

The Buddha's Teaching on Right Speech as a Path to Peace

Submitted by

SILACARA (Research Scholar)

Mahapajapati Gautami Subharti School of Buddhist Studies

Ras Bihari Bose Subharti University, Dehradun, UK, India

Introduction

In modern time, many conflicts often arise because of harmful communication, however the Buddha's teaching on *Right Speech* (*Sammā Vācā*) offers a timeless framework for supporting peace. As part of the Noble Eightfold Path, *Right Speech* mentioned abstaining from falsehood, disruptive speech, harsh words, and vain words, while cultivating truthfulness, harmony, kindness, and meaningful dialogue. In the Tipitaka, Buddha taught us so many Suttas according to peace based on Right Speech. Right Speech is the third of the eight path factors in the Noble Eightfold Path, and belongs to the virtue division of the path.¹ So, what is right speech? The meaning is abstaining from lying, from divisive speech, from abusive speech, & from idle chatter: This is called right speech.²

The Buddha declared a statement endowed with five factors is well-spoken, not ill-spoken were blameless & upfaulted by knowledgeable people.³ Those five are- it is spoken at the right time. It is spoken in truth. It is spoken affectionately. It is spoken beneficially.⁴ It is spoken with a mind of good-will.⁵ By integrating that teaching of *Right Speech* into daily life and governance, individuals and leaders alike can transform words into instruments of compassion and unity, paving the way toward sustainable peace.

Right Speech and Peace-Building

Right Speech provides maintain the peace by reducing the harm that words can do, which is often what causes fights in society. In the *Sanḅhiti Sutta* (DN 33), the Buddha talked about how important for peaceful society. The Buddha said that, it should bring people together, not separate. Leaders, teachers, or even the ordinary persons must be telling the truth in this way that builds trust and respect between people and society.

To keep the peace, it's very important to avoid the following types of speech and words.

¹ <https://www.accesstoinight.org/ptf/dhamma/sacca/sacca4/samma-vaca/index.html>

² <https://zenmoments.org/the-buddha-on-right-speech-ancient-wisdom-for-modern-times/>

³ Ibid-2

⁴ <https://handfulofleaves.life/the-struggle-to-juggle-with-parental-expectations/>

⁵ AN 5.198

(i) *Musavada veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from false speech;

(ii) *Pisuna vaca veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from backbiting;

(iii) *Pharusa vaca veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from using harsh or abusive speech;

(iv) *Samphappalapa veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from useless or meaningless conversation;

(v) *Micchajiva veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from wrong means of livelihood.⁶

In the *Vāca Sutta* (AN 5.198), the Buddha said that people should only say things that bring people together, even if they are already friendly. He also said that people should try to make friends with people who are already friendly. This way of talking to each other could be a great way to make peace in families and in the government.

Ethical Guidelines for Practicing Right Speech

1. **Truthfulness (*Sacca*)** – to avoid intentional falsehood; speak what is correct, because truth builds trust, which is the foundation for peace (Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 529).
2. **Non-divisiveness (*Sanṅgahavācā*)** – Avoid speaking in ways that will be happened the separate for others. Even when disagreements arise, use the words which should aim at reconciliation.
3. **Gentleness (*Maddhuravācā*)** – Avoid harsh and rude words, for they provoke dislike. Gentle words can transform hostility into cooperation (*Dhammapada* v. 133).
4. **Purposefulness (*Atthasaṃhita*)** – Avoid idle gossip or backbites; carefully speak what is meaningful and beneficial to others.
5. **Goodwill (*Metta-citta*)** – Maintain and control the mind with awareness on loving-kindness toward all beings, even when delivering criticism (*Kakacūpama Sutta*, MN 21).

Right Speech in Modern Contexts

In the contemporary world, where social media, political rhetoric, and misinformation often fuel tension, the Buddha's guidelines on Right Speech are more relevant than ever. Diplomats, educators, and community leaders can adopt these principles to foster dialogue that bridges divides rather than deepening them.

For example, in peace negotiations, adopting a Right Speech approach ensures that communication remains truthful, empathetic, and oriented toward reconciliation. Furthermore, educational institutions can integrate Right Speech into curricula to promote ethical

⁶ <https://www.buddhistgroupofkendal.co.uk/eight-precepts-in-theravada-buddhism/>

communication from a young age, nurturing a culture of non-violence in thought, speech, and action (Harvey 89).

Conclusion

Right Speech, which the Buddha taught, is more than just a personal moral code. It's also a powerful social tool that could change how people, communities, and countries deal with each other. Wrong speech, who do it together are less likely to misunderstand and hurt each other with words, and they trust each other more. Right Speech encourages people to be honest, kind, and purposeful in their conversations, which leads to long term peace and respect.

The Buddha's teachings are timeless and can be used to bring peace to global with hurtful words, false information, and words that separate people often lead to stress and conflict. The ideas behind "Right Speech" could help make words useful for bringing people together and promoting peace, whether they are used in the families, in institutions, in the communities, or in International negotiations. Peaceful culture may be able to plant the seeds of peace instead of strife by making this a regular part of their daily lives, their relationships with others, and their government. This will lead to long term peace around the world based on kindness, compassion, empathy and knowledge.

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