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“Buddhadasa’s notion of ‘Dhamma Language’”

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Abstract

In his Dhamma talks Ajahn Buddhadasa would sometimes refer to “two kinds of language,” namely: “Everyday language” and “Dhamma language.” In my address I look at how he explains the notion of Dhamma Language and at why one needs to distinguish it from Everyday Language. I also discuss some of the wider doctrinal implications of this distinction.

About the speaker

Dr. Roderick Bucknell, Associate Professor in Religious Studies, became seriously interested in Buddhism in the mid-1960’s when, during a visit to Thailand, he was introduced to the techniques of insight meditation. After spending a year in various Thai meditation centers and monasteries, he took ordination as a bhikkhu (monk) under the guidance of Ajahn Pannananda of Wat Chalapratana Rangsit. He soon became also interested in the teachings of Ajahn Buddhadasa, and, recognizing their potential value to Westerners, translated during 1967-1971 important works of Tan Ajahn into English, such as *Buddha-Dhamma for Students*, *Two Kinds of Language*, *Another Kind of Birth*, *Why Were We Born?*, and *Handbook for Mankind*. Having returned to laylife, he then pursued an academic career and wrote among other articles “The ‘Three Knowledges’ of Buddhism: Implications of Buddhadasa’s interpretation of rebirth” (1983).