

SANGHA AND SILA

- DISCERNING SKILLFUL SPEECH AND ACTION IN COMMUNITY -

What advice do Buddhist traditions have to offer on the question of how members of a community should discuss matters of common concern, especially when there may be divergent and perhaps strongly held views?

*SPEECH**

SKILLFUL

UNSKILLFUL

Beneficially Intended	⟷	Maliciously Intended
Useful (constructive)	⟷	Idle Gossip & Chatter
Truthful	⟷	Untruthful
Timely	⟷	Untimely
Kind words, kindly said	⟷	Harsh words, harshly said

**Source: Majjhima Nikaya [Middle-Length Discourses] 58, 61. Samyutta Nikaya [Connected Discourses] 45.8. Anguttara Nikaya [Graduated Discourses] 5.198.*

*INTER-BEING IN COMMUNITY**

Before the Buddha left . . . , he spoke to them, “Bhikkus, the very nature of a sangha is harmony. I believe harmony can be realized by following these principles:

1. Sharing a common space such as a forest or home.
2. Sharing the essentials of daily life together.
3. Observing the precepts together [honoring life, generosity, honoring one’s sexuality and that of others, speaking truthfully, ingesting only that which maintains mindfulness].
4. Using only words that contribute to harmony, avoiding all words that cause the community to break.
5. Sharing insights and understanding together.
6. Respecting others’ viewpoints and not forcing another to follow your own viewpoint.

A sangha that follows these principles will have happiness and harmony.”

**Source: Thich Nhat Hanh, OLD PATH, WHITE CLOUDS: WALKING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE BUDDHA (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1991), p. 304. [citing both Theravada and Mahayana texts]*