

Lingual Wisdom of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu: Human Language and Dharma Language (Bhasa Khon Bhasa Dharma)

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Abstract

Religious language is abstract language with subtle meanings. However, it has also very ambiguous meanings. Therefore, it seems to be opened for different interpretations and meaning constructions. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu believes that the interpretation of religious words or language relies closely on the different levels of experiences and conceptions of the religion of Buddhists. To achieve the coherence between the religious words and their interpretation, which are also based on the core of Buddhism, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu presents the concept “ Human Language, Dharma Language” (Bhasa Khon Bhasa Dharma) to classify the religious language into two levels. The first one is Human language which focuses on secularity or objects. The second one is Dharma language which focuses on dharma of which nothing is inherently secular. His presentation of this concept “Human Language, Dharma Language” (Bhasa Khon Bhasa Dharma) is considered as an important tactic to explain the teaching of Buddhism. It gives new points of view among Thais and allows them to understand the teaching of Buddhism more easily. Therefore, the above concept of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu shows his lingual wisdom as well as his propagating of Buddhism, obviously.

Keywords: Lingual Wisdom, Human Language, Dharma Language.

Background

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu is the famous Buddhist scholar in Thailand. He is the great contemporary reformist of Buddhism in history of Siam. He interpret the doctrine of Theravada Buddhism and religious practice of Thai Buddhism by using of analysis and reasoning which is the result from the development of science and the growing of the middle class in Thai society. The printing of the mode of books “Dharmaghosa” or the promotion of Buddha’s teaching conclude his lecture more than 50 books which can accepted as the works of Theravada Buddhist thinker are greatest in history of Thai Buddhism. Donald K. Swearer, a American scholar who experts in Buddhism evaluated highly the role and status of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu in history of Theravada Buddhism. He said that Buddhadasa’s concept is the pattern and most influence beginning from Buddhaghosa the great commentator, and evaluated the role of Buddhadasa equal the great Indian Buddhist thinker as Nagarjuna (Seri Pongpis, 1981, p.119).

Another well-known works of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu are “Manual of Mankind”, “Essence of Buddhism”, “Following of Noble Person” “Mountain of Buddhadharma’s Way”, “Human Language and Dharma Language” and so on. His many works were translated into foreign language such as English, France, German, Chinese, Japan, Lao, Sri Lankan, Tibet. The works which were translated into English printed more than 20 titles (Amnuey Yasyotha : 2003, p. 13)

On the other hand, he begin the teaching which is called “Dharma Lecture” with “Human language” which is the “Language” that is thought by him for affection of Truth. It was called “Suenmok words” for example Me-and-Mine, Enlightenment, Attachment. Hence his old name “Ngeaum” is changed into a new name “Buddhadasa” which means to motivate for

giving himself to be the slave of Buddha. His works as teaching or writing are full of lingual wisdom which is ability in creation of new words or group of word including to bring it for explanation and to give the new meaning of well-known words. Otherwise it still present religious wisdom which can apply the technique of communication and apply religious teaching, faith and valuable ancient ritual for comfortable to practice for giving the good result to man and environment in the contemporary society. The presentation of concept “Human Language and Dharma Language” for using of explanation of Buddhist teaching is the method of Buddhadasa’s promotion of Buddhadharma especially (Chamnan Imsa-ard, 1976, p.69).

The Objective of Research

1. To study the theory of human language and dharma language of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu
2. To evaluate the theory of human language and dharma language of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu

Definition of Important Words

Human Language : It means the normal language which is used in the way of material world or feeling way of normal person and depend on matter, does not true fundamentally.

Dharma Language : It means the transcendental language which is used in abstract way beyond material world, does not depend on material world. It talks truly with wisdom and give only correct meaning of absolute truth.

Literature Review

It is strategy or wisdom in cultivation of Buddhists for understanding of Buddha’s teaching automatically as well as the Buddhist scholars in the past have done the concept of language such as “Normal Language and Transcendent Language”. The reading of religious books or listening of Buddhist teaching often have many difficult words because it composes the Pali language and words which relate to abstract condition. It is obstacle to obtain and understand the religious doctrine for the new learner. Otherwise language and religious words still have many classes and it can be interpreted so many way according to the basic of learner. Whatsoever there are many religious words which the learner of Dharma often misunderstand because they mix it with the meaning which is used generally.

“I have realized what title I will speech, at last I think, the title which most of you don’t understand profoundly truth which was often explained, listened in many time, but didn’t understand it, and suspect that why we don’t understand, I think and realize it still find answer, because most of people know only normal language which is often spoken by people, it is called worldly language, people does not understand transcendent language and never think that there is another language which is different and most opposite the normal language”(Buddhadasa, 1995, p.9).

Buddhadasa have wrote the books on Buddhism which emphasizes the problem about language correctly. He have presented the concept “human language and dharma language” for pointing the difference on understanding about two levels of language or the religious words. Especially, in the level of material and abstract, he explain *“The human language is in the way of material world which is the feeling way of normal person and depend on matter, does not have the truth as fundamental. It talks only the worldly words, it talks only things which can see by eyes of normal person. But the dharma language is the abstract way of*

word which we cannot see, does not depend on material world, because it see the abstract state by wisdom, it talk correctly and give the correct meaning. It is spoken by the Dharma-Wiseman. This is dharma language, abstract language which is beyond the material world” (Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, 1994, p.11).

Methodology

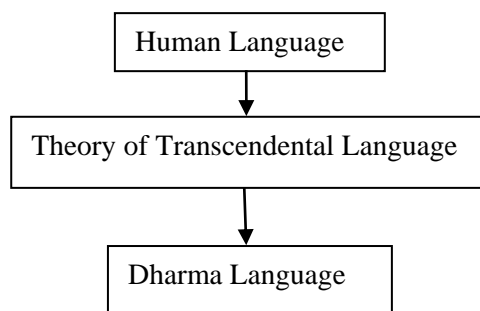
To collect of datum which concern the Theory of Human Language and Dharma Language of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. The method of research is the descriptive and analytic. The concepts of Human Language and Dharma Language will be studied by means of a documentary examination and investigation as well as by its analysis. The study and presentation of the materials found from the primary sources and the secondary sources are:

1. The information in the primary sources ; The literature works of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu as “Manual of Mankind”, “Essence of Buddhism”, “Following of Noble Person” “Mountain of Buddhadharma’s Way”, “Human Language and Dharma Language.”

Later renowned thesis and dissertation concern the works of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu also are carefully looked into, as they are treated as the systematic works on Buddhism.

2.The information in the secondary sources: The explanatory works on Buddhadasa Bhikkhu written by various scholars and supporting literature.

The research based on using the theory of Transcendent Language for analysis of human language into the dharma language as following framework :



Finding

The explanation of concept ‘human language and dharma language’ of Buddhadasa as is presented in above paragraph. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu remind the definition of words especially. The definition of words based on the method of Transcendent Language to give the meaning in two ways namely:

1. The definition of religious words which often are used new correctly from normal level to transcendental level. In this group, it is definition or explanation of words as Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, Sasana, Karma, Nibbana, Magga-phala, Sunyata and so on.

2. The definition of words which is the conceit thought respond to meaning of religion. The words are the conceit concept which the literature calls the thought in kind of typological conceit, and they are the deeper conceit. The words are necessary to have fundamental knowledge of religion in the interpretation or explanation for receiving the completed meaning. The kinds of conceit concept are the words as God, demon, hell, paradise, immortal water, light, dark, bad-smell thing, singing, dancing ect.. The definition of these words is called the ‘symbol’. It call the name of something with using the another words, do not call uprightly, for example, light is the symbol of wisdom, dark is the symbol

of ignorance, immortal water means highest Dharma, angle means the teaching of Buddha. The speaking of symbol and comparative word is the model in teaching of Dharma is used from the time of Buddha. What is well known is the comparison of human in the world as the four kinds of lotus according to the level of wisdom. Whatsoever we can critique the form in explanation of human language into the dharma language on four features as 1) the explanation of material words into the abstract words, 2) the explanation of material things into the material things, 3) the explanation of abstract words into the material words and 4) the explanation of abstract words into the abstract words namely;

1. The explanation of material words into the abstract words as Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, Sasana, Nibbana, Mara (demon), Loka (world), Jati (birth), Marana (dearth), Life, Human, Hell, Animal, Peta (ghost), Asura (evil), Paradise, Immortal Water, Stopping, Light, Dark, Mother-and-Father, Friend, Enemy, Bad-smelled Things, Dancing and so on.

Words	Human Language	Dharma Language
Buddha	The Buddha and his life, body which was born in India two thousand years ago, had been Nibbana and was burn.	The true Dharma which is said by Buddha “One can see Dharma, he will see Tathagata (Buddha). One can see Tathagata, he will see Dharma.” The person who do not see Dharma, although catch the robe of Buddha, it doesn’t means seeing the Tathagata.
Dharma	Scripture or book which is called Dharma in Tipitakas cabinet or the voice of Dharma.	The whole Dharma which is not only book, scripture, palm leave, or deep meaning sermon, but it means every things which can understood difficulty, or can understood easily.
Sangha (community of monk)	Priest, monk	Dharma is in the man’s mind, it means virtue, do not means person, because the outside thing or person is similarly, but it is different on the virtue in the mind which can make man to be Noble Person as Sotapanna, Skithacami, Anacami, and Arahant.
Sasana (Religion)	Church, Vihara, Pagoda, Yellow Robe, Doctrine.	The true Dharma which can be refuge of human being. Dharma can be the way leading to cessation of suffering.
Nibbana (Liberation)	Nibbana is the place, crystal palace, imagined city. All are received from thinking, therefore everyone want to go to Nibbana.	The cessation of desire and suffering.
Mara (demon)	Giant or monster have afraid body.	It is some state which interrupt the goodness and ability for reaching the cessation of suffering.
Loka (world)	Earth or world is round or flat.	The truth, virtue or nature is in the world as suffering, uncertainty, and so on.
Jati (birth)	A child deliver from mother womb.	The beginning of perception “Me-and-Mine” happen once in our mind daily. It happen in the mind of normal man in many time, and happen in the mind of

		good man in sometime. It happen in the mind of Noble Person a little bite, or still don't happen.
Marana (death)	Dearth or died person is brought to burn or bury.	One can destroy evil perception. The perception of 'Me-and-Mine' disappear.
Jiva (life)	The being is not died, can move, walk and eat.	The state is immortal, it is Nibbana or eternal life. The life is not born, is not die again.
Man	The highest being have life and body.	Virtue helps to be the man, it is higher level of mind.

2.The explanation of material words into material words as Duty, Bharmacariya, Refuge and so on.

Word	Human Language	Dharma Language
Bharmacariya (Noble Life)	Refrain from the misconduct of sexual behavior.	The action destroy some desire by effective. If one practice dharma truthfully, strictly, unmistaken, it is called Bharmacariya.

3.The explanation of abstract words into material words as the word 'Karma'.

Word	Human Language	Dharma Language
Karma (Duty)	The work which we have to do because it is necessary for life.	Kammattana (Meditation) is the practice of Dharma. One practice dharma with honesty, correct, diligent, effort, intellect, and most of virtue.

4.The explanation of abstract words into abstract words as Magga-phala, God, Sunyata and so on.

Words	Human Language	Dharma Language
Magga-Phala (way-and-goal)	The working reach the goal according to the desire, hence it is worldly.	One can destroy the suffering or desire which is the cause of suffering correctly with practice of Dharma step by step.
God/gods	God have the power in doing, inspiration, creation of all things. He create the world and Universe	Mystic power does not Self, does not angle, does not be anything. But it is the nature, truth, law of nature. It is called in Pali "Dharma".
Sunya (emptiness)	"Sunyata" is the Pali word, "sunya" means empty, "ta" means -ness, therefore "sunyata" means emptiness, nothing, or wasteful.	One have every things as he can, avoid the perception of 'Me-and-Mine', that is the empty of Self or Oneself.

If we realize language in rhetoric form, Buddhadasa's human language and dharma language is rhetoric form which is used many kind of rhetoric language in consistence as descriptive rhetoric, comparative rhetoric, elevate rhetoric. More clear understanding, there is main words and sub-words which is understood till feeling and thought was happen. The rhetoric form is used by Buddhadasa to consist lecture most clearly in comparative rhetoric. It means language comparing the truth for clearness in meaning, image, emotion and feeling.

Conclusion and Suggestion

The Buddhadasa's explanation of religious language in level of transcendent language help us to across the many imagination in god story and mystic thought in traditional Buddhism. It is the challenge to Thai Buddhist for realizing, to recognize, and understanding of scripture and teaching of Buddhism in deepest and rational level. It is most necessary at time of the class opening of communication between traditional lawful monks who must teach the Buddhist of modern world. The Buddhadasa's concept on human language and dharma language have important significance, because it is fundamental for understanding of Buddhism based on experience of wisdom. Under the frame of concept, it is the true context in meaning of Buddhism. Although it is the presentation which we should not understand the Buddhist scripture according to the words as the most of people understand, because it leads to wrong attachment of ideas. The division of human language and dharma language is helping to see the doctrine or essence of Buddhism. It leads Buddhist to leave the wrong ideas and include the looseness of wrong attachment in the Self, until leads to the cessation of suffering at the end. In the same time, it is to create the understanding of Dharma and solve the problem on the conflict of Buddha's words, it can say that the presentation of concept on human language and dharma language of Buddhadasa had created the harmony in the difference between religion. He reminds that the conflict and misunderstanding between the difference of religion happen from the holding on the doctrine according to the "words" as "Human language" which is worldly rhetoric more than the language beyond the world, or "Dharma language". If we understand the latter form, there is no conflict in all religion, because one will say same language which is dharma language. (Seri Pongpis, 1981, pp.40-41)

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu had tried for explanation and interpretation of doctrine in many religion relatively as explains the meaning of God in English. It is similarly in the voice and meaning with word 'Kod (in Thai)' which means 'Dharma' or 'law of nature'(Nikij Plarychum, 1980, p 149). In the other hand, the symbol 'crucifix' of Christianity was explained by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu that it is the destroying of 'I or Me' and 'Mine' which is important passion of man. Therefore Buddhadasa Bhikkhu have many good friends both Christian and Muslim. His works on lecture and books are full of linguistic wisdom which is ability in creation of words or group of new word, and conclude the explanation and to make the new meaning to well known words. Otherwise he presents the religious wisdom which can apply to technique and communicate the religious doctrine, belief, and valuable tradition, apply to comfort for good practice into the person and environment in contemporary. Howsoever, beginning from the presentation of concept "human language and dharma language", he had interested the using of language in another form as to bring the theory of psycho-analysis of Sigmund Freud and Alfred Adler to interpret the doctrine with presentation in article "The Experiment on Buddhist Psycho-analysis (superiority complex)" (Buddhadasa,1984, p.79). Sigmund Freud realizes that all behavior of man begin from the motivation of Sub-consciousness (Unconsciousness), especially sexual instinct. While Alfred Adler critiques that it begin from the effort to instead inferiority complex. In other hand, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu do not agree with them, he critiques and concludes that every things go on with controlling of persistence (Ahangara, Mamangara or Me-and-Mine) which is called by him 'superiority complex'. He explains that there is no inferiority complex, in the human mind there is only superiority complex. The presentation of persistence is to create the words for comparing with concept "inferiority complex", he critiques and explains that all human behavior, concluding both plant and animal are under motivation from power of superiority complex, they want to be

important person, want to be big person or have the attachment of me-and-mine at all. To use the theory of psycho-analysis for to critique Buddhist views is the effort for applying dharma with the modern science and to create the interested words for communication with the contemporary young person and technocrat meaningfully. He had created the words and sentence “Suenmok Form” which have value, meaning, proverb. These words are not created new at all, some words was applied as the Buddha had done in the past, for example, to bring the word ‘Nibbana’ which means decease and it is the words of people in Indian society to be absolute idea of Buddhism, and give the new meaning which is the state of peace happening from the ability to destroy of lust, greed and fool in mind (Preecha Changkhunyea, 1997, p 479). In the case of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, he create and apply the new words such as birds do not see the sky, fishes do not see the water, man do not see the world, eating, love, dignity, cleaning, light, peace. It is the beginning to explain the Dharma clearly both meaning and significance. It is the way of presentation of wisdom in promotion of Dharma and linguistic wisdom of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and is valuable for leaning worldwide at the future.

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