
Two Decades of the Sadharanikaran Model of Communication

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Abstract:

This article presents an account on two decades of the Sadharanikaran Model of Communication in four sections. The first section discusses the background that inspired me to write this article. The second section provides a brief overview of my family background, which has been instrumental in shaping my worldview and providing a strong foundation to explore ancient Sanskrit texts from multidisciplinary perspectives. The third section covers my educational background that led me to the communication discipline in general and to the world of Sadharanikaran in particular. The fourth section presents an account of the evolution and development of the Sadharanikaran Model of Communication over a two-decade period based on my own experiences.

Keywords: Asiatic, Communication theory, De-Westernization, Reorientation, Sadharanikaran Model of Communication

The Sadharanikaran Model of Communication (SMC) is primarily rooted in *Natyasashtra* by Bharata Muni. The time of *Natyasashtra* is not certain as it goes to antiquity (for further discussion on the date of Bharata and *Natyashastra*, see: Adhikary, 2014a, pp. 34-36). The key word or core concept to understand the process of Sadharanikaran is *Sahridayata* (Adhikary, 2010b). The Sadharanikaran model of communication (SMC) is a representation of communication process from *Bharatavarshiya*/Hindu perspective. It is systematic description in diagrammatic form of a process of attaining mutual understanding, commonness or oneness among people. It illustrates how the communicating parties interact in a system (i.e., the process of *sadharanikaran*) for the attainment *sahridayata*. *Sahridayata* is the core concept upon which the meaning of *sadharanikaran* resides. It is the state of common orientation, commonality, mutual understanding or oneness. Communicating parties become *Sahridayas* with the completion of the process of *Sadharanikaran*. (Adhikary, 2014a, p. 17)

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Bharata Muni's *Natyashastra* has been the most favourite classical Sanskrit treatise for those communication scholars who have been exploring communication from Hindu/Bharatavarshiya/South Asian/Indian/Nepali perspective (Adhikary, 2013). Another principal text that has been drawn on while constructing the Sadharanikaran Model of Communication is *Vakyapadiya* by Bhartrihari, which is considered about 2000 years old. Dissanayake (1988b) presents an exploratory discussion on *Vakyapadiya* from the perspective of communication discipline (pp. 8-15). These two ancient Sanskrit texts— *Natyashastra* and *Vakyapadiya* – were the principal sources while theorizing and constructing the Sadharanikaran Model of Communication (Adhikary, 2003).

The idea of constructing the Sadharanikaran Model of Communication came into my mind when I came across a paper by J.S. Yadava in which he discussed that the concept of Sadharanikaran may be useful in theorizing communication (Yadava, 1998). In fact, it is relevant for this discipline. That article inspired me a lot. Later on, I found his earlier paper too (Yadava, 1987). I consider these two articles very important in my academic journey. Two books, each edited by Dissanayake (1988a) and Kincaid (1987), also provided a lot of insights in this regard. Whereas Yadava's works (Yadava, 1987, 1998) made me more confident on my foundation, Dissanayake's discussions and arguments (Dissanayake, 1988b, 2003) acquainted me with the ongoing paradigm shift in the discipline of communication. I came to know that the communication discipline's institutionalization was largely as "Euro-American discipline" (Kim, 2002, p. 6). As Gordon (2007, p. 51) observes it, "Human Communication Theory: Made in the U.S.A."

In fact, modern communication scholars were mostly "confined to communication metatheory associated with industrially advanced Western countries" (Dissanayake, 1988b, p. 1). Meanwhile, "If we are to widen our field of inquiry productively and to secure greater insights, we need to pay more attention to concepts of communication formulated by non-Western societies as well" (ibid.).

Similarly, Dissanayake (2003) wrote:

As a consequence of the work of the communication scholars in the West, much useful ground has been opened up and new knowledge produced. While one should applaud the efforts of these scholars, one should also draw attention to a glaring omission, namely, that so far we have examined communication largely in terms of Western optics, approaches, and visions. There is a real need to expand the field by studying communication from various non-Western

viewpoints. It is here that Asian approaches to communication become extremely important. (p. 18)

It was quite unsatisfactory for me to find the curriculum completely devoid of Hindu insights given that even my cursory reading of the Vedic Hindu texts made me aware of the fact that insights from Hindu philosophy/religion/culture/knowledge system(s) can enrich the communication discipline. This is why I started the academic endeavor of studying communication from Hindu perspective.

Later on I discovered this was the norm everywhere in the world. The discipline which is called Communication was institutionalized in the US (Craig, 1999; Perry, 2002; Pooley, 2016), and a linear expansion of it happened to other countries. Nepal was no exception. It was the same in other Asian, African, and even South American countries. The following observation by Dissanayake (2003) presents a reality then:

While communication scholars both in Western countries and in Asia make use of Western models and paradigms of communication, very little effort is made, except by a handful of scholars, to understand communication from an Asian perspective. This is primarily because there are not in academic circulation any Asian theories and models that communication teachers and students can readily use. Moreover, communication scholars in Asia have been, by and large, trained in the West and make use of books and journals and research papers published under a Western scholarly dispensation. If communication is to become a more meaningful mode of inquiry in Asia, and indeed in the rest of the world, it has to connect with indigenous intellectual roots, situated knowledge and local mode of thinking. Hence the need to move along the path of constructing Asian approaches, concepts, theories and models of communication is most urgent. (p. 18)

I remember that I had read yet another article on theorizing culture and communication in the Asian context (Miike, 2002) during those days.

I continued my reading with *Natyashastra* and *Vakyapadiya* originally. I came to know that while explaining the *Rasasutra* in *Natyashastra*, Bhattanayaka had theorized *Rasasutra* and he came up with the theory of *Sadharanikaran*. As I worked further taking insights from *Vakyapadiya* as well, the outcome was the *Sadharanikaran Model of Communication* in 2003.

I had written my dissertation for MA-MCJ in Nepali. Hence, the early published articles on the SMC were in Nepali (Adhikary, 2004, 2007a). From 2003

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to 2007, the discussion on the SMC was obviously limited to a small academic fraternity of Nepal only. It was in 2008, the SMC got international readers for the first time, when an article was published comparing Aristotle's model of communication and the SMC (Adhikary, 2008). Professor Yoshitaka Miike was the first ever scholar to write an email to me with an appraisal for this work. His encouragement led me to write an introduction to the SMC (Adhikary, 2009), which later became very popular among the communication scholars across the world.

Also, Prof. Miike invited me to write an article for the journal *China Media Research*, that I accepted, and it got published in 2010 (Adhikary, 2010a). It was after reading this article, Professor B.K. Kuthiala, the then Vice Chancellor of Makhnallal Chaturvedi National University of Journalism and Communication (popularly known as MCU), Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India, came to know about my works. An account has been published in the *Proceedings* (Dahal, Kafle, and Poudyal, 2024) in this regard:

Prof. Kuthiala, the then VC of MCU, had invited young scholar Mr. Nirmala Mani Adhikary to address an international conference organized by MCU, Bhopal in 2011. Mr. Adhikary had presented the SMC in front of the academics from across India and abroad, and he became quite popular among Indian academics after that event. In 2012, after completion of his Ph.D. from Nepal Sanskrit University, Dr. Adhikary was offered the Bharata Muni Chair Research Fellowship at MCU. Then Vice Chancellor Prof. Kuthiala was the research supervisor of Dr. Adhikary for his post-doctoral research at MCU. This research resulted in the publication of Dr. Adhikary's seminal book *Theory and Practices of Communication – Bharata Muni* in 2014. (p. 31)

Whereas the three articles published in *Bodhi: An Interdisciplinary Journal* (Adhikary, 2008, 2009, 2010b) gave me opportunities to strengthen the foundation of the SMC, the Sancharyoga article (Adhikary, 2010a), and the four papers on the SMC (Adhikary, 2010c, 2010d, 2011a) instrumental for establishing a robust interaction with the academic fraternity abroad. With the publication of the book (Adhikary, 2014) and an entry in the *International Encyclopedia of Communication Theory and Philosophy* (Adhikary, 2016), the SMC got wider audiences across the world. There are numerous professors/scholars/authors, and publications (articles/papers/books) that contributed for the mainstreaming of the Sadharanikaran Model of Communication over the years.

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There are various communication theories and models. Virtually all of them in the modern time were constructed, developed and institutionalized in the West, and the non-Western countries simply continued that as a linear expansion. So, the common characteristics among those theories and models was heavily dominated by Western discursive paradigm. There was a one sided presumed universality and totalizing tendency. Later on, some scholars came up with the concept of indigenization, that theory shall be localized let us adapt theory in the local context. Next phase witnessed an emphasis on indigenous theories and models of communication.

The construction and development of the SMC has addressed the call for indigenous communication models. The first and foremost thing that distinguishes the Sadharanikaran Model of Communication from hundreds of other models is that it is the diagrammatic representation and illustration of the communication process as envisioned in Hindu society or Bharatvarshiya society.

This has far reaching consequences. For instance, the role of communicating parties would be completely different and what the goal of communication is. If you take communication models from the West they may not incorporate the three dimensional life – Adhibhautika (physical), Adhidaivika (mental), and Adhyatmika (spiritual), and Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha as the four goals of human life – called the *Purushartha Chatustaya*. Here any *Shastra* would lead ultimately to Moksha. Before the construction of the Sadharanikaran Model of Communication, the communication discipline was not able to explain this aspect of Hindu society. Whereas, with the construction and development of the SMC, here is one model that can describe all of the Adhibhautika, Adhidaivika, and Adhyatmika dimensions of human life with special reference to communication dynamics and roles related to them. One very significant aspect that it explains is how communication is possible and has been possible since a millennia in such a diverse society.

Bharatvarsha, that includes Nepal, India and many other countries, is very diverse and there is a hierarchy as well. There is visible asymmetry but despite this there is a living civilization since millennia. It is not possible to have such a developed civilization without a highly developed communication theory, communication philosophy and a sophisticated communication system. That means there is some mechanism, theory, philosophy related to communication. In fact we can say these in plurals mechanisms, theories, philosophies and so it represents that. For instance the encoding aspect as seen from the perspective of Veda shall be fourfold: Para, Pashyanti, Madhyama, and Vaikhari. But if you take, for example, modern

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philosophy then it may be just two layers. Likewise I can give numerous examples regarding what distinguishes the Sadharanikaran Model of Communication from other models developed from the West but in essence what we can say is it enriches with culture, philosophy and practices of Bharatvarsha or Hindu society.

When the Sadharanikaran Model of Communication was constructed, I received polarizing feedback. Some appreciated the idea of exploring ancient texts and making them relevant in the modern time. The idea of a diagrammatic model visible for the first time itself was tremendous so it was celebrated by teachers, colleagues, academic fraternity first in Nepal and India, and then in the West. But there were those who were doubtful especially in Nepal that there could be anything relevant to Mass Communication and Journalism in our ancient knowledge. They disliked the idea that a person amongst ourselves could be a theoretician or theorist it went against the belief that theorists shall be something from a Eurocentric paradigm. Some criticized it as a claim much too big for a person from Nepal especially when it has not been done even by Indians or Chinese. It was declared incapable to stand against the academic evaluation by the global fraternity according to some. However as time went on it was published in various languages from different countries, universities started incorporating this into their curricula and prominent scholars as well as senior professors started writing on Sadharanikaran Model of Communication not just as citation but theoretical framework along with further research. As it happened many critics and skeptics have turned to admirers.

When I see those exposed to the Sadharanikaran Model of Communication in Nepal, India, Indonesia and some parts of the West not only appreciating this but using it as a theoretical framework and for conducting further research it signifies a global mainstreaming. If people start working in the field of non-Western communication then it has become a milestone. Some writers and scholars have mentioned this as the epitome of non-Western or indigenous communication theorization. It has been included in the *International Encyclopedia of Communication Theory and Philosophy* (Adhikary, 2016). Various Universities across the world have included it in their curriculum and many scholars are conducting further research on it. The number of publications by myself maybe fewer in number but many others who have quoted and cited or further used Sadharanikaran are vastly increasing.

Now I do not view it as personal it has been institutionalized Kathmandu University where I have been working for eighteen years has owned it and organized an

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international seminar on two decades of the Sadharanikaran Model of Communication. The whole university and academics from different countries are celebrating it as it is going to the mainstream global academia more importantly it has inspired many young scholars to explore indigenous sources. In fact, reorientation has commenced in the communication discipline.

There were scholars who actually started De-Westernization, who wanted critical discussions on the Western communication theories. They did not want the limitation of Euroamerican discursive paradigm and desired multiculturalism, multidisciplinary, and multiparadigmatic tradition. They wanted to shift the focus to Asian, African, South American and other cultures as well. With the advent of this model, the process of reorientation has got a definite shape and encouraged other scholars to conduct research in indigenous fashion. This has caused me immense satisfaction and pleasure.

When asked about the future prospects of Sadharanikaran Model of Communication, I feel hesitant to speak on it as we cannot be certain. When I worked on this model I did not know it would go so far. But people have embraced it, the academic fraternity, academics from diverse disciplines have been using it which I had not imagined at that point of time. It has diversified. There is a concept of Sarvatantra theory in *Charaka Samhita*. According to Charak there are different theories and Saravatantra theory is such that it goes beyond disciplinary boundaries and can be generalized in a manner making it useful for virtually all disciplines of knowledge. The trend so far shows that people are liking this model and applying it to different disciplines. If this continues there is prospect of becoming Sarvatantra theory, applicable to diverse disciplines.

Another area is its application. It is fundamental or basic research so theorization is there but many scholars have started the discussion on its practical implications so this will lead to the area of applied research. I am expecting to see application of Sadharanikaran Model of Communication in various applied sectors.

I feel honored and humbled, and also bestowed with a greater responsibility while I see how living legends like Prof. Yoshitaka Miike observe as follows: “Dr. Adhikary is a visionary leader par excellence who not only constructed the *sadharanikaran* model of human communication (Adhikary, 2009, 2010, 2014a), but also created the *sadharanikaran* intellectual movement in the Global South” (Miike, 2024, p. 2). Chowdhury (2025, p. 79) writes: “The SMC offers a profound framework for understanding communication that emphasizes empathy, context, emotional

connection, and ethical interaction. While rooted in Hindu philosophy and cultural specificity, its principles hold universal relevance, especially in an increasingly interconnected and diverse world.”

The conclusion and declaration section of the *Proceedings of the International Seminar on Two Decades of the Sadharanikaran Model of Communication* (Dahal, Kafle, and Poudyal, 2024) says: “The construction, development, and global mainstreaming of the Sadharanikaran Model of Communication (SMC) ... is a significant phenomenon in the contemporary communication scholarship” (p. 101). It further says: “The two decades of the SMC has been fruitful to inspire several scholars and researchers to explore communication from different perspectives. The spirit of theorizing communication from indigenous perspectives shall be further promoted across the World” (ibid.). It is also acknowledged:

By constructing and developing the Sadharanikaran Model of Communication (SMC), Dr. Nirmala Mani Adhikary has made a globally significant contribution to the field of communication theory. Due to his academic research, the field of communication theory in particular and the whole communication discipline in general, has moved beyond what is called the de-Westernization, and there has been a beginning of the reorientation era in communication theory. (ibid.)

De-Westernization not only critiqued the dominance of Western discursive paradigm, it also opened new avenues for academic contributions from different indigenous perspectives too (for further discussion on de-Westernization, see: Acharya, 2024; Glück, 2015; Waisbord and Mellado, 2014). The field of Asian Communication theory, in general, and Asiaticity, in particular, advanced the urge for indigenous theorization (for further discussion on Asiaticity, see: Miike, 2017, 2019, 2022, 2024). Miike (2017) has discussed a total of 17 theories within Asiatic and Afrocentric communication scholarship. He has classified the theories under three philosophical categories: Asian ontological worldviews, African and Asian epistemological foundations, and African and Asian axiological parameters. Sadharanikaran Model of Communication is included as one of the Asian communication theories from axiological perspectives.

Next phase is called ‘Reorientation’ (Adhikary, 2014b, 2018). As Acharya (2024) argues, “With the advent of the Sadharanikaran Model of Communication ... the reorientation approach has become a reality” (p. 134). She writes:

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The next paradigm shift in the discipline of communication seems advancing beyond de-westernization, and to employ the reorientation approach while theorizing communication. Reorientation is needed for re-centering indigenous perspectives in any discipline. Here, pertinence to observe and promote the re-orientation initiatives is felt in the communication discipline. (pp. 132-133)

The construction and development of Sadharanikaran Model of Communication is not to reinforce the binary division of West versus rest. The East Vs. West dichotomy is a living reality but the goal of this theorization lies elsewhere. We shall move to comparative understanding (such as Lloyd, 2021), and reorientation aimed finally reaching to reconciliation (Adhikary, 2017) so that the useful knowledge irrespective of whether it is from the East or the West has to be used by humankind. So I urge all amongst the academic fraternity to work on indigenous theories but not ignite identity politics. Ultimately, it is for the enrichment of the disciplines, and the human mind, and, in fact, to find some reconciliation among the diverse societies including the East and the West.

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