of great value to us in the modern age (Ranganathananda, p.153). *Samadarsana* means the realisation of the oneness of the Self and Universal Self. This realisation gives cognitive ability to understand one's own and another's cultures. It is the ability to acquire cultural understanding. To understand ourselves as a cultural being from our own cultural perspective is the basis of knowing our counterparts' culture. It is this mutual awareness of cultural knowledge that makes respect and integration of cultural difference possible. Thus, the awareness of cultural knowledge is a prerequisite of reducing situational ambiguity and uncertainty in the process of intercultural or global communication. The lack of discomfort, confusion, or anxiety due to the understanding of cultural differences helps individuals adapt to situational demands of global environment and cope with changing environment rapidly.

Through *Samadarsana*, we acquire knowledge and characteristics of our own and others' culture, and further draw a picture or map of the culture to reflect the degree of our understanding. Intercultural communication skill not only demands the knowledge of one's own and one's counterparts' cultures, but also requires both passive and active understanding. A passive understanding of other cultures or co-cultures only provides individuals with the feeling that they know others' culture. This kind of understanding usually is based on superficial experiences in cross-cultural settings, such as travelling to other countries, meeting people from different cultures in conferences, and having some acquaintances of other cultures. While the passive understanding only involves intellectual and rational components of knowing and will not guarantee that one can really function well or adapt to the other culture, an active understanding requires individuals to add affective and emotional elements into one's cognitive repertoire. In other words, the knowledge of self as Universal Self is involved in the active understanding that helps to develop an attitude of respect, tolerance, and acceptance of cultural differences. Thus, passive and active understandings form the continuum of cultural awareness, which indicates a developmental process.

The ability of understanding culture is the manifestation of *Samadarsana*, which comprises four steps of its developmental process: (1) Knowledge based on the superficial cultural traits leads to the reaction of unbelievability, and individuals tend to evaluate the cultural differences as being exotic or bizarre, (2) Knowledge of deeper cultural traits that greatly contrast with ours leads to

an internal conflict situation, and irrational interpretations of the differences tend to provoke feeling of frustration and disappointment, (3) Knowledge of Universal Self gradually leads us to the cognitive understanding of cultural differences and we begin to understand the existence of cultural differences, and (4) Stage of empathic awareness, we are able to see the differences from our culturally-different counterparts' position. This knowledge in turn leads to the ability of cultural immersion, or subjective familiarity, of core cultural traits that help us to live in another culture without feeling of strangeness. When we look at things from the standpoint of Ultimate Reality present in all, we see with the same eye. (Radhakrishnan, 2014. p.211).

The ultimate goal of fostering intercultural communication skill is to function effectively and appropriately in interactional level. In other words, the mental, affective, and cognitive abilities must be integrated into a set of behavioral skills that lead to a successful and productive interaction in the globalizing society. Communication skill as an individual's capacity is one of the basic needs of human beings to interact and adjust effectively with other human fellows and the environment. As a common property of human behaviors, communication skill can be attained through behaviors initiated by a person in one's own right. In other words, the degree of communication skill can be measured by the extent to which an individual produces an intended effect from interaction with his or her human fellows or the environment. Intercultural Communication skill is also increased through socialization, and it is learned not only incidentally, but also through consciously managing the interaction.

In this sense, intercultural communication skill depends much on the ability of empathy or commonality which is based on level of individual consciousness and sensitivity. The level of individual consciousness depends on a spiritual understanding of oneness, or *Advaita*, not only at the human level but also at the level of the Ultimate Reality of the cosmic process. Sensitivity towards the fellow human beings demands a feeling of *Sahridayata*, of shared heartbeats, and a *Samadarsana* or view of all human beings and indeed all life as manifestation of an underlying unity of existence.

Samadarsana leads to effectiveness and appropriateness, two components of intercultural communication skills. Effectiveness refers to individuals' ability to select among a set of communication behaviors to accomplish specific goals

in the process of global communication. These specific goals include getting relevant information about these goals, accurately predicting the other's responses, selecting communication strategies, and correctly assessing the results of interaction in a multicultural context. More specifically, effectiveness is the ability to maximize the functions of communication in terms of influencing and managing the communication process or environment, comfortably sharing feelings with culturally different counterparts, informing the necessary cultural cues, streamlining the communication process, and imaging the picture of cultural similarities and differences.

Appropriateness is the ability to meet the contextual requirements in the global communication, or to recognize the different sets of rules in different situations. It indicates the right quantity of message sending, the consistent quality of message delivered, the relevancy of the topical messages and situation, and the manner of expression. This ability of maintaining the face of one's culturally different counterparts within the constraints of the situation is parallel to the verbal and nonverbal context, in which both kinds of expressions are making sense to participants; to the relationship context, in which the structure and delivery of the messages are consonant with the particular relationship between the participants; and to the environmental context, in which the constraints induced from the symbolic and physical environment and imposed on the interaction are well considered by the participants. Altogether, intercultural communication skill is the ability of participants to execute communication behaviors to elicit desired responses in a congenial and cooperative environment without violating their counterparts' norms and rules.

Successful interaction based on intercultural communication skill is embedded in the two aspects of the globalizing society: people and environment. From the perspective of people, intercultural communication skill demands a set of behavioral skill, including language ability, behavioral flexibility, interaction management, and identity maintenance. From the perspective of environment, intercultural communication skill requires the ability to understand and manage changes or complexity of global practice. These competencies can best be achieved through an understanding and practice of the principles of *Advaita*, *Sahridayata*, and *Samadarsana*.

Conclusion

The trend for indigenous scholarship in the field of communication is getting strong because of the impact of globalization in economic, social and cultural fields. While dealing with the emergence of indigenous scholarship, three issues are worth discussing for those working in the area of communication, i.e., cultural changes over time, the potential problem of dichotomy, and the universalization of indigenous concepts.

First, culture is dynamic. It constantly changes over time because of the impact of economic and technological change, natural and man-made calamity, cultural contact, and other possible environmental factors. When culture changes, cultural values change too, which results in the alternation of the significance of key concepts previously used to represent the culture or explain the behaviors of people from the culture. Scholars must be cautious in treating culture or cultural values as a static variable in conducting the study from the indigenous perspective by closely observing the representation of the concepts during the study. For example, are the key concepts included in this analysis really relevant to the contemporary Indian culture or just reflecting the traditional Indian cultural values? It is legitimate for one to question the contemporary representation of these key concepts or the possible transformation of the meanings of these key concepts in different ages. As Swami Vivekananda repeatedly emphasized, concepts like *Advaita* have to be tested and accepted at the altar of *Anubhava* instead of being received as eternal truths given to us by the sages in the past for all times and places. (Rambachan, p.94-97).

Second, the tendency of dichotomizing culture is a common problem in the research community, especially in the study of intercultural communication. A potential pitfall of dichotomizing culture stems from the attempt to severely delimit the intellectual inquiry by overemphasizing the necessity of employing the culture specific or parochial approach to the study of human communication. The dichotomy problem is displayed in three modes: the indiscriminant treatment of cultural values, the insider's privilege, and the blind acceptance or rejection of foreign elements.

A more appropriate attitude is to treat culture values as a continuum in which each culture or society tends to orient more to one end and show less emphasis on the other end. In other words, the Indian approach may be more

collectivistic oriented, but that doesn't infer that there is no individualism existing in Indian society. It can only infer that Indian people tend to be less individualistic in interaction. It is a more or less rather than an either-or situation. Moreover, the argument that only Indian scholars have the ability to know their own culture is also not warranted, because Western scholars may see what an Indian scholar cannot see about his culture due to the limitations of the worldview from within India. *Rigveda* sums up the limitless open mindedness in Indian texts in one all encompassing phrase "Let noble thoughts come to us from all directions." (Saraswati, Dayanand, p. 533).

As to the problem of the blind acceptance or the sheer rejection of foreign elements, it is just an irrational or ignorant expression, because while each culture or society is unique by itself, no human society today is an isolated island, thus the commonality of cultural values is not uncommon. All these demonstrate that the gap of cultural values among different cultures should not be a discrete or insurmountable one. We may ask: Are all the key concepts used to explain Indian communication behaviors solely belonging to Indian culture? The answer should be no, because the concepts may well be reflected in the communication behaviors of people from other societies, only with the difference of the degree of emphasis.

The commonality of cultural values in different societies provides a possibility or represents an ideal goal of indigenous scholarship for the establishment of a global or universal model of human communication. In recent years a group of scholars in psychology have contended that the ultimate goal of developing indigenous psychology is to help produce a global or universal psychology and people in different societies should possess identical psychological functioning. Unfortunately, scholars in the field of culture and communication tend to treat culture as a stable system and overemphasize the differences of specific styles of communication in different cultures. This oversight of the invariance in functioning of communication in different cultures often leads to factual incorrectness and theoretical misleading. Hence, on the basis of the existence of the identical deep structure of human cultures, the idea of one mind many mentalities, and universalism without uniformity can be proposed to serve as the principle of the inquiry of into intercultural communication.

This argument provides an opportunity for scholars to elaborate on what are the principles of intercultural communication skills behind the key Indian

concepts like *Advaita; Sahridayata; Samdarsana; Bija; Vasudhaiva Kutumbkama; Sadharanikaran; Rasa; and Bhava*. The principles of intercultural communication skills behind these concepts can help in developing a global or universal model of human communication in order to better understand and communicate with people in different societies, and to enrich the literature in this line of research.

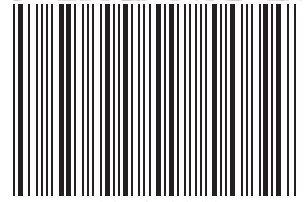
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MAHARAJA AGRASEN COLLEGE

University of Delhi

Vasundhara Enclave, Delhi - 110096 Phone : 91-11-22610552, Fax : +91-11-22610562

Website: mac.du.ac.in