

Family Relations

BUDDHIST APPROACH TO HARMONIOUS FAMILIES: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO RIGHT SPEECH (*SAMMĀVĀCĀ*)

by Ujjwal Kumar

ABSTRACT:

Before going into what are right speech and the Buddhist perspective on it, it is necessary to know what is speech per se. Speech is a vocalized form of communication or the ability to communicate. However, speech is not just a physiological form of communication or a combination of words; it also indicates the mood and intention of the speaker, depending on the tone. A person with a peaceful mind will speak softly and confidently. As against this, one who is worried or drunken will speak fast and without confidence. When one speaks to a child, the voice is very soft, tender and loving. But when one is arguing, it is very forceful and as the argument heats up, the voice gets louder and is full of anger as the speaker gesticulates. Thus, through speech one can observe different moods of the speaker. Human beings living in a society or in a group need to communicate with each other for various reasons. And this is done through the medium of speech. It can also be done by gestures, body language, written words and so on. But the most common form of human communication is by way of spoken words or speech which is a powerful means of communication. It can effectively

communicate one's intention, ideas and emotions to another person. It thus functions as a bridge between two individuals, groups, and communities. A good and intelligent speaker will be able to communicate and put across his thoughts correctly without causing any misunderstanding or disharmony.

In the Pāli Tipiṭaka we find a number of *suttā-s* in which the notion of speech is elaborated. The Buddha was mainly concerned with right speech or *sammāvācā* and not with the mere speech i.e. *vācā*. He condemned wrong speech, *micchāvācā*, which are both the effect as well as the source of evil. Although the Buddha praised *sammāvācā* and condemned *micchāvācā*, in his own lifetime there are several instances where he spoke harsh words, promised five hundred *apsarās* to Nanda for attaining *arhathood* and so on. Can these cases be called instances of *sammāvācā* as per Buddhist parameters? This further leads to a broader question namely, what exactly is *sammāvācā* and *micchāvācā* according to the Buddha? Another question of great significance is what the results of *sammāvācā* are and *micchāvācā* and what the duration of their results is. These questions are related to larger questions regarding the nature of the phenomenon of speech and its ethical dimension. Once this is clarified, the rationale behind the ethical conduct prescribed by religious books will become evident.

Further, it is worth finding out whether the Buddha's words on right speech were relevant only during his period, or do they have some relevance in to-day's world of high speed communication and social networking. This is also related to a larger issue of whether *sammāvācā* can contribute to world peace in the present circumstances.

The present research is driven by these questions. It will try to find the answers to these questions by taking the following steps. First, I will try to understand what right speech from the Buddhist point of view is? While elaborating on this, it is first necessary to know how speech arises; is it merely a physiological phenomenon or is there any mental volition behind it. How do scientists study this and what was the Buddha's view in this regard? Then I will proceed to understand the Buddhist

perspective on right speech with the help of Pāli scriptures. In order to understand *sammāvācā* in right perspective, I will also present its counterpart, i.e., *micchāvāca*. Both these concepts will be studied along with all other related ideas. Further the issue of relevance will be pursued in the light of modern works of Buddhist scholars and practitioners. Here I shall try to present the nature of modern communication and its impact on society and show which Buddhist principles can be effectively used to improve modern communication to achieve harmonious co-existence in the present world.

1. WHAT IS SPEECH?

Dictionaries define speech as, that which is spoken, language, a discourse, oration, talk, colloquy and so on. An important aspect related to speech is language. Modern dictionaries define language as human speech, a variety of speech or a body of words and idioms, especially that of a nation, a mode of expression, diction, any manner of expressing thought or feeling, or an artificial system of signs and symbols with rules for forming intelligible communications for use, as in the case of a computer. According to linguists, language is an arbitrary system of vocal symbols by way of which a human society cooperates and communicates and not through written symbols. All over the world, animals have the same language. Crows caw in the same way all over the world. Only humans rationalize it, hence it is arbitrary. One may summaries the difference between speech and language as follows: *speech is a language that is spoken or expressed through the vocal door. A language can be expressed in writing but when it comes to speech, it is direct communication through one's vocal cords. It needs a speaker as well as a listener.*

If we turn to Buddhism, the Theravāda Pāli canon discusses speech in the context of human society without differentiating it from language. According to *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, what is uttered is speech, *vuccati' ti vācā* (Dhs 324). *Aṭṭhasālinī*, explains speech as “that speech, voice, enunciation, utterance, noise, making noise, speech, articulation of one who has moral, immoral, or unmoral

thoughts is called speech" (Exp 114-115). Thus here the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* and *Aṭṭhasāṅgī* explain speech in terms of spoken words or meaningful utterances. There is however no reference here to written words. In the Pāli texts we do find reference to speech in terms of volition (*cetanā*) and abstinence (*virati*), which are mental and ethical aspects governing the speech.

2. HOW SPEECH ARISES- A SCIENTIFIC VIEW

According to scientists, speech has two aspects: (1) communication and (2) language. Language in turn has two aspects i.e. (1) expression and (2) reception. While talking to a person, the speaker expresses his thoughts according to his own capacity and also the capacity of the listener to understand. This is from the speaker's point. The reception part of speech pertains to the listener and it is his or her capacity to understand what is said by the speaker. Language is a system of symbols and can be expressed through oral, written, sign or pictorial forms. The most common form is oral. Speech is a method of expression of oral language and it has voice, articulation and resonance. Voice is produced because of respiration. Thus one can say that indirectly respiration is related to speech. While exhaling, the vocal cords vibrate and sound is produced. However, speech can be there without voice too, i.e. in the form of whispers. While speaking, breathing goes from involuntary to voluntary mode. One may breathe in more air during inhalation in order to speak loudly or to speak a longer sentence. While speaking, inhalation is quicker and exhalation is slower.

The center of speech production is the brain and it is controlled by, the area number four of brain. It controls the entire motor system of the body through the motor nerves which are bilateral. The language center is in left in the right-handed people and on the right side in the left-handed people. Messages are sent from the brain to various muscles. First the voice is produced and then articulated into sound and is resonated thereafter. Thus it may be seen that scientists study speech mainly from the physiological angle. Although psychologists pay some attention to mental factors responsible

for faulty speech production, the aspect of volition or ethics is largely forgotten. As against this, the Buddha gave much more importance to mind and volition.

3. HOW SPEECH ARISES- A BUDDHIST THEORY

Before discussing the Buddhist theory of speech production, it would be essential to understand how Buddhism looks at the entire phenomenon of speech. This would help us to understand in a better way the Buddhist theory of how the speech arises. Buddhism does not consider speech as mere production of sound. It rather looks at it from the ethical point of view. It considers speech from three aspects namely, (1) volition (*cetanā*), (2) abstinence (*virati*) and (3) sound (*sadda*). Among these, it gives utmost importance to volition. Volition is said to be thinking as active thought, it can also be considered as intention, purpose or will (PED.271). When it comes to speech, it is the volition to utter good or bad words. The volition is explained as under: “*Words endowed with four factors, ... (1) are well spoken, (2) not ill-spoken, (3) faultless and (4) unblamed by the wise. Here speech is voluntary*” (Exp 114).

The *Subhāsitasutta* (Sn.78, 79) enumerates these four factors as (1) *attha*, (2) *dhamma*, (3) *piya*, and (4) *sacca*. In this connection *attha* means the intention of benefiting others, *dhamma* means leading to freedom from suffering, *piya* means friendly intention and *sacca* means truth.

Virati or abstinence is not doing something. In the case of speech, it is abstaining from speaking words which amount to telling lies, speaking harsh words or slander, which can result in breaking relations and also frivolous speech. *Atthasālini* (As. 86) by quoting *Vibhāṅga*, explains *virativācā* as follows:

“*Avoidance of the four misconduct in speech, abstinence, renouncement, abstention, non-action, non-doing, not incurring of guilt, non-trespassing the boundary, pulling down the bridge leading to it; following the eightfold path completely, is called right speech this is speech by way of abstinence*” (Exp 297).

However, there is a difference between abstaining and not acting. Abstinence is proactive whereas the other is non-active. For example, abstinence is restraining oneself from speaking words which can cause damage to others, whereas not acting means not speaking at all.

The third type of speech is sound or *sadda*. Thus speech as *sadda*, i.e., sound, is merely a physiological phenomenon of sound production and there is no ethical aspect involved in it.

Let us now turn to the commentarial literature to understand the phenomenon of speech production. In the *aṭṭhakathā*, Ācariya Buddhaghosa explains the nature of speech by quoting two different views of *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* and *Āgama-aṭṭhakathā*. ‘When thinking arises in an individual as ‘I shall speak this, I shall speak that’ a sound is produced by diffusion of the initial application of the mind. This is cognizable by the mind but not by the ear. This is what the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* says (Exp 115). But according to *Āgama-aṭṭhakathā*, the traditional commentary, the listener first hears the sound and then infers the intention of the speaker through these sounds (Exp 115). Hence the sound is cognizable by the ear. Thus these two books give different views on the nature of speech.

The *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* gives importance to mental speech ‘*vitakka vipphārsaddo*’ which is not audible by the ear. When one wants to speak, one first formulates the speech in the mind and then manifests it into words. This process is from the speaker’s point of view. Thus from this angle, actual speech is speech which originates in the mind. It starts with volition and results into sound. On the other hand, *Āgama* views this process from the listener’s point of view. According to it one first hears the sound and then infers the intention of the speaker. Hence the process starts with the audible speech and results in the comprehension of volition. The first view is stated from the point of the speaker, that is to say; what happens when one thinks of speaking, whereas the second view is from the point of the listener.

It may be seen that before the actual speech takes place,

the thought arises in the mind. This is the mental level. Later when the words are actually spoken through vocal organs, it is at the physical level. Thus speech is both a mental as well as a physical phenomenon.

According to Buddhism, speech necessarily involves three elements, namely; 1) initial application of the mind, 2) an impact of intimation and 3) cognizance by the ear. Out of these, the first and the third are already mentioned above. The second element is called intimation - *viññatti*. It is twofold; bodily intimation and verbal intimation. Bodily intimation is explained as "There is a certain peculiar, unique mode of change in the primaries when set up by mind, through which, as a condition, mobility is able to strengthen, support and agitate the co-existent body. This is intimation (Exp 111)." The verbal intimation is also explained in similar terms as follows "There is a certain unique change (in the primaries set up by the consciousness) which is the cause of bringing about the impact of the element, grasped by kamma, on that set up by the mind. This is speech-intimation (Exp 115)." Thus, intimation is a physical element responsible for physical or verbal activity, which communicates the intention of the agent. In other words it forms the bridge between the volition on one hand and its physical or verbal manifestation on the other. According to Buddhism, without the mediation of intimation, the phenomenon of speech can not be complete. Hence it is said "There is no sound, due to diffusion of the initial application of the mind, which arises without an impact of intimation, and which is not cognizable by the ear (Exp 115)."

The *Paṭṭhāna* gives details of what happens when a person decides to speak. It explains the dynamics between the mind and matter in the process of speech production. Such an intentional speech is called sound produced by the consciousness i.e., *citta samuṭṭhānika saddo*. It is explained as "What happens when a thought arises in the mind 'I shall speak this, I shall speak that' is, it sets up eight material qualities, earth element, water element, fire element, wind element, colour, odour, taste, and nutritive essence. Among these, the earth

element produced by the consciousness arises, impinging on or striking the earth element grasped by the *kamma*. Sound arises together with that impact between the elements. It is the sound set up by the consciousness (Exp 15)." At the time of the production of speech at the physical level, the earth element or the *paṭhavīdhātu* is prominent as the sound is produced due to the coming in contact of two hard elements namely earth and earth. Thus sound is produced when two hard elements strike on each other. According to Buddhism, when intention to speak is present, occasional hardness is generated in the speech organs. When this impinges on the inborn hardness of the speech organs, sound is produced.

Thus after comparing the words of the Buddha on the origin of speech with the research that is being carried out in the modern world, it becomes evident that the Buddha gave prominence to volition. He has declared mind as the source of speech. He talks about intermediate components such as earth element (*paṭhavīdhātu*), and intimation (*viññatti*). He has spoken about speech in terms of an intentional ethical act (*kamma*) and has divided it in to two categories namely, virtuous and non-virtuous (*sucarita* and *duccarita*). As against this the scientific community emphasizes on the brain and other parts of the body responsible for speech production. It hardly pays any attention to the ethical aspect of speech. It rather talks of formal speech defects and how to correct them. It may be concluded that the Buddha's approach to speech is normative and abstract whereas that of scientists is physiological and concrete.

In order to understand the ethical dimension of speech in Buddhism, one must study the concept of *kamma*. As stated earlier, the Buddha gave much importance to volition or *cetanā*, when he talks about *kamma*. In Buddhism, *kamma* is defined as 'bodily *kamma*, vocal *kamma* and mental *kamma*'. 'And what is this *kamma*? Volition as well as states associated therewith' (Exp 117), '*tīṇi hi kammāni- kāyakammam, vacikammam, manokammam*'*ti*. *Kim panetam kamman nāmāti? Cetanā ceva, ekacce ca cetana sampyuttadhammā* (Aṭṭha). The Buddha said 'I declare Bhikkhus, that volition is *kamma*. Having willed, one acts by body,

speech and thought' (Exp. 117).

4. SAMMĀVACĀ: ETYMOLOGY AND DEFINITION

As per the Pāli English dictionary, *sammā* is an indeclinable word. The Vedic form is *samyac/k* and *sāmis*, and means "connected" in one, thoroughly, properly, rightly, in the right way, as it ought to be, best, perfectly, (opposite of *michhā*, i.e. false, wrong, separate, contrary). *Vacā* is a feminine word (*vāc*, *vakti*, *vivakti*), in Pāli it is vaco. The Vedic forms are: *vāk* (*vāc*), voice, word, *vākyā*.

The Buddha defines speech in terms of volition and abstinence. In the *Mahāsatipatṭanāsutta* (D.II.312) the Buddha asks

"which is O! monks right speech?"

And then clarifies it himself-

"Abstinence from telling lies, abstinence from harsh speech, abstinence from slander, abstinence from frivolous speech – this is O! monks called right speech."

This definition is also found in other *suttā-s*, namely, the *Mahācattārikasutta* (M.III.73), the *Saccavibhaṅgasutta* (M.III.251), and the *Vibhaṅgasutta* (Sn. V.8-9). When we examine those *suttā-s* which deal with *sammāvācā*, from the point of view of abstinence, it is found that the Buddha defined right speech in the context of wrong speech and said that abstinence or *veramāṇi* from wrong speech is right speech.

An explanation of *sammāvācā* from the positive point of view is best found in the *Subhāsitasutta* (Sn. 78, 79) of the *Suttanipāta*. Therein the Buddha has said that speech endowed with the following four constituents is good or pleasant speech. These are *attha*, *dhamma*, *piya* and *sacca*. Speech which does not cause repentance or remorse to oneself or harm to others is profitable speech. From the positive point of view, it is speech which benefits others and brings satisfaction to oneself. Speech endowed with *dhamma* is speech which the Buddha speaks. It is said to be the best as it ends suffering and leads a person to *nibbāna*. In the case of speech, the words *attha* and *dhamma* are

normally taken together. Speech should have some advantage, should be beneficial, profitable, and also with some moral and spirit. It should be meaningful (*sāttha*). Regarding the pair *attha* and *dhamm*, *attha* refers to the primary natural/meaning of the word, while *dhamma* relates to the (interpreted) meaning of the text and to its bearing on the norm and conduct or theoretical and practical side of the text (Pāli) to be discussed.

Piya- means pleasant, agreeable, liked, kind and loving. Speech endowed with these is called *piya vacana*. People receive such speech with a feeling of joy. One should speak only words which are amiable, disregarding the bad qualities of others.

Sacca is truth and good speech has to be true speech; which is refraining from telling lies. It is comparable to nectar because it is the sweetest among all the tastes (*saccam have sādutaram rasam*) (Sn 1.84). True speech is a condition for the deathless state called *nibbāna*. Simply refraining from telling lies is not true speech in the absolute sense. In fact, speech should be endowed with two additional qualities of being profitable to others, i.e., it should be for people's well-being and also self-satisfying at the same time. In other words, truth cannot be bare truth, well-being is always embedded in it. Also truth is embedded in well-being. *Attha* and *dhamma* are ultimately embedded in the truth. They qualify the truth and are not separate from the truth.

5. SPEECH AS PER THE VEDIC TRADITION:

Speech that brings the end of suffering is true speech in the highest sense. It is said to be *khema* or safe since it talks about the path leading to *nibbāna*. Hence it is a safe path, not leading astray. Only such speech is comparable to nectar. As against this Buddhist definition of *sammāvācā*, based on the ethical aspects of speech, in the Vedic tradition right speech is said to be that which is correct according to having the right constituents of a logical statement (*patiññā avayava*), nominal stem (*nāma pada*), gender (*liṅga*), number (*vacana*), cases (*vibhatti*), tense (*kāla*), syntactic relations (*karaka*) and so on. This is at variance with what Buddhism says. From the

Buddhist, view point, even if the speech is correct according to the above parameters, if it is endowed with slander it is bad speech. Speech which is free from the four blemishes namely, untruth, harshness, slander and frivolous talk is good speech or *subhāsita* even if it is spoken by a non-Aryan or a slave.

The Vedas were said to have been directly handed down by Gods and hence were considered sacred and divine. They could not be tampered with or polluted. A great deal of importance was given to pronunciation, as the *mantra-s* are said to be very powerful and had to be uttered in a particular manner. It is their sound that is said to give the power, and thus if not pronounced properly, they would not have any efficacy. On the contrary, if pronounced wrongly, it could boomerang and have adverse effects. It is said that a word faulty in accent or a phoneme wrongly employed, does not express its (intended) meaning but kills the host as a thunderbolt of the speech; just as it killed (the host) owing to a mistake in accent while uttering the words.

Further, only the men of upper castes were the custodians of the scriptures. Lower class people and women of upper caste as well were forbidden from studying them. Thus the scriptures were linked to a particular caste and sex. They could be read only in Sanskrit, which was supposed to be the divine language or the language of Gods (*divyā vāk*). Again the divinity was more about the language than the contents. Due to these very reasons, the Vedas could not make an impact outside the Indian sub-continent and remained in the hands of a selected few.

As against this, the Buddha did not attach the concept of purity to the language. There was nothing sacred in speech and as long as it was free from the four blemishes, it was good and right speech. Volition and the intention of the speaker were more important than the words themselves. When the Buddha's words are translated into other languages, the phonemes do change. But this does not mean that their efficacy is lost. They remain as effective as in the language which the Buddha uttered. The teaching too does not get polluted but remains the same. Due to this very reason, the Buddhist mantras are

open to phonetic trans-literation and have been translated in Tibetan, Chinese, and Japanese and so on. These are said to be as effective as the original. The efficacy of these mantras depends on the amount of purity of the mind and the intention with which it is chanted. This is one of the reasons why the words of the Buddha spread far and wide during Asoka's period and also in to-day's world. Further, it is not class or sex based. Anybody could chant the words and get the same results.

Commenting on the *Subhāsitasutta*, Buddhaghosa said that a speech endowed with *attha*, *dhamma*, *piya* and *sacca* should be known as good speech even if it is the language of the *mlecha*-s or the language of the songs of maid servants, as far as it conveys bliss for this world and the other. It is said that in Sri Lanka, there are instances of monks attaining *arahat-hood* after having heard Sinhalese girl servants singing inspiring words in the Sinhala language. According to him, grammatical purity is irrelevant as far as dhamma is considered, provided it was free from the four blemishes (Pj II.396, 397). Thus in Buddhism, language is only a means of communication and there is no divinity or the concept of *pāpa* or *puñña* attached to it.

The Buddha said that one can use any language as long as both the speaker and the listener understand it and one does not transcend the common usage. In the *Araṇavibhaṅga sutta* (M IV.9), the Buddha said that one should not speak in a language that is restricted or limited to a particular region. This is because different languages have different words for the same item and it may cause confusion in the mind of the listeners. His advice to the monks was that they should go to different places and spread dhamma. India had many languages even in those days and if the monks taught in the language that the Buddha used, the listeners might not have understood it. It is the preacher who has to learn the language of those to whom he intends to preach.

Thus as against the Vedic tradition, early Buddhism does not favor use one sacred language. It gives importance to imparting and learning the contents of the teaching rather than its particular

form. This approach of Buddhism which favors use of multiple languages was helpful in making this knowledge accessibility to masses. However, it seems that in the later Theravādā tradition, language played an important role as an identity symbol. As a result of this the Theravādins gave undue sacred status to Pāli contradicting the early Buddhist stand point on language.

6. IMPORTANCE OF SAMMĀVĀCĀ

Importance of speech in Buddhism can be discerned from the fact that when a person takes refuge in the triple gem, which is also a salutation to the triple gem, it can be said mentally, or aloud, i.e., by speech. The Buddha in *Vandanāsutta* (A. I. 294) has said that there are three types of *vandana* or salutations; physical, vocal and mental. Saying it aloud is said to give the highest results, because not only the speaker but also the listeners benefit from it, whereas in reciting it mentally, only the person reciting receives the benefit. Almost all works in Buddhism start with a salutation to the *Buddha*, *Dhamma*, and *Saṅgha*. And since in those days the tradition was oral, the salutation was also made orally. The oral salutation is uttered with rapture and joy. The salutation or paying homage is not out of fear or to get some profit. It is also not because it is one's family tradition or custom. It is done with a heart full of respect and is done with all three doors, namely, physical, vocal and mental, open.

Most of the important discourses were given by the Buddha on someone's request. In other words, these discourses are the results of vocal action of some aspirant. A *devatā* asked the Buddha in two *gāthā*-s who will disentangle the tangles and be free from the cycle of life. Buddha's reply was a monk established in morality, concentration and wisdom will disentangle the tangles (S. I.13,165). Based on these, Buddhaghosa composed an entire book called *Visuddhimagga*. Reciting something with a pure mind and with good volition can bring about good results. When the Buddha recited the *Ratanasutta* (Khp.3-6), it brought rain to the famine struck Vesāli. Similarly *Suppavāsākoliyadhitā* (Ud.15-18), who was pregnant for seven years and suffered

labor pains for seven days, delivered a healthy baby when her husband merely repeated the Buddha's words in front of her. All these recitations and, repetitions were with a pure mind and with *metta* and can certainly be treated as *sammāvācā*.

7. CONCLUSION: THE BUDDHA'S SPEECH

After discussing all the above mentioned aspects of right speech, let us end our discussion of this topic by raising a pertinent question as to what kind of speech the Buddha spoke. In this connection, let us also examine the Buddha's own career and some of the events therein. These events raise questions regarding the Buddha's own observance of *sammāvācā*. Enquiry into these questions, would give us an additional insight into the Buddhist notion of right speech.

The Buddha not only advised others to refrain from telling lies, he himself followed this practice and set the example for others. He was *yathāvādī tathākārī* and *yathākārī tathāvādī*, i.e. he practiced what he taught and he taught what he practiced. Two of the thirty-two marks of a great man or the *mahāpurisa lakkhaṇa* that the Buddha had are broad and long tongue (*pahūta jivhā*), and excellent voice (*brahmassara*). This is because the Tathāgata, in his previous lives, previous existences, and *bhava*, as a human being always refrained from harsh speech. He spoke pure, faultless, charming, cultured and what people liked (D.III.173-174).

In spite of this we find the Buddha using harsh words in certain cases. When the monks made any mistakes, his favorite word for them was '*moghapurisa*' i.e., a stupid or useless person. Once Devadatta approached the Buddha saying that the Buddha was getting old and Devadatta should assume the leadership of the *sangha*. The Buddha's words to him were 'I would not hand over the *sangha* to even Sāriputta or Moggallāna. How then could I hand it over to you, a wretched one to be vomited like spittle?' *kim pana tuyham chavassakhelāpakassa* (Vin. II. 188).

The Buddha's cousin Nanda was ordained by the Buddha against his wish on his wedding-day. He could not meditate properly as he kept remembering his bride-to-be and wanted

to leave the *sangha*. So the Buddha showed him five hundred *apsarā*-s or celestial nymphs in heaven, who were serving Inda, and promised Nanda that if he meditated correctly, the Buddha would provide him with these *apsarā*-s. Accordingly, Nanda meditated and became an *arhat*. Thereafter he had no interest in the *apsarā*-s (Kammavipākajasutta.Ud.21-24).

At Uruvela, shortly after the sambodhi, Māra approached the Buddha to scare him. The Buddha's reply to him was, 'Having described the good and bad of *samsāra* is enough. O, *pāpi Māra*, you have at last been defeated. Those who are restrained with their body, speech and mind cannot come under the influence of Māra and they cannot be captured by him' (Asubhasutta. S.103-104). This statement of the Buddha addressing Māra as *pāpima* although it may appear harsh, is based on truth and as such can be considered as sammāvācā.

In the first instance of the Buddha scolding the monks, it could be out of concern for their well being. As the leader of the *sangha*, he had to see to it that the monks behaved like matured persons and did not act in a manner that would disturb the discipline of the *sangha*. They had to be models of virtue for the householders who supported the *sangha*. Here again, the words sound harsh; but since his intention was out of concern for the monks, it can be treated as sammāvācā.

In the *Abhayarājkumārasutta* (M I.393-395), the prince Abhaya asked the Buddha whether the Buddha spoke words that were unpleasant to others. This was at the instance of Niganṭha Nāthaputta and in connection with the Buddha's prediction that Devadatta would suffer in hell. The Buddha asked the prince, if something got stuck in his child's throat, whether he would remove it at the risk of hurting the child. The prince answered in the affirmative and said that this was out of love and compassion for the child. So the Buddha said that similarly the Tathāgata too speaks only when necessary, he does not speak anything which he knows has not happened, is not true, and by saying it could cause harm and would be unpleasant to the listeners. He does not speak about vain and empty things that have happened, if it can cause harm to others. But if something

has happened, and is true, and by saying it, listeners will benefit, even though it may be unpleasant and not agreeable to some, Tathāgata speaks when it becomes necessary. He further made it clear that he speaks only when the right occasion arises and after thinking it over. This is because the Tathāgata has compassion for all living beings.

Devadatta's request was on a very selfish note: it was not that he was concerned about the future of the *saṅgha*, but on being the leader and getting all the benefits and reverence that the Buddha got. The Buddha, being omniscient, knew his responsibilities. Hence there was no need for Devadatta to advise him. On the other hand, it can be taken as stern (*kathora*) and not harsh (*kaṭuka*). It is quite possible that when a person does not understand any other language, one has to tell him with stern words, which could be with *mettā* and good-will. The Buddha's words to Devadatta can be put under this category.

In the case of the promise to Nanda, the Buddha was aware that once Nanda became an arhat he would not be interested in the *apsarā*-s. But Nanda was so obsessed with thoughts of his bride-to-be, that any other arguments would not have had any effect on him. Since it was with the intention for the good of Nanda, this too can be treated as right speech.

All these instances bring out the qualities of the speech of the Buddha, which is true, said with compassion and with the intention of helping people to come out of their misery. Thus, from the point of view of intention, these apparent cases of micchāvācā can be considered as right speech. As stated earlier, in the *Abhayarājakumarasutta* (M IV.243-245), the Buddha has clarified that speech which is true, correct, and beneficial but unwelcome and disagreeable; and speech which is true, correct and beneficial, and welcome and agreeable to others is what the Buddha speaks. He speaks only these two kinds of speech.

Abbreviations and Selected Bibliography. Pāli texts quoted here are from PTS edition.

A	Aṅguttara-nikāya
As	Atthasālinī
D	Dīgha-nikāya
Exp	The Expositor (Atthasālinī English Translation)
Khp	Khuddakapāṭha
M	Majjhima-nikāya Paṭṭhāna
PED	Pāli English Dictionary, PTS
Pj II	Paramatthajotikā II (Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā)
S	Saṃyutta-nikāya Sn
Ud	Udāna
Vibh	Vibhaṅga
Vin	Vinayapiṭaka

