

Principles of Communication in the Panchtantra

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Abstract— The *Panchtantra* occupies a distinct place among the books which uphold Indian cultural traditions and civilization. It attempts to teach with the help of interesting stories. Originally written in Sanskrit, it has been translated in a number of languages world over. It is a repository of knowledge. It deals with a number of subjects like politics, economics, espionage, education, communication etc. Several of the modern principles of communication find their roots in the *Panchtantra*. This paper is an attempt to highlight principles of communication scattered in it.

Keywords— *communication, kinesics, body language, non verbal communication*

I. INTRODUCTION

All of us are aware of the communication process in which we have been participating since our birth. Scientific researches have proved that the communication process begins even before a child is born. In the advance stages of pregnancy the unborn child listens to the sounds from the environment which includes sound symbols of his mother tongue. All the experts agree that listening is the first stage of language learning which is followed by the other stages like speaking, reading and writing.

The other aspect of communication- the nonverbal communication also plays key role in the process of communication. The communication process to be effective needs judicious use of all the aspects of the communication process. It is very encouraging to note that the *Panchtantra* successfully deals with all the important aspects of communication. The author of the *Panchtantra* is well aware of the role of communication for achieving success.

A. About Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication is a kind of communication where we do not use words. It has been established through a number of studies that nonverbal communication is more reliable and more efficient than verbal communication. It is employed by speakers to support verbal messages.

According to one estimate, there are more than 700,000 forms of nonverbal communication.¹

Some common categories of nonverbal communication include facial expression, gesture, spatial relationships posture, vocal characteristics, and personal appearance etc.

The *Panchtantra*, not only refers to all these nonverbal cues but also explains their significance.

In the very first chapter of the *Panchtantra* the author talks about the role of nonverbal signals and highlights their importance. In chapter one itself the author quotes none other than Manu who is the author of *Manu Smriti* which is considered to be the code of conducts for the Hindus. He says;

आकारैरिङ्गितैर्गत्या चेष्टया भाषणेन च।
नेत्रवक्त्रविकारैश्च लक्ष्यतेऽन्तर्गतं मनः।²

(Aakareringingiteiragatya chestya bhashnen cha

Netravaktravikareshcha lakshyateantargatam manah.)

One can know about the mental state of a person by observing one's facial expressions, body language, way of talking, movement of eye balls etc. Truth cannot be hidden, no matter how hard one tries.

Later in the book the author further enlightens us;

सकृदपि दृष्ट्वा पुरुषं विबुधा
जानन्ति सारतां तस्य।
हस्ततुलयापि निपुणाः
पलप्रमाणं विजानन्ति॥³

(Sakradapi dristwa purusham vibuaa, jananti sartam tasya

Hastatulyapi nipunah palpramanam vijnanti.)

Here the author tells us;

Wise people assess a person's abilities by merely looking at a person. Those who are well versed in the art of measurement know the weight of an object simply by holding it in hands. They need not weigh it on weighing scale.

B. Professional Communication

The communication which deals with technical, scientific and professional subjects is generally recognized as professional communication.

Now look at the following tips which the author of the *Panchtantra* suggests to identify a criminal. The tips are offered to the professional engaged in the work of maintaining

law and order especially in the police
department. भिन्नस्वरमुखवर्णः शङ्कितदृष्टिः समुत्पतिततेजाः ।
भवति हि पापं कृत्वा स्वकर्मसन्नासितः पुरुषः ॥ 4

(Bhinnaswarmukhavarnah shankitdrishtih samutpatittejah
Bhawati hi papam kritwa swakarmasanasitah purushah.)

A sinner or a criminal may be identified by observing the following symptoms/ signs- his voice and face changes, his eyes show signs of fear and his aura is lost.

The author further adds;

आयाति स्खलितैः पादैर्मुखवैवर्ण्यसंयुतः ।
ललाटस्वेदभाग् भूरि गद्गदं भाषते वचः ॥ 5

(Aayayti skhaliteh paadermukhvaivarnyasanyuktah
Lalatswedbhag bhoori gadgadam bhasate vachah.)

The legs of a criminal shake, his face loses its charm, there appears sweat on his face and he speaks incoherently.

The author finally gives another tip to add to what has already been suggested;

अधोदृष्टिर्भवेत्कृत्वा पापं प्राप्तः सभां नरः ।
तस्माद्यत्नपरिज्ञेयश्चिह्नैरेतैर्विचक्षणैः ॥ 6

(Adhodristirbhawetkritwa paapam praptah sabham narah
Tasmadyatnatparigyeshchithneredtrvichkshanauh.)

A criminal avoids eye contact with others. With the help of all these nonverbal cues a criminal may be identified.

Now compare this with the following observation regarding the significance of nonverbal communication skills.

“The old maxim is true: People’s actions often do speak louder than their words. In fact, most people can deceive others much more easily with words than they can with their bodies. Words are relatively easy to control; body language, facial expression, and vocal characteristics are not. By paying attention to these nonverbal cues, you can detect deception or affirm a speaker’s honesty.” [1]

“Because nonverbal communication is so reliable, people generally have more faith in nonverbal cues than they do in verbal messages. If a person says one thing but transmits a conflicting message nonverbally, listeners almost invariably believe the nonverbal signal. [2]

Chances are, if you can read other people’s nonverbal messages correctly, you can interpret their underlying attitudes and intentions and respond appropriately.

C. About Effectiveness of communication

All of us know that effective communication is necessary to achieve success in whatever area of activity we are involved in.

In the Panchtantra we learn about how to employ communication for our benefit and avoid certain mistakes which may cause us harm.

रोहति सायकैर्विद्धं छिन्नं रोहति चासिना ।
वचो दुरुक्तं बीभत्सं न प्ररोहति वाक्क्षतम् ॥ 7

(Rohati sayakairvidham chhinam chasina
Vacho duruktam bibhatsam na prarohati vakshatam.)

Don’t you know that a wound made by an arrow or a sword gets healed sooner or later, but one never forgets a wound made by (unkind) words.

This idea is further strengthened in the following verse.

अदेशकालज्ञमनांयतिक्षमं
यदप्रियं लाघवकारि चात्मनः ।
योऽत्राश्रयीत्कारणवर्जितं वचो
न तद्वचः स्याद्विषमेव तद्वचः ॥ 8

(Adeshkalagyamnayatikshamam
Yadpriyam laghavkarichatmanah
Yoatrabravitkaranvarjitam vacho
Natadvachah syadvishmeva tadvachah.)

A person who speaks unpleasant words that result in sorrow, out of prejudice without keeping in mind the occasion and place, and without considering the outcome of such words, is said to be creature that spits poison.

Therefore such conduct should be avoided.

II. CONCLUSION

In the Panchtantra we find that the author Vishnu Sharma gives valuable information on the significance of communication to his pupils. Some experts believe that Vishnu Sharma and Chanakya are two names of the same person.

It is clear beyond any doubt that views of both- the author of the Panchtantra and the modern writers in the west have expressed identical views on the subject of nonverbal communication. They recognize the significance of nonverbal communication. On one hand it helps the speaker present his

viewpoint more effectively and on the other hand it helps in gauging the truthfulness of the speaker.

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