

กวีนิพนธ์ของพุทธทาสภิกขุกับการพิจารณาความว่าง

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BUDDHADASA'S POETRY AND THE CONTEMPLATION ON EMPTINESS

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“ความว่าง” ในฐานะคำศัพท์เฉพาะทางพุทธศาสนานั้นมีที่มาจากคำสอนของพระพุทธเจ้าที่ปรากฏในพระไตรปิฎก ในทางเถรวาทใช้คำว่า “สุญญตา” แทนคำว่าความว่างและอธิบายความว่างด้วยหลักปฏิบัติสมุปปาท ในทางมหายานใช้คำว่า “ศูนยตา” โดยขยายขอบเขตความหมายของคำว่าความว่างครอบคลุมทุกสิ่งรวมถึงการตรัสรู้หรือโพธิของพระพุทธเจ้าด้วย

พุทธทาสภิกขุเสนอแนวคิดเรื่องความว่างในลักษณะเหนือการแบ่งนิกาย กล่าวคือ ท่านอธิบายว่าความว่างเป็นแก่นแท้ของศาสนา ปรากฏในศาสนาของพระพุทธเจ้าหรือ “พุทธยาน” ความว่างในทรรศนะของพุทธทาสภิกขุสามารถอธิบายได้ด้วยแนวคิด 4 ประการ คือ แนวคิดเรื่องจิตว่าง, แนวคิดเรื่องจิตเดิมแท้, แนวคิดเรื่องนิพพานที่นี้เดี๋ยวนี้สำหรับทุกคน, และแนวคิดเรื่องการปฏิบัติจิตว่างในชีวิตประจำวัน แนวคิดทั้ง 4 ประการนี้ครอบคลุมหลักคำสอนของท่านพุทธทาสในทุกมิติ กล่าวคือ ทุกสิ่งที่ท่านพุทธทาสภิกขุสอนล้วนเกี่ยวข้องกับแนวคิดเรื่องความว่างทั้งสิ้น

กวีนิพนธ์ของท่านพุทธทาสภิกขุแสดงนัยสำคัญของแนวคิด “ความว่าง” ในหลายลักษณะ กล่าวคือ “ความว่าง” หมายถึงการดำรงอยู่ของสรรพสิ่งโดยปราศจากแก่นแท้ให้ยึดมั่น ทุกสิ่งดำรงอยู่ด้วยเหตุและปัจจัย ท่านพุทธทาสภิกขุใช้แนวคิด “ความว่าง” ในลักษณะเป็นอุดมคติสูงสุดของพุทธศาสนา กล่าวคือ อธิบายเรื่องจิตว่างและจิตเดิมแท้ และใช้อธิบายวิธีปฏิบัติเพื่อเข้าถึงอุดมคตินั้น นั่นคือ แนวคิดนิพพานที่นี้เดี๋ยวนี้สำหรับทุกคนและแนวคิดการปฏิบัติจิตว่างในชีวิตประจำวัน

นอกจากนี้กวีนิพนธ์ของพุทธทาสภิกขุยังแสดง “ความว่าง” ในฐานะแนวคิดสำคัญที่ใช้อธิบายไตรสิกขา คือ สีล สมาธิ ปัญญา ซึ่งเป็นพื้นฐานของการบรรลุนิพพาน การอ่านกวีนิพนธ์ยังใช้เป็นหลักปฏิบัติเพื่อการบรรลุนิพพานอีกด้วย ตัวกวีนิพนธ์เองก็เป็นอุบายสอนธรรมอย่างแยบยลและลึกซึ้ง องค์ประกอบทางวรรณศิลป์ที่ปรากฏใช้ในกวีนิพนธ์ของท่านพุทธทาสภิกขุ อาทิ การสร้างภาพพจน์ การใช้ภาพประกอบบทกวี การใช้คำถามเชิงวรรณศิลป์ การใช้อุปลักษณ์ การใช้บุคลา-วิเศษชนา การใช้คติ การใช้เรื่องราวสอนธรรม ล้วนสร้างเป็นการสร้างปริศนาธรรม เป็นเครื่องมือให้ผู้อ่านกวีนิพนธ์ได้ “ฟัง” พิจารณาเพื่อเข้าถึง “ความว่าง” หรือ พระนิพพานในที่สุด

สาขาวิชา.....ไทยศึกษา.....ลายมือชื่อนิสิต.....

ปีการศึกษา.....2555.....ลายมือชื่อ อ.ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์หลัก.....

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THANAPHON CHEUNGSIRAKULVIT : BUDDHADASA'S POETRY AND THE
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CHONGSTITVATANA, Ph.D., 144 pp.

'Emptiness' as a Buddhist term is derived from the teaching of the Buddha which appears in the Tipiṭaka. In Theravāda, the word '*suññatā*' is used in the meaning of emptiness and is explained by the Buddhism concept of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. In Mahāyāna, the word '*śūññatā*' is used in the meaning of emptiness and its meaning is extended, to the greatest extent, to cover the *Bodhi* – the enlightenment of the Buddha.

Buddhadāsa proposed the concept of emptiness as something beyond the division of schools, that is, he explained that emptiness is the essence of the religion which appears in the teaching of the Buddha, or what he called *Buddhayāna*. Emptiness in Buddhadāsa's teaching can be divided into four categories; the empty mind, the original condition of the mind, *Nibbāna* here and now for everyone, and the integration of empty mind with daily life. These four aspects of emptiness cover all areas of Buddhadāsa's teaching, that is, everything that Buddhadāsa taught is all related or connected to the concept of emptiness.

Emptiness is also the main focus in Buddhadāsa's poetry. His poetry portrayed the concept of emptiness in various aspects, that is, the poetry defines emptiness as the dependent origination of things with no core to cling to. Everything exists under the law of cause and effect. In his poetry, Buddhadāsa suggests that the ultimate condition of emptiness is elaborated in 4 dimensions namely, the notion of empty mind, the original condition of the mind, and the path to attain such ultimate state –covering the concept of *nibbāna* here and now for everyone, and the integration of empty mind with daily life.

Moreover, Buddhadāsa's poetry also illustrates that the emptiness is the concept used to explain the *tri-sikkha* (threefold training) that is *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* – which are the foundation of attaining *nibbāna*. Reading of poetry can also be considered the path to *nibbāna* because the poetry itself is an *upāya* which teach dhamma in a deep and refined way. Artistic techniques used in Buddhadāsa's poetry, such as, imagery, poetry with picture, provocation, metaphor, conversation technique, and parable; all contribute in creating 'skillful means' in which the reader can 'contemplate' until they finally attain 'emptiness' or *nibbāna*. Buddhadāsa's poetry is, thus, a crucial object of contemplation on emptiness.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. Background and rationale

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu (1906-1993) is one of the best-known monks in Thailand. Since the early 1970s, the thought of Buddhadāsa has become a primary focus of debates about Theravada Buddhist doctrine in Thailand. Buddhadāsa began to systematically propose his teaching in 1932, and some of his sermons and articles were published in local Buddhist journals in the 1930s and 1940s. However, it was not until the late 1960s and early 1970s, in particular during the period of civilian government from 1973 until 1976, that Buddhadāsa's ideas found a broader national audience in Thailand. This is because it has only been during the last couple of decades, in response to the rapid socio-economic development of the country, that considerable number of fellow Thais have come to share the modernist and reformist views on Buddhism that Buddhadāsa has been proposing for over fifty years.

Buddhadāsa's work covers all areas of Buddhist doctrine and practice. Indeed, Buddhadāsa's life work can be regarded as an attempt to develop a thorough commentary of the Theravada doctrine.¹ Not since the *Visuddhimagga*, written by Buddhaghosa in Ceylon in the fifth century of the Christian era, has there been such a comprehensive attempt to systematically reinterpret the doctrine in the light of contemporary views and expectations.

Poetry is one of the methods of teaching used since the time of the Buddha as pointed out in 'A study of Patterns and Methods of the Preaching by Thai Sangha in the Present Time' by *Phra Boonchok Chayadhammo*² and 'An Analytical Study of the Buddha's Strategy in the Propagation of Buddhism' by *Songvit Kawosri*.³ These two studies maintain that poetry is a kind of arts used in presenting profound meaning since the ancient time. Especially, Dharma poetry has long been used since the time of the Buddha, for example, the Tripitaka was composed in the form of versed 'katha.' Moreover, poetry also enables the audience to remember the content and helps the monks correct the mistake - as the rhythm of poetry is a control factor of the content. Buddhadāsa mentioned the importance of poetry as he said:

¹Chayadhammo, Boonchok. A Study of Patterns and Methods of the Preaching by Thai Sangha in the Present Time. (Bangkok: Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya Press, 2005). p.2.

²Ibid.

³Kawosri, Songvit. An Analytical Study of the Buddha's Strategy in the Propagation of Buddhism. (Bangkok: Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya Press, 2008).

"Normally the word 'kavi' only means that the work is composed in verse. However, for me, [to call it 'kavi'] the work must express some profound thought, regardless it is versed or not. The difficulty [of composing the poetry] is how to express such profound thought for the audience to understand easily and explicitly. The versing process is another process helping the audience remember the poetry fast, easily and eventually."⁴

From the quotation, the main focus of poetry in Buddhādāsa's point of view is the profound idea that is expressed, not the poetic forms. Good poetry, in this case, does not have to be versed, or fully decorated with imageries. But it needs to communicate some profound meaning. His poetry "*Please, Taste the Dharma, not the Beauty*" captures the main idea of Buddhādāsa's definition of poetry*:

For Dharma poetry, it is not necessary-	คำประพันธ์ บทพระธรรม ไม่จำเพาะ
That the words must be beautiful,	ว่าจะต้อง ไพเราะ เพราะอักษร
Or the verse is put so finely,	หรือสัมผัส ชดช้อย แห่งบทกลอน
As general poets do.	ที่อรชร เชิงกวี ตามนิยม
Mainly, it needs to convey Dharma,	ขอแต่เพียง ให้อรรถ แห่งธรรมะ
Clearly, explicitly; first and foremost.	ได้แจ่มจะ ถนัดเห็น เป็นปฐม
It must give emotional taste of Dharma,	แล้วได้รส แห่งพระธรรม ต่ำอารมณ์
Which will ripen and elevate the mind.	ที่อาจบ่ม เบิกใจ ให้เจริญ
The previous habit will be changed;	ให้นิสัย เปลี่ยนใหม่ จากก่อนเก่า
It gives not melancholy but happiness.	ไม่ซึมเศร้า สุขสง่า น่าสรรเสริญ
The mind will be strong; not lacking or excessive.	เป็นจิตกล้า สามารถ ไม่ขาดเกิน
Please, taste the dharma, not the beauty. ⁵	ขอชวนเจริญ ชมธรรมรส งดกวี

Moreover, referring to the ancient meditation technique, interpretation of poetry was also used as a kind of meditation. Chayadhamo stated about the method of teaching of the Buddha that:

* Poetry cited in this research is originally published in Thai language and is translated, unless stated as others, by the author.

⁴ Buddhādāsa. *Far Sang Tang ThammaKod*. (Bangkok: Dhammaghosa Studies project, Sukhaphab Jai, 2004). pp.284-285.

⁵ พุทธทาสภิกขุ. *หัวข้อธรรมในคำกลอน*. (กรุงเทพฯ : สุขภาพใจ, 1997). หน้า v.

“In studying the way of teaching of the Buddha, it is found that the Buddha used many techniques to present his thought. Overall, the patterns of his sermons can be divided into two groups; "Tessana Tham Baeb Yor"; the concise preaching, which the Buddha gave only the topic of the dharma and a few important word as its explanation, and "Tessana Tham Baeb Pissadan", the elaborated preaching, which is very detailed and well organized with or without the topic of the dharma.”⁶

For the Buddha, the concise preaching was used for very selective people who, the Buddha thought, were suitable for understanding such dharma. The Buddha used only a few words to let his audience think and fill in the gap he left for their consideration. Poetry may be classified into this concise preaching category since it is the selected combination of words intended for the audience to think and interpret the meaning; especially for Buddhadāsa’s poetry; as Buddhadāsa called his poetry “Hua Koh Tham Nai Kam Klon”, or the topic of dharma in verse. The advantage of using only the topic of dharma in the poetry is that it allows the reader to think and interpret the poetry. Buddhadāsa linked this interpretative aspect of poetry with meditation. He explained that:

“This kind of dharma is used for contemplation in order to see the truth that lies in words. And then contemplate more until you can feel it, until your mind is changed according to the Dharma...”

The knowledge and understanding generated by this kind of contemplation is more correct and more beneficial than only read through the poem. Also this kind of practice is another way of meditation. It is the access to concentration and wisdom. This is the way that is reachable by general people. And it is also a precept at the same time.”⁷

From the quotation, it is important to note that Buddhadāsa intended, for his poetry, to be an object of contemplation. He stated clearly that by reading poetry, the audience is practicing Dharma, both in terms of Sīla, Smādhi, and Paññā (precept, concentration, and wisdom), which are the three essential ways, known as Tri-sikkhā,

⁶ Chayadhammo. A study of Patterns and Methods of the Preaching by Thai Sangha in the Present Time. p.13.

⁷ พุทธศาสนิกฯ. นั้งข้อธรรมในคำกลอน. หน้า. vii

to attain Nirvana. It is interesting that Buddhādāsa pointed out that by reading his poetry the reader can practice the three of tri-sikkhā at the same time, which can be implied that reading and contemplating the poetry may be one way to attain Nirvana - even though there is no proof that anyone ever reach nirvana by reading the poetry.

To conclude about the meditative role of poetry; poetry can be regarded as “upāya” or skillful means for the reader to think about more profound meaning the lies behind the verse. For the definition of upāya, John Hick stated that

“It presupposes that a teacher knows some truth which is to be communicated to others so that they may come to see it for themselves; and the skillful means are the devices which the teacher uses to do this.”⁸

It is important to emphasize on the word ‘skillful’ as it makes upāya different from other means. Hick maintained that the master must know exactly the knowledge they want to teach and skillfully created the device, the skillful device, which is not too easy or too difficult but it needs to ‘challenge’ the student to think and make understanding of such device. Taking this explanation into consideration; Buddhādāsa’s poetry can be regarded as skillful means since his poetry challenge the reader to think, see, contemplate, feel and open the mind for dhamma.

Moreover, it is interesting how Buddhādāsa created his ‘skillful’ device. What elements in his poetry make the poetry skillful? What ‘profound meaning’ is expressed in Buddhādāsa’s poetry? Does the skillful means help the reader understand such profound meaning effectively?

One of the best-known characteristics of Buddhādāsa's teaching is his emphasis on the concept of sunyatā, which he defined as "kwam wang." This concept has been preached since the time of the Buddha, for example;

Khuddakanikāya, patisambhidāmakka is directly related to sunyatā. Ānanda Bhikkhu asked the Buddha about the meaning of 'empty world?' The Buddha replied that

Ananda:

“It is said that the world is empty, the world is empty, lord.
In what respect is it said that the world is empty?”

⁸Hick, John. "Religion as Skillful Means: A Hint from Buddhism," International Journal for Philosophy of Religion 30, 3 (October 1994): 141.

The Buddha:

“Insofar as it is empty of a self or of anything pertaining to a self: Thus it is said that the world is empty. And what is empty of a self or of anything pertaining to a self? The eye is empty of a self or of anything pertaining to a self. Forms... Visual consciousness... Visual contact is empty of a self or of anything pertaining to a self.

The ear...

The nose...

The tongue...

The body...

The intellect is empty of a self or of anything pertaining to a self. Ideas... Mental consciousness... Mental contact is empty of a self or of anything pertaining to a self. Thus it is said that the world is empty.”⁹

Moreover, in order to see the world as empty, the Buddha stated in the Dhammapada that;

*"When you see with discernment,
'All fabrications are inconstant' —
you grow disenchanted with stress.
This is the path to purity.*

*When you see with discernment,
'All fabrications are stressful' —
you grow disenchanted with stress.
This is the path to purity.*

*When you see with discernment,
'All phenomena are not-self' —
you grow disenchanted with stress.
This is the path to purity.”¹⁰*

Therefore, meditation practice needs the understanding of the concept of sunyatā; that is to see that everything is empty from the self; that everything is just the stream of nature that flows. To see emptiness is to see the way things really are as

⁹ Department of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Education. Tripitaka-Royal Patronage Edition (English Language), No.31. (Bangkok: Department of Religious Affairs Printing, 1982), p.311.

¹⁰ Dhamapada (English Version). Verse 277-279. Online. Retrieved December 12, 2012. Access from <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/dhp/dhp.20.than.html#dhp-277>.

samādhi-sutta said *"Bhikkhu who attained the concentrated mind will know the truth that everything is impermanent, it is empty."*¹¹

For Buddhadāsa, he called ‘sūnyatā’ as ‘kwam wang’ or ‘emptiness, which is free from moral impurities and is in a state of peace and equanimity, the foundation of Nirvana. He said that *“why do we learn Dharma? What is the ultimate goal of learning Dharma? The answer is we learn Dharma in order to achieve the ultimate state, the cool and empty state of Nirvana.”*¹²

Buddhadāsa explained the condition of Nirvana as cool and empty. This is to link the concept of emptiness with Nirvana. He pointed out that Nirvana is the ultimate goal of life. The poem ‘Life of a Wise Man’ best describes the ultimate goal of life in Buddhadāsa’s point of view:

Abruptly leaving hell,	ผลงขึ้นมาจากนรกให้ฉับพลัน
Resting in heaven for a moment.	แล้วนั่งพัก บนสวรรค์ กั้นสักครู่
Long is the time spent in Nirvana.	มีเวลา เหนานิพพาน นานโขอยู่
This is the life of a wise man.	ชีวิตผู้ ประเสริฐศรี เช่นนี้แล

The poem suggests that the ultimate goal of life is the attainment of Nirvana. The suggested stages of life should start by knowing ‘hell’ but do not rest in that for too long. This implies that since we were born in suffering, we should see and feel suffering then get out of it. The second stage is to rest in ‘heaven’ but it is important that we must see the danger in heaven too, then spend only some time in it and try to reach Nirvana.

For Buddhadāsa, the concept of emptiness is inevitably related to Nirvana. The relationship between emptiness and nirvana is also mentioned in a number of Buddhadāsa’s poetry. One example is “The Empty Mind can Hear the Grass Speaks”:

The enlightened Buddha’s mind is empty.	พระพุทธรู ตรีสิริ จิตอยู่ว่าง
He can hear everything talking to him,	ได้ยินสิ่ง ทุกอย่าง แดลงไซ
As if they talk about themselves	เหมือนมันฟ้อง ตัวเอง เริงแซไป
That nothing is worth taking -	ว่าไม่มี สิ่งไหน น่ายึดเอา
For myself, or as it is mine.	มาเพื่อเป็น ตัวกู หรือของกู
Do not take it because you are fool.	อย่าหลงดู มันเข้า เพราะความเขลา
And take the emptiness as mine.	เอาของเป็น อนัตตา มาเป็นเรา

¹¹ [Tripitaka](#). No. 18, p.81.

¹² Buddhadasa. Kwam Lud Phon. (Bangkok: Thai Quality Book, 2006). p.122.

You will then suffer a great pain.	จะต้องเศร้า โศกระทม ตรมใจแรง
The soil, the rocks, the grass,	แม้กวอดดิน หินไม้ และใบหญ้า
All are saying to you the words;which,	ล้วนแต่ส่ง เสียงจ้า ทุกห้วงแห่ง
Human beings with busy mind do not understand	คนจิตวุ่น ไม่เข้าใจ ไม่ระวาง
The word that everything is all singing Dharma.	ว่าทุกสิ่ง ร้องแสดง บทพระธรรม
When the mind is empty you can hear even the grass.	ครั้นจิตว่าง จะได้ยิน แม้ใบหญ้า
They're discussing the great words-	มันปรึกษา ข้อความ ที่งามซ้ำ
That “what can we do in order for all being,	ว่า “ทำไฉน สัตว์ทั้งหลาย จะรำยรำ
To dance with empty mind,	ด้วยจิตว่าง เพราะวางธรรม ทั้งปวงเลย” ๗
To learn how to let go even the Dharma itself.	

In this poem, Buddhadāsa decentered human being as he made nature sing to human being. Only the people with empty mind can hear all those singings. That is to say, anyone who wants to get along with nature, or the law of nature, must have the empty mind. The poem points out clearly that empty mind is a characteristic of the Buddha mind. Moreover, because we know that the Buddha is already enlightened and attained the state of Nirvana, so this poem also suggests that empty mind is also a characteristic of the mind that attained nirvana.

To explain further, Buddhadāsa maintained that Nirvana is the most important thing for this life. He said that “*the heart of Buddhism is Nirvana. All the virtues in Buddhism have Nirvana as the core. In other words, all the Dharma ends at Nirvana, so Nirvana is the heart of Buddhism.*”¹³ Therefore, the main focus of Buddhadāsa’s teaching, therefore, is inevitably aimed at the attainment of Nirvana, and at emptiness as the core explanation of such state.

In conclusion, in this research the main questions that will be discussed are: how does Buddhadāsa’s poetry help the reader understand the concept of emptiness. How does poetry as a skillful means contribute in the path of attaining Nirvana; along with the questions of what elements that make Buddhadāsa’s poetry become a skillful means which is used to express the profound meaning of emptiness?

2. Objectives of the Study

1. To study Buddhadāsa’s contemplation on emptiness in his poetry
2. To analyze the artistic techniques that Buddhadāsa used in his poetry

¹³ Buddhadasa. Kwam Lud Phon. p.111.

3. Hypothesis

Emptiness is the main focus in Buddhadāsa's poetry. Buddhadāsa's constant use of artistic techniques, such as, imageries, parables and provocative questions, make his poetry an "upāya" or skillful means; to connote the concept of emptiness. Buddhadāsa's poetry could lead to an awareness of the way things really are; that is, to perceive emptiness in all things.

4. Scope and Limitation of the Study

This thesis will study the printed version of the book 'Hua Kho Dham Nai Kham Klon' (หัวข้อธรรมในคำกลอน) which contained 189 poems written by Buddhadāsa. Apart from that book, there will be some poetry in 'Bot Pra Tham Pra Cham Phab' (บทพระธรรมประจำภาพ). The total number of Buddhadāsa's poems used in this research is 295 poems.

5. Significance and Usefulness of the Study

This study will provide an in-depth analysis of Buddhadāsa's poetry which will help the reader understand Buddhadāsa's concept of emptiness. This study will also pave the way for further study of poetry as a means to teach Dharma in terms of the mind development and its contemplation.

6. Related Documents and Researches

There are a few researches by Thai scholars relating to the concept of emptiness. These researches mainly discussed the characteristic of Mahayana Buddhism which the concept of emptiness is a dominated idea. For example, Prapod Assavavirulhakarn. *Bodhisattvacarya: Marga Pua Muan Chon*.¹⁴ In this research, the author explains the origin of the concept of bodhisattva that it first appeared in Theravada text in the meaning of the Buddha-to-be. But when Buddhism was divided into schools there was an elevation of the bodhisattva over the arahant. There was also the emphasis on the concepts of compassion and salvation by faith, in order to promote the religion to the public and also the acceptance of the notion of suññatā as the basic condition of everything. Prapod argued in his research that as a Mahayana's term, bodhi means suññatā and Bodhisattva must see suññatā in everything. This

¹⁴Assavavirulhakarn, Prapod. *Bodhisattvacarya: Marga Pua Muan Chon*. (Bangkok: Academic Research Distribution Project, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, 2003).

research explained the concept of *suññatā* in Mahayana point of view, which is the key concept in this study.

In Suwanna Satha-Anand's *Buddhadāsa Philosophy and Mahayana*¹⁵, the author analyzed Mahayana philosophy in Buddhadāsa's teaching. The author suggested that Buddhadāsa presented the basic understanding of Buddha Dharma in four universal conditions which are the universality of Dharma, which is Dharma in nature; the universality of language, which is *phasa khon - phasa tham* (human language and dharma language); the universality of salvation, the potential of human being to attain nirvana; and the equality in society. These four conditions go along with the basic conditions that Nagārjuna and Asanga in Mahayana tradition had explained, which are the universality of the Buddha Dharma; the unbounded good mind; and activities of the Bodhisattva that will help the being attain Nirvana. Satha-Anand's work will contribute in the discussion of the concept of emptiness and in analyzing various means that Buddhadāsa used to convey the dhamma.

There are also many researches that deal with the study of poetry. But when it comes to poetry with dharma content, the number is decreased to only a few. One of the examples is Suchitra Chongstitvatana's '*Buddha Dhamma in Thai Modern Poetry*.'¹⁶ In this research, the author analyzed Thai modern poetry which has the content related to Buddha Dharma, in order to understand the existence of Buddha Dharma in Thai modern poetry. The conclusion of the study is that Buddha Dharma is still an important main idea in Thai modern poetry. However, the existence of the Buddha Dharma is changed from traditional poetry because of the poet's interpretation of the Buddha Dharma. The focuses of the Buddha Dharma in modern poetry are the elevation of individual mind and create the ultimate goal of life. This research is important because it is the pioneer research in Buddhadāsa's poetry, as well as modern poetry in terms of Buddha Dharma.

Another example of poetry study that aim to analyze the Buddha dharma in the poetry is Peerapong Paññābho's *An Analysis of Buddhist Ethics as Found in Poems: A Case Study of Poems of S.E.A. Write Award (Thailand)*.¹⁷ The author concluded that human beings always fail to notice the reality of life and to know the force of the defilement of mind when lose consciousness. Therefore there is no doubt the ethic is to be gradually neglected and finally disappeared from the society. The

¹⁵Satha-Anand, Suwanna. Mahayana Buddhism in Buddhadasa's Philosophy. (Bangkok: Research Dissemination Project, Chulalongkorn University, 1992).

¹⁶Chongstitvatana, Suchitra. Buddha Dharma in Thai Modern Poetry. (Bangkok: Academic Research Distribution Project, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, 2004).

¹⁷Paññābho,Peerapong, Phra Mahā. An Analysis of Buddhist Ethics as Found in Poems: A Case Study of Poems of S.E.A. Write Award (Thailand). (Bangkok: Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya, 2004).

S.E.A. Write Award poems are the poems that gather and collect the disappearance and unbalance of the ethic in the society in order to find the way out of the social problems. If human beings are able to live according to ethical conduct then the poem is the force of goodness, which will support and protect those and lead them to the ultimate goal of life. This is the wonder of Dharma or the teachings of Buddhism, which absorb in the poem intentionally or unintentionally. However the light of righteousness is always radiated from good admirers. The power of wisdom, which is absorbed in the S.E.A. Write Award poem, is absolutely impossible to be described. If people cannot absorb goodness, ethic and virtue cannot be established in his mind no matter how great that thing is. This thesis is an attempt to link the poem to the social responsibility and individual awareness, which is essential in analyzing Buddhādāsa's teaching.

In terms of Buddhādāsa's interpretation of dharma, there are many studies conducted to show the characteristic of Buddhādāsa teaching compared to the canon or the generally accepted commentaries. In Arth Adunarayangsi's *Paticcasamuppāda in Buddhādāsa's point of view*,¹⁸ the author studied paticcasamuppāda in Buddhādāsa teaching and concluded that Buddhādāsa interpreted paticcasamuppāda that it is a condition which happens in the mind, not a physical network of life as Buddhaghosa explained in *Visuddhimarga*. The author continued that since Buddhaghosa's explanation of paticcasamuppāda was widely accepted in Thai society, Buddhādāsa's concept was criticized as a wrong thinking. The author argued that Buddhādāsa's explanation of paticcasamuppāda is acceptable in Buddhist framework, so did Buddhaghosa's explanation. The importance of this thesis is it showed how Buddhādāsa re-interpreted a topic of dharma and explained it in his style. The thesis emphasized that Buddhādāsa's interpretation of the dharma is acceptable in the framework of Theravada Buddhism.

Anant Isukāro¹⁹ also presented another version of the study of Buddhādāsa's interpretation of Paticcasamuppāda. He explained that Buddhādāsa's interpretation of Paticcasamuppāda in terms of content is the same as in the Tripitaka and *Visuddhimarga*; that is, everything in this world is under the rule of Paticcasamuppāda. However, in terms of the style of teaching, Buddhādāsa uses interesting language to catch the audience's intention.

¹⁸Adunarayangsi, Arth. *Paticcasamuppāda in Buddhādāsa's point of view*. (Bangkok: Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, 2003).

¹⁹Isukāro, Anant, Phra. *The Interpretation of Paticcasamuppāda according to Buddhādāsa's views*. (Bangkok: Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya, 2007).

Preecha Manawanichcharoen²⁰ also tried to explain Buddhādāsa's teaching of "Chit Wang," in comparison with the mainstream Theravada tradition. The author concluded that "chit wang" or empty mind in Buddhādāsa's point of view is a condition that the mind is free from the self and what belong to the self. In that condition the mind will be free from all the desire and be full of wisdom to see the truth that the world and nature are empty. There is no essence to grab. The author also pointed out that this concept of 'chit wang' is based on the idea that, normally everybody's mind is good and is ready to do good thing, which Buddhādāsa called 'chit prapassorn.' Every human being has the potential to attain nirvana, even in this life if he resides in a good condition. For another thing, the author tried to convey that Buddhādāsa interpreted and modified Dharma into day-to-day use. However, the author also pointed out that the explanation of 'work as meditation' is not generally accepted by mainstream Theravada monks, because they think differently that each human has different ability to attain nirvana depending on the perfection (pārami) of each person that has been accumulated in their previous lives. This thesis is important because it explains the concept of emptiness in different perspectives and suggests the way Buddhādāsa interpreted the ability and potential of the individuals, which is the main focus of this thesis.

Another study that aim to propose critical analysis of Buddhādāsa's teaching of 'chit wang' is Fong Abhivanno's *An Analytical Study of Buddhādāsa's Conception of "the Empty Mind."*²¹ This thesis aimed to study the meaning of the Empty mind (Chit-Wang) according to Buddhādāsa's teaching as found in his lectures and his writings. The study emphasized Buddhādāsa's interpretation of such term in the Tripitaka, problems in his dhammic propagation, and the application of "Chit-Wang" in one's daily life. Especially, while most people hold that "Chit-Wang" is the Dharma for the holy (ariya). Buddhādāsa teaches that "Chit-Wang" is indispensable for everyone. This study also revealed the most important meaning of "Chit-Wang" which relates to the meaning of Emptiness (Sūnyatā). In other word, "Chit-Wang" is the mental detachment of "me-and-mine" which leads to the emptiness of all suffering. This conception of "Chit-Wang" is consistent with that of sutra in the Tripitaka in which the Buddha warns all Bhikkhus to mindfully cultivate the right view, such as, seeing the world as emptiness or voidness. Similarly, Buddhādāsa encouraged his followers to apply "Chit-wang" in daily life so that they can understand the true meanings of their activities, e.g., working, eating, living, etc. and finally can lead their lives in peaceful happiness.

²⁰Manawanichcharoen, Preecha. Empty mind in Buddhādāsa's concept. (Bangkok: Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University. 2006).

²¹Abhivanno, Fong, Phra. An Analytical Study of Buddhādāsa's Conception of "The Empty Mind (Chit-Wang)." (Bangkok: Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya, 2007).

Somkiat Parinyano also analyzed the concept of Tathatā (Suchness) in Buddhādāsa's teaching. In his research, *an Analysis of Tathatā (Suchness) in the Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu's Thought*,²² the results showed that Tathatā in the Tripitaka, and its commentaries enables the reader to understand that all the compounded things, which are called five aggregates.: (Forms, Feeling, Perception, mental formations, and consciousness) and the non-conscious matters are Tathatā. It means that nobody can change the law of nature. Under the law of nature all things are compounded and must be changed by the law of three characteristics (impermanence, state of suffering, and non-self) Under the law of the three characteristics a thing arises in the primary state, changes in the middle and extinguishes in the end. However, In the Buddhādāsa's thought, Tathatā is "suchness" which means the state of being so and not being other things, and no one can force it. It is as it used to be all the time. Such the state is surely called 'Tathatā.' The explanation of Tathatā by Buddhādāsa is exactly the same as his explanation of the Idappaccayatā and of the Paticcasamuppāda. These are the laws of reasons. He explained that when there is no essence of the conditioned things, there is the impermanence and the change. And this change is always there forever. This is called 'Tathatā.' Tathatā in the Buddhādāsa's thought is not different from what is found in the Scriptures. It is really the synonym for the words 'Idappaccayatā' and 'Paticcasamuppāda.'" The author then concluded that Tathatā is the state of general law that covers all the conditioned and the unconditioned which are the natural laws and the Buddhist high principles for leading the people to attain Enlightenment. It is directly related to humanity, society, politics, government, economics and cultures for the security of the nation and the people's happiness.

In terms of teaching techniques that Buddhādāsa had applied in his works, there are a few researches focus on this topic. In Arun Jittacutto's *A Study of Communication Process for Buddha Dharma Propagation of Suan Mokkhabalarama*,²³ the author studied the process of Dharmapropagation of Suan Mokkhabalarama [Suan Mokh], Chaiya district, SuratThani province, Thailand. This study focused on attitude of personnel in Suan Mokh as sender, form and essence of message, channel of sending message and attitude of receivers. It is the documentary and survey research by using questionnaire as a tool of data collection from the sampling respondents who are the student of Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya University and students who are the members of the Buddhist Club of Walailak University and Thammasart University. The author concluded that Buddhādāsa was attended to propagate BuddhaDharma to the people in order to help everyone attaining to the heart of their own religions, then to create mutual understanding

²²Parinyano, Somkiat, Phra. *An Analysis of Tathatā (Suchness) in the Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu's Thought*. (Bangkok: Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya, 2004).

²³Jittacutto, Arun, Phra Mahā, *A Study of Communication Process for Buddha Dharma Propagation of Suan Mokkhabalarama*. (Bangkok: Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya,2001).

among all religions for bringing the world out of materialism. The form and content of Dharma-communication was focused on Buddha Dharma method by using all knowledge applied by Buddha Dharma such as Dhammic socialism, politics, economics, science, education, culture etc. The attitude of most receivers appears that Suan Mokh's personnel are well trained discipline and firmly maintaining in principle of Dharma-vinaya, piety, credibility, modernistic, knowledge intellectual, modesty, high virtue, generous peaceful person. Suan Mokh personnel are able to use appropriate art such as spiritual theatre, simile, and noble language. All are convenient for contemporary situation: they can connect Buddha Dharma to apply the conventional Dharma by giving the example and telling parable story, calm life and benefit of life. They can put lectures into the excellent stories by making funny emotion to audience, motivate them by using proverbs, poems, epigrams etc. This study is an attempt to analyze the reaction of the reader, the audience, of Buddhadāsa's works and the impact of his work to the society.

Another thesis that related to the techniques that Buddhadāsa used in his teaching is Issares Rochanasiri's *An Analytical Study of the Language Problem of Anattā in Theravada Buddhist Philosophy*.²⁴ This thesis aimed to studying the concept of Anattā as religious language and analyzing the meaning for appropriate usage. The author has collected data from a variety of sources, such as the Tripitaka, the commentaries, the sub-commentary, theses, and various relevant books. From the research, it is found that; the Western religious linguistic theories analyze only from the theoretical perspective of meaning. They just seek the true meaning of words. They do not make detailed analyses in depth regarding disputed issues. Thus, they only examine religious linguistics superficially from this one point of view. This contrasts completely with Eastern religious linguistic theories especially the classical Buddhist philosophical works. The Buddhist philosophy aims at taking theoretical perspectives and analyzing them in detail to receive the results useful for oneself and society in general. Specifically, this means leading oneself and one's association to reach transcendence from suffering. The author continued that the word "Anattā" as a word in the Māgadhī or Palī language can be interpreted in many different meanings, especially in the sentences uttered by Lord Buddha. The Thai people do not come from Magadha state. Thus, they are not able to penetrate clearly into the deeply true meaning of Anattā. Even the assembly of advanced researchers, as a whole, is not yet able to agree with the unambiguous and correct definition. Thus, there are still various interpretations of the word Anattā, dependent on how far one broadens one's viewpoint to include the various perspectives found in societies some of which may be true and others false.

²⁴Rochanasiri, Issares, Phra Mahā. *An Analytical Study of the Language Problem of Anattā in Theravada Buddhist Philosophy*. (Bangkok: Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya University, 2006).

In conclusion, the meaning of Anattā is not yet absolutely certain. This is because it depends on the context in which it is used. The main problem with Anattā is that its meanings in the Palī and Māgadhī languages are not the same. Penetrating deeply into the fundamental linguistic point regarding Anattā, the people have different visions in the question. Buddhist philosophy views Anattā from the Jhāna perspective. It aims at understanding the current condition, which leads to transcendence to the apex of Buddhism, Nirvana. Western philosophers, however, investigate only the superficial meaning, because they have the different religious foundations.

CHAPTER 2

BUDDHADĀSA'S CONCEPT OF EMPTINESS

This chapter discusses Buddhadāsa's explanation of the concept of emptiness in order for the reader to understand such concept in Buddhadāsa's point of view. This concept will be discussed and referred to throughout the research. *Emptiness* is an important characteristic of Buddhism. In order to understand emptiness in Buddhadāsa's poetry, one must first understand the meaning of emptiness in Buddhist terminology.

'Emptiness' (*suññatā* or *śūññatā*) is a religious and philosophical concept which is central to much Buddhist thought. It is employed in numerous contexts, by different thinkers and schools, with a variety of meaning.

2.1 The Meaning of 'Emptiness' in Buddhist Context

In normal dictionary, such as, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary; the word 'emptiness' means,

1. A feeling of being sad because nothing seems to have any value
2. The fact that there is nothing or nobody in a place
3. (formal) a place that is empty¹

Taking such definitions into consideration, roughly can be said that the word emptiness means nothing-ness, non-existence, vacancy, vacuum, zeroness, and the like. On the other hand, in Buddhism point of view, one must be aware that such word conveys different meaning. Certainly, one must avoid the misunderstanding that equates *suññatā* to some kind of nihilism.

In academic reference text, Encyclopedia of Religion defines the word *śūnyatā* / *śūnyam* that:

¹ Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. Seventh Edition. [CD-ROM]. (Oxford University Press, 2006).

“Empty,” “open,” “devoid,” “nothing,” and “nonexistent” are words used to translate the term *śūnyam*.

“Emptiness,” “openness,” “nothingness,” non-substantiality,” “relativity,” and “the inexhaustible” have been used to translate *śūnyatā*.

These two terms, of major importance in Buddhism, have been used to express a philosophical idea, a focus of meditation, a religious attitude, and a manner of ethical action, a complex implicit interrelatedness of all existing things, or blissful perfect freedom. As general religious term are used in an attempt to indicate and incite an awareness of “the way things really are” (*yathābhūtam*)²

From the quotation, the word *śūnyatā* in academic context can be used in various functions. For example, it can be used to explain philosophical idea related to Buddhism; it is a focus in meditation technique; it is a basic worldview of Buddhism; and it is the norm of the morality in the society. This can be concluded that emptiness is the foundation of Buddhism in every aspect: social, philosophical, and metaphysical. However, in order to understand the concept of emptiness, we need to look at it in a more specific point of view.

2.1.1 Emptiness in Theravāda’s point of view

Dhamma that best explains the concept of emptiness in Theravāda’s point of view is *suññatā*

In the Tipiṭaka, there is a phrase that the Buddha teaches Mogharāja, “*Suññato lokam avekkhassu mogharāja sadā sato...*”³; translated as “Mogharāja! You must always concentrate and think of the world as empty.”

In Khuddakanikāya, patisambhidāmakka, Ānanda Bhikkhu asked the Buddha why he said that the world is empty. The Buddha replied:

² Eliade, Marcea (Editor in Chief). The Encyclopedia of Religion, Vol 14.) New York : MacMillan, 1993(. pp.153-154.

³ Khuddakanikaya, Apadāna, Tripitaka, Vol.33, No.130. Cited in Evans, Bruce, tran. Buddhist solutions for the twenty-first century. (Bangkok: Buddhadharma Foundation, 1992) p.40.

Ananda:

“It is said that the world is empty, the world is empty, lord. In what respect is it said that the world is empty?”

The Buddha:

“In so far as it is empty of a self or of anything pertaining to a self: Thus it is said that the world is empty. And what is empty of a self or of anything pertaining to a self? The eye is empty of a self or of anything pertaining to a self. Forms... Visual consciousness... Visual contact is empty of a self or of anything pertaining to a self.

The ear...

The nose...

The tongue...

The body...

The intellect is empty of a self or of anything pertaining to a self. Ideas... Mental consciousness... Mental contact is empty of a self or of anything pertaining to a self. Thus it is said that the world is empty.”⁴

Regarding the Tipiṭaka as the primary source of Theravāda Buddhism, the word empty in Theravāda term then does not mean ‘nothing’ as general dictionaries define. Rather it means empty from ‘a self and of anything pertaining to a self’. The Buddha said that the world is empty, and then he elaborated that the world here means the five aggregates. One must see that the world is a combination of the five aggregates, then he will see that there is no “self” to grab. This is the Buddha’s definition of the word ‘empty.’ Moreover, in the same nikāya of the Tipiṭaka, the Buddha stated that nibbāna is also empty in the same manner.⁵

It is undeniable here that the meaning of emptiness in Buddhist canon differs from general definition of such word. Furthermore, in Issares Rochanasiri’s *An Analytical Study of the Language Problem of Anattā in Theravada Buddhist Philosophy*,⁶ Issares maintained further that suññatā doctrine may be said to be the core of the Buddhism or

⁴ Ibid. p.311.

⁵ Ibid. p.312.

⁶ Rochanasiri, Issares, Phra Mahā. An Analytical Study of the Language Problem of Anattā in Theravada Buddhist Philosophy. (Bangkok: Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya University, 2006), pp. 10-15.

the Buddha's teaching, for all other discourses leading a person to deliverance from suffering and attaining *Nibbāna*, are related to it, hence it is said:

“*Ye te suttantā tathāgatabhāsita gambhīrā
gambhīratthā lokuttarā suññatapaṭisaṃyuttā,*

“The discourse (*suttantas*) proclaimed by the
Tathāgata, deep-deep in meaning, reaching beyond the
world, are related to emptiness.”⁷

This means that the other discourses, if do not relate to or deal with emptiness, though they may be versified, poetical, splendid, etc., are said to be outside this principle doctrine of the Buddha, as it is said:

“A discourse of any kind of any class, though
produced by a poet, versified, poetical, splendid, melodious
in sound and syllable, is not in keeping with the teaching, if
not concern with *suññatā*.”⁸

In *An Analysis of Tathatā (Suchness) in the Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu's Thought*,⁹ Somkiat explained that *suññatā* is one of several terms in the Buddhist literature which have deep meaning and significance. The word *suñña* and *suññatā* correspond to the Sanskrit “*śūñṇā*” and “*śūñṇatā*.” In Buddhist terminology, it can be replaced by English words as “empty” or “emptiness,” “devoid,” or “devoidedness,” or “void” or “voidness.”

Somkiat explained further that etymologically it is derived from the root ‘*sunā*’ and ‘*hita*.’ the verb ‘*sunā*’ means ‘to go’ and the adverb ‘*hita*’ means to express its benefit or goodness, and the word is defined thus: “the teaching of the Buddha is called “*suñña*” because it leads to a benefit that is the attainment of ‘emptiness’ [free from worldly disturbances). Hence it tends to the path of release, and therefore it is called ‘*suññatā*.’”¹⁰

Somkiat continued that the teaching of *suññatā* is in fact the natural outcome of, or the corollary to, the teaching of *anattā* (not-self) and *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent origination) which dispel the delusion about self, the obstacles to religious progress, so

⁷ The *Dhammadinna Sutta* is in *Mahā-vagga, Saṃyutta-nikāya, Sutta-piṭaka*. See Feer, M. Leon, ed., *Saṃyutta-nikāya Part V Mahā-vagga*. (London: Pāli Text Society, 1960). pp. 406-8.

⁸ Ibid., pp.410-412.

⁹ Parinyano, Somkiat, Phra. *An Analysis of Tathatā (Suchness) in the Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu's Thought*. (Bangkok: Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya, 2004), pp.15-28.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp.30.

that it forms the indispensable condition for the correct understanding of the teaching of the Buddha and keeps men on the path to the deathless state which is *nibbāna*.

Moreover, in *the study of Buddhadāsa's interpretation of Patīccasamuppāda*,¹¹ Anant mentioned that the teaching of *suññatā* and *paṭīccasamuppāda* has been treated in Theravāda Buddhism both negatively and positively. Negatively, in regard to what things are not, critical assessment has led the seers to see the five *khandhas* (aggregates) as non-substantial, and not-self possessed (*anattā*), while positively, in regard to what things are, the analysis, the definition and the classification of things have led them to assess the five *khandhas* as conditioned and relative, the complex of functions of elements. The former is the insight that functions as a guide to the latter, and the application of these two methods-negative and positive-together leads one who practices spiritual exercise to the comprehension of the intrinsic nature of things, the perfect and undivided vision of things as they are (*yathābhūtañāḍassana*)

Anant pointed out that the purpose of teaching *suññatā*, as in all the other teaching of the Buddha, is to release mankind from suffering and the analysis of the five *khandhas* is in order to find out the causes and conditions of their coming into being and their functioning which are involved in suffering. Thus the way to the cessation of suffering is disclosed.

Pra Dhammapīṭaka (P.A. Payutto) explained about *paṭīccasamuppāda* that it is the doctrine that the Buddha treated as the law of nature, or it is naturally existed without depending on the appearance of the Buddha as the Buddha said,

“Regardless of all the Tathagata, born or unborn, the elements of the world are still there. These elements are the *paṭīccasamuppāda* which all Tathagata only found and explained, laid as the rule, preached as the law, revealed, made it easier to understand and said to us ‘look at this.’

Bhikkhus, really the noble one who is learned will have the wisdom to see *paṭīccasamuppāda* without believing in other people’s words, that is to see that when this thing exists, this thing also exists, when that thing happens, so that thing also happens.

¹¹ Isukāro, Anant, Phra. The Interpretation of Patīccasamuppāda according to Buddhadāsa's views (Bangkok: Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya, 2007).

The definition of *paṭiccasamuppāda* (or "dependent origination" or "dependent arising" or "interdependent co-arising") is that everything arises in dependence upon multiple causes and conditions; nothing exists as a singular, independent entity.

The concept of *paṭiccasamuppāda* is the basis for other key concepts in Buddhism, such as *karma* and rebirth, the arising of *dukkha*, and the possibility of liberation through realizing no-self (*anattā*) and see emptiness (*suññatā*).¹²

At this point, it is clear that in Theravāda Buddhism, the concept of emptiness is the main focus in the teaching of the Buddha and such concept covers everything in his teaching. The word *suññatā* is used to connote the concept of emptiness as well as the word *anattā* and *paṭiccasamuppāda*. Ultimately seeing emptiness within all things is the cessation of *dukkha*, which is path to *nibbāna*.

2.1.2 Emptiness in Mahāyāna's point of view

Apart from the Theravāda Buddhism, the Mahāyāna school also taught the concept of emptiness, especially in Nāgārjuna's works. Nāgārjuna came to be known as the founder of the Madhyamika School, a school which was particularly influential in Tibetan and Mahāyāna Buddhism. Nāgārjuna focused his teaching on the word 'Śūnyatā,' as he explained that

"Śūnyatā is a Sanskrit word equated to the Pāli 'suññatā.' It is literally translated as 'emptiness.' Śūnyatā is the condition of everything, that is; they all have no true essence in themselves. We cannot confirm or deny that one thing is really separated from others because everything is under the law of *paṭiccasamuppāda*; everything is depending on other things to exist; everything falls under the rule of the dependent origination. Therefore, the ultimate truth will only be perceived by enlightened wisdom, which is beyond human's reason, calculation or

¹² Dhammapitaka, Phra (Prayut Payutto), translated and compiled by Evans, Bruce. Buddhist Solutions for the Twenty-First Century. (Bangkok: Buddhadharma Foundation, 1992), p.33.

physical perception; that is, to see the connection of all things. ”¹³

It is interesting, from this quotation, that Nāgārajuna explained the concept of emptiness by the law of inter-relatedness and the law of dependent origination. He pointed out that emptiness is beyond confirmation or denial. It is also beyond the capability of human language to explain. Nāgārajuna stated clearly that emptiness, or Śūnyatā, is actually the ‘enlightened wisdom.’ It is the way that one must practice to ‘see’ and ‘understand’ things as they really are. We can see here that Nāgārajuna referred what the Buddha said of “a self or anything pertaining to a self” to the law of dependent origination.

There is a common interpretation that Nāgārajuna’s philosophy of emptiness is simply a re-assertion of the Buddha’s original teaching of dependent origination. This re-assertion was required because some Abhidhammikas had departed from the Buddha’s original teaching of universal dependent origination by asserting the autonomous, permanent existence of the atomic dharmas out of which the dependently originating world is formed.¹⁴ So, in fact, the concept of *śūññatā* in Mahāyāna Buddhism is comparatively the same as *suññatā* in Theravāda sect.

For modern Buddhist teacher, this idea of perceiving things as the relativity is also very famous. For example, Thich Nhat Hanh, a well-known Vietnamese Buddhist monk gave an explanation about the inter-relatedness of things that:

"In Buddhism there is no such thing as an individual. There is no such thing as a separate object, event, or experience, because no any part of the world can exist alone without all other things. Rather, everything that looks like a separate entity is actually dependent on, and therefore interwoven with, something else. Everything (object, event, idea, experience, whatever) is made up of other things. Whatever appears to be an isolated "thing" is actually a combination of its constituent elements. These elements are the influences from the other things with which it is interwoven. And those elements, too, are made

¹³Chinnawong, Komain. The Comparative Study of the Concept of anattā and suññatā between Theravāda and Nāgārajuna traditions. (Bangkok: Graduated School, Chulalongkorn University, 1996). p.55.

¹⁴Burton, David. Emptiness Appraised : A Critical Study of Nagarajuna’s Philosophy. (Delhi : Curzon Press, 2001), p.x.

up of other combinations. The world is an endless web of combinations.

But even this description of reality is misleading, because it is too static. The elements that make up the world are patterns of dependency and interweaving. In other words, they are relationships. When we are fully aware, we see that there are only relationships. All relationships are patterns of Interaction. So they are, by definition, dynamic; they are patterns of change. There are no individual things, but only ongoing processes. These processes are made up of other, constantly changing, processes. All of reality is combinations of patterns of relationships in process.”¹⁵

This explanation is the foundation of Nhat Hanh’s approach to all of lives. He called it the principle of "inter-being." This is the basis of modern, and also traditional, Buddhist teaching of "emptiness." Emptiness is a means of perceiving the nature of reality. When contemporary Buddhists say that everything is empty (at least in Nhat Hanh’s interpretation), they mean that nothing has any independent permanent essence; nothing can exist by itself. Rather, every element is made up of other elements; paradoxically, each thing is made of what it is not. If all these other elements are removed, the thing is empty.

However, even though the concept of *śūññatā* is originally and basically the same as the concept of *suññatā* in Theravāda tradition, there are some characteristic of *śūññatā* that Mahāyānists tend to elaborate. Nāgārjuna also explained that *śūññatā* is something to be an Absolute-eternal principle from which everything comes out and to which everything ultimately returns to as he said,

That is to say, it is by advancing step by step along eightfold stage of empty-conception with one’s own experience, that one is able to enter or descend into the state of emptiness which is the True, Unperverted, Purified, Supreme and Highest.¹⁶

¹⁵ Nhat Hanh, Thich. Touching peace: Practicing the art of mindful living. (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1992). p.11.

¹⁶ Chinnawong, Komain. The Comparative Study of the Concept of anattā and suññatā between Theravāda and Nāgārjuna traditions. p.10.

Prapod Assavavirulhakarn in *Bodhisattvacarya: Marga Pua Muan Chon*¹⁷ stated that one characteristic of Mahāyāna Buddhism is the concept of *sūnyatā*

In original Buddhism, it is believed that human being is a combination of the five *khandhas* (aggregates). This belief is only the seeing of personal *anattā*; it is only *puḍgala-sūññatā*, not the real truth. The person who possesses such knowledge can only get rid of the *kilesa*, but cannot get rid of the barrier of knowledge. The complete enlightened one must see the *dharma-sūññatā*, which is emptiness of all conditions.

Then he explained further that

Mahāyāna texts emphasize more on the teaching of *sūññatā*. It is believed that *sūññatā* is the ultimate truth, which is also called *tathatā*. The knowledge that is called *bodhi* has the characteristic of *sūññatā*. Therefore, *bodhi* itself is *sūññatā*; the path to attain *bodhi* is also through *sūññatā*. The outcome of the attainment is then *sūññatā*. Consequently, *sūññatā* in Mahāyāna tradition covers everything. It is the ultimate truth that covers everything, which is considered the enlightenment of the Buddha.¹⁸

Therefore, *sūññatā* in Mahāyāna context expanded its meaning to cover everything in the world. It is the ultimate truth that everything in the world resides in. D.T. Suzuki, an expert in Zen Buddhism, also pointed out the ultimate condition of *sūññatā* that:

‘Empty’ (*sūnyam*) or ‘emptiness’ (*sūnyatā*) is one of the most important notions in Mahāyāna philosophy and at the same time the most puzzling for non-Buddhist reader to comprehend. Emptiness does not only mean ‘relativity’ or ‘phenomenality’ or ‘nothingness’ but rather means the Absolute, or something of transcendental nature, although this rendering is also misleading, as we shall see later. When Buddhists declare all things to be empty, they are not

¹⁷Assavavirulhakarn, Prapod. *Bodhisattvacarya: Marga Pua Muan Chon*. (Bangkok: Academic Research Distribution Project, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, 2003), pp.19-20

¹⁸ Assavavirulhakarn, Prapod. *Bodhisattvacarya: Marga Pua Muan Chon*, pp33-4.

advocating a nihilistic view; on the contrary an ultimate reality is hinted at, which cannot be subsumed under the categories of logic.¹⁹

Suzuki maintained that *śūññatā* is something stable, permanent, unchanged, and above the perception by any sense which he called the Absolute. *Śūññatā* is the core of everything in the world as everything in the universe has no essence, has no identity that can independently exist without related to others. Suzuki combines the definition of emptiness as ‘interrelatedness’ and ‘the absolute’ to explain such concept.

It is essential to clarify the difference between the word *suññatā* and nothingness since Nāgārājuna’s and Suzuki’s explanation of emptiness emphasize their differences. When a Buddhist scholar says that *nibbāna* is *suñña* (empty), it does not mean that *nibbāna* does not exist. Consider the quotation below:

“For the teacher of the wrong viewer, the word *suññatā* is the end of the word ‘exist.’ And the word ‘exist’ is used oppositely to the word *suññatā*. What they taught as ‘not exist,’ actually does not mean it is completely destroyed, and the thing they called ‘exist’ actually ‘does not exist’.

What I am trying to say here is that *suññatā* is above existence or non-existence, that is, ultimately they do not exist but at the moment they cannot be destroyed. This is the difference between my teaching and the wrong viewer’s teaching.”²⁰

This excerpt from Sutra of Wei Lang stated clearly that emptiness in Buddhist point of view is not the nothingness. It is not like the nihilism concept that spread through Europe starting from the 19th Century.

Nihilism is the belief that all values are baseless and that nothing can be known or communicated. It is often associated with extreme pessimism and a radical skepticism that condemns existence. A true nihilist would believe in nothing, have no loyalties, and no purpose other than,

¹⁹ Suzuki, Daosetz T., Essays in Zen Buddhism, Third Series (London: Rider and Co., 1953). p.78.

²⁰ Leng, Hue., translated by Buddhādāsa. Sutra of Wei Lang. (Bangkok: Sukkhabhājai, 2004). p.186.

perhaps, an impulse to destroy. While few philosophers would claim to be nihilists, nihilism is most often associated with Friedrich Nietzsche who argued that its corrosive effects would eventually destroy all moral, religious, and metaphysical convictions and precipitate the greatest crisis in human history. In the 20th century, nihilistic themes—epistemological failure, value destruction, and cosmic purposelessness—have preoccupied artists, social critics, and philosophers. Mid-century, for example, the existentialists helped popularize tenets of nihilism in their attempts to blunt its destructive potential. By the end of the century, existential despair as a response to nihilism gave way to an attitude of indifference, often associated with anti-foundationalism.²¹

Buddhism does not accept the idea of nihilism, but at the same time does not accept that there is a permanent self. However, in Buddhism, there is a teaching that there is something permanent; only such permanent thing is not the self. Phra Dhammapitaka (Prayut Payutto) explained that:

“Buddhism divides elements in the universe into two groups – *asaṅkhata dhamma* and *saṅkhata dhamma*. *Asaṅkhata dharma* is everything that exists by itself. These elements do not have to depend on others; while *saṅkhata dharma* includes everything that is the result of other elements. These elements cannot exist by itself.”²²

Somporn Promta gave examples of *saṅkhatadharmā* and *asaṅkhatadharmā* in his thesis that:

“The example of *asaṅkhatadharmā* is *nibbāna*. *Nibbāna* has no origin, no creator, but exists by itself. It appears independently from other existences. Even if no one has attained *nibbāna*, it is still there.

²¹Pratt, Alan. *Understanding Modern Sociology*. (Preston: SAGE Publication, 2003). p. 35-43.

²²Dhammapitaka, Phra (Prayut Payutto), translated and compiled by Evans, Bruce. *Buddhist Solutions for the Twenty-First Century*. (Bangkok: Buddhadharmā Foundation, 1992). pp.5-6.

The examples of *saṅkhata dharma* are plenty. Everything in the universe that we are familiar with is *saṅkhata dharma*, such as, the world, the planets, matters, or even our body. They exist because they depend on their origins. They cannot exist by their own. And when they exist they cannot be separated from others”²³

From these quotations, the elements in the universe are divided into two groups – *saṅkhata dharma* and *asaṅkhata dharma*. This division seems to generate no problem as long as the discussion is limited only the matter in the physical world. But when talking about the metaphysical matters that go beyond human senses, the condition of *asaṅkhata dharma* seems to have some problem, especially when dealing with concept of emptiness.

Phra Dhammapitaka (Prayut Payutto) explained the condition of things in the universe that everything is under the rule of *anattā*. He maintained that:

“In traditional Buddhist context, there is a teaching called ‘*idappaccayatā*.’ This dharma is important because if anyone can truly understand it, they will have the true view of the world, that is, they can see the inter-relatedness of things.

For everything that appears in the world, when we analyze it to its ultimate, there is no essence or core that is permanent. It is the ‘process of dharma’²⁴ that joins together. Each of the dharma will finally disintegrate and send the effect to the others creating the relationships between the processes. In this condition we have to clarify 4 major points:

- 1) There is no essence of thing standing as a core.
- 2) The appearance of things in the world is the result of the combination of factors.
- 3) These factors continuously appear and disappear and relate to one another as the cause and the effect. Therefore, the ‘process of dharma’ is generated as the result of the combination.

²³ Promta, Sompan. Time and Universe in Theravada Buddhism’s philosophy. Thesis. (Bangkok: Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, 1988) p.35.

²⁴ Translated from Thai word “กระบวนการธรรม”

- 4) Each ‘process of dharma’ is inter-related and can be seen better when separating each ‘process of dharma’ into smaller factors.”²⁵

The quotation says that human being and everything in this world is actually has no essence. Everything is the effect of the other causes, which Phra Dhammapitaka called ‘process of dharma.’ Therefore, by *anattā* rule, *saṅkhata dharma* is empty because it has to depend on others to exist. The question is that whether *asaṅkhata dharma* falls under the *idappaccayatā* and *anattā* rules? There are a lot of explanations.

Sompran Promta discussed this question in his thesis that the condition of the *saṅkhata dharma* can be explained by comparing it to a chain. Each matter is each chain-link that connects together. So each link does not have its core but has to connect to others to exist. If *asaṅkhata dharma* also connects to this chain, it has to be the first link of the chain. It cannot be the middle link because it cannot be the effect of the others.²⁶ The explanation above shows that *asaṅkhatadharmā* could possibly follow *idappaccayatā* rules as the origin of other things.

Then what is *asaṅkhatadhammā*?, even though it neither arises nor ceases but exists eternally, is not self. There is no such self, but there is only extinction or plane of cessation of all worldly states, or *saṅkhatadhammā*. *Asaṅkhatadhammā* is not *attā*, or self, that exists permanently. Therefore, Buddhism is not nihilism, nor not a doctrine of *sassatadiṭṭhi* which emphasizes on the concept of permanent self. A permanent thing exists, but it is not self. Rather, it is only the state of extinction or the condition after the impermanent things have become extinct. Buddhism calls this state *nibbāna*, or *asaṅkhatadhammā*, not self.

From the brief account given above, conceptions of *suññatā* of Mahāyāna Buddhism are fundamentally similar to those of Theravāda Buddhism. Their point of difference is in some of their interpretations and concepts which are due to difference in their approach, and it is not so important. What is of great importance is how far they are able to lead us to the goal taught by the Buddha, and therein lies the real taste of the true teaching, as Buddhādāsa has said: “the true Buddhism is neither Theravāda nor Mahāyāna but the Buddhayāna or the true teaching of the Buddha.”²⁷

²⁵Pormta, Somparn. Time and Universe in Theravada Buddhism’s Philosophy. pp.17-18.

²⁶ See more in detail in: Promta, Somparn. Time and Universe in Theravada Buddhism’s Philosophy. pp.40-45.

²⁷ Buddhādāsa. Suññatāparidassana, vol. I. (Bangkok: B.E, 1971), p. 217.

2.2 Buddhādāsa's explanation of emptiness

In the past few decades, Buddhādāsa has been studied with great interest by both scholars and Buddhist practitioners. Among the many who committed themselves to studies of Buddhādāsa and to English translation of his sermons and biography are Jack Kornfield, Peter A. Jackson, Donald K. Swearer, Sulak Sivaraksa, Santikaro, and Kamala Tiyavanich.²⁸ Their publications have indicated that Buddhādāsa's thought has "modern" characteristics: rationality, a scientific and demythologizing approach, scant interest in traditional rituals and "unscientific" beliefs, and an emphasis on causality in mind.

In *A Modern Buddhist Bible*, Donald S. Lopez, Jr. lists Buddhādāsa as one of the 31 figures who contributed to the formation of "modern Buddhism."²⁹ In his study of "Buddhist Modernism," David L. McMahan also refers to Buddhādāsa as a prominent contemporary Asian Buddhist leader.³⁰ In archetype modern Buddhists, including Colonel Olcott, Anagārika Dharmapāla, D. T. Suzuki, Mahasi Sayadaw, and the 14th Dalai Lama, Lopez identified a common tendency to dismiss rituals that interfere with the natural order, and a tendency to aim at ending suffering through a rational approach, particularly meditation practice. Yet, unlike other figures mentioned above who traveled vigorously all around the world and spoke fluent English in their interaction with Western and other audiences outside their native countries, Buddhādāsa's works predominantly in Thai in Thailand. Although some of Buddhādāsa's works were translated into English and he openly welcomed foreigners for *dhamma* conversations, Buddhādāsa contributed much more significantly to Thai Buddhists in Thailand than to Western Buddhists.

A group of Buddhādāsa's followers in Thailand referred to Buddhādāsa's thought as "radical conservatism,"³¹ meaning that in one sense Buddhādāsa was "conservative,"

²⁸ Their publications include: Jack Kornfield, "Achān Buddhādāsa," in *Living Buddhist Master* (Santa Cruz: Unity Press, 1977), pp.117-29; Peter A. Jackson, *Buddhādāsa: A Buddhist Thinker for the Modern World*. (Bangkok: The Siam Society, 1988); Donald K. Swearer, trans., ed., *Me and Mine: Selected Essays of Bhikkhu Buddhādāsa* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989); Sulak Sivaraksa et al., eds., *Radical Conservatism: Buddhism in the Contemporary World*, Article in Honour of Bhikkhu Buddhādāsa's 84th Anniversary (Bangkok: Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development, and International Network of Engaged Buddhists, 1990); Santikaro Bhikkhu, "Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu: Life and Society through the Natural Eyes of Voidness," in *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, eds. Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp.147-94; and Kamala Tiyavanich, *Sons of the Buddha: The Early Lives of Three Extraordinary Thai Masters* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2007)

²⁹ Lopez, Donald S., *A Modern Buddhist Bible: Essential Readings from East and West*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002)

³⁰ McMahan, David L. *The Making of Buddhist Modernism*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.152.

³¹ Sulak Sivaraksa, ed., *Radical Conservatism*.

as he aimed at following the Buddha's essential teachings; and that at the same time he was "radical," never hesitating to reject seemingly inessential rituals or even to criticize some traditional scriptures and their exegeses, particularly those relating to the *Abhidhammapiṭaka* scriptures. Furthermore, Buddhadāsa's intellectual pursuits were well beyond the scope of orthodox Theravāda Buddhist textual group; his sermons included notions of Mahāyāna, Christianity, and even socialism, in which he found some commonalities with and aspects helpful to an understanding of Buddhist concepts.

However, when Buddhadāsa taught the notion of emptiness, he did not intend to spread Mahāyāna Buddhism to his Thai audience, but rather, he introduced it as the most essential teaching of Buddhism regardless of school, not just in Mahāyāna, because it is related to the state in which suffering is overcome. Buddhadāsa indicated that the idea of *suññatā* or emptiness is mentioned in the *Tipiṭaka*, the classical scriptures that underpin the views and practices of people in Theravāda tradition. Buddhadāsa referred to the *Dhammadinna Sutta*,³² the *Mahāsuññatā Sutta* and the *Culasuññatā Sutta*³³ in which the concept of emptiness is presented. This was helpful reference for Buddhadāsa to support his teaching that the notion of emptiness was actually practical for lay Buddhists of all sects.

Buddhadāsa pointed out that when speaking of emptiness, especially in Thai language, some problem about translation occurred. "*Suñña*," the adjective, is translated as "*wāng*," which means "empty, free from, devoid of." "*Suññatā*" is rendered "*khwam-wāng*," that is, "emptiness," which includes a sense of freedom, ease, peace, and openness. It signifies that all is well; that there are no problems. In general understanding, "*suññatā*" is translated as "*wāng-plao*," an altogether different thing, meaning "empty of being, zeroness, vacancy, disappeared, nothing."³⁴

In addition to *suññatā*, there are many other Pāli terms for which there is no exact English (or Thai) equivalent. Take, for example, *dukkha*. Generally, it is translated as "suffering," occasionally as "ill, pain," and the like. None of these words captures the full meaning of *dukkha*. As Buddhadāsa pointed out, even *dukkha* is not translated

³² The *Dhammadiṇṇa Sutta* is in *Mahā-Vagga, Samyutta-nikāya, Sutta-piṭaka*. See M. Leon Feer, ed., *Samyutta-nikāya Part V Mahā-vagga* (London: Pāli Text Society, 1960). Pp.406-8.

³³ These *sutta* are in the *Suññatāvagga, Uparipannāsa, Majjhima-nikāya*. See Robert Chalmers, ed., *The Majjhima-nikāya*. Vol. III (London: The Pāli Text Society, 1960), pp. 104-18.

³⁴ Buddhadāsa, *Kan-tham-ngan duai chit wang phua sangkhom lhong than phutthathat (Working with the empty mind for the sake of society by venerable Buddhadāsa)*. (Samutprakan: Ongkan Funfu Phutthasasana), pp. 3-4.

correctly. “Suffering” is not correct because even *sukha* (happiness, joy) is *dukkha*. *Sukha* has the character of *dukkha*: once you have really seen it, it is ugly.³⁵

Buddhadāsa explained the word *suññatā* that,

“The word “*suññatā*” is derived from *Pāli* language. “*Suñña*” means “empty”, “*tā*” means “ness,” “*suññatā*” means emptiness.

Emptiness in human language - the language of silly people who have not seen dharma or have not reached dharma - means “nothing” or “waste” or “receive nothing.” Listen carefully, *suññatā* in worldly language means that there is nothing; not only one, nor a few: it is all empty and all waste and cannot be used in any way. This is *suññatā* in human language, the world of silly people who have not seen dharma.

For *suññatā* or emptiness in dhammic language, there is everything, there can be anything in any quantity except for the feeling that there is the self and what belongs to the self. You can own whatever you want to own, you can have everything both tangible and abstract things, except for one that is, you cannot have the feeling of yourself or yours, and there must be no feeling of the self and what belongs to the self. This is *suññatā* in dhammic language or the Buddha language.”³⁶

From the quotation, Buddhadāsa pointed out the differences between emptiness in general understanding and emptiness as a Buddhist term. In Buddhist scope, the concept of emptiness focuses on the attitude, or the belief, or the worldview of individual that can see things as the combinations of other things.

Therefore, emptiness in Buddhadāsa’s point of view focused on the way human being perceives the reality. This interpretation of emptiness mainly related, then, to the individual. For Buddhadāsa, he explained the concept of emptiness in many occasions. Some of the explanations are as follow:

³⁵ Buddhadāsa. *Ibid*, p.4.

³⁶ Buddhadāsa. *Phasa Khon – Phasa Tham (Worldly language – Dharma language)*. (Bangkok: Sukhabhabjai, 2007). p.82.

“(For the word ‘empty’), this one word has two meanings. One is worldly empty and another is dharma empty. For worldly empty, thing must not exist or it has nothing so can we call it empty. This is the dictionary definition of emptiness. But empty in dharma point of view or un-worldly empty does not mean ‘nothing.’ But it rather means there is nothing that we should grasp or cling to. Therefore, we can have so many things, or everything, except for the notion that we have it or grasp it. This kind of ‘empty’ is what the Buddha meant when he said “to see the world as empty.”³⁷

“It is not that there is nothing at all. There are earth, water, wind, fire, air, and mind; there is everything; there is a body; but we should not call it a self. We cannot consider it as a self... by the fact it is like that. It is not a self, but it can think, it can act. The mind part can think, the body part can act by the control of the mind. Combining these together, we assume it as human being but it is not a self.”³⁸

Buddhadāsa explanation of emptiness continued that the word emptiness consists of emptiness of *attā* (self) and *attanīyā* (what belongs to self). He believed that *attā* (self) is the root cause of defilement (*kilesa*), craving (*taṇhā*), and attachment (*upādāna*). If there is no *attā*, there is no craving, then there is no attachment, and there is complete extinction (*niroda*). He said that,

“*Suññatā* simply means ‘empty of self.’ Anything, everything exists according to its conditions. There are *khandhas* (aggregates, heaps), there are *āyatana* (sense), but they are *anattā*, which is empty only of *attā*. The Buddha insisted that the world is empty of *attā* and empty of *attaniya*, but he did not mean it is empty of other unmentioned things. The Buddha said that the world is

³⁷ Buddhadāsa, Duang Ta Tee Hen Dharma (The eyes that see dharma). (Bangkok: Sukhabhabjai, 2007). p.18.

³⁸ Buddhadāsa, Kwam Lud Pon (the State of Being Freed). (Bangkok: Thai Quality Book 2006: 2008). p.25.

suñño but there is still the world. The world is empty but it still exists. It is just empty of *attā*.

In order to understand the concept of emptiness in Buddhādāsa's teaching therefore, there are some points to be mentioned. Buddhādāsa did not explain the Pāli word *suñnatā* alone; he delivered the idea by the Thai word *chit wang*, or 'empty mind,' in order to make the unfamiliar concept of emptiness easier to his audience. Analyzing Buddhādāsa's preaching of emptiness, there are at least four points that became topics of discussion.

2.2.1 Empty Mind.

The word 'empty mind' is used to call the condition of the mind that possesses the wisdom to see emptiness within all thing as Buddhādāsa's explained:

“The meaning of the empty mind in my understanding is the mind that is free from desire, free from the existing of the self... When the mind is free from anything that related to the concept of the self - which is the great delusion – everything will disappear, there is nothing left except the mind. But when the mind can feel the desire and generate what is called the self - including what belong to the self, gaining, losing, love, hate, anger, fear, or anything – this is called the mind is deluded by the self. This kind of mind is not empty because it is occupied by the self.”³⁹

The key point of the extract is that to achieve the empty mind one must set the mind free from the self and what relates to the self. It is a 'process' of the mind to think, to perceive, and to be aware of the way things really are. Such awareness will lead to the mindful action and eventually the end of suffering.

Buddhādāsa explained that he used the word 'empty mind' because of a few significant reasons. The first reason was this word was used by the Buddha himself as Buddhādāsa claimed “*Suñnatā* is the word that the Buddha used himself in *Samyutta Nikāya*. The Buddha confirmed that *suñnatā* is deep and profound. It is the heart of

³⁹ Buddhādāsa. Chumnum Dhamma Banyay Rueng Chit Wang (A Collection of the Preaching about Empty Mind). (Bangkok: Arunwittaya, 1995).pp.112-113.

Buddhism.”⁴⁰ Another reason is this word – empty mind – is understandable by general people and it leads to the heart of Buddhism⁴¹ He explained further that:

“Normally human mind is basically empty. Do not forget that human mind is basically empty. It is not basically busy as most people understand. Most people, even those who study *abhidhamma* or *abhidhamma* teacher, believe that human being has the desire as the basis; they have the busy mind as the basis, all the time. Then they try to get rid of such desire.

But I don’t agree with them. I think the mind is basically empty from desire. The desire will come from time to time depending on when they would encounter our eyes, ears, nose, etc. When we lose focus, the ignorance will be generated and we will grab them as our basis of the mind. Actually the mind is empty. It is normally empty. Our duty is to try to stop the desire to happen using our wisdom. Don’t let them come in. We need to keep our mind empty all the time.”⁴²

Buddhadāsa explained that the using of the word ‘*chit wang*’ can best explain the true condition of the mind; as we have talked about the pure mind that is bright and empty in earlier chapter. He pointed out that the word ‘*chit wang*’ could lead general people to understand that basically the mind is empty. If one can maintain the empty mind, he will reside in nirvana.

Buddhadāsa explained further that empty mind is a state of mind freed from *kilesa* (defilements) and from *upādāna* (clinging), which sees things as *tua ku* (me, self) or *khong ku* (mind, possessions of the self).⁴³ According to Buddhadāsa,

Empty mind is not a mind that does not feel anything. What is called *citta* (mind) has to have *kwam-rusuk* (feeling), because it is the nature of the mind. If the mind has a feeling of non-egoism, it is called ‘*chit wang*’

⁴⁰ Buddhadāsa. Tam Mai Jueng Chai Kam Wa Chit Wang. [Why do I use the word empty mind].(Nontaburi: Samit Publishing, 2010). p.10.

⁴¹Ibid. p.10.

⁴² Buddhadāsa. Soo Chit Wang [The way to empty mind]. (Bangkok: Sukhabhabjai, 2009). p.45.

⁴³ Buddhadāsa, Kan-tham-ngan duai chit wang phua sangkhom lhong than phutthathat (Working with the empty mind for the sake of society by venerable Buddhadāsa), pp. 7-8.

(empty mind). If the mind has a feeling of strong egoism, it is called '*chit wun*' (unsettled mind).⁴⁴

Buddhadāsa elaborated on the empty mind that,

Here the empty mind also means two things, namely, the mind that is devoid of the concept of *attā* (self) and what belong to self (*attanīyā*), and the mind that associates with the *sati-saṃpajañña* (consciousness-cum-discrimination) and *sati-paññā* (consciousness-cum-wisdom). These two, i.e., *sati-saṃpajañña* and *sati-paññā* are relative terms; where there is *sati-saṃpajañña*, there is *sati-paññā*, and vice versa. The former is in keeping the mind to be aware of what one is doing, whereas the latter is in keeping the mind to be skillful in what one is doing. And these two aspects of emptiness are very important for practicing and performing all kinds of work.⁴⁵

Buddhadāsa considered the state of mind that is free from attachment to the self and its possessions as the heart of Buddhism. He referred to the words of the Buddha,

All kinds of *dhamma* (*dhammajāti [nature]*) are *anattā* (non-self). No one should become attached to any kind of dhamma.⁴⁶

When there is no sense of attachment to a 'self,' or to things as the possession of a self, which in reality cannot be owned, suffering does not arise. Because the ultimate goal of Buddhism is to overcome suffering, Buddhadāsa identified emptiness or empty mind as the essence of Buddhism.

Buddhadāsa used the words "I" (ฉัน) and "mine" (ของฉัน) as the representative of 'the self' and 'what relates to the self.' He stated that

"I want you to focus on this matter, the no 'I' and no 'mine' matter. If you are interested more in this matter and understand more about this matter, you will be the cool one; you are not hot and you have no suffering. At this

⁴⁴ Buddhadāsa, *Kan-tham-ngan duai chit wang phua sangkhom*, pp.7-8.

⁴⁵ Buddhadāsa, *Kan-tham-ngan duai chit wang phua sangkhom*, pp.9-12.

⁴⁶ Buddhadāsa, *Sunyata – chit wang – chit doem thae khong than Buddhadasa (Suññatā, Empty Mind, and Original Mind by Venerable Buddhadāsa)* (Samutprakan: Ongkan Funfu Buddhasasana), p.2.

time they [general people at the time] will not listen to me and will not consider what I mean by no ‘I’ and no ‘mine.’ They hated the word ever since they first heard it; because they think if there is no ‘I,’ why they have to live? Actually I am saying that we will have the ‘I’, the “I” that have no suffering, the ‘I’ that is not ‘I’ and not ‘mine.’ And we can end our suffering.

So please look at it closely, it does not mean having nothing at all; it is not that emptiness; everything is still there as it is, but there is no notion of ‘I’ and of ‘mine.’ The house, wife and child, money, honor, fame, furniture are still the same. But why there is no ‘I’ and ‘mine?’ Because our mind does not create such notion like the fools... the heart of Buddhism is the realization that there is no human being; there is no ‘I’ and ‘mine,’ and to die before dying”⁴⁷

From the quotation, the ‘I’ and ‘mine’ are the creations of the mind which affect the behavior of their owner. It is a belief that this body is the ‘I’ and what this body has possessed is the ‘mine.’ Buddhādāsa said that if we want to end the suffering, we need to believe that the ‘I’ is empty. If there is no ‘I,’ there will not be any ‘mine.’ If there is no ‘mine’ then one will not suffer from grasping things. In other words, letting go of the ‘I’ and the ‘mine,’ is another way to end suffering as Buddhādāsa said,

Therefore, what is called *chit wang*? In terms of knowledge it is the knowledge that there is no self in everything. In terms of practice it is the mind that does not cling to, does not attach to, and does not grab anything. In terms of the result of the practice it is the condition that is the cleanest, brightest, calmest, and most comfortable.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu. Kan tam ngan pua ngan (Work for work). (Bangkok: Sukkhabhabjai, 2006). p.25-27.

⁴⁸ Buddhādāsa. “Sunnatadham.” Sunyataparithas. Vol.2. (Bangkok: Karnpimpranakorn, 1976), p.455.

2.2.2 The Original Condition of the Mind

Second, Buddhadāsa explained that the mind is originally pure and empty, free from defilements. He stated that

“Human mind is basically pure but because it is occupied by desire so it becomes dim and suffer. The purity of the mind is the original wisdom - original in the sense that it is empty of the self. The pure mind here is a naturally empty mind. It is the basis of emptiness. If we can keep the purity of the mind, we will not find any suffering. The pure mind is the mind that is empty of the self and what belongs to the self. It is perfect wisdom in itself. To conclude, we need to understand that the Buddha did not say that desire is the basis of human mind. The Buddha said the desire appears from times to times, basically the mind is empty and pure. It is full of wisdom - to know and appreciate the truth of the world that it is empty. Empty mind is the basis of the awareness of emptiness.”⁴⁹

From the quotation, Buddhadāsa stated that the original condition of the mind is empty of self and pure. It is free from defilement. Desire and other delusion come later. Buddhadāsa also mentioned that potentially the mind will go back to its original condition which is full of wisdom and empty.

Also in ‘the teaching of Huang Po,’ Huang Po pointed out that the origin of everything is ‘One Mind.’ Buddhadāsa, the translator, gave his comment to this ‘One Mind’ that

“For Theravāda reader, when hearing the word ‘Mind,’ ‘One Mind,’ ‘Path,’ ‘Buddha’ or even the word ‘Dharma,’ please be aware that these words do not have the same meaning that we are accustomed to, especially when we hear these words from Huang Po, which differ a lot from what Wei Lang had taught. For example, the word ‘Mind’ or ‘One Mind’ refers to something that appears before the appearance of the mind in our general perception, and even appears before everything. It is before

⁴⁹ Buddhadāsa. Chum Num Dharma Ban Yay Ruang Chit Wang (the collection of preaching about empty mind). (Bangkok: arunavidya, 2005).pp.95-96.

the *nibbāna* and life cycle. The thing that is called ‘One Mind’ has been always there. ‘Path’ is also this thing; ‘Buddha’ is also this thing. So we really need to slowly read and slowly discover its main idea.”⁵⁰

Buddhadāsa pointed out that what Huang Po called ‘One Mind’ is the origin of all things. ‘One Mind’ is not the mind that is in human body. It is the origin of the human mind. In other word, ‘One Mind’ is the universal mind that Huang Po said to be pure, bright, and calm. If ‘One Mind’ has the characteristics of pure, bright, and calm; human mind, which is the fruit of the ‘One Mind’, should also possess the same characteristics.

“All the Buddhas and animals in this world is nothing except the ‘One Mind.’ Apart for the ‘One Mind,’ there is nothing.

The ‘One Mind’ has no origin. It is never born. It cannot be destroyed. It has no body. It never appears. It cannot be set in any group of existing or none existing things. It cannot be regarded as new or old. It is not long, short, big, or small because it is above any limitation, it is beyond any measurement. It transcends names and any comparison.

The ‘One Mind’ is the Buddha. There is no other Buddha. There is no other mind. It is bright and pure like emptiness. That is to say, it has no shape, nor any condition. If you use your own mind to think of other thing apart from the ‘One Mind,’ you have abandoned the truth and cling to the material.”⁵¹

This ‘One Mind’ is basically the same as *nibbāna* as explained by the concept of *asaṅkhata dhamma*. It exists without depending on other things and it is the origin of others. It is eternal but empty of self. It resides in everything.

To conclude here; Huang Po, and Buddhadāsa, share the same concept that everything in the universe comes originally from the same source. This source of origin can be called ‘One Mind’, or ‘pure mind,’ or ‘*nibbāna*,’ or ‘*asaṅkhata dhamma*.’ This source of origin is still residing in everything in the universe, and most important it is

⁵⁰ Buddhadāsa, Translated. The Teaching of Huang Po. (Bangkok: Dharmapuja, 1988). p. 16.

⁵¹ Ibid., p.23.

empty. If anyone can see this source of origin within himself, he can regain the wisdom to see emptiness within all things.

Finally, the Buddha discovered the superior and supreme truth that only the state of mind that is free from the feeling of or attachment to having self, or even purity, can be considered the most peaceful, purest, and most completely suffering-free.⁵²

Although the teaching of *chit praphassorn*, or ‘One Mind’ sound too like Mahāyāna teaching, Buddhadāsa supported his idea with a Pāli phrase from the *Tipiṭaka*:

*Pabhassaram idaṃ bhikkhave cittaṃ āgantukehi
upakilesehi upakiliṭṭhaṃ*

which means

Bhikkhu [s], the mind is luminous. But, the mind becomes gloomy because *upakilesa* (imperfections) come as visitors.⁵³

Thus, Buddhadāsa argued that the original mind (*chit doem thae*) does not have any defilement, so that it is always pure and luminous if we prevent defilement from arising by following the noble eightfold path (right view, right thinking, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration). He explained,

Mud is not a jewel, but luminosity is covered with mud. If we take away the mud, the jewel is luminous as it used to be. The mind is the same. Many sorts of *cetasika* come to it and deprive it of its luminosity.⁵⁴

According to Buddhadāsa, defilements come to the original, pure mind in the following way. When a baby is born, it starts to have attachment. For example, when its eyes see a visual object, its ear hear a sound, its nose smells an odor, etc., it becomes interested in the visual object, sound, odor, taste, or body sensation, and either *sukha vedanā* (satisfaction) or *dukkha vedanā* (dissatisfaction) arises. Then, some kind of *tanhā* (desire) arises, and then *upādāna* (clinging), or in other words ‘tua ku’ and ‘khong ku’ (me and mine), arises. Since a little child does not have knowledge of *dhamma*, *kilesa*

⁵² Buddhadāsa. *The Buddha's Doctrine of Anattā*. (Bangkok: Vuddhidamma Fund, 1990), p.11.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.10.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-2.

easily arises because of its *avijjā* (ignorance). It soon starts to be attached to *sukha vedanā*, and that attachment produces suffering.⁵⁵

However, Buddhadāsa thought that *tanhā* or *upādāna* does not occupy the mind for too long, perhaps several hours or minutes a day. If the mind were dominated by the sense of me and mine all the time, Buddhadāsa said, the person would become crazy. Any time when the mind is not interfered with by *kilesa*, the mind is at peace and is able to think with *sati paññā* (insight) and *sati-sampajañña* (full-awareness).⁵⁶ Therefore, Buddhadasa maintained that,

In general, the mind that is originally pure, or what is called ‘*chit praphassorn*,’ is a kind of empty mind in my explanation. It is the foundation of emptiness. If we can keep the ‘emptiness’ of the mind, we, then, will not suffer. We will be eternally empty of self and what relates to self.⁵⁷

2.2.3 Nibbāna Here and Now for Everyone.

Third, Buddhadāsa taught that *nibbāna* is attainable here and now through practicing empty mind, which should be pursued by everyone, including lay people living in secular society. Since general monks taught that the idea of empty mind or emptiness belongs to *lokuttara dhamma*, or the path of overcoming suffering, some people interpreted it as a teaching relevant to monks who aim at becoming *arahant* by renouncing the mundane world. However, Buddhadāsa found a scriptural foundation to support the practice of empty mind by lay people. Buddhadāsa often referred to the Pāli phrase,

*Ye te suttantā tathāgatabhāsita gambhīrā
gambhīratthā lokuttarā suññatapaṭisaṃyuttā,*

which appears in the *Dhammadinna Sutta*.⁵⁸ In the story, the Buddha recommended the practice of emptiness when Dhammadinna sought advice that would benefit lay people. The Buddha answered,

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 14-5.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 3-4.

⁵⁷ Buddhadāsa, Translated. *The Teaching of Huang Po*. (Bangkok: Dharmapuja, 1988), p.6.

⁵⁸ The *Dhammadinna Sutta* is in *Mahā-vagga, Saṃyutta-nikāya, Sutta-piṭaka*. See Feer, M. Leon, ed., *Saṃyutta-nikāya Part V Mahā-vagga*. (London: Pāli Text Society, 1960). pp. 406-8.

Then, Dhammadinna, thus must you train yourselves: As to those discourses uttered by the Tathāgata, deep, deep in meaning, transcendental and concerned with the Void. From time to time we will spend our days learning them. That is how you must train yourselves, Dhammadinna.⁵⁹

Through this scriptural authorization, empty mind or emptiness is encouraged for ordinary lay people who also have emptiness as the foundation of their mind, even though their mind is not always empty of defilements as is that of an *arahant*, hence *upādāna* often interferes with their mind. Buddhadāsa continued that,

Lay people are the people who are in the middle of the fire. Monks are the people who avoid the fire, or bounced off the fire, or stay at the outer of the fire. Then lay people have more urgent problems. We must take the problems of lay people as our priority since they are the majority of this world. If we can solve the problems of lay people, surely we can solve the problems of the monks since monks' problems are a lot easier to solve. Then, please, listen to me carefully; the Buddha taught 'suññatā' for the eternal sake of lay people!⁶⁰

Buddhadāsa stated clearly that one dhamma of emptiness can be used with all kind of people regardless of gender, class, age, or social position. He implied that emptiness is attainable by anyone, which also means anyone can attain *nibbāna*.

Buddhadāsa also pointed out that *nibbāna* is attainable by those who can see emptiness. Encyclopedia of Religion explained about *nibbāna* that:

In short, the early Buddhist texts primarily approached *nibbāna* as a practical solution to the existential problem of human anguish. Specifically, they maintained that by undertaking a disciplined praxis the Buddhist practitioner can achieve a non-discursive awakening (*bodhi*) to the interdependent non-substantiality of reality, especially of the self. With that insight, it was believed, one could be released from the grips of insatiable craving

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.407.

⁶⁰ Buddhadasa. Sunyataparithat. Vol.2. (Bangkok: Kanpimpranakorn, 1976), p.347.

and its resultant suffering.

The word *nibbāna* itself means “extinction,” and other words used synonymously with it, such as *moksa* and *mukti* refer to emancipation... One prominent tendency was to understand *nibbāna* as a release from *samsāra*, the painful world of birth and death powered by passion, hatred, and ignorance.⁶¹

The condition of *nibbāna* as explained above is empty of self. It is the ultimate state and final goal for every Buddhist. Buddhādāsa maintained that the purpose of studying and practicing dharma is for only one reason - to attain *nibbāna*. He said that

"Why we have to study dharma?; what is the highest state of studying?; To answer, we study dharma because we need to get to the highest point that human being can be, which is the cool state of *nibbāna*."⁶²

He explained further that:

"The word '*nibbāna*' in dharma language means the complete extinguishment of all suffering and desire. When there is the extinguishment of suffering and desire, there will be, more or less, *nibbāna*. If it is completely extinguished, it is the ultimate *nibbāna*."⁶³

It is interesting that the state of *nibbāna* in Buddhādāsa's explanation above can be temporarily attained. At any point if there is the extinguishment of desire and suffering, then there will be *nibbāna*, even though it is temporary. Therefore, Buddhādāsa implied that *nibbāna* can happen in every moment of life. It can happen 'here and now' as long as the mind is empty of self and what relates to self. Buddhādāsa suggested further that in order to do so, one must have the wisdom to see the truth and nature of everything. He linked emptiness to *nibbāna* when he said that

⁶¹ Mircea Eliade, Edi. *The Encyclopedia of Religion Vol.13*.(New York: Macmillan, 2004). p.449.

⁶² Buddhādāsa. *Kwam Lud Pon*. (Bangkok: Thai quality book, 1998).p.122.

⁶³ Ibid.

"We must see emptiness within all things in order to see *nibbāna*. When I say that we must see emptiness, it means we need to let go of the 'I' and 'Mine.'" ⁶⁴

He also stated that

"For all dharma, if we look at it from the underlying nature aspect, they all share one characteristic, that is, *anattā*. This is to say that all *saṅgata* and *asaṅgata* dharma, both *samkhāra* and *asamkhāra*, which includes all of the nature including *nibbāna*; is empty. In terms of Buddhism this is *anattā*,⁶⁵

The quotation suggests that even the *nibbāna* also falls under the law of *anattā*. *Nibbāna* is also empty. Therefore, if one person can perceived empty mind, he will be able to perceive *nibbāna*. Then, practicing of '*chit wang*' can finally lead to *nirvana*. Buddhādāsa explained further that

"*Suññatā* is emptiness of desire and suffering. It is empty of the "I," It is marrying to *nibbāna*, get married to *nibbāna*, live in the same condition with *nibbāna* - the cool condition without the fire from desire, without suffering. This condition can be called marry to *suññatā*; marry to *nibbāna*, or marry to emptiness. Everybody can practice this. This is the ultimate state that human being can achieve."⁶⁶

Buddhadāsa stated clearly that his definition of emptiness is actually the same as the word *nibbāna*, which is the ultimate goal in Buddhism. Therefore, the most important task of every human being is to find the way to attain *nibbāna*, or to see emptiness within all things.

2.2.4 The Integration of empty mind with Daily life

Fourth, Buddhādāsa taught lay people to "work with empty mind" (*tham ngan duai chit wang*) in the midst of secular society. According to Buddhādāsa, when the mind is empty of egoism (*kwam-hen-kae-tua*), without the sense of me and mine, we

⁶⁴ Buddhadasa. Duang Ta Tee Hen Dharma. (Bangkok, Sukhaphabjai, 2007). pp.16-17.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid

work only in accordance with our duty; and when the mind is empty from clinging to me and mine, the mind is filled with *sati paññā* and *sati sampajañña*. Therefore, a person can fulfill their duty most perfectly when they have an empty mind. For example, Buddhādāsa said that when the mind is empty of attachment to the sense of “I” and “mine,” a farmer can plough the field enjoyably even in the middle of the blazing sun, a hunter can shoot a target precisely, and a musician can play music in a most refined way.⁶⁷

Buddhādāsa promoted “Work for work’s sake,” “Work with empty mind,” being forgetful of the benefit to oneself, especially with regard to work for society or for the nation. If there is egoism in the mind, the work will only be a means of unlawful benefit, and will not be done accurately.⁶⁸ However, Buddhādāsa taught that if a soldier has a sense of responsibility for the nation without any intention of doing unjust violence or killing people, the shooting by the soldier would not be a demerit, as it would be for those who have a sense of I and mind. This is compared to taking a medicine to excrete a parasitic worm. The person may know that the worm will be killed by the medicine, but the primary intention is not to kill, but to cure the body.⁶⁹ Buddhādāsa considered such acts as working with empty mind.

To prevent the misunderstanding of the concept, he clarified that the word ‘work with empty mind’ that:

The work of everyday language, though, may be of a worldly nature, if we do it in the right way, then ultimately it will teach us. It will bring us to an understanding of the true nature of the mental life; it will enable us to recognize ‘impermanence (*aniccā*), unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), and non-selfhood (*anattā*). It will bring us to the Truth without our making any conscious effort in that direction. So in dhamma language “work” refers to the practice that leads a person to the Truth to be found in one’s own mind.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Wetchasuan, Arun. Wiwattha: Khwam hen mai trong kan rawang mom ratchawong khukrit pramoj kab than Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (Dispute: Disagreement of Opinions between M.R.W. Kukrit Pramoj and Ven. Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu). (Bangkok: Arun Witthaya, 1977), pp.114-21.

⁶⁸ Buddhādāsa, Kan-tham-ngan duai chit wang phua sangkhom, p.17.

⁶⁹ Buddhādāsa. Sunyata-Chiwang-Chit doem thae, pp.7-8.

⁷⁰ Buddhadasa. Sunyata-Chiwang-Chit doem thae, pp.11-13.

As mentioned above that where there is *sati-sampajañña* and *sati-paññā*, there is no attachment, and vice versa. Therefore, when the mind is said to be empty of attachment, then the mind is said to be full of *sati-sampajañña* and *sati-paññā*. This is called the empty mind. Thus, working with the mind that is empty means working for the sake of working or duty for duty's sake without attachment to the sense of "I" and "mine"

Thus in short, 'work' in everyday language means earning a living out of necessity; and 'work' in dhamma language means putting the teaching of the Buddha into practice while working. This is the complete integration of practicing dhamma into daily life. It implied that practicing dhamma can happen every moment. And at the moment that the mind is empty, there is the state of nibbāna.

Buddhadāsa advised and encouraged old and young Buddhists to work with the empty mind – the mind that is without attachment of the sense of "I" or "mine" either at the office, factory, at home, or wherever they are. And at the same time he reminds them to observe how, when working with an agitated mind – a mind that is restless and always grasping and clinging to one thing or one idea after another, brings about suffering. Therefore, one should work, have lived, and be without attachment; one should not cling to anything.

To conclude here, the concept of emptiness in Buddhadāsa's teaching follow the framework of the Buddha teaching of such concept as appeared in the Tipiṭaka. His teaching is above the dividing of Theravāda and Mahāyāna, and other existing, schools. Buddhadāsa's teaching of emptiness can be reflected through these four categories;

- 1) empty mind
- 2) The original condition of the mind
- 3) Nibbāna here and now for everyone; and
- 4) The integration of empty mind with daily life

These four categories cover all area of Buddhadāsa's teaching since Buddhadāsa himself said that all dhamma connects to emptiness. The only difference is the aspect that each category emphasizes. The next chapter will discuss these concepts of emptiness as portrayed in Buddhadāsa's poetry.

CHAPTER 3

EMPTINESS IN BUDDHADĀSA'S POETRY

This chapter will explore Buddhādāsa's poetry in order to illustrate that Emptiness is the main concept reflected through the poetry. Buddhādāsa tried to explain the concept of '*chit wang*' or 'empty mind' as the basic underlying nature of human being; and, at the same time, some of the poems deal with the practical way to practice '*chit wang*' in daily life, which Buddhādāsa called the art of Buddhism.¹ Emptiness, both in terms of concept and practice can be regarded as the essence of Buddhādāsa's poetry

First of all, the name and words used in Buddhādāsa's poetry need to be discussed. There are 42 poems out of 295 poems studied in this thesis containing the word emptiness. Moreover, 112 poems contain words which relate to the concept of emptiness discussed in previous chapter, such as, *nibbāna*, I and mine, pure mind, etc. Combining these poems together, there are 154 poems from 295 poems; more than half of Buddhādāsa's poetry studied in this thesis, connected directly to the concept of emptiness by the title of the poem and the words in the content of the poems.

Apart from the words that appear in the poem, the content of the poem and its interpretation are more substantial to prove that Buddhādāsa's poetry focuses on the concept of emptiness. As mentioned earlier, there are two aspects of emptiness that is interesting to be discussed; emptiness as a concept, and emptiness as a practice.

Moreover, in the previous chapter, there are four characteristics of emptiness in Buddhādāsa's teaching, among these are;

- 1) Empty mind
- 2) The original condition of the mind
- 3) *Nibbāna* here and now for everyone; and
- 4) The integration of empty mind with daily life

To put these two frameworks together, the emptiness as a concept will consist of the notion of empty mind and the original condition of the mind; while as a practice, it deals with the *nibbāna* here and now for everyone and the integration of empty mind with daily life. This categorization of concept of emptiness includes all area of Buddhādāsa's teaching, and it is an evidence that the whole doctrine of Buddhādāsa's teaching is all connects to the emptiness, including his poetry.

¹ Buddhādāsa. Soo Chit Wang (The way to empty mind). (Bangkok: Sukhabhabjai, 2009). p.78.

3.1 Emptiness as a Concept

As a concept, Emptiness is explained through its definition, its condition, and its interpretation. First of all, meaning of emptiness in Buddhādāsa's doctrine deals with the idealistic state of everything in the world. This is to say, Buddhādāsa maintained that ultimately everything in the world, including *nibbāna* is empty.

It is interesting, then, that what is 'the world' in Buddhādāsa's interpretation? In various places in his teaching Buddhādāsa described the world as what is included in what he called '*dhamma*.' Buddhādāsa explained the word '*dhamma*' that:

“Now let us consider all things are included in the word '*dhamma*'. '*Dhamma*' means 'thing', *sabbe dhamma* means 'all things' or the world. You must be clear when you use the term 'all things' as it is confusing to what it signifies. 'All things' refers to everything without exception, whether worldly or spiritual, material or mental. Therefore, all the nature is called the world, the world is *dhamma*; even if there is something outside these categories, it would still be included in the term 'all things' and would still be *dhamma*.”²

Buddhādāsa saw the world in the meaning of the whole nature. It covers everything as he explained “all the nature is called 'the world,' that is, there is no exception; and it is the same word as the Pāli word '*dhamma*.”” And for the word '*dhamma*,' he suggested that there are four meanings,

“The first meaning is the *nature* itself, it covers everything that is tangible including the five senses and the mind.

The second meaning is the *law of nature* since there are some laws in nature which can be considered as the truth, that is, the law of causes and effect or *idappaccayatā*; the law of dependent origination or *paṭiccasamuppāda*; the three conditions of things that is *aniccaṃ, dukkhaṃ, anattā*.

For the third meaning, the word 'world' or '*dhamma*' includes 'human duty' which one has to perform in order to live according to the rule of nature. It starts by gathering of food to feed the body, growing up, getting sick and being cured, reproducing, surviving, and finally trying to attain the cessation of the suffering.

² Buddhādāsa. Chumnum Dham Banyay Rueng Chit Wang. p.22.

For the forth meaning, the ‘world’ is the ‘result’ that we can get from the act of nature; both the worldly result like honor, fame, money, etc; and spiritual result like *nibbāna*.³

Buddhadāsa suggested that for the correct understanding of the world, one must look at it in ‘broader’ sense as explained above, that is, to look at it as the nature, the law of nature, the human duty according to the rule of nature, and the result from such action. “*We must look at it in this broader sense to really understand the world.*”⁴

Buddhadāsa elaborated more about the condition of the world that it is empty. He explained that:

“For all these definitions of *dhamma*; the nature itself, the rule of nature, the duty, or the fruit of duty; we shall see them that they are empty. That is, they are empty of self and empty of what belongs to self. Because, in the world or in everything, there is no such part that can be taken as permanent; they all change according to what the mind generates and all decays when time goes by. There is not a moment that the world is fixed and permanent. Therefore, the world and everything, by nature, is changing and impermanent. They cannot be grabbed as self and what relates to self. The world itself is emptiness and is empty of self.”⁵

There is a number of Buddhadāsa’s poetry that deal with the concept of the world and tries to educate the reader that actually the world is empty. Some of them are as follow:

Sabbe dhammā nālai abhinivesāyā	สรรพเพ ธมฺมา นาลํ อภินิเวสาย.
Everything is all deluding us to grab-	สิ่งทั้งปวง ล้วนแต่ลวง ให้ยึดมั่น
Both the goodness and badness.	ได้เท่ากัน ทั้งที่ ดีและชั่ว
What is called good is because we ‘have’ it;	ที่ว่าดี ยึดไว้เพราะ “ได้” แคตัว
What is called bad is because we are afraid to ‘lose’ it.	ที่ว่าชั่ว ยึดเพราะกลัว ตัว “เสีย” อะไร
They both can cause us problem;	ก่อให้เกิด หนักใจ ได้เท่ากัน
No matter how we grab them.	ไม่ว่าจะ ยึดมั่น นั้นแ่งไหน
Even the taste of achievement is temporary;	ดีดั่งหมาย เดียวก็กลายเป็น จืดไป
Everything falls into this rule.	สิ่งใดใด ก็ต้องเป็น เช่นว่ามา

³ Buddhadāsa. *Chumnum Dham Banyay Rueng Chit Wang*. pp.22-23.

⁴ Ibid. p.189.

⁵ Ibid.

If we are not deluded by both good and bad, ถ้าอย่าหลง ยึดมั่น ทั้งชั่ว-ดี
 We will set the mind in the right way จะวางจิต ถูกวิธี ทั้งหลัง-หน้า
 Both goodness and badness will enhance our wisdom. ชั่วและดี กลายเป็นเครื่อง เรื่องปัญญา
 Letting go of both goodness and badness- ไม่เป็นบ้า เพราะชั่ว-ดี นี้! นิพพาน
 This is nibbāna.⁶

Buddhadāsa maintained from the poetry that *dhamma* that is the conclusion of all other *dhamma* in Buddhism is “*Sabbe dhammā nalan abhinivesāya*” meaning “all *dhamma* should not be cling to”⁷, which Buddhadāsa paraphrased as “there is nothing we should have or should be.”⁸ This phrase derived from the *Tipiṭaka, culatanhasamkhaya-sutta, majjhima nikāya*; when a man asked the Buddha that what is the most concise teaching in Buddhism and the Buddha answered by this saying.⁹ Buddhadāsa understood that this saying can be interpreted that empty mind is the core of Buddhism as he said:

“For all *dhamma* (*Sabbe dhammā*), if we consider the law of impermanence, there will be only one common characteristic, that is, *anattā*; even the *saṅgata dhamma* or *asaṅgata dhamma*, all *saṅkhāra* or *visaṅkhāra*, all the nature including the *nibbāna* is also *anattā*. In Buddhism, *anattā* is something that is not *attā*, or ‘no self’; and other characteristics that come together are *aniccatā* – the impermanence; and *dukkhatā* the suffering. These are the characteristics of everything.”¹⁰

Apart from seeing the world as empty, Buddhadāsa maintained that we need to see within ourselves, too, the emptiness. It is a state in our mind that we need to get rid of all elements that prevent us from attaining emptiness. One of these elements is the letting go of both good and bad. As goodness and badness are both the emotion that are generated in the mind, then it is essential to see the mind as empty. The poetry above has the content related to this teaching; also another poem reflects the same idea is as follow,

The taste of Heaven is addictive	รสสวรรค์นั้นเสพติด
The schools of thinking cause us headache.	อันลัทธิ นานา นำเวียนหัว
You really need to get away from them.	จงถอนตัว ออกมา เสียให้ห่าง
The stories of gods, or heaven, are like rubber-	เรื่องพระเจ้า เรื่องสวรรค์ นั้นเหมือนยาง
Which stick and obstruct the mind.	เป็นตังเหนียว กั้นทาง ดวงวิญญาณ

⁶ Buddhadāsa. *Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen*. p.55

⁷ Buddhadāsa. *Kaen Buddha Sasna* [The Core of Buddhism]. (Bangkok: Amarin Printing, 2007). p.80.

⁸ Buddhadāsa. *Naew Kan Patibad Dhamma nai Suan Mokkhapalaram* [The Guide of Practice in Suan Mokkhapalaram]. (Bangkok: Klum Sueksa lae Patibad dharm, 1986). p.79.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Buddhadāsa. *Kaen Buddha Sasna*. p.43.

They is a golden cage that captures us	เป็นกรงทอง ของจำ จำกัดเขต
It is disgusting, but we, instead, love it.	น่าทุเรศ กลับรัก เป็นหลักฐาน
The cessation is not as sweet as the sugar cane.	ความหลุดพ้น ไซ้อร่อย เช่นอ้อยตาล
It is not sparkling like the diamonds.	ทิ้งไม่ลาน ตาพราว ราวเพชรพลอย
The taste of heaven is addictive, and poisonous.	รสสวรรค์ นั้นเสพติด พิษอม่ง
We are trapped in it, but we do not notice,	ถูกกักขัง ก็ไม่รู้ เหมือนปูหอย
Just like crab and shell,	อยู่แต่รู้ มิได้รู้ เรื่องนกน้อย
Which always stay in the hole,	ที่บินลอย เวหา ว่าปานใดฯ
Never know about the little bird,	
That flies freely in the endless of sky or freedom. ¹¹	

The main idea of this poetry is the letting go of the worldly happiness which captures us to this world. Buddhadāsa used the image of ‘crab and shell’, which have the strong body cover and they stayed in there knowing nothing about the outside world, to represent the people who are addicted to happiness in this world. These people do not realize that the happiness that they know now will disappear and change to suffering in the future. On the other hand, the little bird that is not trapped in any cage and flies freely in the sky represents that one that can let go of such happiness of this world and find the eternal happiness of *nibbāna*.

To conclude here, Buddhadāsa taught us, just like the Buddha, that the world is empty. He defined the world as the nature itself, the rule of nature, the duty, or the fruit of duty, that is to say, everything is the world. And because the world is empty, everything is, then, empty. Those people who see the world as empty, thus, will be able to let go of the world – letting go of both suffering and happiness, good and bad, or even letting go of the dhamma itself. This is the condition of the world. Buddhadāsa, then, explained the condition of the mind which is also empty. Buddhadāsa’s definition of emptiness is actually the same as the word *nibbāna*, which is the ultimate goal in Buddhism. Therefore, the most important task of every human being is to find the way to attain *nibbāna*, or to see the emptiness within all things.

What is this world?

This world is a dark cave;	โลกนี้คืออะไรแน่?
There is no light, no clearness, no cleverness.	โลกนี้คือ ถ้ามืด ไม่เห็นแสง
They think-speak-do by the ignorance.	ไม่มีความ แจ่มแจ้ง ไม่เฉลียว
We should think about the bright world in the future!	คิด-พูด-ทำ โมหะ ไปท่าเดียว
This world is the tree shade.	ลองคิดเที่ยว โลกสว่าง ช่างหน้ากัน !
It is just for a quick rest, and then we must go -	โลกนี้คือ ร่มไม้ ได้อาศัย
To other thousands of worlds.	บัดเดียวใจ พักผ่อน แล้วผ่อนผัน
Why then we hold fast to this world. ¹²	ออกไปสู่ โลกอื่น อีกหมื่นพัน
	โยยัดมัน หมายถึง โลกนี้นาน!

¹¹ Buddhadāsa. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen, p.158.

Buddhadāsa compared this world to the dark cave and the tree shade. He suggested that this world is temporary and human being should not cling to this world. The first stanza of the poem suggests that there is another ‘brighter’ world, and it is deducible that Buddhadāsa wanted all beings to reside in that world. This world is actually the *samsāra*, or the cycle of birth and rebirth; the brighter world symbolizes *nibbāna*, for which, as the first stanza suggests, human being should aim. The second stanza emphasizes more on the temporariness of this world. And since it is temporary, one should not cling to this world. Therefore, the main concept of this poem is to leave this world and focus on the path to *nibbāna*. Wei Lang also said that:

“Learned Audience, our physical body may be likened unto an inn (i.e., a temporary abode), so we cannot take refuge there but only within our Essence of Mind. The Essence of Mind, are not to be sought from without.”¹³

From the quotation, Wei Lang stated that human being should not take refuge in this physical body because it is temporary; rather one must look into the mind to find ‘the Essence of Mind.’ This can be interpreted that the path to *nibbāna* actually resides in our mind, not in the physical body or the physical world. In order to attain *nibbāna*, one needs to see the world truly through the ‘Essence of Mind’ or what Buddhadāsa called ‘empty mind’

3.1.1 Empty Mind

For Buddhadāsa, there are two kinds of meaning in this one word. One is the worldly level, which can be found in any dictionary. It deals with worldly matter and is used in normal conversation. Another is the meaning in *dhamma* level, which the readers need to use their wisdom in order to understand.

For the word emptiness, there are also two levels of meaning. In worldly language it means 'nothingness,' 'empty,' but in *dhamma* language it means everything exists but with no core. Moreover, if scoping the study to only Buddhadāsa’s teaching; there are two levels of meaning lied in the word; one is to see the inter-relatedness within all things and perceive that everything has no core; another is emptiness is actually the cessation of all suffering, that is, Buddhadāsa equated emptiness with *nibbāna*. At this point, if emptiness is actually the same as *nibbāna*, emptiness then is the ultimate goal for Buddhist to achieve.

Buddhadāsa continued that in order to attain *nibbāna* one must look inside oneself. It is finding the path within oneself, that is, within the mind. Buddhadāsa explained that the mind that is free from self and what belongs to self is the mind that can see *nibbāna*. Therefore, in order to attain *nibbāna*, it is through the practice of the mind to let go of self and what belongs to self.

¹² Buddhadāsa. *Hua Kho Dham Nai Kam Klon*. p.167.

¹³ Wei Lang. *Sutra of Wei Lang*. (Delhi: Matura, 1986). p.54.

At this point, the main idea of Buddhādāsa's teaching of emptiness follows the framework of the Buddha's, that is, Buddhādāsa focused his definition of emptiness on the ability to control the mind to see things as empty from the self and what belongs to the self. This idea is portrayed in many of Buddhādāsa's poems. For example:

The Hardest Thing to Know

The hardest thing to know -

Is our mind or ourselves,

Which the fools think they know very well.

The stubborn monk, stubborn novice,

and stubborn child;

Never act according to the rules, never have peace;

Because they don't have right the knowledge of the self,

The feeling of ourselves and our possessions;

Is a deep illusion that confuses us;

While dhamma is the great reality.

If we can get rid of the ignorance and know dhamma

It is the best way to know ourselves.¹⁴

สิ่งที่รู้จักยากที่สุด

สิ่งรู้จัก ยากที่สุด กว่าสิ่งใด

ไม่มีสิ่ง ไหนไหน ได้ยากเท่า

สิ่งนั้นคือ ตัวเอง หรือตัวเรา

ที่คนเขลา หลงว่ากู- รู้จักดี.

ที่พระดีอ เกียรติดี และเด็กดีอ

ไม่มีหรือ มีสร้าง อย่างหมุนจี

เพราะความรู้ เรื่องตัวกู มันไม่มี

หรือมืออย่าง ไม่มี ที่ถูกต้อง.

อันตัวกู ของกู ที่รู้สึก

เป็นตัวลวง เหลือลึก ให้คนหลง

ส่วนตัวธรรม เป็นตัวจริง ที่ยิ่งยง

หมดความหลง รู้ตัวธรรม ถ้าเลิศตนฯ

In this poem, Buddhādāsa maintained that the core of human being is the emptiness. Normally human being 'feels' that we have the self and possesses things that belong to us. Buddhādāsa pointed out that this notion is not the right way to know ourselves. He played with word 'Tua Ku' (self) and 'Tua Dham' (emptiness). Buddhādāsa said that we need to let go of 'Tua Ku' and see 'Tua Dham' which is to see emptiness within ourselves. He gave the example of stubborn monk, novice, and child, which never find peace in their lives; this is because they think they are different from others and grasp their egos. In other words, the poem is telling us that the best way to know ourselves is not to develop our egos. The main idea of this poem is that the hardest thing for human being to know is ourselves. The problem occurs because we are taught to believe in ourselves, while the truth is there is no such 'we' to believe in. There is no self to grasp. The illusion of the self blinds us to see the truth so we cannot see emptiness within ourselves.

From this poem, the existence of the self and what relates to the self is actually linked with human thinking system. To see the self as a core of human being, or as empty, is what the mind chooses to believe. Therefore, controlling the mind and perceiving things in as the way they are can be regarded as the main focus of Buddhādāsa's teaching which is portrayed in all of his works including his poetry.

¹⁴ Buddhādāsa. Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. (Bangkok: Sukkhabhaji, 2010). p.76.

To give the example of how to see things as they really are, Buddhādāsa suggested that one needs to control the mind in order to see the emptiness within the possession, as suggested in the poem ‘possess without the possessor.’

Possess without the Possessor

มิโดยไม่ต้องมีผู้มี

If you feel tired from possessing things,
And you are always aware that you are the owner;
It is obvious that there is ‘I’ and there is ‘mine,’
There is ‘the self’ appearing in this possession.

ถ้ามีอะไร แล้วใจ รู้สึกเหนื่อย
สำนึกเรื่อย ว่ากูมี อย่างนี้หน้า
มีทั้ง “กู” ทั้ง “ของกู” อยู่อัตรา
นั่นอึดตา มาผุดขึ้น ในการมี.

If you possess things and realize it is illusion,
And do not grasp it as yours,
And your mind perceives the possession

ถ้ามีอะไร มีไป ตามสมมติ
ไม่จับยึด ว่า “ของกู” รู้วิถี
แห่งจิตใจ ไม่วิปริต ผิดวิธี
มีอย่างนี้ ย่อมไม่เกิด ตัวอึดตา.

in the right way,

This is the possession without ‘the self.’
Therefore, whenever you possess things,
Do not let ‘the self’ appear,
The good consciousness will prevent it.

ฉะนั้นมีอะไร อย่าให้มี อึดตาเกิด
เพราะสติ อันประเสริฐ คอยกันท่า
สมบุรณ์ด้วย สัมปชัญญะ และปัญญา
นี้เรียกว่า รู้จักมี ที่เก่งเกิน.

The awareness and wisdom

also appear in this possession. This is the right way to possess.

This is the great art of possessing:
Possessing without holding the fire from hell,
Possessing with emptiness,

เป็นศิลปะ แห่งการมี ที่ชั้นยอด
ไม่ต้องกอด ไฟนรก ระหกระเหิน
มีอย่างว่าง ว่างอย่างมี มีได้เพลิน
ขอชวนเชิญ ให้รู้มี อย่างนี้แลฯ

and see emptiness in possessing-

This is a joyful way to possess thing. Let’s possess thing in this way. ¹⁵

In this poetry, Buddhādāsa played with the word ‘possess’ and ‘empty.’ In general when we possess thing, we think ‘we’ are the owner of it. This is the normal way to possess things. But Buddhādāsa suggested that the right way to possess thing is to own it without thinking that ‘we’ are the owner of it. That is, we need to understand that there is no such thing called ‘we.’ The ‘we’ is an illusion that we grasp. The way that enables us to look at ourselves in this way is to practice concentration. Then our awareness and wisdom will lead our mind to think in the right way. Consequently, if even the owner himself does not exist, the things to own also cannot exist.

¹⁵ Buddhādāsa. Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.74.

It is interesting to point out here that the word ‘empty mind’ is actually comes with the word ‘*sati-sampajañña*’ (consciousness with awareness), and ‘*sati-pañña*’ (consciousness with wisdom). From the poem, Buddhādāsa pointed out that in order to have empty mind, the consciousness plays an important role, it is the tool for getting rid of self and what belongs to self. Then the awareness and wisdom will come to the mind. With this awareness and wisdom, one can see the emptiness within all things. There are also others Buddhādāsa’s poetry which connote this idea, for example, the poem ‘Su Chit – Tu Chit’ [pure mind - Corrupted mind]

This poem stated clearly that the factor Buddhādāsa used to separate pure and corrupted mind is the realization of emptiness. Pure mind, then, is empty mind. Furthermore, he added the condition of empty mind that it is clean, bright, and calm, since the poem said “*it is clean with its pure condition / it is bright because it can see things as they really are / it is calm because it is cool and free from worry.*” In this poem Buddhādāsa also suggested the way to eliminate the “I” by using consciousness so that the “I” will not appear. Consciousness then leads to the condition of clean, bright, and calm – which is to say, the mind with the awareness and wisdom.

Apart from the worldly level of emptiness which can be seen with empty mind. In personal level, empty mind also plays an important role in order to find peace within. From the poem above, “I” is not referred to the human body but rather a state of thought. It is generated by the mind. To get rid of the “I,” it is essential to control the mind, which means to see the emptiness within ourselves; this is totally happening in the mind.

Apart from the “I” that the mind generates, there is also the “you.” In normal life “I” and “you” can be used to separate one person from another. “I” and “you” are different persons, which have different thought, different lifestyle, different body, etc. However, following the definition of emptiness discussed earlier, there will be no “I.” Consequently if the “I” disappears, how “you” can exist, since “you” is the result of accepting that there is an “I”, “You”, also, must follow the *suññatā* rule and must essentially be empty. The one that see emptiness in “I,” will see the emptiness in “you” as well. Thus, the line between “I” and “you” is eliminated. “I” and “you” should be the same. They are both essentially empty. The poem ‘Beware of “I” ghost and “you” ghost’ explain this aspect in Buddhādāsa’s teaching.

Beware of “I” ghost and “you” ghost

Actually there is no “I” and “you”
 But when you are a fool,
 They both become the ghosts and haunt you.
 When you stop being foolish,
 “I” and “you” will disappear. It is a good thing to get rid of “I” and “you.”
 If you love peace,
 You should eliminate “I” and “you.”
 Don’t let them remain as the ghosts.

ระวังผี “กู” ผี “กู”

อันความจริง “กู” – “กู” มิได้มี
 แต่พอโง่ ก็เป็นผี โผล่มาได้
 พอหายโง่ “กู” – “กู” ก็หายไป
 หมด “กู” – “กู” เสียได้ เป็นเรื่องดีฯ
 รักสงบ ขวนกัณถอน ชึ่ง “กู” – “กู”
 อย่าให้มี เหลืออยู่ เหมือนอย่างผี
 เหลือกันไว้ แต่ปัญญา และปราณี

Keep only the wisdom and compassion.	อย่าให้มี “กู” – “กู” เหลืออยู่เว้ยฯ
Don’t let “I” and “you” remain at all.	
Normally the “I” ghost and “you” ghost	อันธรรมชาติ ผี “กู” และผี “กู”
Are the obvious rival.	มันเป็นคู่ กัดกัน ชันเปิดเผย
When they can control the mind, you will be sick.	เข้าสิงจิต เมื่อไร เป็นไม่เสบาย
Do not raise these ghosts, chase them away. ¹⁶	อย่าเลี้ยงเลย ผีทั้งสอง ต้องขับไปฯ

Buddhadāsa thought that “I” and “you” are basically the same, that is, they are the illusions created by the mind. They are not real; they depend on the mind to exist. Therefore, they have no core and are empty. The right way to view this is to understand the impermanence of both illusions, the “I” and “you,” and let them go.

The poem continued that “I” and “you” are obviously rivals. Buddhadāsa pointed out the disadvantage of clinging on “I” and “you” that if there is “I”, so “I” must compete with “you” in order to get better than “you.” “I” will try best to win over “you”. This creates the sense of the otherness and separates “I” from “you.” Buddhadāsa said that the mind that still divides “I” and “you” is not able to perceive the right attitude. It still does not see the emptiness within all things because seeing emptiness within all things is seeing everything as one.

The elimination of “I” and “you” will lead to another concept that is very important in Buddhism, especially in Mahāyāna Buddhism, that is, the concept of compassion. When the separation of “I” and “you” disappear, the feeling of otherness will also disappear and one can understand others more. One will pay the same attention to the other’s matter because there is no difference between them. Emptiness and compassion are linked. If one can see the emptiness, it is likely that he will master the compassion as well.

At this point, empty mind is very important for understanding the emptiness. It is the mind that plays the role in perceiving the world as empty. It is important that one must see the world, the dhamma, or *nibbāna* is actually empty; And as discussed earlier, ‘empty’ in this sense does not mean ‘nothing’, but it means empty from the self and what relates to the self. This is the definition that the Buddha mentioned in the Tipiṭaka and the definition that Buddhadāsa used to explain the concept of emptiness in his works.

Bird cannot See the Sky, Fish cannot See Water.	นกไม่เห็นฟ้าปลาไม่เห็นน้ำ
The birds look but cannot see the sky.	หมุ่นกัจจง มองเท่าไร ไม่เห็นฟ้า
The fish also cannot see the cool and clear water.	ถึงฝูงปลา ก็ไม่เห็น น้ำเย็นใส
The earthworms cannot see dirt that they ate	ไส้เดือนมอง ไม่เห็นดิน ที่กินไป
The worms cannot see the stool they sucked	หนอนก็ไม่ มองเห็นมูล ที่ดูดกิน
General people cannot see the world,	คนทั่วไป ก็ไม่ มองเห็นโลก

¹⁶ Buddhadāsa. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.64.

So they always suffer.	ต้องทุกข์โศก หงุดหงิด อยู่เนืองนิจ
But Buddhists will adapt the dhamma	ส่วนชาวพุทธ ประยุกต์ธรรม ตามระบิล
So they see things as they really are. ¹⁷	เห็นหมดสิ้น ทุกสิ่ง ตามจริงเอ๋ย

This poem uses the metaphor of the fish and water to describe human being living in the world. The fish actually swim in the water but they do not see the water. All they see is their prey, their food, their shelter, etc. They see everything except the water; same as birds do not see the sky, worms do not see the dirt. Just like human beings who live in the world but do not see the world. The poem is suggesting that we are taking the world for granted and do not try to understand it. The last stanza of the poem said that we must see everything as they ‘really are,’ which linked to the concept of emptiness. In order to live without suffering in this world, one must see the world, and see with the right attitude. One must see the world as empty of self and what relates to self. One must see the world with empty mind.

3.1.2 The Original Condition of the Mind

From the previous chapter, Buddhādāsa stated that the original condition of the mind is empty of self and pure. It is free from defilement. Desire and other delusion come later. Buddhādāsa also mentioned that potentially the mind will go back to its original condition which is full of wisdom and empty. This concept reflects through some of Buddhādāsa’s poem, for examples,

Buddhādāsa also compare the characteristics of the ‘Pure Mind’ and human mind in the poem ‘Which minds?’ In this poem, Buddhādāsa described two different kinds of minds - the Original Mind and the Instant Mind. The Original Mind is the ideal mind that is cool, calm, and complete; while the Instant Mind is always hungry and confused. The Original Mind is ‘*praphatsorn*’ in the sense that discussed earlier and new Mind is normal human mind which is covered by desire and confusion.

For the way to achieve the Original Mind, Buddhādāsa suggested that it can be found ‘in our forehead, which can be interpreted that one need to use our wisdom to find it - to see the original mind within our mind. The poem ‘the river bends, not the water’ pointed out the wisdom to see the world that,

The River bends, not the water	แม่น้ำคด น้ำไม่คด
The River bends, not the water,	แม่น้ำคด ส่วนน้ำ นั้นไม่คด
This is not a lie, look clearly, it makes sense.	ไม่แก้งปด ดูให้ดี มีเหตุผล
Just like Body and Mind is not corrupted.	กายกับใจ ไม่ลามก ไม่กวน
But Desire is tricky corrupted.	แต่กิเลส แสนกล นั้นเหลือคด

¹⁷ Buddhādāsa. Hua Kho Dham Nai Kam Klon. p.187.

The mind is normally ‘praphatsorn’	จิตล้นล้น นั้นเป็น ประภัสสร
The desire comes and takes over.	กิเลสจร ครอบงำ ทำอยู่หมด
The desire is like the curved river.	กิเลสเปรียบ ลำน้ำ ที่เลี้ยวลด
The mind is the water that is not curved.	จิตเปรียบน้ำ ตามกฎ ไม่คดงอ
Empty mind can stay in the chaotic body	อันจิตว่าง มีได้ ในกายวุ่น
Just as the water can be in the mud.	ในน้ำขุ่น มีน้ำใส ไม่หลอกหนอ
In cycle of birth and death, there is <i>Nibbana</i> .	ในสังสาร มีนิพพาน อยู่มากพอ
Each statement is a puzzle to think.	แต่ละข้อ งวยงง ชวนสงกา
Monk said, cut the forest, not the tree.	พระตรัสให้ ตัดป่า อย่าตัดไม้
It does not make sense, how can it be?	ไม่เข้าใจ ตัดได้ อย่างไรหนา
If you can separate the water from the river,	รู้แยกน้ำ จากแม่น้ำ ตามว่ามา
You are clever!	จึงนับว่า ผู้ฉลาด สามารถเอชฯ ¹⁸

From the poem, normally a person looks into the river and sees its curves then he thinks the water is curved. But actually the thing that curves is the river, not the water. The water and river are the symbols for the mind and desire. They stayed together but separately. Buddhādāsa then pointed out that the original condition of the mind is pure, but the desire makes it dirty. The way to attain nibbāna then, is to keep the mind as pure and clean or ‘praphatsorn’ as the poem said, or as Buddhādāsa called ‘empty mind.’ Buddhādāsa pointed out that empty mind can reside in the chaotic body. And in the cycle of birth and death, there is *nibbāna*. He used the image of forest and tree to connote the idea; he said that we need to cut the shagginess of the tree which makes the tree the forest, not cut the tree itself. The poem firmly suggested that the true condition of the mind is pure, but desire makes the mind dirty. We do not need to cut off the mind, but only the desire that covers the mind.

Buddhādāsa continued that the process of generating desire happens forever, but the condition that is free from desire is also forever, the poem ‘From Ananta to Ananta’¹⁹ suggested. This poetry stated clearly that there are two categories of things in the universe, that is, *saṅkhata* and *asaṅkhata dhamma*. *Saṅkhata* is the world of formations (*saṅkhāra*) and *asaṅkhata* is the end of the formation. Buddhādāsa pointed out in this poetry that both *saṅkhata* and *asaṅkhata dhamma* are eternal but in different way. *Saṅkhata dhamma* is eternal in the way that it always creates *saṅkhāra*. It never stops. This is its nature; this is its law; while *asaṅkhata* is eternal in terms of its condition. It is empty (*suññatā*). The poem said from eternity to eternity means this is a journey from one eternity to another eternity. On one side, the eternity of *saṅkhata* is the creation of *saṅkhāra*, delusion, desire, which keep people staying in this world. Buddhādāsa used the image of the bell to connote the idea. Whenever one hits the bell, it always gives sound. Then the sound goes into the air

¹⁸ Buddhādāsa. Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.99.

¹⁹ Buddhādāsa. Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.153.

but the air is never full of sound. The creation of the *saṅkhata* is never ending, while, on another side, the emptiness of *asaṅkhata* is never full. Buddhādāsa pointed out that we need to go from *saṅkhata* eternity to *asaṅkhata* eternity.

Another imagery that Buddhādāsa used to portray the idea of *saṅkhata* and *asaṅkhata dhamma* is the sky, and the land. The poem said,

When I Look at the Land I see the Sky

When I look at the land I see the sky.
 There is a big sky in the land.
 I will tell you.
 You should listen and tell me it is crazy or good?
 I see the world as empty of the self
 And empty of what belong to the self.
 It is even emptier than the sky,
 Because there is another thing
 called *mahā-suññayā*.
 If you can see the world as truly empty
 You can see the great immortal city concealing in it.
 This is called look at the sky and see the land.
 Think about it, is this crazy or good?
 If you still cannot see it, do not rush and blame on me.
 If you have the wrong view,
 you will see the land as the land,
 So you will eat it like an earthworm.²⁰

เมื่อมองดินเห็นฟ้า

เมื่อมองดิน เห็นฟ้า นิจจาเอ๋ย
 มองเห็นฟ้า ดินใหญ่ กระจายเลย
 ฉันจะเอ๋ย ฟังดูหนา บ้าหรือดี?
 คือมองโลก เห็นว่าง จากอัตตา
 ว่างจากอัต- ตินียา อย่างเต็มที่
 มันว่างจริง ยิ่งกว่าฟ้า เพราะว่ามี
 สิ่งหนึ่งที่ เรียกมหา- สุญญตา.
 ครั้นมองดู โลกว่าง อย่างแท้จริง
 ก็เห็นสิ่ง ที่เรียก ว่ามหา -
 อมฤต- นคร ซ่อนอยู่นา
 นี้เรียกว่า มองฟ้า แล้วปะดิน.
 คิดดูเถิด บ้าหรือดี มีให้ดู
 ถ้าไม่เห็น อย่าเพ้อจู้ มาติฉิน
 ถ้าจะมัว อยู่ทีเห็น ดินเป็นดิน
 ก็ดูคกิน มันไป เป็นไส้เดือนฯ

This poem explained clearly about the way human beings should see the world. Buddhādāsa pointed out that we must see the world, or the land in the poem, as empty of self and what relates to self, that is to see the world with empty mind. After that, if we look at the emptiness, which is signified by the sky, we can see an immortal city in it. Buddhādāsa then suggested that we should reside in this city. In other word, this city is the *nibbāna* that inhabit in the emptiness. The land is the world of things or *saṅkhata* dhamma, and the sky is the world of emptiness or *asaṅkhata* dhamma. This poem also suggests that emptiness is *nibbāna* and *nibbāna* is emptiness. And the emptiness is not the nothingness like in nihilistic view. After publishing this poem, Buddhādāsa published another poem call “Looking at the Sky but Seeing the Land.”

²⁰ Buddhādāsa. *Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen*. p.292.

Looking at the sky but seeing the land

First I see the sky as empty as I have been told,
I cannot see any angel residing in it.

When I look at it closely I see more emptiness.

And when my mind is concentrated,

I see even more emptiness.

I can see the truth that emptiness -

Gives me, as hard as a new land;

It is cooler and calmer than any land.

It is the great land called "the great immortal city."

It is the coolest location of the empty mind.

It is free from any desire, suffering, and sadness.

It is the land that is stable forever

This is what I call 'look at the sky but see the land.'²¹ นี่แลตอน ที่มองฟ้า แล้วปะดินฯ

มองฟ้าปะดิน

แรกมองฟ้า ก็เห็นว่าง อย่างเขาว่า

ไม่เห็นพวก เทวดา คลาสวรรค์

ยิ่งมองไป ยิ่งว่างมา สารพัน

จิตใจมัน ยิ่งเห็นว่าง อย่างสุดใจ

กลับได้เห็น สารหนึ่ง ซึ่งความว่าง

มอบให้ อย่าง แก่นสาร ปานดินใหม่

เป็นแผ่นดิน เย็นและหยุด กว่าจุดใด

ทรงคุณใหญ่ เรียก "อมตะ มหานคร"

เป็นที่ตั้ง เย็นสนิท แห่งจิตว่าง

กิเลสร้าง ทุกข์หาย ไร้โคกคร

เป็นแดนดิน ที่คงมั่น นิรันดร

Buddhadāsa clarified here that the sky that he had written earlier means *nibbāna*. He related *nibbāna* with what he called "the great immortal city." He described this city as 'coolest,' 'free from desire, suffering, and sadness,'; This is the condition of the pure and clean mind as mentioned earlier. Therefore, within emptiness, there is the condition of pure and clean. This is the essence of the emptiness, and this is the original condition of the mind. Thus, from this poetry, the empty mind can lead us to the great truth about emptiness, that is, the state of pure and clean mind, the *asaṅkhata dhamma*.

To conclude here, the original condition of the mind is '*chit praphatsorn*, or the pure and clean mind. This is also the same condition of *nibbāna* and the same condition of *asaṅkhata dhamma*. But when the desire comes, it makes our mind lose its pureness and cleanness, the poem "Conversation: the Buddha City"²² conveys this conclusion,

From the poem, Buddhadāsa maintained that *nibbāna* is a city that is cool and empty. From the poetry, *nibbāna* can only be achieved by the empty mind since this city appears in the mind that has no desire. This poetry uses the conversation technique, which is, using question and answer to communicate the main idea to the reader. The questions posted in the lines are the questions that Buddhadāsa supposed that the reader might wonder.

Another interesting point about this poem is that Buddhadāsa explained that wisdom and loving-kindness are what make the city the Buddha city. This is implied that to belong to the Buddha one must have wisdom and loving-kindness. This concept is very much like Mahāyāna traditional view of the Bodhisattva.

²¹ Buddhadāsa. *Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen.*, p.293.

²² Buddhadāsa. *Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen.*, p.325.

Then the great city of *nibbāna*, then, resides in human mind. Only the empty mind can see the existence of this city in human mind. This can be implied that in human mind, there is a state of mind that is pure and empty. This is the original condition of the mind.

Another poem which conveys the same message is ‘Bab Yai – Bab Luek (Great Sin – Deep Sin)²³ This poem suggested that there are two kinds of desire that keep our mind away from its original condition of pure and clean; that is, the great sin, and deep sin. The great sin is clinging to suffering, clinging to badness; while deep sin is clinging to happiness, clinging to goodness. In order to follow the path of *nibbāna*, we need to let go both deep sin and great sin. Then we will find the original condition of the mind, which is the cool and empty state of *nibbāna*.

3.2 Emptiness as a Practice

Apart from teaching about the definition, the condition, and the interpretation of emptiness as a concept, Buddhādāsa focused his teaching on how to put the emptiness into practice. He tried to tell people that the practice of empty mind can happen everywhere, in every time, and in anything we do in daily life. He even pointed out that *nibbāna* is here and now, and the practice to achieve *nibbāna* is for everyone in this very life. The key is to see the world as it really is, that is, to merge the eye that sees emptiness into daily life. Dalai lama also focus his teaching in the same way:

“What is emptiness? Emptiness is another way to say that everything does not appear and exist by their own. Ultimately say, nothing, not even human, ideas, or cars, exists by their own. This is the way to see the world with enlightened eye. This will expand to a profound dhamma that is the ultimate truth. The core of life and everything around us is inter-related. There is no separation from one to another. There is no human being. Nothing can exist alone like an island. The world is like a giant cobweb that links everyone and everything together. This cobweb is hard to be seen or think or understand, but it is real and always exists, lying under the thing that appear to the eye. Therefore "emptiness" is not a negative concept. Since everything is dependent on and interrelated with something else, the chain of inter-being stretches out infinitely. Ultimately, everything is linked with everything else. "Empty, in this sense, means that it is full of everything, the entire cosmos." Philosophically speaking, the entire cosmos exists in every part of cosmos. The point of Buddhism is to transform this insight from an abstract philosophical idea into a living reality that becomes the basis for everyday life.”²⁴

²³Buddhādāsa. *Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen*.p.62.

²⁴ Dalai Lama and Shan, Victor. *The Wisdom of Forgiveness*. (New York: Riverhead Book, 2004). p.133.

The key of Dalai Lama's explanation above is the transformation of the insight to emptiness, from an abstract idea into a living reality.

3.2.1 Nibbāna Here and Now for Everyone

At this point we can see Buddhadāsa's attempt to tell the people how to concentrate the mind on emptiness in every step of life. There is another term used to call this integration, that is 'engaged Buddhism.' Engaged Buddhism refers to Buddhists who are seeking ways to apply the wisdoms from meditation practice and dhamma teachings to situations of social, political, environmental, and economic suffering and injustice.

There is an argument that teaching emptiness to general people is too sophisticated for them to understand. Buddhadāsa maintained that the dhamma that all the Buddha had taught is not only for the monks, but it is also for the general people as at one point in the Tipiṭaka, a group of lay people asked the Buddha about the dhamma for themselves to practice, the Buddha replied by teaching them *suññatā* sutra. Then the lay people thought it was too difficult so the Buddha taught them the path to the enlighten ones (*sotā-pattiyanka*). Buddhadāsa thought that the Buddha played 'trick' on the lay people because he was still teaching about the emptiness as well.

“...this is what I have preached so many times elsewhere that once there was a group of lay people; they went and asked the Buddha to teach them the *dhamma* that would forever benefit them at home, where resided their children and wives who put on their bodies with the garland and perfume. The Buddha taught them the *suññatā sutra*. The lay people thought it was too hard for them to understand so the Buddha taught them *sotā-pattiyanka* instead; that is, the way to be the enlightened one. The teaching composed of the refuge in the true Buddha, true *dhamma*, and true *saṅgha* (monks) and to hold the *ariyaganta-sīla*, that is, the conduct that satisfied the enlightened one. This is the wisdom of the Buddha to 'trick' lay people, that is, they did not want the emptiness but the Buddha taught something that cannot avoid the emptiness. When the Buddha said that to take refuge in the true Buddha, *dhamma*, and *saṅgha* and to practice the enlightened one conduct; this is only possible for the one who had the eyes that can see the emptiness.”²⁵

²⁵ Buddhadāsa. *Kaen Buddha Sassana*. pp.112-113.

This quotation confirmed that emptiness is essential, not only for monks but also for lay people as well. It is essential to apply the wisdom of emptiness to the social situation. To explain further, Buddhādāsa thought that if we can always have the empty mind and use the empty mind to see things, and situations in the society, we will understand more about the world and can use such situations as our lesson to teach us *dhamma*. The same idea reflected in Thich Nhat Hanh’s popular word – Engaged Buddhism. Finding its roots in Vietnam through the Zen Buddhist teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, Engaged Buddhism has grown in popularity in the West. He said:

“To live in our society we need to copy the practice of the *avalokitesavara bodhisattva*; that is to pay attention to every sound on earth, including those of pain from the internal and external. The sound of the bell, air, water, insect, and animals contribute to the meditation. When we can listen to them with concentration and take a deep breath, everything will be deep and profound.”²⁶

Nhat Hanh believed that to live in the society we really need to listen to others. Even the sound of the insect is meaningful, so we have to pay attention to it. Nhat Hanh also said that to live in the society is a kind of meditation, which will make us less selfish and care more about others. Nhat Hanh said that every step of life is practicing *dhamma*, only if we pay attention to the outside world with the mind full of the knowledge of emptiness. This implied that *nibbāna* is attainable through the practice of the mind to see the emptiness. Then *nibbāna* can be achieved here and now through the practice of empty mind. Some of Buddhādāsa’s poetry reflected such idea:

It is always there

When the mind has no ‘Self,’

Nibbāna appears in the mind.

But when the self exists in the mind,

Samsāra replaces *Nibbāna*.²⁷

มีอยู่แล้ว

ขณะใด จิตไม่มี “ตัวกู”

นิพพานก็ปรากฏอยู่ ณ จิตนั้น

พอ “ตัวกู” เกิดได้ ในจิตนั้น

สังสารวัฏฏ์ ก็พลัน ปรากฏแทนฯ

It is clear from this poem that the cycle of birth and rebirth (*samsāra*) is not a tangible thing but rather a state of mind, as well as the state of *nibbāna*. Buddhādāsa pointed out that when we see the self in our mind, we won’t see *nibbāna*. But when we see *nibbāna*, we have already let go of the self. Buddhādāsa also pointed out that the mind which can see *nibbāna* is the mind that is empty from the self. We can conclude here that empty mind is the way to achieve *nibbāna*.

²⁶ Hanh, Thich Nhat. Loving Kindness: The Teaching about Love. (New York: Brooks Publishing). p.100.

²⁷ Buddhādāsa. Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.71.

A Degree from Suan Mokh**ปริญญาจากสวนโมกข์²⁸**

He who receives the “die before actually dying” degree	“ปริญญา ตายก่อนตาย” ใครได้รับ
He is considered a graduate.	เป็นอันนับ ว่าจบสิ้น การศึกษา
It is the ultimate that is beyond this world.	เป็นโลกุตตร์ หลุดพ้น เหนือโลกา
It is the end of the cycle of birth and rebirth.	หยุดเวียนว่าย ลี้นสังสาร- วัฏฏ์วน
It is a unique degree from Suan Mokh	ปริญญา แสนสงวน จากสวนโมกข์
Others may think this degree is nonsense;	คนเขาว่า เยกโยก ไม่เห็นหน
They won’t see the benefit of it.	ไม่เห็นดี ที่ตรงไหน ใครสัปรดณ
They cursed those who received it.	รับเอามา ค่าปน กันทั้งเมือง
But this is it – the “die before actually dying” degree.	นี่แหละหนา ปริญญา “ตายก่อนตาย”
Other people may not understand it.	คนทั้งหลาย มองดู ไม่รู้เรื่อง
They want to live with their fame and honor	เขาอยากอยู่ ให้เด่นดัง มลึงเมลิอง
So they hate me when I ask them to die too quickly.	เขาเลยเคือง ว่าเราชวน ให้ด่วนตายฯ

If degree is what the graduates receive for showing the highest education he achieved; In Buddhādāsa’s temple, or Suan Mokh, the highest degree that people should have is to die before actually die. Buddhādāsa explained in the first stanza that to receive this degree is not only graduated from his system of education, but also the highest state that human being could get. It is the degree that allows human being to escape from this world and end suffering. This implied that the cessation of suffering can be attained within this life, through the degree from Suan Mokh; that is ‘to die before actually dying’ meaning to kill all those desire and delusion before the end of this life.

In Buddhādāsa’s time when he wrote this poetry, general people still do not understand his pun, and the concept behind the pun, so they do not accept this teaching. In this poetry, Buddhādāsa tried to persuade the reader that he is not mad in saying that human can die before actually die and tried to point out the value of it. In another poem, he tried to elaborate more on his pun.

To die before actually dying**ตายก่อนตาย**

To die at your death you will become a ghost	ตายเมื่อตาย ย่อมกลายเป็นผี
In bad death you will become a homeless ghost	ตายไม่ดี ได้เป็นที่ ผีตายโหง
Why die just for others to put you in a coffin?	ตายทำไม เพียงให้ เขาใส่โลง
The grand death is to die before you actually dying.	ตายโง่โง่ นั่นคือตาย เสียก่อนตาย
To die before dying, you won’t become a ghost	ตายก่อนตาย มิใช่ กลายเป็นผี
But you will become something that live forever	แต่กลายเป็น สิ่งที่ไม่สูญหาย
This is the death that will end other deaths-	ที่แท้คือ ความตาย ที่ไม่ตาย

²⁸ Buddhādāsa. Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.201.

Which means there will be no other birth.	มีความหมาย ไม่มีใคร ได้เกิดแล
This word is very puzzling.	คำพูดนี้ ผันผวน ขวบนจน
It sounds like a liar;	เหมือนเล่นลิ้น ลาวน คนตอแหล
But actually it is the ultimate truth.	แต่เป็นความจริง อันไม่ผันแปร
He who can solve its mystery shall not die. ²⁹	ใครคิดแก้ อรรถได้ ไม่ตายเออ

In this poetry, Buddhādāsa used the paradox of life and death as he mentioned that ‘to die before actually dying’ is the way to live forever; or in another word, is to enter the state of *nibbāna*. We can see that this poem is the elaboration of his pun and even Buddhādāsa himself thought that this idea is a ‘mystery’ to be solved. Also this is the ‘ultimate truth’ that will end the cycle of birth and rebirth, which is the origin of human suffering.

Another example of how we can use our wisdom to understand our lives in this world is in Buddhādāsa’s teaching of the suchness. Buddhādāsa maintained that the difference between the Buddha and normal people is that; the Buddha is the one who can kill the desire and live in *nibbāna*; or the one who can solve the mystery of ‘to die before actually dying.’ To explain this Buddhādāsa said that everybody has the ability to see the true condition of things or ‘suchness’ (*tathatā*), which means they have the ‘*bodhi chit*’ or the awakening mind within their heart and when they realize the existence of it, they will see the suchness as he explained:

“My beloved scholars, if we only cut off the enlightenment, there will be no difference between the Buddha and normal people. Only one flash of light is enough to make a normal man equate the Buddha. It is because all *dharmma* already resides in every heart of men that we cannot claim that we can not explicitly perceive the true condition of *tathatā* (the condition of ‘suchness’ - cannot be changed to any other conditions)”³⁰

Buddhadāsa re-emphasized about the original condition of the mind that is pure and empty that this condition resides in every mind. He continued that because of the residing of this original condition, every human being has the ability to see things as the way they are, or *tathatā*. There are many poetry of Buddhādāsa dealing with the concept of suchness and the perfect life. Buddhādāsa said that to attain the perfect life, one must find *dharmma* within his mind and see the suchness.

Suchness is the word that Buddhādāsa, as well as other his contemporary scholars like Thit Natch Hanh, the 14th Dalai Lama, used to explain the state of *nibbāna*. Because it is beyond the word to explain so it is impossible to tell other about its condition by words. Natch Hahn said that

²⁹ Buddhādāsa. *Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen*. p.200.

³⁰Wei Lang. *Sutra of Wei Lang*. (Delhi: Matura, 1986). p.54.

“Suchness is the highest truth of this world. If you can see it, the birth and death cannot touch you. So please wake up and see the morning sun. You will find peace without chasing it.”³¹

Buddhadāsa explained about the connection between suchness and life that that:

“Birth is a very amazing incident, just like death. The very profound truth is hidden under the birth and death. If you can sense this wonder, you will not be afraid of birth and death and will get up and face it. You will be stronger and be free. You will realize what I called by the name ‘suchness,’ since birth is suchness; death is suchness; life is suchness; and even the *nibbāna* is suchness.”³²

From this quotation, Buddhadāsa explained the concept of suchness by using the same explanation he used with the word emptiness. Suchness here is the element that resides in everything. It is even the condition of *nibbāna*, which as explained earlier is empty. The concept of suchness, therefore, is equating the concept of emptiness. And it is the ultimate goal of life that one should attain. So the perfection of life within the one life time is the awareness of suchness and entering the state of *nibbāna*. The poetry ‘the perfect life’ is one of the examples:

The Perfect Life

Jump out of hell;

And rest for a while in the heaven;

Then spend some time in *nibbāna*;

This is the life of the wise man.

ชีวิตสมบุรณ์แบบ

ผุดขึ้นมา จากนรก ให้ดับพลัน

แล้วนั่งพัก บนสวรรค์ กันสักครู่

ต่อแต่นั้น เหนานิพพาน นานโขอยู่

ชีวิตผู้ ประเสริฐศรี อย่างนี้แล ³³

In this poem, Buddhadāsa said that when we are still living in the normal world, which he used ‘hell’ as its representative; we will not understand the condition of heaven. Until the moment that we can realize the different between heaven and hell, we will suddenly jump from hell to heaven. But the wise person, Buddhadāsa added, will absorb the happiness of heaven just for a moment, then they would leave the heaven and reside in *nibbāna*.

We can see here that Buddhadāsa differentiate heaven from *nibbāna*. In heaven, Buddhadāsa pointed out, we will still cling to the happiness and still attached to the world; while in *nibbāna*, we will be in the condition that is free from everything. This poetry can be interpreted that the *dharmma*, which resides in our heart, is the best carrier to bring human being to *nibbāna*. Only we have to find it and stop being ignorant. The best way to get to heaven, even to *nibbāna*, is to look inside

³¹ Hanh, Thich Nhat. Loving Kindness: The Teaching about Love. p.56

³² Hanh, Thich Nhat. Loving Kindness: The Teaching about Love, p.23.

³³ Buddhadāsa. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.213.

into our heart and find the precious *dhamma*. This is the point to be born in this world, to find the way to attain *nibbāna*.

Another interpretation of this poem is that, in order to attain *nibbāna*, one must practice according to the teaching of the middle way. The wise one in this poem is the one who experience both the hell and heaven. They need to ‘know’ both suffering and happiness until they can understand the ultimate condition of emptiness.

Buddhadāsa also told us to use the wisdom to contemplate on life. What are we born for? What is the purpose of life? And what should we do with life. To answer these questions, Buddhadāsa answer in the poem ‘a blooming lotus.’³⁴

This poem uses the metaphor of the lotus to connote the enlightenment or the state of the Buddha. Buddhadāsa pointed out clearly that the Buddha is actually not a human, nor any existent being; rather the Buddha is “the complete blooming- /of the Buddha nature which resides in every human being.” The Buddha here is the condition of human mind, which can find the ‘Pure Mind’ or emptiness within himself. This state of realizing the ‘Pure Mind’ takes time just like the blooming of the lotus. The lotus will start to bloom and continue blooming until it completely blooms; human minds will gradually realize the ‘Pure Mind,’ get use to it, and will finally be fully aware of it, just like the lotus. Therefore, the goal of this birth is the finding of the emptiness within the mind and attains *nibbāna*.

The Buddha image behind the curtain

พระองค์อยู่ที่หลังม่าน

Look carefully, he is behind the curtain.

ดูให้ดี พระองค์มี อยู่หลังม่าน

He is always there, but you have not seen him;

อยู่ตลอด อนันตกาล ท่านไม่เห็น

You have been calling him like a dog howling.

เฝ้าเรียกหา ดุจเห่าหอน หอนหาเป็น

If you do not know where to find, you cannot find him. ไม่รู้เช่น ชิงหา ยิ่งหาไกล.

ไม่รู้เช่น ชิงหา ยิ่งหาไกล.

If you part the curtain only for a cubit;

เพียงแต่แหวก ม่านออก สักศอกหนึ่ง

You will be shakily astonished.

จะตกตะลึง ใจสั่น อยู่หวั่นไหว

You may or may not know him.

จะรู้จัก หรือไม่ ไม่แน่ใจ

But if you may, you will be happy that 'here he is.'

รู้จักได้ จักปรีดี “อยู่นี่เอง”

Please take 'parting the curtain' as our duty.

เชิญพวกเรา เอาการ “การแหวกม่าน”

Stop being credulous, insensitive, and noisy.

งดมงาย ตายด้าน หยุตโง่งเงง

Destroy the ignorant, do not be afraid-

ทำลายล้าง อวิชาชา อย่ามัวเกรง

That you are not clever, not beautiful,

ว่าไม่เก่ง ไม่สวย ไม่รวยบุญฯ

not rich in merit.³⁵

³⁴ Buddhadāsa. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.111.

³⁵ Buddhadāsa. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.113.

This poem said that the duty of human being in this life is to see behind the curtain. The curtain is the ignorance (*avijjā*) that blind human being from seeing the Buddha. The Buddha signified the dhamma, or emptiness. Only if one can part the curtain for just a little, he will see the Buddha. Only part for a cubit means people who can get rid of some ignorance but not all, this is enough to see the Buddha. It is the starting point of practicing dhamma, or what called ‘*dhammajaksu*’ or possess the eyes that see the dhamma.

Another meaning of this poem is that in order to find the Buddha, or finding the emptiness, one must look inside himself, not from the outside. This means that emptiness resides in oneself and can be found within oneself. *Nibbana* then can be found within oneself, within this life. *Nibbāna* then is here and now and can be reached by anyone.

3.2.2 The Integration of Empty Mind with Daily Life

In order to see things with empty mind, Buddhādāsa thought that it is necessary to integrate it with daily life. The idea of ‘to work is to practice dhamma’ is used to guide people to accurate their way of leading life. It can also be implied that if every member of the society do their duty accordingly, the order of the society will be back and there will be happiness for all.

Working is practicing dhamma

Work is a value of human being.

It is no doubt the most honorable thing.

If your mind are happy while you are working,

Only a moment, you will deeply learn dhamma.

Because work is the principal of meditation.

The good deed will come together with the work

It can be compared with the wise man shooting;

Only one shot but he gets a lot of birds.

The point is in work you must do with awareness;

With concentration, patience, and effort,

With sincerity, controlling mind, and wisdom

With faith, courage, and the love for work.³⁶

การทำงานคือการปฏิบัติธรรม

อันการทำงาน คือคุณค่า ของมนุษย์

ของมีเกียรติ สูงสุด อย่างสงสัย

ถ้าสนุก ด้วยการทำงาน เบิกบานใจ

ไม่เท่าไร ได้รู้ธรรม ฉ่ำซึ่งจริง

เพราะการทำงาน เป็นตัวการ ประพฤติธรรม

กุศลกรรม กล้าปณมา มีค่ายิ่ง

ถ้าจะเปรียบ ก็เปรียบคน ฉลาดยิง

นัดเดียววิ่ง เก็บนก หลายพกมา

คือการทำงาน นั้นต้องทำ ด้วยสติ

มีสมาธิ มีขันติ มีอุตสาหะ

มีสัจจะ มีทมะ มีปัญญา

มีศรัทธา และกล้าหาญ รักงานจริง.

The concept of ‘to work is to practice dhamma’ is another best known concept of Buddhādāsa. Such concept is reflected through a number of Buddhādāsa’s poetry. This concept shows the integration of meditation with daily life’s work as Buddhādāsa wanted us to practice dhamma in every moment of life. The heart of this

³⁶ Buddhādāsa. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.16.

teaching is that while we are working, we have to do it with empty mind. Other virtues will come with empty mind automatically, including the conduct, concentration, and the wisdom. We should not worry or expect the result of the work because the worry and expectation will make us suffer. Working with no expectation of the result will ease us in controlling our mind because the expectation is very powerful in terms of motivating people to do what is necessary to get the result. In other word, to work without expectation of the result is the way to allow us to lead our lives with less pain and it will make the work more bearable.

Moreover, apart from empty mind, there are other virtues that are needed in order to work effectively; these are awareness, concentration, patience, effort, sincerity, wisdom, faith, courage, and love. These virtues will make work effective both in terms of worldly results and dhammic result automatically.

In another poem, Buddhādāsa said that we have to enjoy our work, because the work is fun:

Work - Enjoyment

Work is lovely because it is our teacher;

It teaches us to know everything.

The more we work, the smarter we are;

It teaches us not to scare;

It teaches us to get over the failure and elevate our mind.

Moreover, look closely, it is precious;

Because it is the practice of dhamma;

It allows us to have the awareness, love for work

And it teaches us to control our mind.

When we are enjoying it, our mind will rest in *nibbāna*.

It is more precious because it is fun.

There is no suffering. This is a meditation.

It makes our life lively and cheerful-

Within the daily-life work.³⁷

การงาน – การสนุก

การงานนั้น น่ารัก เพราะเป็นครู

สอนให้รู้ ให้ฉลาด ไปทุกสิ่ง

ยิ่งทำแล้ว ยิ่งฉลาด มีवादประวิง

เป็นผู้ดึง พันผิด จิตเจริญ,

ยิ่งกว่านั้น ดูให้ดี มีค่าลึก

เป็นการฝึก ธรรมะกล้า น่าสรรเสริญ

มีสติ ฉันทะ ทมะ ฯลฯ เกิน

แสนเพลิดเพลิน จิตวาง ทางนิพพาน,

เมื่อเราสนุก ก็คือว่า น่าสนุก

ยิ่งประเสริฐ ก็คือว่า น่าสนุก

ไม่มีทุกข์ เป็นการ ทำกรรมฐาน

ทำชีวิต ให้สดใส ใจเบิกบาน

ในการทำงาน ประจำวัน นั่นเองเออ.

From this poem, Buddhādāsa said that we need to do work with empty mind. This is very important because empty mind will make our work become a meditation. The title of the poem, work – enjoyment; suggests that work is not boring but truly it is enjoying. It is enjoyable because it is a kind of meditation. Buddhādāsa said that work is our teacher, because they teach us how to see the enjoyment, the dhamma, and the emptiness within the work; and ultimately it leads us to *nibbāna*. Buddhādāsa explain further about the technique of how to see the work as the practicing of dhamma in the poem ‘the one who do nothing,’

³⁷ Buddhādāsa. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen., p.19.

The one who does nothing

All day I do nothing
 But I'm happy
 More than I can tell you!
 Such a special happiness -
 Cannot be explained;
 Only talk about how -
 We can be 'doing nothing,'
 Who can live all day -
 With the endless happiness.
 The clue is to make our mind focus -
 Especially in the work -
 That we are doing, until we forget -
 That there is no 'we' who are doing;
 Our minds will not confuse -
 That 'we' are doing works.
 Our mind will concentrate on -
 The work until we master it.
 And it won't think we are doing for ourselves.³⁸

ผู้มีได้ทำอะไร
 ทั้งวันฉันมิได้ทำอะไร
 แต่สุขสนุกใจ
 เกินเปรียบเกินกล่าวเล่ากัน!
 ความสุขพิเศษเช่นนั้น
 ไม่ต้องรำพัน;
 พูดกันแต่จะทำฉันใด-
 จึ่งจะเป็น "ผู้ไม่ทำอะไร"
 ทั้งวัน, อยู่ได้
 ทั้งสุขทั้งสนุกเหลือประมาณ.
 เงื่อนงำคือทำจิตง่วน
 อยู่แต่ในงาน
 ที่ทำ, จนกระทั่งลืมไป-
 ว่ามี "ฉัน" ผู้ทำอะไร;
 จิตไม่มีใจ
 หลงไปว่า "กู" ทำงาน :
 สมบัติดั้งเดียวที่การ-
 กระทำชำนาญ;
 ไม่ตู่กูทำเพื่อกูฯ

This poem plays with word "I" who do nothing. The one who is doing the work is not "I" since there is no "I" to grab. "I" who do nothing is a person who work with empty mind. Buddhādāsa suggested that we need to concentrate on work so much that we forget other thing else including ourselves. We will forget to worry about the result of the work; then our egos will be reduced. The "I" who do the work and get the result of the work will be gone and then work will be for work sake. This is what Buddhādāsa called to work with empty mind.

Working with empty mind, thus, is the foundation of practicing dhamma. Buddhādāsa said that dhamma can be seen in every place and every moment, only if one has the wisdom to see it. He said that it is necessary to put dhamma into practice by trying to see it everywhere. He pointed out that many people still obsess with the studying of dhamma, but they never practice. The poem 'Learn Dhamma and Learn Philosophy'³⁹ describes the right way to learn dhamma. Buddhādāsa thought that philosophical study is not the right way to study dhamma since dhamma is attained only through practicing and it is limited to only the one who practices it – Dhamma cannot be told or taught but can only be experienced - or what is technically called

³⁸ Buddhādāsa. Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.23.

³⁹ Buddhādāsa. Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.176.

‘*paccattāṇi*’ (ปัจฉัตตัง). Dhamma can be attained personally and only through practice, not by thinking or reasoning. In the greater extent, the example of philosophy in this poem is the study of the condition of *nibbāna*; as it is discussed and explained by the people who have never seen, and never experienced. It is implied that regardless of what the condition of *nibbāna* actually is, it is not necessary to know it in order to attain *nibbāna*; what is really matter is the practice to attain *nibbāna*, which Buddhādāsa emphasizes on the controlling the mind to see emptiness in all things. The poem ‘Study Religion’,⁴⁰ elaborates what Buddhādāsa meant:

Buddhādāsa defined the word ‘study’ in the poem in two levels. The first definition is studying religion as a subject. He gave examples of studying dhamma in this definition as ethical study, Pāli study, meditation study, or enlightenment study. This kind of study will create ego since the student will think they know more than others. The monks will get title after they pass the test and then will be obsessed to the title. Buddhādāsa thought that this kind of knowledge exceeds necessary.

Therefore, Buddhādāsa suggested in the poem that the best way to study dhamma is to practice it in everyday life.

Therefore, studying dhamma is actually เรียนศาสนา นั้นต้องมี ที่ตาหู ฯลฯ
studying at eyes, and ears, etc. ไม่ให้เกิด ทุกข์อยู่ ทุกสถาน

which implied that we need to control our eye, ears and other senses to see the suffering and ‘the process of its origin / then stop the process that cause the suffering’. The poem is talking about ‘*paṭiccasamuppāda*’ or the dependent origination. Buddhādāsa said that suffering comes from the process of generating it by the mind. If one is smart enough to ‘break the bridge,’ the process will be stop and the mind will be at peace. Therefore, studying dhamma in the correct meaning in Buddhādāsa teaching is the practice that the mind can stop the process of generating suffering after the senses are aware of what they come across. Learning dhamma then is beyond the studying textbook or discussion about the deep and profound dhamma, it is as easy as having consciousness while sensing things as the way things really are.

Buddhādāsa also pointed out that practicing dhamma can be done any time, only if the doer knows the right way to practice – that is seeing things with empty mind. The poem ‘Anytime’ conveys this message,

At Any Moment	ยามไหนก็ได้
When you own something, own it the right way, you will not suffer.	ยามจะได้ ได้ให้เป็น ไม่เป็นทุกข์ ยามจะเป็น เป็นให้ถูก ตามวิถี
When you are being, live in the right way.	ยามจะตาย ตายให้เป็น เห็นสุดดี
When you are dying, die in the right way, It will do you good.	ถ้าอย่างนี้ ไม่มีทุกข์ ทุกวันเคยฯ

⁴⁰ Buddhādāsa. Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.180.

This way, you will not suffer in any day⁴¹

As mentioned above that Buddhādāsa emphasized in his teaching that dhamma can be practiced anytime and anywhere. The only thing we need to do is to concentrate our minds to see emptiness in everything. There are three concepts that Buddhādāsa pointed out for us, which are the examples of how to concentrate; among these are how to own, how to be, and how to die. He explained that:

“To own in the right way” is to possess thing but do not grab or think it is me or mine.

“To be in the right way” means do not think there is the “I” to be, even to be father or mother.

“To die in the right way” is the kind of death that is actually not death, but you will live forever. And it has to be the action of “to die before dying” which means you’re already dead before the body is actually dead.⁴²

Buddhādāsa said that to own in the right way is to own with no awareness that we are the owner of our possession. To be in the right way is to be without the “I” and “mine.” To die the right way is the death of the desire but the empty mind live forever. Buddhādāsa said that the best way of living is the living with the awareness of the empty mind - we need to get rid of the “I” or the self. The poem ‘Own, Own the Right Way’ gives the example of clinging to “I” and “mine”

Own, Own the Right Way.

<p>If you own things in a wrong way, you will suffer. Just like the fools who are addicted to the happiness; But never know it is a great pain. The more he owns, the more foolish and The closer to the hell he is. Own in that way is the great lost and tiresome. So we all should look up. Own in this way will make the ghost laughs - That “Human, how could you be human? You always make fire in your heart.” Water turns into fire; this is crazy. Even a small fire becomes a great fire.</p>	<p>ได้ .ได้ให้เป็น ได้อะไร ได้ไม่เป็น ยิ่งเป็นทุกข์ เช่นคนเขลา เมาสนุก ทุกข์มหันต์; ยิ่งได้มา ยิ่งโง่งม จมโลกกันต์ ได้เช่นนั้น คือยิ่งเสีย: เปลี้ยหัวใจ พวกเราเอ๋ย เงยหน้า มาดูที ได้อย่างนี้ ฝีกเคาะ หัวเราะใหญ่ ว่าคนเอ๋ย คน! เป็นคน กันอย่างไร มีแต่ก่อ กองไฟ สุมใส่ทรวงฯ น้ำมากลาย เป็นไฟ ให้วิปริต แม้ไฟนิด กลายเป็นไฟ อันใหญ่หลวง คว่ำอะไร ก็เป็นไฟ ไปทั้งปวง เพราะถูกลง ว่าได้ ,ได้ ,อย่างไม่เป็นฯ</p>
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⁴¹ Buddhādāsa. Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk ven. p.218.

⁴² Buddhādāsa. Kwam Lud Pon. p.17.

Whatever you take, it becomes fire;
 Because you are deluded that you own it,
 You own it in a wrong way.⁴³

This poem pointed out the disadvantage of owning in a wrong way. Buddhadāsa said that the wrong way of owning is like taking the fire into our lives. It will burn us and make us suffer. ‘Whatever you take, it becomes fire’ means the fire is not burning on things but it actually burning in the mind. Even the water, or nibbāna, becomes fire; the small fire becomes great fire. The fire of desire tricks us that there is the “I” and “mine.” To own in the right way, for Buddhadāsa, then is to own things without grabbing it; it is the owning without the self; and the most important it is the owning that does not make the owner suffer.

It is important to note that ‘the right way’ mentioned in the poem relates to the concept of ‘chit wang’ or empty mind. Therefore, to live in the right way, is to be and live with the empty mind. The poem ‘Be and Live with Empty Mind’ is the best example of the lesson.

Be and Live with Empty Mind

Working with the empty mind;
 Do work of all kinds with a mind that is empty;
 And then to the emptiness give all of the fruits;
 And you are dead from the very beginning
 Who can be empty like mentioned above
 They will not suffer any pain
 This kind of the “art” of life
 Is a “secret” to happiness⁴⁴

เป็นอยู่ด้วยจิตว่าง

จงทำงานทุกชนิดด้วยจิตว่าง
 ยกผลงานให้ความว่างทุกอย่างสิ้น
 กินอาหารของความว่างอย่างพระกิน
 ตายเสรีจึ้นแล้วในตัวแต่หัวที่
 ท่านผู้ใดว่างได้ตั้งว่ามา
 ไม่มีทำทุกข์ทรมานหมองศรี
 “ศิลปะ” ในชีวิตชนิดนี้
 เป็น “เคล็ด” ที่ใครคิดได้สบายเอยฯ

This poem is one of the most famous poems of Buddhadāsa and it concludes everything that need to be done in Buddhadāsa point of view. It pointed out that emptiness need to be focused in every step of life. This is the art of living that will end suffering. The main idea of the poem builds on the concept of ‘no self’ that when we have no self, we will not take anything as ours. This is what Buddhadāsa called “give all the result of the work to emptiness. It does not mean we will not care at all about the result, but it rather emphasizes the obsession and expectation of the result. We can get the result of the work but do not grab it, or expect it to be ours. “To eat the fruit of emptiness like the monk eats” means we need to learn how to stop; do not

⁴³ Buddhadāsa. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.247.

⁴⁴ Buddhadāsa. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.220.

take too many things; just take it only for living. If we can do all of these, we could get rid of the desire and live and be happy.

This chapter discusses the emptiness portrayed in Buddhādāsa's poetry that it is displayed in two categories; emptiness as a concept and emptiness as a practice. Emptiness as a concept deals with the definition, the characteristics, and the interpretation of emptiness that it covers the whole nature, or what Buddhādāsa called dhamma – including nibbāna. To see the empty mind, Buddhādāsa argued, then is to see the nibbāna – or attaining nibbāna. Emptiness is also the condition of the original mind that resides in every being and potentially every mind can see the emptiness within itself and can attain nibbāna. Nibbāna, then, is attainable by everyone in this very life, only to find the emptiness within the mind. The question is how to transform this philosophical theory into a living reality. Buddhādāsa's answer is to transcend the presumed distinction between ourselves and others. Then we will lose ourselves and care more for other. The most important part is our mind; to see, to think, to understand about the way of the world. Buddhādāsa taught that we do not need to go to the temple to practice dhamma. But we must go into our mind to practice dhamma. He maintained that the way to achieve emptiness is not to look, but to see the emptiness in every action of life. If we can do like this, it means we have achieved the concentrated mind. We have achieved the emptiness.

CHAPTER 4

BUDDHADĀSA'S POETRY AS SKILLFUL MEANS

This chapter discusses the characteristics of Buddhadāsa's poetry as a skillful means or upāya. Furthermore, the artistic elements used by Buddhadāsa in his poetry will be identified and explained its function in creating the elements of contemplation on emptiness.

4.1 Definition of Upāya

“Upāya” is a Sanskrit word for ‘skillful means’ or ‘method.’ It can refer to any activity, skill, experience or practice that helps someone toward the realization of enlightenment.

As a Buddhist term, the word is derived from the root upa and √i. It refers to a means that goes or brings one up to some goal, often the goal of Enlightenment. The term is often used with kaushalya (“cleverness”); as ‘upāya-kaushalya’ meaning roughly “skill in means.” Upāya-kaushalya is a concept which emphasizes that practitioners may use their own specific methods or techniques that fit the situation in order to gain Enlightenment.¹ Edward Conze, in *A Short History of Buddhism*, says

“Skill in means’ is the ability to bring out the spiritual potentialities of different people by statements or actions which are adjusted to their needs and adapted to their capacity for comprehension.”²

The concept of skillful means is prominent in Mahāyāna Buddhism especially when regards to the actions of a bodhisattva. The idea is that a bodhisattva may use any expedient methods in order to help ease the suffering of people, introduce them to the dhamma, or help them on their road to nibbāna. For example, in chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha describes how the *Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara* changes his form to meet the needs of the student. If a monk is needed, the Bodhisattva becomes a monk.³

¹ Schroeder, John. *Skillful Means: The Heart of Buddhist Compassion*. (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2001). p.13.

² Conze, Edward. *A Short History of Buddhism*. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1980). p.44.

³ Gregory, Peter N. *Chinese Cultural Studies: Doctrinal Classification*. (New York: Brooklyn University Press, 1999). pp.1-2.

In the Encyclopedia of Britannica, the term ‘upāya’ has different interpretations, even between schools of Buddhism.⁴ One understanding of it is that a Buddhist teacher, a Zen master, or a lama, manipulates students into achieving Enlightenment, sometimes even lying to them or tricking them into it. Even though the action may be too extreme, this passes as the understanding of upāya in some Zen circles.

Tibetans have a slightly more complicated understanding of upāya. Lamas teach that the use of mantras is, in fact, skillful means. The mantra, when empowered by its use, is a spell. And that spell has real power to shape reality. Thus the more devotedly one does the mantra, the more powerful the effects of the mantra manifest in one’s life. If the mantra is good, then as its power begins to shape one life and his path, one will find himself moving step by step towards the goal embodied in the mantra. This is, essentially, the deliberately use of magic to bring oneself to enlightenment.⁵

In some doctrine of the modern Mahāyāna Buddhism, skillful means also has another meaning that goes beyond the general definition.

A realized god-being, who has achieved universality, can manifest circumstances which lead a person, step by step, towards a particular goal (usually the enlightenment). While one cannot consciously think of every random event which might be required to bring someone to a particular understanding, such conscious understanding is not even necessary. The universe which you have become one with is an organic living thing – your greater self or the universal self. It is illusory just as the personal self is, but it is not delusory, which is to say it is, at least, as real as the personal self is, while remembering that none of it is real. And the universe responds intimately to your Will once you’ve transcended the personal self.⁶

This means that, if the doctrine is true, one does not have to know how the things will happen. They just Will or command the universe to bring that person to that particular goal, and all of the events necessary will fall into place. Just like when we ask God, or Goddess, or a bodhisattva, or any god for something, this is how they manifest it. The results are assured. As long as one has consented to a particular outcome; all incidents, people, time, environments and any other things will be exactly as necessary to produce the outcome. These incidents, people, time,

⁴"upāya." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. (Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2012). Retrieved. 25 Jan. 2012.
<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/618636/upaya>>.

⁵ Schroeder, John. *Skillful Means: The Heart of Buddhist Compassion*, p.22-25.

⁶ Pye, Michael. *Skillful Means – A concept in Mahāyāna Buddhism*. (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1978). p.40.

environments, and other things are called the skillful means of the Will. This is the most extended definition of upāya.

In this thesis, the word upāya will be used only in the framework of activity, skill, experience or practice that helps someone toward the realization of enlightenment as Buddhādāsa explained that,

The word ‘upāya’ does not mean cheating. I want to clarify here that as a Buddhist term; the word ‘upāya’ does not mean cheating. If it is cheating, it does not cheat human being but it cheats desire and even kills the desire. This is what it calls ‘upāya’ in Buddhism.

To be more specific, ‘upāya’ in Buddhism will help us prevent the desire to be born. Upāya will allow us to have, to use, to eat, to do everything without being suffered. It is anything that prevents us from grabbing “I” and “mine.” It can come in any forms, in any places, in any time as long as it prevents us to obsess to self and what relates to self.⁷

Moreover, as discussed earlier that the enlightenment is attained by the realization of the emptiness in one’s mind. It can be implied, then, that upāya is the practices that lead someone toward the realization of emptiness. Buddhādāsa said that

“If any means is an upāya, which would help people get into the state of emptiness, those means is very important. I don’t mind using one means as the way to end all suffering, if it takes us to our goal quicker. Do not forget that in this matter [of ending all suffering] we need to open every door, that is, we cannot only think that what we have assumed is right, what our friends assumed is also correct. Opening every door is to go above the separation of schools. There is no Mahāyāna or Hīnayāna. There is no Buddhism and non-Buddhism. If any means is helpful in getting to the state of emptiness, to end the suffering, do not let it go by. Dhamma has no nationality. The Buddha has no nationality, Nibbāna is not the right of any nation, it is universal.⁸

At this point, Buddhādāsa concluded that regardless of the method, as long as such method could lead the doer to the cessation of suffering, such method is called upāya. It is interesting, then, that whether Buddhādāsa’s poetry can be regarded as upāya. If it is, it needs to bring the reader to the cessation of suffering, that is, to see the emptiness within all things.

⁷ Buddhādāsa. *Paticcasamuppada in daily life*. (Bangkok: Sukhaphabjai, 2008)., p.26.

⁸ Buddhādāsa. *Phukao Hang Vithi Puttatham*. [the mountain on the way to the Buddhadhamma] (Bangkok: Dhammapuja printing, 1983). p 159-160.

4.2 Poetry as Three Fold Training

In Buddhism, The Buddha has taught about the way to eliminate the desire, which is called Tri-Sikkhā (Three Fold Training). The method is based on three practical steps, namely Morality (Sīla), Concentration (Samādhi), and wisdom (Paññā). Buddhādāsa also said that this Three Fold training is the ‘method to be used for eliminating clinging.’⁹

In order to prove that Buddhādāsa’s poetry is a skillful means. It is essential to prove that this Three Fold Training is also reflected in Buddhādāsa’s poetry. Buddhādāsa’s poetry can be implied, then, that it is the path to the elimination of clinging. Also at the heart of these trainings, emptiness plays a vital role as Buddhādāsa said,

“This kind of dhamma [Dhamma Poetry] is used for contemplation in order to see the truth that lies in words. And then contemplate more until you can feel it, until your mind is changed according to the Dhamma...

The knowledge and understanding generated by this kind of contemplation is more correct and more beneficial than only read through the poem. Also this kind of practice is another way of meditations. It is the access to concentration and wisdom. This is the way that is reachable by general people. And it is also a precept at the same time.”¹⁰

Buddhādāsa pointed out clearly that reading poetry is the practice of the threefold training at the same time. By reading Buddhādāsa’s poetry, then, is the way to attain emptiness, that is, the way to attain *nibbāna*.¹¹ Buddhādāsa poetry is an object of contemplation on emptiness in this way.

4.2.1 First Step of Training: Morality

The first step of training is called Sīla or morality. Buddhādāsa explained about the morality that

“Morality is simply suitable behavior, behavior that conforms to the generally accepted standards and causes no distress to other people or to oneself. It is coded in the form of five moral precepts, or eight, or ten, or 227, or in other ways. It is conducted by way of body and speech aimed at peace, convenience and freedom from undesirable effects at the most basic level. It has to do with

⁹ Buddhādāsa. *Handbook for Mankind*. (Bangkok: Sukhabhabjai, 2007). p.45.

¹⁰ Buddhādāsa. *Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen*. p. vii

¹¹ See the discussion in previous chapters.

the members of a social group and the various pieces of property essential to living."¹²

Training in morality is simply elementary preparatory practice, which enables us to live happily and helps stabilize the mind. Morality yields various benefits, the most important being the preparing of the way for concentration. Other advantages, such as conducing to happiness or to rebirth as a celestial being, were not considered by the Buddha to be the direct aims of morality. He regarded morality as primarily a means of inducing and developing concentration. As long as things continue to disturb the mind, it can never become concentrated.

Buddhadāsa maintained that only the act of reading poetry itself is a practice of morality. He suggested that by reading poetry, one is meditating in a way. Moreover, in Buddhadāsa's poetry, there is a number of poetry that has the content related to morality, for example; in the poem 'A Supreme Life'¹³ From the poetry, Buddhadāsa taught the basic concept of life, how to do, how to think, how to speak. That is, we need to do, think, speak with clean and bright mind. As mentioned in previous chapter, the clean and bright mind is the characteristic of empty mind; Buddhadāsa, thus, pointed out that to have morality, we need to act, think, speak with empty mind. Buddhadāsa also said that morality is the basis that society needs to have in order to keep people together in calmness. He said,

Morality	ศีลธรรม
Morality is the flow of the nature.	ศีลธรรมความปกติตามธรรมชาติ
Morality is now depended on the power of the ruler.	ศีลธรรมตามอำนาจคนจัดสรร
Morality is now the combination of happiness and convenience.	ศีลธรรมคือสุข-สะดวกบวกเข้ากัน ศีลธรรมคนทุกวันหันหัวลง.
Morality is now being neglected by the people.	
Morality is what makes a man become a great man.	ศีลธรรมนำไปสู่ชนดลอรียะ
Morality is the combination of all people should do.	ศีลธรรมรวมฐานะที่พึงประสงค์
Morality, in every part, is all clear;	ศีลธรรมทุกทุกส่วนล้วนเส้นตรง
That it leads us straight to the nibbāna.	ศีลธรรมนำสูงส่งตรงต่อญาณ.
Morality and knowledge are the foundation.	ศีลธรรมปริยัติจัดฐานราก
Morality has only the happiness as the result.	ศีลธรรมมีวิบากล้วนสุขศานติ
Morality is a perfect combination of clean, clear, and calm	ศีลธรรมสะอาดสว่างสงบบรรจบงาน ศีลธรรมส่วนอวสานนิพพานแลฯ
The final part of Morality leads to the nibbāna. ¹⁴	

Buddhadāsa compared two kinds of morality that appears in the society nowadays, the authority's morality and the nature's morality. The ruler morality

¹² Buddhadāsa. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.46

¹³ Buddhadāsa. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p. 84.

¹⁴ Buddhadāsa. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.253.

concerns with the preservation of power, so it is mainly related to politics and economics of the country. This kind of morality can be changed according to the desire of the authority. On the other hand, nature morality is generated by the mind that can control itself. It is clean, clear, and calm. This kind of morality leads us to *nibbāna*. Buddhādāsa maintained that in our society, we need to be aware of authority's morality but follow the nature's morality because if this kind of morality will not come back, it means the end of the world:

If morality does not come back

If morality does not come back,
it is the end of the world

Human being will be worse than animal.

Because they are doomed by eating, sex and honor
And hate *nibbāna*.

They are stubborn and don't control their heart.
Crime happens everywhere on earth.

Blood colors the earth and then it flows-

Because of the craving for eating and sex-

And honor, this unable human
to control themselves.

Each people want power and want to rule the world.

There is no mercy from any of them.

All I ask is for the morality to come back

And lead us all through this crisis on time.¹⁵

ถ้าศีลธรรมไม่กลับมา

ถ้าศีลธรรมไม่กลับมาโลกาวินาศ

มนุษย์ชาติจะเลวร้ายกว่าเดรัจฉาน

มัวหลงเรื่องกินกามเกียรติ์เกลียดนิพพาน

ล้วนคือด้านไม่เห็นยวรั้งบังคับใจ.

อาชญากรรมเกิดระห่น่าลงในโลก

มีเลือดโชกแดงฉานแล้วชานไหล

เพราะน้ำกินน้ำกามทราวมเกินไป

น้ำเกียรติก็พอไม่ได้ให้เมาตน.

อยากครองเมืองครองโลกโยกกันใหญ่

ไม่มีใครเมตตาใครให้สับสน

ขอศีลธรรมได้กลับมาพาหมู่คน

ให้ผ่านพ้นวิกฤตการณ์ทันเวลาฯ

The poem suggested the supreme important of morality to cultivate Buddhism that now we are in the crisis in which people lose faith and neglected religion. So the standard that is used as the indispensable code of conduct for the society, especially the morality, is gone with the losing faith in religion. Buddhādāsa suggested that we need to bring back the morality to society, which means we need to turn back to our religions and keep its teaching in mind, in order to save our world, and eventually save ourselves.

Buddhādāsa's poetry then shares the content of morality to the reader to think and interpret. Buddhādāsa thought that in reading and interpreting his poetry, the reader will contemplate and gradually absorb his teaching and finally lead to the practice. Buddhādāsa's poetry, consequently, is the way to practice morality.

¹⁵ Buddhādāsa. Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.258.

4.2.2 Second Step of Training: Concentration

The second aspect of the threefold training is concentration (*samādhi*). This consists in constraining the mind to remain in the condition most conducive to success in whatever we wish to achieve, especially in Buddhādāsa's case, the empty mind as Buddhādāsa explained:

“Just what is concentration? No doubt most of you have always understood concentration as implying a completely tranquil mind, as steady and unmoving as a log of wood. But merely these two characteristics of being tranquil and steady are not the real meaning of Concentration. The basis for this statement is an utterance of the Buddha. He described the concentrated mind as fit for work (*kammaniya*), in a suitable condition for doing its job. Fit for work is the very best way to describe the properly concentrated mind.”¹⁶

Training in concentration consists in developing the ability to control our mind, to make use of it, to make it do its job to the best advantage. Morality is good behavior in respect of body and speech; concentration amounts to good behavior in respect of the mind, and is the fruit of thorough mental training and discipline.

Buddhādāsa explained more about the concentration that:

“The concentrated mind is devoid of all bad, defiling thoughts and does not wander off the object. It is in a fit condition to do its job. Even in ordinary worldly situations, concentration is always a necessity. No matter what we are engaged in, we can hardly do it successfully unless the mind is concentrated. Regardless of whether a man is to be successful in worldly or in spiritual things, the faculty of concentration is absolutely indispensable.”¹⁷

For Buddhādāsa, he pointed out clearly that to attain concentration necessitates making sacrifices. We have to put up with varying degrees of hardship, to train and practice, until we have the degree of concentration appropriate to our abilities. Ultimately we shall gain much better results in our work than can the average man, simply because we have better tools at our disposal. Buddhādāsa stated clearly that the ultimate aim of practicing concentration is to practice the mind until our mind can see the emptiness within all things; or what Buddhādāsa called ‘Chit Wang’

¹⁶ Buddhādāsa. Handbook for Mankind. p.48.

¹⁷ Buddhādāsa. Handbook for Mankind. p.49.

For Buddhādāsa’s poetry, Buddhādāsa pointed out clearly about the usefulness of poetry in terms of practicing concentration. The poem ‘use poetry as an object of concentration’¹⁸ suggested, that, for Buddhādāsa, reading poetry is not just for entertaining; rather it is a kind of meditation. From the poem, Buddhādāsa pointed out that dhamma poetry can be used as the object of contemplation. It is, at the first step, the practicing of concentration because in reading poetry one needs to carefully read and interpret, to do so they need to concentrate on the poetry. The moment our minds focus on the poetry is the moment that the mind possesses concentration. Then the poem goes on to wisdom, that after the mind possess the concentration, the wisdom will appear and with the wisdom, one can see the truth of nature, that is, the emptiness within all things.

Therefore, according to the poem, all of Buddhādāsa’s poetry is the object of concentration. Buddhādāsa suggested further that the direction that one need to focus the mind is to eliminate the “I” and “mind” and the poem said,

The Duty that Dhamma Assigned	หน้าที่ที่ธรรมมอบให้
Expectation dims the life	มัวหมายมัว ก็มีดมนท์ จนหม่นหมอง
No expectation brightens the mind.	ไม่มัวมัว หมายปอง ก็ผ่องใส
When doing any kind of work	ยามประกอบ กิจการ งานใดใด
Do not cling to “I” and “mine”	อย่าเดือดใจ เป็น “ตัวกู” หรือ “ของกู”
Keep the mind clean, bright, and calm	ให้จิตสะอาด- สว่าง สงบ มีสติ
Concentrate until there is no creation of “I” and “you”	สมาธิ ไม่เตลิด เกิด “กู” – “กู”
Do the duty according to nature	ทำหน้าที่ ธรรมชาติ ฉลาดดู
Always be smart, calm and cool as <i>nibbāna</i>	สงบอยู่ เย็นอยู่ ฐนิพพาน
It is only cool, cool, and cool,	มีแต่เย็น เย็นเย็น ยิ่งเย็นเย็น
There is no heat of fire in the heart	ไม่กลับเป็น ร้อนใจ ดั่งไฟผลาญ
Because doing the duty according to nature assigned	เพราะทำถูก ตามหน้าที่ ที่ธรรมประทาน
Then <i>nibbāna</i> will be attained before death.	จึงนิพพาน คือเย็นได้ ก่อนตายเฉย

Buddhādāsa said that in order to concentrate the mind, one need to do it in a correct direction, that is, to focus on the creation of “I” and “Mine” or self and what belongs to self. The mind without self and what belongs to self will, then, be clean, bright, and calm – which are the basis of attaining wisdom.

¹⁸ Buddhādāsa. Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen.p.347.

4.2.3 Third Step of Training: Wisdom

Wisdom is one of the best known characteristic that the Buddha emphasized. It is important to point out the connection between the concentration and wisdom as Buddhadāsa once said

“When the mind is concentrated, it is in a position to see all things as they really are. When the mind is concentrated and fit for work, it will know all things in their true nature. It is a strange thing that the answer to any problem a person is trying to solve is usually already present, though concealed, in his very own mind. He is not aware of it, because it is still only subconscious; and as long as he is set on solving the problem, the solution will not come, simply because his mind at that time is not in a fit condition for solving problems. The moment the mind has become concentrated, the answer will just fall into place.”¹⁹

From the quotation, Wisdom is always dependent on concentration though we have perhaps never noticed the fact. So the more wisdom a person has, the higher degree of concentration he will be capable of. Likewise an increase in concentration results in a corresponding increase in wisdom. Either one of the two factors promotes the other.

Therefore, the wisdom is very important in terms of training in Buddhism, because it comes together with the concentration and it is the understanding that is gained through the understanding of the world. Wisdom is the tool we need to use when we face a problem in life, and it is the key to gain the emptiness within our mind. Buddhadāsa explained about the wisdom that:

“The third aspect is the training in wisdom (Paññā), the practice and drill that gives rise to the full measure of right knowledge and understanding of the true nature of all things. Normally we are incapable of knowing anything at all in its true nature. Mostly we either stick to our own ideas or go along with popular opinion, so that what we see is not the truth at all. It is for this reason that Buddhist practice includes this training in wisdom, the last aspect of the threefold training, designed to give rise to full understanding of and wisdom into the true nature of things.”

In the Buddhism context, understanding and wisdom are not by any means the same. Understanding depends to some extent on the use of reasoning, on rational intellection. Wisdom goes further than that. An object known by wisdom has been

¹⁹ Buddhadāsa, Handbook for Mankind. p.49.

absorbed; it has been penetrated to and confronted face to face; the mind has become thoroughly absorbed in it through examination and investigation so sustained that there has arisen a non-rational but genuine and heartfelt disenchantment with that thing and a complete lack of emotional involvement in it.

Wisdom implies un-obscured vision and consequently disenchantment and resignation. It results in a backing away from all the things one has formerly been madly infatuated with.

This stopping short and backing away is, of course, not a physical action. Here we are referring specifically to a mental stopping short and backing away, as a result of which the mind ceases to be a slave to things and becomes a free mind instead. This is what it is like when desire for things has given way to disenchantment as Buddhādāsa said:

“Outwardly one is as usual, behaving quite normally with respect to things. Inwardly, however, there is a difference. The mind is independent, free, no longer a slave to things. This is the virtue of wisdom.”²⁰

Also Buddhādāsa summed up this principle very briefly by saying: “*Wisdom is the means by which we can purify ourselves.*”²¹ He also added that:

“The Buddha did not specify morality or concentration as the means by which we could purify ourselves, but wisdom, which enables us to escape, which liberates us from things. Not freed from things, one is impure, tainted, infatuated, and passionate. Once free, one is pure, spotless, enlightened, and tranquil. This is the fruit of wisdom, the condition that results when wisdom has done its job completely.”²²

Buddhādāsa stated clearly from the quotation that in having wisdom one is able to ‘escape’ and ‘liberate’ himself. It is implied that as the last step, wisdom allows us to attain the state of *nibbāna*.

At this point we can see that for Buddhādāsa, the ultimate goal of life is to end the cycle of birth and rebirth and enter the state of *nibbāna*. Buddhādāsa believed that the only way to achieve *nibbāna* is through the wisdom to see empty mind. There is a number of his poetry connoting such idea, for example,

²⁰ Buddhādāsa. *Handbook for Mankind*. p.53.

²¹ *Ibid.* p.70

²² *Ibid.* p.66.

More Powerful than a Mountain.

How can we be bigger than the mountain?

Oh! It can be done by killing desire!

It is related to the mind or wisdom?

Oh! They need to come together!

How does it related to the mind?

Oh! The mind gives bigger power than the mountain! Oh! ใช้พลัง หนักใหญ่ กว่าสิ่งขร!

And then when wisdom do its duty?

It cuts precisely as the thunder!

How can these two cooperate?

They join and make the knife sharp and strong!

So then how can we be bigger than the mountain?

Kill the desire, the mind will be bigger, eternally.

ใหญ่ได้กว่าภูเขา

ทำอย่างไร เราจะใหญ่ กว่าภูเขา?

อ้อ! ทำได้ โดยเรา ฆ่าตัณหา!

มันเป็นเรื่อง ของจิต หรือปัญญา?

อ้อ! ต้องมา ด้วยกัน นั้นแน่นอน!

เรื่องของจิต นั้นมี หน้าที่อะไร?

อ้อ! ใช้พลัง หนักใหญ่ กว่าสิ่งขร!

เรื่องปัญญา หน้าที่มี ที่ไหน? ตอน

มันตัดซอน คมเฉียบ เปรียบสายฟ้า!

มันร่วมแรง กันอย่างไร ไฉนเล่า?

อ้อ! มันเข้า มีดทั้งหนัก ทั้งคมกล้า!

เหตุผลอะไร ว่าเราใหญ่ กว่าเลากา?

ฆ่าตัณหา หมดพิษ จิตใหญ่ “อนันต์”!

This poem shows the importance of third steps of training, the wisdom. Buddhadāsa said that in order to cease the desire and suffering, there must be the combination of the mind and the wisdom. That is to say, in order to attain nibbāna, one must have the wisdom in the mind. The wisdom here does not mean any academic or general knowledge but it is the wisdom to see things as the way they really are. It is the wisdom to see the emptiness.

We can conclude here, then, that Buddhadāsa’s poetry is classified as the practice of the threefold training which finally leads the doer to the attainment of nibbāna. Poetry is a method that could lead the reader to the cessation of suffering, if the reader read, think, interpret, and practice according to the poetry. Therefore, Buddhadasa’s poetry can be called upāya in terms of the goal of achievement.

4.3 Poetry as an Upāya

Poetry has been regarded as one of the most efficient methods used for communicating profound ideas since ancient times. For example, the classical Indian epics - Mahābhārata and Rāmāyana were composed in śloka, a type of poetry invented by a hermit named Viśvāmitra. As well as the classical well-known books of the Greek – the Iliad and the Odyssey were also composed in verse. In the Tipiṭaka, a lot of these verse forms appeared as well as in the *dharmapada* and many other Buddhist texts.

There are a few reasons why poetry is famous among the great thinkers and teachers of all time. The first reason is because it helps remember the poem since each type of poetry has its unique rhythm and rhyme; then specific words need to be put in specific position to create the rhythm; and the rhyme is a control factor that links each line of the poetry together. Similar to a song that specific music comes

with its lyrics. Once the music is recorded into one's mind, they will recall the lyric right away when they hear the music, or vice versa.

The second reason is poetry leaves some space for the reader, or the hearer, to interpret and create individual understanding of the poem. Most poetry is limited by the number of words, and then the poets need to use limited words to communicate the ideas. This limitation challenges the reader to solve the puzzle of the poetry; Moreover, the interpretation of the poetry requires individual experience to create individual understanding of the poetry. Each person will have different experiences by reading the same poetry because we all have different experiences and different way to interpret the world. This makes poetry one of the most powerful tools to communicate the profound ideas since it can penetrate into personal entity of the reader and creates concentration.

After the mind has concentration, it is able to think what the meaning of the poem is. Buddhadāsa said that the 'truth' is hidden within the normal thing. And wisdom is hidden between letters. Think deep enough, we will find the wisdom within the poem.

In order to create wisdom, Buddhadāsa's poetry needs to have the ability to challenge the mind of the reader and let the reader interpret and make personal understanding of the poem. This process enables the poem to be an object of contemplation. In other words, Buddhadāsa's poetry is an "upāya" or skillful means for the reader to think about more profound meaning the lies beyond the verse. John Hick explained that:

"In general of upāya, or the skillful means, it presupposes that a teacher knows some truth which is to be communicated to others so that they may come to see it for themselves; and the skillful means are the devices which the teacher uses to do this."²³

It is important to emphasize on the word 'skillful' as it makes upāya different from other means. Hick maintained that the master must know exactly the knowledge they want to teach and skillfully created the device, the skillful device, which must not be too easy or too difficult but it needs to 'challenge' the student to think and make understanding of such device. If taking this explanation into consideration; it is possible to say that Buddhadāsa's poetry is a skillful means. Buddhadāsa's constantly use of artistic techniques, such as, imageries, parables and provocative questions, make his poetry an "upāya" or skillful means; to connote the concept of emptiness. Buddhadāsa said in one of his poems that.

²³ Hick, John. "Religion as Skillful Means": A Hint from Buddhism." International Journal for Philosophy of Religion, (30, 3). pp.141.

Many Characteristics of Poetry

The present day dhamma poetry
 Is very diverse in terms of its content
 They tease and teach, or some teach and tease.
 Some provoke, some tempt the emotions.
 Some are crazy in other's eyes-
 Because they challenge the reader too much.
 Some encourage the reader.
 Some are bitter and hit the reader's heart.
 Some are too deep it misses the point.
 Some create misunderstanding.
 Some are funny but they teach good lesson.
 Some teach us to see and grab the self.

กลอนนี้น่ามีลักษณะ²⁴

บทพระธรรม คำกลอน ตอนตอนนี้
 ล้วนอรรถมี มากมาย หลายกระแส
 ล้ออย่างสอน สอนอย่างล้อ กันงอแง
 บ้างก็แหย่ บ้างก็ยั่ว คั่วอารมณ์
 บางบทก็ ถูกหา ว่าป็นบ้า
 ฟังซู่ซ่า ทำเล่นไม่เห็นสม
 แต่บ้างก็ ชะลอใจ ให้ชื่นชม
 บ้างชื่นชม แก่ผู้ฟัง บ้างหยอกตำ
 บ้างก็ลึก เกินไป ไม่เห็นอรรถ
 ฟังติดขัด มีดมิด จิตถล่ำ
 บ้างติดตลก แล้วกลับชก ด้วยถ้อยคำ
 พอได้กำ หัวหู ตัวอึดตา ฯ

From the poem, we can see that Buddhādāsa tried to create the poetry that is very diverse in terms of contents and techniques. I have discussed in detail about the content of Buddhādāsa's poetry in previous chapters. Therefore, in this chapter, the techniques that Buddhādāsa has used to create his poetry and enable his poetry to be an object of contemplation will be brought into focus.

4.3.1 Language as an Upāya

First of all, the language that is used in Buddhādāsa's poetry, even in the whole doctrine of his teaching, can be interpreted into two levels that is; human language, and dhamma language. Sometimes he used the word 'lokīya language' (language of the world) and 'lokuttara language' (language that is beyond this world). Sometimes he used the word 'puggalādhisathan' (personification) and 'dharmadhisathan' (dhammic-fiction). Sometime he used the English words as 'physical ways of speaking' and 'metaphysical way of speaking.' Buddhādāsa explained that,

“Human language is following the objects. It is what normal people feel. It uses objects as a basis of creating words. Therefore, it speaks only of the objects, not the dhamma. It speaks only about the world, about the things that can be seen with normal eyes.

²⁴ Buddhādāsa. Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.388.

Dhamma language is based on abstract idea. It cannot be sensed with normal senses. It is beyond the objects. Only the wisdom can see these abstract. Only the seer can speak and define these abstract. This language is speaking only among the learned. It is the language of dhamma.²⁵

Buddhadāsa explained that the same words contain two kinds of meaning. The normal meaning as general dictionary defines and dhamma meaning that is understandable among the learned people. As he said “*how to teach emptiness efficiently enough for those in general society who did not study the text of Buddhism,*”²⁶ Buddhadāsa then use the normal language in the meaning of dhamma language in order to create puzzle for general people and let them interpret what he meant by his saying, for example when he said,

“Do not let a Buddha image covers the Buddha!
Do not let a Tipiṭaka covers the dhamma.
Do not let a son of villager covers the monks.”²⁷

The usage of human language and dhamma language allow the reader to step over from the human language to understand dhamma language. Even though the level of understanding of general people and the learned people are different, the teaching of such concept will at least educate people and motivate them to understand the real dhamma that Buddhadāsa meant them to do. There are some poetry portraying the definition of human language and dhamma language, especially the poem name, ‘Human Language – Dhamma Language’²⁸

From the poem, Buddhadāsa pointed out that dhamma language is the way that leads to the attainment of nibbāna. The same word, if one looks only the human meaning, he will get only the meaning of this world. But if he looks close enough to the dhamma meaning, he will understand more about dhamma and will finally lead to the practice. Some of Buddhadāsa’s poems show the interpretation of the dhamma meaning of the worldly word, for examples,

Enemy is our final examiners

Enemy is our final examiners-

In order for us to know how good we are;

Or we can only stand on the fire of angry-

And cannot control our mind for just a moment.

ศัตรูคือผู้จู่มาสอบไล่

อันศัตรู คือผู้จู่ มาสอบไล่

ให้รู้ได้ ว่าเรามี ดีเท่าไหน

หรือดีแต่ จะโกรธเย็น เป็นไฟนไฟ

บังคับใจ ไว้ไม่อยู่ สักครู่เดียว.

²⁵ Buddhadāsa. “Phasa Khon – Phasa Dham” (human language – worldly language). The collection of religious articles. (Bangkok: Dhammapuja, 1974), p.1.

²⁶ Buddhadāsa. Kaen Buddha Sasna. pp.153-154.

²⁷ Buddhadāsa. Mountain of the path to Buddha teaching. (Bangkok: Dhammapuja, 1983) p.14-15.

²⁸ Buddhadāsa. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen., p.191.

Enemy provides us the heaven;
 By making us realize that-
 Patience leads us to the path of the monk;
 Which will not turn us to the demon in hell.
 Enemy teaches us the great truth;
 That revenge is the dirty water
 Do not keep it in the heart to make it bruised,
 Because it will make us swim in
 Samsāra for a very long time.
 Therefore, enemy is our giver.
 But why we think he is a wrongdoer.
 It is because the receiver don't know
 How to receive properly.
 Because if they know, they won't have any enemy.²⁹

อัมศัตรู คือผู้สรร สวรรค์ให้
 ตรงที่ได้ มีจิต คิดเฉลียว
 ว่าอดกลั้น นั้นแหละนะ เป็นพระเทียว
 ไม่อด , เลี้ยว ไปเป็นมาร พล่านนรก.
 อัมศัตรู คือผู้สอน สัจธรรม
 ว่าอาฆาต นั้นคือน้ำ สกปรก
 อย่าเก็บไว้ ในใจ ให้ใจฟก
 จะเวียนวก วายสงสาร นานักเคย.
 เพราะฉะนั้น ศัตรู คือผู้ให้
 แต่กลายเป็น ผู้ร้าย เหตุไรเหว
 เพราะผู้รับ รับไม่เป็น อย่างเช่นเคย
 ถ้ารับเป็น พวกเราเอ๋ย หมดศัตรูฯ

In this poem, Buddhādāsa pointed out a lot of benefit for being patient with our enemies. In human language, enemy is the one who want to harm us or take advantage from us. But in this poem, Buddhādāsa said that enemy is the one who test us. In dhamma language, enemies need to be looked in the way that they come to test our ability to control the mind, ability to let go of the bad side of people, and ability to reduce and control our egos. To put this in other word, enemy is our teacher who teaches us to know and understand more about ourselves, which Buddhādāsa thought is another most important thing to know:

Apart from enemy, Buddhādāsa continued that one must know “oneself.” He defined ‘to know yourself’ that,

To know yourself

To know yourself means that -
 To know what is good and bad within yourself.
 Keep the goodness in your heart.
 And quickly get rid of the badness.
 To know yourself means that -
 To know that the defilement is the boss of the body;
 It persuades us to do bad deed;
 We need to control it and love the merit.
 To know yourself means that -

จงรู้จักตัวเอง

“จงรู้จัก ตัวเอง” คำนี้หมาย
 มีดีร้าย อยู่เท่าไร เร่งไขชาน
 ข้างฝ่ายดี มีไว้ ในดวงมาน
 ข้างฝ่ายชั่ว รีบประหาร ให้หมดไป.
 “จงรู้จัก ตัวเอง ” คำนี้หมาย
 ว่าในกาย มีกิเลส เป็นเหตุใหญ่
 จึงสละแน แต่จะทำ บาปกรรมไกล
 ต้องควบคุม มันไว้ ให้รักบุญ.
 “จงรู้จัก ตัวเอง ” คำนี้หมาย

²⁹ Buddhādāsa. Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.78.

Saṅkhāra is empty and it spins -	สังขารไร้ ตนตัว มัวแต่หมุน
By the cause and effect that is pushing it.	ไปตามเหตุ บั้จจัย ที่ไ้ใส-รูน
Above the sin and merit, the goodness and badness	พ้นบาปบุญ ชั่วดี มีนิพพานฯ
There is nibbāna. ³⁰	

In worldly language, to know ourselves means know the name, the address, the like, the dislike, the ability, the personality. Buddhadāsa pointed out that in order to know ourselves in dhamma language, we must use empty mind to look inside ourselves. What is already a good thing we have done, we can continue doing it; but for those bad things we need to get rid of it. The most important part is we must use our mind in getting rid of the desire, the “I”, and “Mine.” To know ourselves then is to know that there is no ‘self’ and above the good and bad, there is emptiness.

Apart from looking at ourselves, Buddhadāsa also told us how to look at others. He said that we need to ‘only look at the good thing.’

Only looking at the good side	มองแต่แง่ดีเถิด
He has some bad parts, let it be.	เขามีส่วน เลวบ้าง ช่างหัวเขา
Only pick up the good part that he has	จงเลือกเอา ส่วนที่ดี เขามีอยู่
The part that is somehow benefits the world.	เป็นประโยชน์ แก่โลกบ้าง ยังน่าดู
For the bad part – do not pay attention to it.	ส่วนที่ชั่ว อย่าไปรู้ ของเขาเลย;
To look for the man who only have the good part;	จะหาคน มีดี โดยส่วนเดียว
Do not waste the time doing.	อย่ามัวเที่ยว ค้นหา สหายเอ๋ย
It is like searching for the turtle’s beard	เหมือนเที่ยวหา หนวดเต่า ตายเปล่าเลย
Practice this – only look at the good thing –	ฝึกให้เคย มองแต่ดี มีคุณจริงฯ
it will benefit you ³¹ .	

It is being human that makes everybody do both good and bad things. Everybody have the good side and bad side. Buddhadāsa taught us to look for only the good side and neglect the bad side. This is a very optimistic view and it would lead to our happiness because we do not need to concern with the bad side of people. It is the emptiness that allows us to see only the good side because we do not grab a person as a person but we do see a person as a combination of good and bad. Therefore, we can choose to see only the good side of the people and let go of the rest.

To answer the question ‘how can we let go of the rest?’, Buddhadāsa proposed that we need to use our wisdom and contemplate on *suññatā* for *suññatā* will help up to see things as a continuing current of chain. In between these chains there is no *attā*, person, animal, or even life. It is the chain of *idappaccayatā*. Therefore, if we

³⁰ Buddhadāsa. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.77.

³¹ Buddhadāsa. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.290.

understand this basic rule of the world, we can let go of it. The poem ‘let it be’ can explain this concept;

Let it be

Stand firm that you let it all go-

If it is the cause of the suffering.

Do not pity and try to save it.

That will make your ego grows up.

For the small matters,

If you think about it too much, you will be ruined

For the small things, do not take it as a big one.

Be hurry to throw it away.

The more your ego gets smaller;

The more you will be gentle.

You will survive because you know how to ‘let it be,’ รอดตัวได้ เพราะรู้ใช้ “ช่างหัวมัน”

Then we shall learn to use it.³²

ช่างหัวมัน

จงยืนกราน สลัดทิ้ง ช่างหัวมัน

ถ้าเรื่องนั้น เป็นเหตุ แห่งทุกข์หนา

อย่าล่าออย ตะบอยจัด ไร่อัตรา

ตัวถูกล่า ขึ้นเรื่อยไป อัดใจตาย

เรื่องนั้นนิด เรื่องนี้หน่อย ลอยมาเอง

ไปบวงเบง ให้เห็นว่า จะฉิบหาย

เรื่องเล็กน้อย ตะบอยเห็น เป็นมากมาย

แต่ละราย รีบเขวี้ยงขว้าง ช่างหัวมัน.

เมื่อตัวถู ลู่หลุบ ลงเท่าไร

จะเยือกเย็น ลงไป ได้เท่านั้น

จงพากัน หัดใช้ ไร่ทุกคนฯ

Buddhadāsa said that we need to let go of anything that is the cause of suffering. Because the world is suffering, so we need to let go of the world. This way we can decrease our egos and we will get closer to the *nibbāna*. In other word, ‘let it be’ is Buddhadāsa’s ‘*gāthā*’ or a spell that can save us from the world. Buddhadāsa continued with another poem in the series that it is essential not to ‘let it be’ when that matter related our fellow human being. The poem goes:

Do not let it be.

Do not be crazy and let it be -

If that thing is related to our fellow human beings.

You have to be kind and do your best -

As they are your friends of birth, old age,

sick, and death

Helping friends is like helping yourself.

When you are concentrating on helping others;

You will greatly decrease your ego.

So everyone, do not let it be.

The more you can get rid of your selfishness.

The closer you come to *nibbāna*.

อย่าช่างหัวมัน

อย่าบินบ้า มัวแต่อ้าง ช่างหัวมัน

ถ้าเรื่องนั้น เกี่ยวกับเพื่อน มนุษย์หนา

ต้องเอื้อเพื่อ ปฏิบัติ เต็มอัตรา

โดยถือว่า เป็นเพื่อนเกิด- แก่เจ็บตาย.

การช่วยเพื่อน เหมือนช่วย ตัวเราเอง

เมื่อจิตเพ่ง เล็งช่วย ทวยสหาย

ย่อมลดความ เห็นแก่ตัว ลงมากมาย

ทุกทุกราย อย่าเขวี้ยงขว้าง ช่างหัวมัน.

เห็นแก่ตัว บางเบา ลงเท่าไร

ยิ่งเข้าใกล้ พระนิพพาน เห็นปานนั้น

³² Buddhadāsa. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.34.

You will survive because you do not let it be. รอดตัวได้ เพราะไม่มัว ช่างหัวมัน
 Shall we all consider what I'm saying?³³ จงพากัน ใคร่ครวญ ถ้วนทุกคนฯ

In human language, 'let it be' means the surrender of what has happened without doing anything because we cannot change it. Buddhadāsa stated in the first poem that, for dhamma language, we can use the phrase 'let it be' only with the matter that relates to the cause of suffering. But when it comes to the matter that relates other fellow human being, we need to take action. This is the concept of loving kindness. Buddhadāsa said that we cannot turn our back on the problem of our friends because in helping friends we are helping ourselves. It is a kind of practice that can reduce our ego and our selfishness. Then we come closer to the *nibbāna*.

Buddhadāsa's teaching of human language and dhamma language, in a way, is another means to explain dhamma through what is generally understand. That is, Buddhadāsa assumed that general people know the definition of one word, so he put that word into a poem and explain that word in another meaning; sometime reduce the meaning, sometimes extended, sometime change, sometime keep the original meaning with limitation of subjects and scopes of using. The using of human language and dhamma language, then, challenge the reader to think and interpret the poetry, which can be regard as one reason that makes poetry the skillful means or upāya.

4.3.2 Imagery

Another element that makes Buddhadāsa poetry an upāya is imagery. Imagery is the picture that the readers create in their mind while reading. In Buddhadāsa's poetry, imagery also plays an important role.

Most figures of speech cast up a picture in the mind. These pictures created or suggested by the poet are called 'images'. To participate fully in the world of poem, we must understand how the poet uses image to convey more than what is actually said or literally meant. Clare said,

We speak of the pictures evoked in a poem as 'imagery'. Imagery refers to the "pictures" which we perceive with our mind's eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin, and through which we experience the "duplicate world" created by poetic language. Imagery evokes the meaning and truth of human experiences not in abstract terms, as in philosophy, but in more perceptible and tangible forms. This is a device by which the poet makes his meaning strong, clear and sure. The poet uses sound words and words of color and touch in addition to figures of speech.

³³ Buddhadāsa. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.35.

As well, concrete details that appeal to the reader's senses are used to build up images.³⁴

Although most of the image-making words in any language appeal to sight (visual images), there are also images of touch (tactile), sound (auditory), taste (gustatory), and smell (olfactory).³⁵

In Buddhadāsa's poetry, the poet used image of many things to connote the abstract notion of dhamma. In the poem, 'the president of Buddhadhamma,' the dhamma are compared with other things which create the tangible visual and make them easier to understand.

Also in *The Question of Milinda* (*Milinda-pañhā*), this book contains a large variety of images, sometimes organized into lists. King Milinda asks if there is a quality or attribute of *nibbāna* found in other things, something that might merely illustrate it by means of a simile. Nāgasena replies that in regard to its true or essential nature (*sarupato*) there is not, but there is in regard to its qualities or attributes. He then lists one attribute of a lotus, two of water, three of a medicine, four of the great ocean, five of food, ten of space, three of a precious jewel, three of red sandal-wood, three of cream of ghee, and five of a mountain-peak.³⁶

In Buddhadāsa's poetry, there are many imageries used to connote the profound idea, among these, for examples, are the image of city, image of water, image of cave, image of fire, image of a house, and image of arrow.

4.3.2.1 Image of City

In Buddhism, the image of city represents the concept of *nibbāna*. The image of the city as signifying *nibbāna* has also been used in the *Tipiṭaka*, Buddhadāsa said that

"It is just as if a man, traveling along a wilderness track, were to see an ancient path, an ancient road, traveled by people of former times. He would follow it. Following it, he would see an ancient city, an ancient capital inhabited by people of former times, complete with parks, groves, & ponds, walled, delightful. He would go to address the king or the king's minister, saying, 'Sire, you should know that while traveling along a wilderness track I saw an ancient path... I followed it... I saw an ancient city, an ancient capital... complete with parks,

³⁴ Clare, M. T., S.C. *A Book of Poetry*. (New York: Macmillan Co., 1960), pp.22-23.

³⁵ Drew, E. H. *Discovering Poetry*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1933), pp77-80.

³⁶ David, T. W. Ryde. *Question of Milinda*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1998). p.93.

groves, & ponds, walled, delightful. Sire, rebuild that city!' The king or king's minister would rebuild the city, so that at a later date the city would become powerful, rich, & well-populated, fully grown & prosperous.

"In the same way I saw an ancient path, an ancient road, traveled by the Rightly Self-awakened Ones of former times. And what is that ancient path, that ancient road, traveled by the Rightly Self-awakened Ones of former times? Just this noble eightfold path: right view, right aspiration, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. That is the ancient path, the ancient road, traveled by the Rightly Self-awakened Ones of former times. I followed that path. Following it, I came to direct knowledge of aging & death, direct knowledge of the origination of aging & death, direct knowledge of the cessation of aging & death, direct knowledge of the path leading to the cessation of aging & death. I followed that path. Following it, I came to direct knowledge of birth... becoming... clinging... craving... feeling... contact... the six sense media... name-&-form... consciousness, direct knowledge of the origination of consciousness, direct knowledge of the cessation of consciousness, direct knowledge of the path leading to the cessation of consciousness. I followed that path.³⁷

Michele Pyre emphasized the idea of the city in his book that the image of the city has been proposed by the Buddha himself, implicitly in a Sutta entitled 'City' in the Samyutta Nikāya..³⁸ Buddhādāsa explained further that in the text the Buddha only gives an explanation of the old road: it is the Noble Eight-fold Path, 'travelled by Perfectly Enlightened Ones of former times'. The commentary explains: the man's wandering in the forest is the time spend by the Gotama in past lives fulfilling the Perfections after vowing to become a Buddha at the time of Diīpaṅkara Buddha; The road is the Path; and the city is the city of nibbāna.³⁹

The image of city representing *nibbāna* is portrayed in Buddhādāsa's poetry, for example,

³⁷ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, translated. "Nagara Sutta" The Tripitaka [English version]. [online]. Retrieve : February 14th, 2013. Access from : <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.065.than.html>

³⁸ Pye, Michael. Skillful Means – A concept in Mahāyāna Buddhism. (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1978). p.66.

³⁹ Pye, Michael. Skillful Means – A concept in Mahāyāna Buddhism. p.70

When I Look at the Land I see the Sky

When I look at the land I see the sky.

There is a big sky in the land.

I will tell you.

You should listen and tell me it is crazy or good?

I see the world as empty of the self

And empty of what belong to the self.

It is even emptier than the sky,

Because there is another thing

called *mahā-suññayā*.

If you can see the world as truly empty

You can see the great immortal city concealing in it.

This is called look at the sky and see the land.

Think about it, is this crazy or good?

If you still cannot see it, do not rush and blame on me.

If you have the wrong view,

you will see the land as the land,

So you will eat it like an earthworm.⁴⁰

เมื่อมองดินเห็นฟ้า

เมื่อมองดิน เห็นฟ้า นิจจาเอ๋ย

มองเห็นฟ้า ดินใหญ่ กระจ่างเลย

ฉันจะเอ๋ย ฟังดูหนา บ้าหรือดี?

คือมองโลกเห็นว่าง จากอัตตา

ว่างจากอัต ตีนียา -อย่างเต็มที

มันว่างจริงยิ่งกว่าฟ้า เพราะว่ามี

สิ่งหนึ่งที่เรียกมหา -สุญญตา.

ครันมองดูโลกว่าง อย่างแท้จริง

ก็เห็นสิ่ง ที่เรียก ว่ามหา -

อมฤต -นคร ชัอนอยู่ณา

นี่เรียกว่า มองฟ้า แล้วปะดิน.

คิดดูเกิดบ้าหรือดี มีให้ดู

ถ้าไม่เห็น อย่าเพ้อจู้ มาติฉิน

ถ้าจะมั่ว อยู่ทีเห็น ดินเป็นดิน

ก็ดูตกินมันไป เป็นไส้เดือนฯ

Buddhadāsa suggested that if we look at the sky with empty mind, we can see an immortal city in it. Buddhadāsa then suggested that we should reside in this city. In other word, this city is the *nibbāna* that inhabit in the emptiness. The land is the world of things, and the sky is the world of emptiness. Another poem that gives the image of *nibbāna* as a city is “Looking at the Sky but Seeing the Land.”

Looking at the sky but seeing the land

First I see the sky as empty as I have been told,

I cannot see any angel residing in it.

When I look at it closely I see more emptiness.

And when my mind is concentrated,

I see even more emptiness.

I can see the truth that emptiness -

Gives me, as hard as a new land;

It is cooler and calmer than any land.

It is the great land called "the great immortal city."

มองฟ้าปะดิน

แรกมองฟ้าก็เห็นว่าง อย่างเขาว่า

ไม่เห็นพวก เทวดา คลาสวรรค์

ยิ่งมองไปยิ่งว่างมา สารพัน

จิตใจมันยิ่งเห็นว่าง อย่างสุดใจ

กลับได้เห็นสาระหนึ่ง ซึ่งความว่าง

มอบให้อย่างแก่นสาร ปานดินใหม่

เป็นแผ่นดินเย็นและหยุด กว่าजूดูใด

ทรงคุณใหญ่เรียก อมตะ“มหานคร”

⁴⁰ Buddhadāsa. *Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen*, p.292.

It is the coolest location of the empty mind. เป็นที่ตั้ง เย็นสนิท แห่งจิตว่าง
 It is free from any desire, suffering, and sadness. กิเลสสร้าง ทุกข์หาย ไร้โศกคร
 It is the land that is stable forever เป็นแดนดินที่คงมั่น นิรันดร
 This is what I call ‘look at the sky but see the land.’⁴¹ นี่แลตอน ที่มองฟ้า แล้วปะดินฯ

In this poem, Buddhādāsa related *nibbāna* with what he called “the great immortal city.” He described this city as ‘coolest,’ ‘free from desire, suffering, and sadness,’ This is the condition of the pure and clean mind, or the empty mind. It is important that in order to see the city of *nibbāna*, in Buddhādāsa’s point of view, one must contain the empty mind. Another poem said,

Conversation: the Buddha City

What is the biggest thing in the world?	สนทนา: พุทธนคร ในโลกนี้ มีอะไร ใหญ่ที่สุด?
It is the Buddha city, it is obvious!	ใครท่อนเห็น "นคร - พุทธ" นั่นคือ !
What is that the Buddha city, tell me more?	นั่นคืออะไร ว่าไป ให้ตรงประเด็น?
It is the cool state of the empty mind!	ภาวะเย็นแห่ง จิต“ไม่ติดอะไร”!
Where is it? Again please.	อยู่ที่ไหนว่าไป อีกทีเกิด?
It is in the mind that has no desire!	ตรงที่จิต ไม่เกิด กิเลสได้!
How can a city appear in the mind?	ในจิตนั้นมีเมืองบ้าน สถานใด?
It is the great emptiness that has no body!	คือความว่าง ยิ่งใหญ่ ไร้ตัวตน !
So how can that be the Buddha city?	แล้วเป็นพุทธ นคร -ตอนไหนกัน?
Because there are wisdom and loving kindness in it!	ก็ในนั้นมีปัญญา เมตตาอัน!
Then who live in that city - if it is not human being?	ใครอาศัยในนคร ? ถ้าท่อนคน ?
Emptiness is even more substantial than human being! ⁴²	ความว่างนั้น เป็นตัวตน กว่าคนเรา!

Buddhādāsa maintained that the state of *nibbāna* is cool and empty. From the poetry, it is clear that *nibbāna* can only be achieved in the mind since this city appears in the mind that has no desire. This poetry uses conversation technique, which is, using question and answer to communicate the main idea to the reader. The questions posted in the lines are the questions that Buddhādāsa supposed that the reader might wonder and he gave the answer to the question. This conversation can be regarded as ‘dhamma talk’ and the reader is the participant. This technique helps the reader to understand more about the content the poet wants to suggest. Also, the reader needs to pay more attention to the poem in order to follow the conversation, which is the practicing of concentration in a way.

⁴¹ Ibid., p.293.

⁴² Buddhādāsa. *Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen*, p.325.

4.3.2.2 Image of Water

Another imagery of the water finds its reference from the Tipiṭaka. The water may sometimes be connected with the image of ocean, or river, or stream. The Buddha said once that the enlightened person after death is ‘profound, immeasurable, and unfathomable like the great ocean’⁴³. But *nibbāna* is also, very commonly, the escape from the ocean, river, or stream of rebirth and consciousness, and reaching the heaven of the further shore. This image of water occurs in many texts; one example is in an extended metaphor from the Samyutta Nikāya:

“A man is in danger from four venomous snakes, five murderous enemies, and a burglar with a sword; he finds an empty village, but is told that it is about to be plundered by robbers. He sees a great stretch of water, and finds that ‘this shore is (full of) uncertainties and fears, the further shore is safe and without fear’, but he can see no boat or bridge to take him across. He makes a raft and crosses over.”⁴⁴

The metaphors are explained: the four snakes are the four Great (material) Elements: earth, water, fire, and air; the five enemies are the Five Aggregates; the burglar is passion and lust; the empty village is a name for the six internal Sense-Bases; the robbers are the objects of sense, the six external Sense-Bases; the great stretch of water is ‘the four floods of pleasure, (repeated) existence, (wrong, harmful) views, and ignorance; this shore is the psycho-physical individual; the further shore, safe and without fear, is *nibbāna*; the raft is the Path.⁴⁵

In the *Dhammapada*, a collection of verses attributed to the Buddha, we also find this verse:

The person who reaches the sacred, the inexpressible,
Who has permeated his mind with it,
Who is in control of his senses,
Is one bound upstream.⁴⁶

Dogen, implies that to view water in the usual way is to see something other than what is actually present. Water itself is very hard to identify whether this image is symbolized the good or the bad. To fully encounter water, we must move beyond our normal perceptions and definitions. Since “*water is neither strong nor weak,*

⁴³ Apadāna, Khuddakanikaya, Tripitaka Vol.33, No.130.cited in Dhammapitaka, Phra (PrayutPayutto), translated and compiled by Evans, Bruce. Buddhist solutions for the twenty-first century. (Bangkok: Buddha dhamma Foundation, 1992). p.40.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p.45.

⁴⁵ Ford, James L. Waves and Water : A Buddhist Metaphor. (Tokyo : Japan life and religion Journal, 2008). p.54-56.

⁴⁶ Maitreya, Balangoda Ananda, trans. “Words of the Buddha.” Entering the Stream: An Introduction to the Buddha and : His Teachings. (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1993). p. 72.

neither wet nor dry, neither deluded nor enlightened...Do not doubt that these are the characteristics water manifests."⁴⁷

We can see here that the image of water and stream is traditionally used as the symbol of the cycle of birth and rebirth; and nibbāna is the escape from the water or crossing the water. In Buddhādāsa's poetry, we can see this tradition also, such as in the poem 'sitting by the stream.'

Sitting by the stream

I'm sitting by the stream thinking about	นั่งริมธาร ⁴⁸ นั่งริมธาร ครุ่นพิจารณา การเกิดดับ
The birth and death	
The water is changing suddenly, it soars and flows	เปลี่ยนปุบปับ สายธาร ทะยานไหล
Then the cool vapour appears-	เกิดไอน้ำ ฟุ้งฟุ้ง จรุงใจ
It makes me cool down even if I did not get	ดับร้อนได้ โดยไม่ต้อง ลงอาบกิน
Into the water.	
Then I look more, one fact I am certain-	อีกทางหนึ่ง ตลิ่งแล แน่ใจนัก
That if someone push me into the water, I would die	ถ้าใครผลัก ตกลง คงแต่ตื่น
Because I will be hit by the rocks under water;	กระทบก้อน หินผา ใต้วาริน
And die in the whirlpool.	แล้วจะสิ้นชีพไป ในวังวน
This is just like the Samsāra.	มานี้ก็ดู เปรียบดัง สังสารวัฏฏ์
In outer look, its treasure is very embraceable-	ดูผาดผาด น่ากระหวัด ในลาภผล
But this treasure is hiding in human suffering.	ที่ซ่อนอยู่ ในทุกข์ ปลุกใจคน
It arouses us to endure and try to	ให้ยอมทน ทุกข์ยาก บากบั่นไป
Get over suffering.	
Until we are born, get old, and die in Samsāra	จนได้เกิด แก่ตาย ในวัฏฏะ
There is no other escape.	ไม่มีอะไร หลีกพ้น ไหนไหน
Who can see this, be careful and control your mind.	ใครมองเห็น จงระวัง ยังจิตใจ
Do not let your mind fall into the whirling hell.	อย่าให้ไฟล่ พลัดตก นรกวน

The stream here could be viewed as the path to realization, but at the same time it is also the dangerous cycle of birth and rebirth. The Buddhist traveler sits on the bank of the stream, untouched by the steam of the flow of desires and attachments, and eventually, through diligent effort, attains realization; this suggests that in order to attain nibbāna, we must understand the world, but untouched by it. Here, the stream, as in traditional reference, symbolizes the cycle of birth and rebirth. It is the Samsāra that if we fall down, it is very hard to get out. Buddhādāsa used the image of 'whirlpool' to suggest the condition of the stream that has no exit.

⁴⁷ Tanahashi, Kazuaki, ed. *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dogen*. (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1985). p.101

⁴⁸ Buddhādāsa. *Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen*. p.44.

Another interesting poem that gives sets of imagery and connotes the strong idea of the great ocean is ‘the coconut tree in the middle of the pond’

The coconut tree in the middle of the sea.	สระนาฬิกา
Samsāra is clearly like the great sea.	สังสารวัฏฏ์ เปรียบชัด ดั่งขุนทะเล
Which has two different aspects	แต่มีค่า หักเห เป็นสองสถาน
One is bad from sin, one is good from merit.	เดี๋ยวเป็นบาป เดี่ยวเป็นบุญ หมุนตามวาร
This circle is spinning after the cause and effect.	คือตามปัจ- จยการ ปรุงแต่งไป
Just like the wax is solid when it is cool,	เหมือนขี้ผึ้ง ถูกเย็น เป็นของแข็ง
But when it is hot, the wax is melt to liquid.	ถูกร้อนแรง ก็เป็นน้ำ หลามหลากไหล
The sea of wax is the sea of sin and merit.	เป็นทะเล บุญ-บาป สับปลับไถล
Getting off this sea will find nibbāna.	พ้นเสียได้ จึงเสรี มีนิพพาน
A coconut tree is standing in the middle of the sea.	“ต้นมะพร้าว” นั้นเฝ้าอยู่ กลางขุนทะเล
It will not affect by any aspects of the sea.	ไม่หักเห ตามปัจจัย ไปทุกสถาน
It won't be touched by rain, won't be scared	ฝนไม่ต้อง ถึงฟ้าร้อง ก็ไม่ราน
by the sound of thunder.	
Because it is beyond the result of sin and merit.	เพราะมันผ่าน พ้นปรุงแต่ง แห่งบาปบุญ ฯ ⁴⁹

This poem used the image of the sea to compare with sansara. But the sea here is not just a normal salt water sea, but a sea containing wax. There is a coconut tree standing in the middle of the sea. The wax represents sansara as it contains both sides of sin and merit. The coconut tree is the symbol of *nibbāna*. It stands alone, untouched by both sin and merit. It is in the middle of the sea. This implied that *nibbāna* is actually resided in the middle of Samsāra, which is it need to be where suffering is, since it is the cessation of suffering. Both the sea and coconut tree are actually reside in human being mind. The mind can turn into good by the merit, bad by the sin, and attain *nibbāna* by letting go both merit and sin. This poetry portrayed a great dhamma by using a great imagery and extended metaphor.

4.3.2.3 Image of Cave

Buddhadāsa used the image of cave in order to connote the idea of individuals who are trapped in this world and do not see the light from outside. He compared this world to the cave, and human being in this world is people who do not understand the truth beyond life, the poem said:

⁴⁹ Buddhadāsa. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.47.

What is this world?

This world is a dark cave;
 There is no light, no clearness, no cleverness.
 They think-speak-do by the ignorance.
 We should think about the bright world in the future!
 This world is the tree shade.
 It is just for a quick rest, and then we must go -
 To other thousands of worlds.
 Why then we hold fast to this world.⁵⁰

โลกนี้คืออะไรแน่?

โลกนี้คือ ถ้ำมืด ไม่เห็นแสง
 ไม่มี ความ แจ่มแจ้ง ไม่เฉลียว
 คิด-พูด-ทำ โมหะ ไปทำเดี๋ยว
 ลองคิดเที่ยว โลกสว่าง ช่างหน้ากัน !
 โลกนี้คือ ร่มไม้ ได้อาศัย
 บัดเดี๋ยวใจ พักผ่อน แล้วผอนผ่น
 ออกไปสู่ โลกอื่น อีกหมื่นพัน
 ยึดมั่น หมายมี โลกนี้นาน!

Buddhadāsa compared this world to the dark cave and the tree shade. He suggested that this world is temporary and human being should not cling to this world. The first stanza of the poem suggests that there is another ‘brighter’ world, and it is deducible that Buddhadāsa wanted all beings to reside in that world. This world is actually the *saṃsāra*, or the cycle of birth and rebirth; the brighter world symbolizes *nibbāna*, for which, as the first stanza suggests, human being should aim. The image of cave, is also signified that people who reside in the cave is like the prisoners who is ignorant individuals. Cave is the world. Light is the Truth. Darkness is the lacking of Truth and the people who walk out of the cave is the enlightened one. The second stanza emphasizes more on the temporariness of this world. And since it is temporary, one should not cling to this world. Therefore, the main concept of this poem is to leave this world and focus on the path to *nibbāna*.

The connotation that comes with the cave is the image of darkness. Buddhadāsa mentioned that darkness is the symbol of the desire which come to human being in three forms, the poem suggested:

Darkness

Darkness of greed is poisoned darkness.
 This green darkness covers the poisoned mind.
 It is like a rubber that sticks to the mind.
 It cannot be easily removed by pulling.
 Darkness of anger appears with angeriness.
 It is a red darkness which is greater than fire.
 It blinds us when it comes to control us.
 And left us with sad truth when it released us.

มืด

มืดราคะ นั้นเพราะพิษ ด่างฤษณา
 มืดเขียวมา คลุมจิต พิษดม้ง
 เป็นยางเหนียว เกี่ยวจิต อย่างติดตัง
 จะดึงรั้ง อย่างไร มันไม่คลอน
 มืดโทสะ นั้นเพราะฤทธิ์ แห่งพิษโกรธ
 มืดแดงมา หฤโหด กว่าสุมขนอน
 มันไม่ดู หน้าใคร ในตันตอน
 แล้วต้องนอน ถอนใจ เมื่อปลายมือ

⁵⁰ Buddhadāsa. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.167.

The darkness of delusion comes from stupidity.	มืดโหมเหะ นั้นเพราะพิษ แห่งฤทธิง
It is black darkness which makes us stupid.	มืดดำมา พาไล ิ่งมืดตื้อ
It is even darker than the blindness.	ยิ่งกว่าบอด ยอดก่อกรรม ร้าตะพื้อ
It won't listen to any advice.	แล้วยังตื้อ แดกตัน เมื่อท่านเตือน
We need to give light to the three darkness.	ทั้งสามมืด รู้แก้ไข ให้สว่าง
Then the desire will be eliminated.	กิเลสสว่าง สิ้นไป ใจเสมือน-
Just like the dark sky are penetrated by the moonlight.	บรรยากาศ ส่องสาด ด้วยแสงเดือน
This is the light of the cool.	มีเค้าเงื่อน แห่งสว่าง อย่างเยือกเย็น ⁵¹

Buddhadāsa suggested that the darkness of this world is the representative of the three desires, the greed, anger, and delusion. In one darkness, there contains three shades of darkness – the green of greed, the red of anger, the black of delusion. These color imagery connote the feeling of each desire. Then Buddhadāsa advised us to take refuge in the moonlight, which he described as cool. The moonlight is the light of *nibbāna*. Buddhadāsa suggested that if we can get rid of the darkness of desire, there will be the light of *nibbāna*.

4.3.2.4 Image of Fire

The image of fire is also used in various places in the Tipiṭaka. For example, , the concept of *nibbāna* is portrayed through the image of fire;

“Just as a flame put out by a gust of wind
goes down and is beyond reckoning,
so the sage free from name-and -form
goes down and is beyond reckoning ...
There is no measuring of one who has gone down,
There is nothing by which he might be discussed.
when all attributes (dhamma) are removed
so have all ways of speaking been removed.”⁵²

Or once the Buddha taught that *nibbāna* is

⁵¹ Buddhadāsa. *Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen*. p.342

⁵² Chutima,Punyanuch. *Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu's philosophy of communication*. (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 2543). p. 63.

"Just as an oil-lamp burns because of oil and wick, but when the oil and wick are exhausted, and no others are supplied, it goes out through lack of fuel (*anāhāro nibbāyati*), so the (enlightened) monk ... knows that after the break-up of his body, when further life is exhausted, all feelings which are rejoiced in here will become cool."

The extinguished flame is one of the best-known images of *nibbāna*. In one text, the ascetic Vacchagotta questions the Buddha about where the enlightened person is reborn; on replying that the verb 'is reborn' is inapplicable, the Buddha uses the analogy of a fire gone out: just as without fuel, a fire goes out and one cannot say where it has gone to, so it is impossible to point out the enlightened person.⁵³

The fire then, when using in the image of *nibbāna*, is the suffering that the enlighten one ceased. Moreover, in the Fire Sermon, fire expresses the omnipresence of suffering. Elsewhere, as in two conversations between the Buddha and the ascetic Vacchagotta, the image is applied directly to rebirth and release. In the first the Buddha says that he does not describe an enlightened person who has died as having been reborn in this or that place; rather, such a Supreme Person has made an end of suffering. 'Just as a fire, Vaccha, burns with fuel but not without fuel, so I declare (that there is) a (place of) rebirth for one who is with attachment, but not for one without'⁵⁴

The image of fire, therefore, is the symbol of suffering in Buddhism. And aiming for *nibbāna* is like getting on the boat and sail through the sea of fire:

Through the Sea of Fire⁵⁵

If human boat sails through the sea of fire,
It won't get through, do not dare to do it.
The boat of dhamma is what is needed
To smoothly get across the rain and sea of fire.
Some may say I'm crazy in saying this
Because they cannot see what I'm seeing.
They cannot even identify
What is the real 'fire'
Human body is just like boat
If we practice and hold dhamma in our mind

ฝ่าทะเลไฟ

เรือของคน แล่นฝ่า ทะเลไฟ
ไปไม่ไหว ดอกท่าน อย่าหาญกล้า
เรือของธรรม ลอยลำ สบายมา
ท่ามกลางท่า ฝนไฟ ได้เยือกเย็น,
พูดอย่างนี้ มีคนหา ว่าเหลวไหล
เพราะตรองสัก เท่าใด ก็ไม่เห็น
เพราะไม่รู้ แยกความ ตามประเด้น
ออกให้เห็น ว่าเป็น "ไฟ" อย่างไรกัน;
อัตตภาพ ของคน กลกับเรือ
ประกอบธรรม ทุกเมื่อ ไม่แพกผัน

⁵³ Kozak, Arnie, Dr. How did the Buddha use Metaphor? (Boston: Stanford University Press, 2003). p.21-25.

⁵⁴ Ibid. pp.30-32

⁵⁵ Buddhādāsa. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.356.

We can certainly sail through the sea of fire - ย่อมผ่านพ้น ทะเลไฟ ไปทั้งนั้น :
 The fire of suffering that is caused by the fire of desire⁵⁶ ไฟทุกข์อัน ไฟกิเลส เป็นเหตุแล ฯ

Buddhadāsa defines the ‘fire’ in the poem as the fire of suffering that is caused by the fire of desire. He uses the characteristic of the fire, which is it is hot and burning to communicate the characteristic of the suffering. He tried to link that the suffering is burning us like a fire even in our daily life. He said that to lead the life wisely we need to have dhamma as the shield to protect us from the fire of suffering, which means no matter what problems in life we may face, dhamma will help us get through.

There can be only one kind of boat that can sail through the sea of fire, that is the boat of dhamma. The sea of fire here is the cycle of birth and rebirth. Fire is the suffering, or the world itself, since this world is the world of suffering. Fire is in this world – this is the reason why we need to leave this world. The only boat that can sail in this kind of sea is the dhamma. We need to get rid of the foolishness, get beyond happiness and suffering. And then we will see nibbāna in the middle of the fire.

Moreover, Buddhadāsa gave his interpretation of the fire in a poem name ‘fire,’ the poem goes;

Fire	ไฟ
The fire of greed is the fire of lust.	ไฟราคะ เสียวระสัน มั่นนั้นแหละ
It is a wet fire, dirty, and pervert.	ไฟเปียกและ สกปรก ลามกหลาย
It burns the heart just like hot water.	ลวกดวงใจ คล้ายน้ำร้อน ตอนลวกกาย
But people like to be burn by greed.	คนเมามาย ชอบมันลวก สวกหัวใจ
The fire of anger is crueller.	ไฟโทสะ นั้นปะทะ อย่างโหดเหี้ยม
It burns forever in the heart.	ไฟไหม้เกรียม กร่ำกล้า พาจิตไหว
It is like a ghost that can appear any moment.	เป็นผีบ้า ขึ้นมา ขณะใด
And when it comes, it bites even the husband-wife.	เป็นต๋องได้ กัดกันแน่ แม้วเมีย
The fire of delusion is dull and foolish.	ไฟโมหะ มีดหนา ปัญญาอับ
It buries and heaps in the mind.	ไฟหมกทับ หมักหมม อารมณเสีย
It makes the mind unrest, and uncertain.	จิตระส่ำ ใจระส่าย หทัยเพ็ลย
It prevents us from getting rid of suffering.	ไม่อาจเชี่ย ทุกชีไป จากใจตน
Knowing these three kind of fire,	ทั้งสามไฟ รู้จักไว้ ให้เพียงพอ

⁵⁶Ibid. p.356.

You will not make any of the kinds.	จะไม่ก่อ ไฟไหม้ ให้สืบสน
You will be as cool as human should be.	จะเยือกเย็น แสนเย็น ได้เป็นคน
You will accomplish as human being.	ประสบผล แห่งมนุษย์ สุดยอดเย็น ⁵⁷

The image of fire here is displayed in terms of the three kinds of desire; that is the greed, the anger, and delusion. *Buddhadāsa* used the characteristic of fire that burns to compare with the desire that burns in the heart. Therefore, the use of fire imagery in *Buddhadāsa*'s poetry is not only traditionally used as the representative of the world or suffering, but also used as the interpretative image for the word desire.

4.3.2.5 Image of Arrow

The image of arrow, or sometimes the poisoned arrow, is a Buddhist image that shows the skeptic and pragmatic themes of the *cūla-malunkyaovada sutta* which is part of the *Majjhima Nikaya*. The sutta begins at Jetavana where the monk *Mulankya* is troubled by The Buddha's silence on the fourteen unanswerable questions, which include queries about the nature of the cosmos and life after death. *Mulankya* then meets with the Buddha and asks him for the answers to these questions, he says that if he fails to respond, *Mulankya* will renounce his teachings. The Buddha responds by first stating that he never promised to reveal ultimate metaphysical truths such as those and then uses the story of a man who has been shot with a poisoned arrow to illustrate that those questions are irrelevant to his teachings.

“It is just as if a man were wounded with an arrow thickly smeared with poison. His friends and companions, kinsmen and relatives would provide him with a surgeon, and the man would say, “I will not have this arrow removed until I know whether the man who wounded me was a noble warrior, a priest, a merchant, or a worker.” He would say, “ I will not have this arrow removed until I know the given name and clan name of the man who wounded me... until I know whether he was tall, medium, or short... until I know whether the bow with which I was wounded was fiber, bamboo, threads, sinew, hemp, or bark... until I know whether the feathers of the shaft with which I was wounded were those of a vulture, a stork, a hawk, a peacock, or another bird... until I know whether the shaft with which I was wounded was bounded with the sinew of an ox, a water buffalo, a languor, or a monkey.’ He would say, “ I will not have this arrow removed until I know whether the shaft with which I was wounded was that of a common arrow, a curved arrow, a barbed, a calf-

⁵⁷ *Buddhadāsa*. *Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen*. p.343

toothed, or an oleander arrow.’ The man would die and those things would still remain unknown to him”⁵⁸

The arrow is the symbol of something that is not necessary in terms of attaining the highest state of life. At the same time, the arrow is something dangerous that can kill or give pain to the body. The arrow itself, then, may signify suffering, or the cause of suffering. Some of Buddhādāsa’s poetry portrayed the idea.

Be careful of the second arrow

When you feel the great pain,
Just be aware that ‘this is pain’
Do not think that “I” am hurt, “I” am in pain.
This is call you are hit by only one arrow.
But if your mind think in a wrong way-
That “I” am in a great scary suffering-
And think that “I” will definitely die,
You are hit by the second arrow.
The first arrow is nothing because it has no poison
It will not burn your mind, it only hurts the body.
While the second arrow is covered by
The great poison
It causes the greater pain than death.

ระวังศรดอกที่สอง ⁵⁹

เมื่อรู้สึก เจ็บปวด อย่างรวดร้าว
ก็รู้เท่า ว่า “เจ็บหนอ” เท่านั้นหนา
ไม่เกิดยึด ว่า “กู” เจ็บ “กู” ทรมาน
นี้เรียกว่า มีศรดอก เพียงดอกเดียว
ถ้าเกิดความ คิดผิด อีกชนิดหนึ่ง
ว่า “กู” ถึง ทุกข์ร้าย ให้หวาดเสียว
ยึดว่า “กู” ตายแน่ เป็นแน่เทียว
ศรดอกเดียว กลายเป็นสอง ต้องกายา
ศรดอกแรก ไม่กระไร ไร้ยาพิษ
ไม่เผาจิต เพียงเจ็บกาย ไร้โทษา
ดอกที่สอง อาบยาพิษ ฤทธิมหึมา
มันเจ็บกล้า ทุกข์กล้า ยิ่งกว่าตาย

Buddhadāsa suggested in the poem that there are two kinds of pain, one is the external pain of the body and another is the pain in mind. Buddhādāsa said here that it is normal to suffer the first kind of pain since birth itself is suffering. We cannot escape physical pain. But for the second kind of pain, the mental pain, it is possible we can avoid it. The mind that understand the nature of the mental pain, that is, the mind that can see the “I” or the ‘ego’ will be able to escape from the mental pain by eliminating the “I” which the mind generated. Buddhādāsa used the image of the arrow the signified this meaning. The first arrow hit the body, then we suffer the external or physical pain. It is inevitably suffering, but the second arrow – physically the same arrow – hit us in the mind that still stick to the “I”, then Buddhādāsa suggested we need to get rid of the “I” in order to avoid the second arrow.

⁵⁸ Thanissaro Bhikkhu.,trans. Cula-Malunkyovada sutta, Majjhima Nikaya. Tipitaka. (Access to insight, 14 June 2010.) www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.063.than.html

⁵⁹ Ibid. p.338.

4.3.2.6 Image of a House

Another imagery that is used by the Buddha to refer to *nibbāna* is the house metaphor. The Buddha said that "*nibbāna is the final going forth from home to homelessness, no longer building body-houses to live in time.*"⁶⁰

The house then is the world of suffering since the Buddha said that to attain *nibbāna* is like homelessness. Moreover, The idea of the physical body as a house is easily exemplified;

'just as when a space is enclosed by timbers, creepers, grass and clay, it is called a 'house', so when a space is enclosed by bones, sinews, flesh and skin, it comes to be called 'body''

Similarly, the mind is regarded as a house.

*'When a house has an ill-thatched roof, rain enters and soaks the roof-beams and walls; in the same way, it is said, when a mind is 'undeveloped' or 'unguarded', desire enters, to penetrate and saturate all actions, whether of body, speech, or mind.'*⁶¹

The image of a house represents the body and the mind of human being. The cycle of birth and rebirth is just like the building of a new house forever. For *Buddhadāsa*, he used the word the world, in the meaning of the whole body and mind together. He said that this world is a temporary rest house. This imagery of the house is also found in *Buddhadāsa's* poetry:

The World is like a rest house	โลกเปรียบศาลาให้อาศัย
This world is like a temporary rest house	โลกนี้ เปรียบศาลาให้อาศัย
You will stay just for a while and then leave.	ประเดี๋ยวใจ ผ่อนพัก แล้วจักผัน
The best thing is, when you are leaving this house-	ทางที่ดี เมื่อพราก ไปจากมัน
You should leave something good.	ควรสร้างสรรค์ ส่งเสริม เพิ่มคะแนน
Getting a chance to born in this world-	เมื่อเราได้ เกิดมา ในอาโลก
Is a great chance that you can practice to end suffering.	ได้พ้นโศก พ้นภัย สบายแสน
Then you should build something to give back in return	จึงควรสร้าง สิ่งชอบ ไว้ตอบแทน
To make the world as the happier place.	ให้เป็นแดน ดั่งสุข ขึ้นทุกกาล
The good legacy of the one who previously come	คุณความดี ของท่าน กาลก่อนก่อน

⁶⁰ Tanahashi, Kazuaki, ed. *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dogen*. p.77.

⁶¹ Collins, Steven. *Selfless Person: Imagery and thought in Theravada Buddhism*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p.167.

Which he left for us is the best evidence.	ที่ท่านสอน ไว้ประจักษ์ เป็นหลักฐาน
We, as the later born, can use such legacy.	เราเกิดมา อาศัย ได้สำราญ
Is it wise to just neglect this legacy? ⁶²	ควรหรือผ่าน พ้นไป ไม่คำนึงฯ

The poetry suggested that this world is just the temporary residence for human being. Therefore, after we no longer live in this world, that is when we die, it is just a moving from this house to another house. If we can see that this world is only temporary house, we won't hold it too much. And Buddhadāsa also suggests that for this house we are living in such a short period, we should leave something valuable for the sake of the newcomer who will reside in this house after us. The most valuable thing is to pass on the best legacy that the Buddha has passed to us. It is to practice dhamma.

4.3.3 Other Artistic Techniques

Imagery is an important technique that Buddhadāsa used to connote the idea of emptiness. However, there are many other artistic techniques that Buddhadāsa also used to make his poetry a skillful means, or upāya. This section will analyze the artistic techniques that Buddhadāsa used in his poetry and explain how such techniques make his poetry an upāya.

4.3.3.1 Artistic Techniques: Poem with Picture

The diversity in Buddhadāsa's poems derives from the poetic techniques that make his poetry a good puzzle for the reader to unlock its mystery. In order to do that, Buddhadāsa used various techniques in his poetry. The first, and the most prominent, technique is to put the picture with the poem. This set of poetry comes together with the pictures that the poem describes. He said in a poem that

Compose the dhamma poem for the picture	แต่งบทธรรมประจำภาพ ⁶³
I have collected free pictures that some have taken.	รวมรูปภาพ ถ่ายฟรี มีคนถ่าย
For many years until I have got a certain of them.	ให้มากมาย หลายปี มีหลากหลายเหลือ
I don't know what use I can do with them.	มีรูจะใช้ ไฉนกัน มันเหลือเพื่อ
But I want to give some merit to the taker	นึกเอื้อเพื่อ ท่านผู้ถ่าย ให้ได้บุญ
So I gradually compose poems	ค่อย ๆ คิด รचितธรรม เป็นคำกลอน

⁶² Buddhadāsa. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.298.

⁶³ Buddhadāsa. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.104.

That can possibly teach the dhamma.	ที่พอเป็น คำสอน ไว้แก้หนุ่น
Some is only the saying that is useful	บ้างเป็นเพียง ข้อคติ ที่เป็นคุณ
For the wisdom and the faith in Buddhism.	มุ่งเจือจุน ปัญญา ศรัทธาเทียว
The happiness from dhamma is the profit	บันเทิงธรรม เป็นกำไร อยู่ในตัว
Some poems give happiness, some give sadness	บ้างนำหัว, นำเศร้า, นำหวาดเสียว
Read a line and see the picture, and keep doing it.	อ่านบรรทัด รูปภาพเรื่อย ไปทีเดียว
Each time you read it is full of dhamma.	แต่ละเทียว เหนี่ยวเนื้อธรรม คำทุกตอนฯ

Buddhadāsa stated clearly that the purpose of writing this kind of poems is ‘for the wisdom and faith in Buddhism’, which means his poems aim to stimulate the reader’s mind to think and realize the dhamma that lies between word and finally receive the wisdom of the Buddha – that is – to see the emptiness within all things. Buddhadāsa explained how to use the poem with picture that.

Alternate reading poem and looking at the picture	อ่านกลอนสลับการดูภาพ ⁶⁴
Read one line of the poem and then, look at the picture Stare at it with concentration.	อ่านคำกลอน หนึ่งบรรทัด ดูภาพที่ เพ่งให้ดี มีสติ จักผลิผล
You will receive the taste of dhamma Do not rush or carelessly do it.	คือได้รส แห่งพระธรรม คำกลม อย่าลุลกลน ลวกลกไป ให้ป่วยการ
Read one line of the poem and then, look at the pictures	อ่านคำกลอน หนึ่งบรรทัด ดูภาพที่
There will be many emotions generated At the face, eye, ear, etc. look at them closely	อารมณ์มี มากมาย หลายขนาน ที่ใบหน้า ตา หู ดูนานนาน
They are combined and composed in the poem.	มันประสาน ประสานธรรม ในคำกลอน
Read one line of the poem and then, look at the pictures	อ่านคำกลอน หนึ่งบรรทัด ดูภาพที่
You can see the ultimate truth more clearly than listening to the teacher	ปรมัตถ์ ชัดดี กว่าบอกสอน
But if you just read through the poetry	ถ้าอ่านฟัง ตะลุดไป ไรขึ้นตอน
Even until you are dead, you won’t see the wisdom	จนม้วยมรณ ก็ไม่ชี้ ถึงอรรถ แล ฯ

⁶⁴ Buddhadāsa. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.107.

It is important to note that in reading the poem with picture, Buddhādāsa suggested, we need to read only one line then look at the picture; then continue reading further. The picture will help the reader feel the depth of the poem and absorb what the poem trying to communicate. In other word, the picture is the guideline for the reader of how to interpret the poem, as in the poem ‘the sound of one hand clapping, for example:

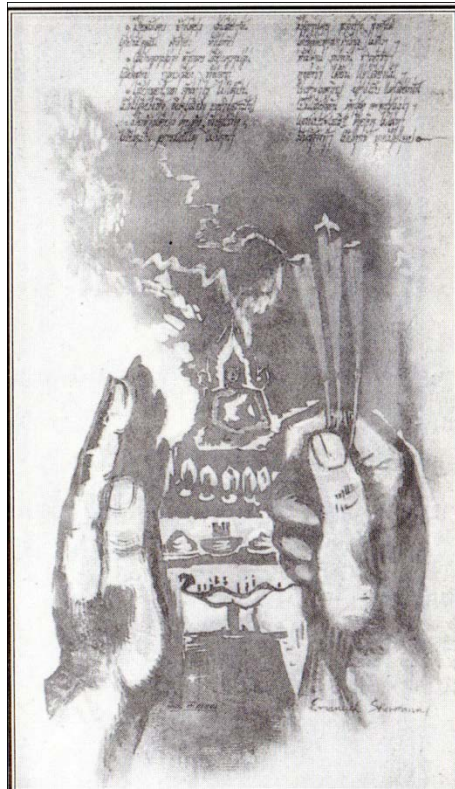
The sound of one hand clapping

I clap my one hand and it is very loud
 But you need two hands to clap
 My clapping can be heard around the world.
 Your clapping can be heard only some meters
 The sound of happiness covers up
 the sound of business.
 It also gives more happiness.
 The sound of peace is louder.
 than other sounds on earth
 My ears can only hear such sound.
 No matter how loud the sound of the earth,
 I cannot hear
 Because my ear can only perceive-
 the sound of peace
 It is the sound that is different
 from the other normal sounds.
 It is the sound that is so loud
 that cannot be explained.
 Only one handclap can give the sound,
 Just because the mind do not search for it.
 It won't grasp any emotion;
 It always speaks and challenges the suffering.⁶⁵

เสียงมือตบข้างเดียว

มือฉันตบ ข้างเดียว ส่งเสียงลั่น
 มือท่านตบ สองข้าง จึงดังได้
 เสียงมือฉัน ดังก้อง ทั่วโลกภัย
 เสียงมือท่าน ดังไกล ไม่กี่วา
 เสียงความว่าง ดังกลบ เสียงความวุ่น
 ทั้งมีคุณ กว่ากัน ทางหรรษา
 เสียงสงบ กลบเสียง ทั่วโลกา
 หูของข้า ได้ยิน แต่เสียงนั้น.
 เสียงของโลก ดังเท่าไร ไม่ได้ยิน
 เพราะเหตุวิญญานรับ แต่เสียงนั้น -
 เป็นเสียงซึ่ง ผิดเสียง อย่างสามัญ
 เป็นเสียงอัน ดังสุด จะพรรณนา
 มือข้างเดียว ตบดัง ฟังดูเถิด
 แสนประเสริฐ คือจิต ไม่ใฝ่หา
 ไม่ยึดมั่น อารมณใด ไม่นำพา
 มันร้องทำ เย้ยทุกข์ ทุกเมื่อเลย ฯ

⁶⁵Buddhadāsa. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tangsookwamsuk yen. p.117.



From the picture, one hand of the clapper is clapping, while in another hand, he holds the incense. There is a Buddha image in the between the two hands with the candle lights to pay respect to the Buddha. Why Buddhādāsa called this picture one hand clapping? The answer is just because another hand will not clap with the clapping hand. The clapping hand signified the worldly matter that comes to our senses. Another hand that is not clapping signified our senses that will not be touched by the worldly matter. The result of this incident is there will be no generation of feeling, and finally there will be no suffering. The Buddha in the middle means that in order to stop the clapping, one must see the Buddha, or the dhamma of the Buddha, that is, the Buddha is in the emptiness between these hands.

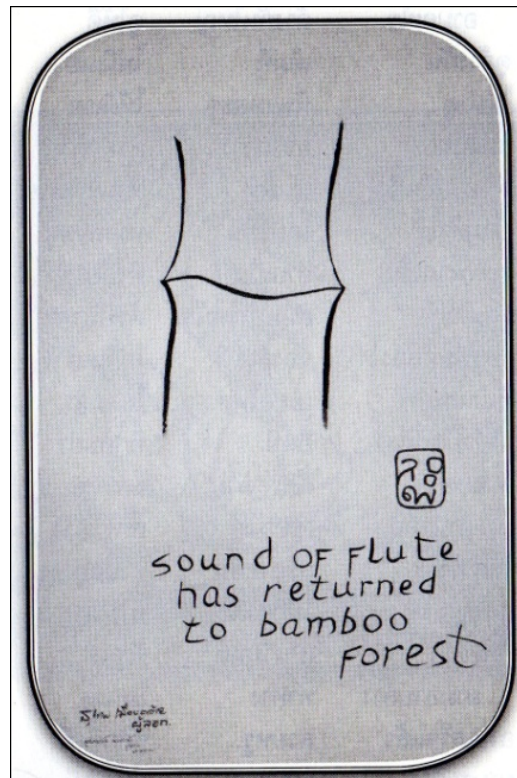
Another interpretation of the poem is; Buddhādāsa used paradox to connote the greatness of the realization of emptiness within all things. He said that in order to hear the sound of one hand clapping, one must possess the empty mind. This sound of one hand clapping is louder, and greater than other sounds in the world, just because it's the sound that resonant in everything on earth. It is the sound of emptiness. The poem suggested that in clapping one hand, we can hear nothing; that is to say, on the other hand, we can hear the emptiness, and this sound of emptiness can be heard from everything in the world. The mind that can hear the emptiness is the mind that is empty; or the mind that is awakened by the realization of the emptiness of the world.

The picture also arouses us to think about what the poem has said. In the picture, the person is clapping one hand, while his other hand is holding the stick, which symbolizes the dhamma. In between the hands there is a Buddha image and the set for venerate the Buddha. This picture is telling us that no matter what action we are doing, what really important is the mind that is controlling such action. In this case, instead of the empty space between the hands, Buddhādāsa wanted us to see the dhamma in such emptiness. This is the puzzle to think and interpret.

Another example of picture-poem is ‘the Sound of Flute has Returned to Bamboo Forest’:

The Sound of Flute has returned to bamboo forest	เสียงขลุ่ยกลับมาทอไม้⁶⁶
“The Sound of the flute has returned to bamboo forest”	“เสียงขลุ่ยหวน กลับมา ทอไม้
Think until you understand the word.	จงคิดให้ เห็นควา ตามนี้หนอ
That a single bamboo is cut from the bamboo forest	ว่าไม้ลำ ตัดไป จากไม้ทอ
Then it is made as a flute which makes the sound	ทำขลุ่ยทอ เป่าได้ เป็นเสียงมา
The sound of flute then has returned to bamboo forest.	เสียงก็หวน กลับมา ทอไม้
The more it is blown, the faster it runs.	เป่าเท่าไร กลับกัน เท่านั้นหนา
Just like the vapor from the sea turns into the cloud,	เหมือนไอน้ำ จากทะเล เป็นเมฆา
Then it becomes rain and falls back to the sea.	กลายเป็นฝน กลับมา สู่ทะเล
Just like human desire is the cause of birth,	เหมือนตัณหา พาคน ดันพิภพ
Human will eventually go back to the pure land.	พอสิ้นฤทธิ์ ก็ระลอบ หนทางเห
They will not go to other places.	วังมาสู่ แดนวิสุทธิ หยุดเกรา
	ไม่เถล ไถลไป ที่ไหนเลย
All the chaos will return to the emptiness.	“อันความวุ่น วังมา หาความว่าง”
There is no other way, my friend.	ไม่มีทาง ไปไหน สหายเอ๋ย
Finally, it will end just like before.	ในที่สุด ก็ต้องหยุด เหมือนอย่างเคย
This stillness is the core of dhamma.	ความหยุดเฉย เป็นเนื้อแท้ แก่ธรรมแล

⁶⁶ Buddhādāsa. Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.121.



Buddhadāsa used this image to tell us about the concept of 'pure mind.' In this case he used the sound of flute that is produced from a bamboo. He said that no matter how the player blow the flute, the sound of the flute always returned to the bamboo forest; just like the sea water that become the vapor, and finally return as the rain into the sea. Therefore, he concluded that emptiness is just like the sound of the flute and the water, which finally need to return to its original condition - in this case, the pure mind. Buddhadāsa added that no matter how far we have run, finally we need to go back to the stillness. This is the heart of dhamma.

The picture also connotes the same feeling. Buddhadāsa used a single piece of bamboo in the picture; connote the solitude of human being. But at the same time, it also suggests the stillness. At this point it depends on the reader to interpret the picture and make their own understanding of both the picture and the poem. This is a good exercise for the mind of the reader.

Another interpretation of this poem is, this is the picture of a bamboo tree. The bamboo tree is now cut and made as a flute; the bamboo tree is no more. The sound of flute then goes back to the bamboo tree; this means the sound will finally disappear just like the tree. The sound will go back to nothingness just like the beginning. The sound then signified the cycle of birth and death. When there is birth, there will be death. This is inevitable.

Another great poem that shows the characteristic of poem with picture that the picture helps the reader to understand the poem more in detail is 'sit like a tongue in the serpent mouth.'

Sit like a tongue in the serpent mouth

The eye that is still able to see –

Is used to see and solve the problem

How to live with no suffering in this world?

Thoroughly think and contemplate.

Sit like a tongue in the serpent mouth,

Which will never be hit by the fang.

To live in this world, do not touch the worldly fang

This is the secret, do not be confused.

Just like sitting in the serpent mouth –

But you do not be touched by its fang;

When you sit in the comfortable room in the house –

Control the mind, just like the Buddha have done.

Live in the world but do not be touched

By the way of the world.

Do not be touched by the karma, and the suffering.

If you have eyes, come and see the truth.

And try to practice it, starting from now on.

อยู่ให้เหมือนลิ้นงูในปากงู⁶⁷

นั้นลูกตา มองเห็น ไม่เห็นหมัน

เขาใช้มัน เล็งแล แก้ปัญหา

อยู่ในโลก อย่างไร ไม่ทรมาน

พิจารณา ตรองไป ให้จบดี

อยู่ให้เหมือน ลิ้นงู ในปากงู

ไม่เคยถูก เขี่ยวง อยู่สุขศรี

อยู่ในโลก ไม่เคยถูก เขี่ยวโลก็ย

เป็นเช่นนี้ คุบมา อย่าพ่นเฟื่อน

คิดดูบ้าง นั่งได้ ในปากงู

ก็ไม่ถูก เขี่ยวง อยู่เสมื่อน

นั่งในห้อง แสนสบาย ภายในเรือน

มีเค้าเงื่อน เหมือนพระ ภควันต์

อยู่ในโลก ไม่กระทบ โลกธรรม

อยู่เหนือกรรม เหนือทุกข์ เป็นสุขสันต์

ใครมีตา รีบเคารพ นบนอบพลัน

รีบพากัน ทำตาม ยามนี้เอยข



⁶⁷ Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu. Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.127.

From the poem above, we can identify two aspects of life people in the society must understand in order to live pleasantly in the society; one is as a citizen who must conform the rules of the society, another is as an individual who needs to understand the reality of the world. The understanding of the ultimate truth will train our mind to stop clinging to the self – the same self that potentially lead us to the suffering. But as a member of the society we need to follow its rules, even if those rules are based on assumption in the sense of the religion.

This poem is telling us that, in order to live happily, we do not need to separate ourselves from the society. However, we need to integrate into the society and lead our normal life. The point is we need to ‘see’ and, especially, understand the nature of the world since if we can see the nature of the world, nothing can hurt or affect us.

The picture that Buddhādāsa used to come with this poem is the picture of a serpent that has the Buddha sits on its tongue. This implies even that the Buddha himself has not separated himself from the society; rather he still lives and communicates to the world, but with the awareness of the way the world is. The fang and teeth of the snake are the ‘*lokadhamma*’ or the normal condition of the world, which includes lucky, unlucky, honor, unhonor, praised, gossip, happiness, and suffering. The person who sits in the snake mouth but is not affected by its fang and teeth, then, is the person who is not affected by the dhamma of the world. Another picture is the eye that has a person paying respect to the Buddha. This eye is the eye that can see the dhamma, or *dhammajakkhu* - that is the eye that can see emptiness within all things. It is clear from this picture that Buddhādāsa tried to let the reader compare these two pictures and make the connection between them.

We can see that the using of picture together with the poem creates a good puzzle for the reader to resolve. It helps the reader understand more about what Buddhādāsa want them to see. It is the guideline to the poem, which allows the reader to see the same picture the poet wants them to see. Apart from the picture poem, the conversation technique is another artistic technique that Buddhādāsa applied to his poetry effectively.

4.3.3.2 Artistic Technique: Conversation Poem

Another technique that Buddhādāsa used is the conversation technique. This type of poetry imitates the conversation between two people; one is questioning and another is answering. This technique presupposes the question the reader of the poem may have during the reading and it gives the answer to the questions. One example of this type of poem is ‘born as human being,’

Born as Human being**เกิดให้เป็นมนุษย์**

“How can we be born as human beings?”

เกิดอย่างไรเกิดให้ได้เป็นมนุษย์?

It is to do our best in our duties!

เพราะทำได้เอกอุตมในหน้าที่!

What do you mean by “do our best”?

เอกอุตมนั้นอย่างไรกันบอกฉันที?

Until there is no mistake for the ghost to laugh at us! คือไม่มีช่องโหว่ให้ฮา!

Is it possible to make everyone like our work?

ให้ใครชมทุกคนไปได้หรือนี่?

Only for them not to look down on us!

เอาเพียงที่ใครไม่หยันเท่านั้นหนา!

How can that be honored by others?

เพียงเท่านั้นมีเกียรติอะไรมา?

Look! It is not for the disgusting honor!

ไม่ได้ว่าทำเพื่อเกียรติ; น่าเกลียด ,ดู!

If you are a man without honor,

เป็นมนุษย์ไม่มีเกียรติเป็นทำไม?

why should you be a man?

เป็นได้ใหญ่กว่ามีเกียรติก็มีอยู่ !

There is other way that is better than

เป็นอะไรเป็นอย่างไรผมใครรู้?

A man with honor!

ไม่เมาเกียรติมันยิ่งหรุอยู่นิรันดร์ !

What is that? How can that be? I want to know.

Do not cling to honor, you will live forever! ⁶⁸

In this poetry, Buddhādāsa said that to be human is to do the human duty; even though nobody appreciated what we did, and it leads to no honor. He said in this poem that to abandon the honor in this world, one may find the eternal life. The main idea of this poem is to play with the concept of honor; that is, someone might think the value of being human is to be respected by others, to be honored by others; but Buddhādāsa taught us that the value of being human is actually to leave those honor behind; since this honor pins us to this world. The main idea of this poetry is also links to the concept of emptiness.

Not only Buddhādāsa mentioned about being human being, he also taught about what is the monkhood, in the poem ‘monkhood’ he said:

Another example of conversation techniques is in the poem ‘who should be spoken to?’

Who should be spoken to**จะ พูด กะ ใคร ดี? ⁶⁹**

“Contemplated, contemplating, good contemplate!

“ใคร่ครวญแล้ว ใคร่ครวญไป ใคร่ครวญดี

Is to see that our beloved body will decay in years.

ไม่กี่ปี ภายที่รัก จักสลาย

What is now body will become what is not the body. ที่เป็นกาย จักเปลี่ยนไป ไม่เป็นกาย

Then we should do something beneficial for others.” ควรชวนชวาย ทำอะไร ไว้เป็นคุณ?”

⁶⁸ Buddhādāsa. Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.244.

⁶⁹ Buddhādāsa. Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.387.

“Who and how will it be the benefit?”	“จักเป็นคุณ แก่ใคร อย่างไรกัน
Since people nowadays do not have the taste of art.	คนทุกวัน ไม่มีใจ วิสัยสุนทร
They are tired of the word ‘virtue’	เขาระอา กันหนักหนา คำว่า “บุญ”
They are stressfully collecting ‘eating-pleasure-honor.’	มุ่งกักตุน กิน-กาม-เกียรติ จนเครียดใจ
“Oh! I only have the dhamma legacy-	เอ้อ! เรามี แต่มรดก พระธรรม
That has been passed on since the time of the Buddha	ที่สืบนำ มาตั้งแต่ พุทธสมัย
Now I do not know who should I teach this dhamma	ในบัดนี้ มีรู้ที่ สอนใจใคร
Or may I need to boisterously speak it.	เลยเอาไว้ พูดปาวปาว เท่านั้นกระมัง

This poem simulates the conversation between two people. One is presumably a monk or a teacher who by his duty has to teach dhamma. Another is the person who represents the normal people in the society. This poem portrayed the attitude of general people in the society toward dhamma, which is they are bored and think dhamma is tiring. They don't want to know dhamma because they think it is useless. This poem also pointed out the feeling of the teacher who is hopeless for the society since he said he only nowadays ‘boisterously speak’ the dhamma. The feeling and the tone of the poem is just like the normal conversation but when we think deeper than the surface, we can see the bigger content that is hidden in the poem – that is, the poem is criticizing people in the society for both the monks and the lay people. The conversation technique makes the hard content seems to be lighter- which allows the reader to think more on their own.

4.3.3.3 Artistic Technique: The Metaphor

The metaphor is another artistic technique that is used by all writers and thinkers. The metaphor challenges the reader to think and link the individual experience the reader have with the metaphor to what the metaphor trying to compare. The advantage of the metaphor is it can explain the condition and characteristic of one thing by comparing and linking with the condition and characteristic of other things that the reader might be more familiar.

Metaphor is a technique that allows the reader to think and interpret the poetry by using one's own experience relating the metaphor. The process of linking the metaphor to the main idea the poet wants to communicate enables the poetry to be an upāya. And when the reader can solve the mystery of the metaphor, the more understanding of the content is created and this leads to the appreciation of the poem and established the connection between the reader and the poem itself.

We have discussed in great detail about metaphor in the section that described imagery. Apart from those metaphors that appeared in the Tipitaka, Buddhādāsa also invented his own metaphor in his poetry. For example in the poem ‘The Taste of Heaven is Addictive’:

The taste of Heaven is addictive

The schools of thinking cause us headache.
 You really need to get away from them.
 The stories of gods, or heaven, are like rubber-
 Which sticks in the middle of the mind.
 They are the golden cage that captures us
 It is disgusting, but we, instead, love it.
 The cessation is not sweet like the sugar trees
 It is not sparkling like the diamonds.
 The taste of heaven is addictive, and poisonous.
 We are trapped in it, but we don’t notice,
 Just like crab and shell,
 Which always stay in the hole,
 Never know about the little bird,
 That flies freely in the endless sky.⁷⁰

รสสวรรค์นั้นเสพติด

อันลัทธิ นานา นำเวียนหัว
 จงถอนตัว ออกมา เสียให้ห่าง
 เรื่องพระเจ้า เรื่องสวรรค์ นั้นเหมือนยาง
 เป็นตังเหนียว กั้นทาง ดวงวิญญาณ
 เป็นกรงทอง จงจำ จำกัดเขต
 นำทุเรศ กลับรัก เป็นหลักฐาน
 ความหลุดพ้น ไซ่อร่อย เช่นอ้อยตาล
 ทั้งไม่ลาน ตาพราว ราวเพชรพลอย
 รสสวรรค์ นั้นเสพติด พิษอม่ง
 ถูกกักขัง ก็ไม่รู้ เหมือนปูหอย
 อยู่แต่รู มิได้รู้ เรืองนกน้อย
 ที่บินล่อน เวหา ว่าปานใด ฯ

The main idea of this poetry is to let go of the happiness that one obsessed in this world. Buddhādāsa used the image of ‘crab and shell’ - that stayed in the hole and they both have a strong body cover that disable them to know anything about the outside world - to represent the people who addict to the happiness in this world but they don’t realize that the happiness they are having now will disappear and change into suffering in the future. The image of the golden cage is also used to represent the limitation that happiness in this world can give. Happiness is a precious cage that locks us from our ultimate freedom. On the other hand, the little bird that is not trapped in any cage and flies freely in the sky represents that one that can let go of such happiness of this world and find the eternal happiness of nibbāna.

Another example of metaphor that Buddhādāsa has created is the metaphor of ‘the boss:’

⁷⁰Buddhādāsa. Buddhādāsadharmkamklon: sen tang sookwamsuk yen.p.158.

The Boss

Our first boss is the mouth and stomach.
 When he is demanding, we need to hurry to find-
 And serve him in no time.
 His name is the ‘eating boss’
 Our second boss is the flesh.
 He will not listen to anybody,
 Only search for pleasure.
 From the flesh and sexual affair.
 His name is the ‘pleasure boss’
 Our third boss is the head and ear-
 Which always praise themselves.
 They raised their tail faster than the monkey.
 His name is the ‘honor boss’.

นายเหนือหัว ⁷¹

นายของตน คนที่หนึ่ง คือท้องปาก
 ยามท่านอยาก ท่านเรียกร้อง ต้องรีบหา
 มาป้อนท่าน ให้ทัน แก่เวลา
 ท่านชื่อว่า “นายกิน” เก่งดี
 นายของตน คนที่สอง คือเนื้อหนัง
 ท่านไม่ฟัง เสียงใคร ใฝ่เสียดี
 แต่ในเรื่อง นุ่มเนื้อ เหยื่อโลกีย์
 ชื่อท่านมี ว่า “นายกาม” ตะกลามจริง
 นายของตน คนที่สาม คือ หู หัว
 ใฝ่ยกตัว เรื่อยไป คล้ำผีสิง
 ทั้งยกหาง แกวงไกว ไวกว่าลิง
 มีชื่อพริ้ง ว่า “นายเกียรติ” ใครเกลียดเอย

The boss, in general understanding is the one who can control and order us. Buddhādāsa suggested here that people nowadays are under the power of three bosses; ‘the eating boss,’ ‘the pleasure boss,’ ‘the honor boss.’ These three bosses have a lot of influence in controlling our life. To have the boss means that you do not have freedom to do whatever you like to do. Then Buddhādāsa implied, we need to escape from the power of these bosses in order for ourselves to be our own boss. To live freely, untouched by the way of the world is actually to attain the state of *nibbāna*.

Another example of using metaphor in Buddhādāsa’s poetry is the ‘dhamma in mangosteen.’ The poem said;

Dhamma in mangosteen

A monkey eat the mangosteen with the harsh skin
 It acts wildly by throwing things away.
 Another monkey has more wisdom,
 He removes the skin and eats the fresh inside.

มังคุดธรรม

ไอ้จ๋อหนึ่ง กัดมังคุด ทั้งเปลือกฝาด
 ก็อาละวาด ขว้างทิ้ง กลิ้งหลุนหลุน
 ไอ้จ๋อหนึ่ง มีปัญญา รู้ค่าคุณ
 หยิบบิดุน กินเนื้อใน ชื่นใจลิง

⁷¹ Buddhādāsa. Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.373.

The foolish bites religion and says it is harsh.	คนโง่งับ ศาสนา ร้องว่าฝาด
They act wildly just like there is a ghost inside.	ก็อาละวาด โกรธใจ คล้ายผีสิง
Learned people dig the real dhamma	สัตบุรุษ ขุดพระธรรม ได้ความจริง
They drink the great taste of dhamma.	ดื่มธรรมยิ่ง ดื่มสุข ทุกวันคืน
Monkey or man can both be foolish.	ลิงหรือคน ก็วิกล ได้ด้วยกัน
Eat wisely, it is easier to eat.	กลืนถูกมัน ก็กลืนคล่อง ไม่ต้องฝืน
Eat with skin, they will die on their feet.	กลืนทั้งเปลือก ตาเหลือก ตายทั้งยืน
Eat the flesh inside, they will taste the good dhamma	กลืนเนื้อใน ชื่นมื่น รื่นเริงธรรม ⁷²

Buddhadāsa used the mangosteen as a metaphor for the religion. Contemporary religion is covered with many things that are not essential for attaining dhamma. The skin of the mangosteen is the cover of religion that is not necessary for attaining *nibbāna*. Buddhadāsa portrayed the image of two monkeys which one eats the mangosteen with its skin, another eats by removing the skin. The monkey represents human who are ignorance and stubborn. To taste the real dhamma, then, one must remove all the cover, or the skin of the mangosteen.

Another poem as an example of using metaphor in Buddhadāsa's poetry is 'a walking stick' the poem said:

A walking stick

My walking stick is very good,
 In a way that it helps the elders walk easier.
 When staggering, it helps me keep my balance.
 When standing, it helps me save my energy.
 When danger animal comes nearby,
 I can use it to protect myself.
 It saves my invaluable life.
 But other people do not see its value.
 They think it is a useless thing, easy to find.
 Never honor it, never think about it.
 People are, then, living without morality.
 Because they insult the walking stick
 Which represents dhamma.⁷³

ไม้เท้า

อันไม้เท้า ราคานี้มันดีเหลือ
 ช่วยจุนเจือ คนแก่ ไม่แยแสเหว
 ยามชวอนเซ อาศัยได้ ไม่ล้มเลย
 ยามยืนเฉย จุนกาย ไม่เหนื่อยแรงแ
 เมื่อยามมี สัตว์ร้าย ใกล้เข้ามา
 ยังกันท่า ไว้ได้ ไม่ต้องแยง
 ช่วยป้องกัน ชีวา ราคาแพง
 แต่คนแก๊ง เหี้ยมดค่ามัน ชี้คว้านครอง
 เห็นเป็นของ ไร้ค่า หาได้ง่าย
 ไม่เคยให้ เกียรติมัน ชื่นหอมขมของ
 คนจึงไร้ ศีลธรรม เพราะล้าพอง
 เหี้ยมดค่าของ "ไม้เท้า" ซึ่งเท่ากับธรรม

⁷² Buddhadāsa. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.182.

⁷³ Buddhadāsa. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.194.

A walking stick in the poetry is the dhamma, as Buddhādāsa stated clearly in the last line of the poem. He recalled the usefulness of the walking stick as it supports people while walking and while standing, which implied that dhamma, is always helping people, supporting people, and accompanying people. It even prevents people from the danger, and the life and death incident. However, human being does not see the value of dhamma and ‘insults’ it. Buddhādāsa wrote this poetry in order for the reader to see the usefulness and value of dhamma. Then after realizing its value, this dhamma will finally lead the way to the practice.

4.3.3.4 Artistic Technique: Provocation

Another technique that Buddhādāsa used to communicate his teaching of emptiness is the provocative question. This technique will ask the question to the reader with no intention to receiving the answer back. Rather the question arouses the reader to answer the question in their mind. It is a good way to let the reader think and interpret the intention of the poet. One example says,

Buddhadāsa shall not die

Buddhadāsa shall live forever,
Even when my body is dead
It is normal for the body to be dead
It is the law of nature and time
Buddhadāsa will live forever,
Good or bad, I will live with the religion
As I have devoted this body and mind to it,
By the order of the Buddha, I won't stop
Buddhadāsa still lives forever,
In order to serve my fellow human beings-
With the dhamma advertising.
Can you see, my fellow, what is really dead?

พุทธทาสจักไม่ตาย⁷⁴

พุทธทาส จักอยู่ไป ไม่มีตาย
แม้ร่างกาย จะดับไป ไม่พังเสียง
ร่างกายเป็น ร่างกายไป ไม่ล้มเอียง
นั่นเป็นเพียง สิ่งเปลี่ยนไป ในเวลา
พุทธทาส คงอยู่ไป ไม่มีตาย
ถึงดีร้าย ก็คงอยู่ คู่ศาสนา
สมกับมอบ กายใจ รับใช้มา
ตามบัญชา องค์พระพุทธรูป ไม่หยุดเลย.
พุทธทาส ยังอยู่ไป ไม่มีตาย
อยู่รับใช้ เพื่อนมนุษย์ ไม่หยุดเลย
ด้วยธรรมโฆษณ์ ตามที่วาง ไว้อย่างเคย
ใช้เพื่อนเอ๋ย มองเห็นไหม อะไรตาย ฯ

In the poem “Buddhadāsa shall live forever.” Buddhādāsa played with the world live and death; the cessation and eternal, to arouse the reader intention. He said that when he died the only thing that died with him was his body; but his works still live. Within his works lies his intention to serve the Buddha, as his name ‘Buddhadāsa’ means the servant of the Buddha. Buddhādāsa called his teaching ‘dhammaghosa’ or ‘dhamma advertising’, which is the revolutionary way in teaching dhamma especially at the time when Thai society still see the monk institution as the

⁷⁴Buddhadāsa. Buddhadāsadharmkamklon: sen tang sookwamsuk yen. p.210.

passive preacher and need to be preached only in the temple on only certain occasions. Buddhādāsa said that even his body is dead; the dhamma of the Buddha will live on. The death of Buddhādāsa's body is not the real dead because it will wake the public interest for Buddha teaching. What is really dead should be the suffering and the desire. This poem shows Buddhādāsa's ultimate intention for promoting Buddhism in the society.

Blinded, rocky turtle

“Oh turtle, I want to ask you,
After I see you, I want to laugh;
Your body is made of rock, your eyes are blinded
You are carrying dhamma books,
But you do not know what they are.”
“Oh human, I will speak to your ear.
I am, myself, indeed the dhamma!
Your dhamma is in the books,
But my dhamma is in myself.
My rock body is as cool as *nibbāna*.
And it kills ignorance, why you laugh at that?
The blindness is the perfect peacefulness.
It is the emptiness that resides in everything. เป็นความว่าง มีประจำ อยู่ทั่วไป
The dhamma books are not the dhamma.
Just think, oh human, do not be confused.
Have you ever taste the real dhamma?
Or you can only grab the dhamma book.

เต่าหินตาบอด⁷⁵

“โอ้ ! เต่าเอ๋ย ขอถาม ความสั๊กอย่าง
ดูท่าทาง ของเต่า เรานึกขำ
ตัวเป็นหิน ตาก็บอด ยอดเวรกรรม
มีพระธรรม อยู่บนหลัง ยังไม่รู้”
“มนุษย์เอ๋ย เราจะบอก กรอกหูเจ้า
ตัวเราเอง แหะละคือธรรม ต๋าตาอยู่
ธรรมของเจ้า คือตำรา บ้าพอดู
ธรรมของตู คือตัวตู อยู่ที่ธรรม
ที่เป็นหิน หมายถึงเย็น อย่างนิพพาน
และประหาร อวิชชา ไยว่าขำ
ความหนวกบอด ยอดสงบ ลบล้างกรรม
อันตำรา นั้นมิใช่ พระธรรมเลย
คิดดูเถิด คนเอ๋ย อย่าโง่
จะมีธรรม กันบ้าง ช่างอะไร
คว้าเอาไว้ แต่คัมภีร์ ดีเหลือเอ๋ย

This poem deals with the question of what is the real dhamma. It starts with a human being asked the turtle about the dhamma book that the turtle is carrying. He implied that the turtle has the dhamma with itself but the turtle did not understand dhamma at all. But surprisingly, the turtle asked the human back about what is the real definition of dhamma. This question arouses our mind to think that the real dhamma is not the textbook that the turtle is carrying. It is the turtle itself that is the dhamma. Buddhādāsa explained in the poem that the rocky turtle symbolized the cool state of *nibbāna*. The blindness symbolized the ability to escape, to be untouched by the world, and not accepting any worldly sense that comes across. The deafness is the ability to neglect the worldly sounds and matters. And the most important thing, Buddhādāsa suggested, is that, the dhamma can be achieved only through practicing dhamma, not by reading the dhamma book.

⁷⁵ Buddhādāsa. Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.129.

4.3.3.5 Artistic Technique: Parable

Another characteristic of Buddhādāsa's poetry is the use of the story to teach dhamma. In many occasion, Buddhādāsa composed the stories setting the situation for the reader to solve the problem the situation demands. Sometimes the story reveals the surprise answer to some situation which arouses the reader to think along. One example is the poem 'sharpen the brick into the mirror':

Sharpen the brick into the mirror

A student asked a teacher with anxiety that

“how can I attain nibbāna?”

“Oh it is so easy, I will tell you -

It is sharpening the brick into the mirror”

“My teacher, other would think we are crazy-

Because the task you ask is impossible.

“This is it! It is teaching us-

To stop searching, and stop our craziness.

No one can sharpen the brick into the mirror-

You understand it very well.

Same as nibbāna, it can be reached by not going.

Just get rid of the self, you will see nibbāna.

If you sharpen the brick, do it until nothing left;

Until there is no cause for rebirth in the cycle.

We need to sharpen the business into the emptiness. ฝนความวุ่น เป็นความว่าง อย่างเปรียบเทียบ

You are crazy if you sharpen the brick into the mirror ฝนอิฐด้าน ให้เป็นเงา เราบ้าเองฯ”⁷⁶

ฝนอิฐเป็นกระจกเงา

ศิษย์วอนถาม อาจารย์ ฐานรั้นใจ

“ทำอย่างไร ไปนิพพาน อาจารย์ขา”

“อ้อมมันง่าย นึกอะไร บอกให้หนา

คือคำว่า ฝนอิฐ เป็นกระจกเงา”

“อาจารย์ครับ เขาคงว่า เราบ้าใหญ่

แม้ฝนไป ฝนไป ก็ตายเปล่า

“นั่นแหละเนื้อ มันสอนให้ แล้วไม่เบา

ว่าให้เรา หยุดหา หยุดบ้าไป”

ไม่มีใคร ฝนอิฐ เป็นกระจก

ไม่ต้องยก มากล่าว เข้าใจไหม

นิพพานนั้น ถึงได้ เพราะไม่ไป

หมดตนไซ้ร่ว่างเห็น เป็นนิพพาน.

ถ้าฝนอิฐ ก็ฝนให้ ไม่มีเหลือ

ไม่มีเชื้อ เวียนไป ในสงสาร

The poem above tells the story of a teacher with his students having a conversation about *nibbāna*. The first student asked how to reach *nibbāna*. The teacher answered with the impossible statement of sharpening the brick into the mirror.

At first level, this poem is a pun to one of Thai well known saying ‘sharpen a rock into a needle’ meaning that one need to try hard until he accomplished. In this poem, the teaching saying ‘sharpen the brick into a mirror’ may be interpreted in the first level that he wants his student to practice hard, just like sharpening a brick. He wants his students to do it until the brick is all gone, then there will be emptiness. After trying hard, his student will not get a mirror as the teacher said, but he will get emptiness. This is the shallow level of interpretation.

⁷⁶Buddhadāsa. Buddhadāsadharmkamklon: sen tang sookwamsuk yen. p.137.

Moreover, the deeper level of this poem is the teacher is sarcastic. Sharpen the brick into the mirror is impossible. The teacher wants his student to understand that if it is impossible, then he needs to stop doing it. The teacher meant by this saying that we should not do anything that is not worth doing. He is teaching us to stop trying to attain *nibbāna*. Stopping is the practicing of dhamma. Buddhādāsa implied from this story that the will to reach *nibbāna* makes human being get stuck to this world. Reaching *nibbāna* itself is one of the desires that need to get rid of. This will to attain *nibbāna* stop us to achieving it.

From the poem we can see that the teacher is the representative of the dhamma itself. The student signifies the general people who seek the happiness from dhamma. The action of sharpen the brick into the mirror symbolized the wrong action that people are trying to do to get to the happiness. But Buddhādāsa suggested in the poem that in order to get to the happiness; it is not about what action people should do, but it is mainly about the attitude when people are doing such action. He maintained that if we can do everything with empty mind, everything can lead to the happiness.

Another poem that is used the parable, for example is ‘the fool of the wise’

The fool of smart person

A baby has swallowed a coin.
The mother then pours the acid into her baby throat-
As she thought the acid will melt the metal.
The result, I think you can guess.
This is a sudden wisdom,
Without the control of concentration.
It turns out to be the foolish wisdom.
If the concentration comes soon enough
Then it should be safe.
The fool can appear in the wisdom-
Only if it lacks concentration.
No worry, it will come out
And kill its owner.
Practice the concentration, all the wise.

ความโง่ของปัญญา⁷⁷

ลูกอ่อน กลิ้นสตาจค์ ค้างติดคอ
นางแม่หล่อ น้ำกรดตรง ลงแก้ไข
ว่าละลาย โลหะหมด แล้วปลอดภัย
ผลอย่างไร เชื่อว่าตาย ได้ด้วยกัน
นี่แหละหนา ปัญญา มาพรวดพรวด
เพราะสติ มั่นขาด ก็ผวนผัน
กลายเป็นโง่ ในปัญญา ขึ้นมาพลัน
ถ้าสติ มาทันควัน นั้นปลอดภัย

ความโง่มี ในปัญญา ถ้าขาดสติ
มันอุตริ ออกมา อย่าสงสัย
ฆ่าเจ้าของ ของมัน ให้บรรลัย
มีสติไว้ นหนอ พวกที่ มีปัญญา

⁷⁷ Buddhādāsa. Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen. p.372.

The story is told in the first stanzas. The mother pours the acid into her baby throat in order to melt the coin that her baby has swallowed. Buddhādāsa pointed out that this is the example of the person who have a lot of knowledge but cannot get over the problem. The poem suggested that concentration is an important factor we need to have in order to control ourselves. Without concentration, we can do some silly things, such as, killing our own children just like in the poem. Also Buddhādāsa put into this poem two meaning of the word wisdom. In the worldly language, the wisdom is the cleverness. It is the knowledge that can solve the problem in the worldly way- in this case the knowledge that metal can be melted by the acid. But we need another kind of wisdom, the dhamma wisdom, or the ability to understand the world as it really is. Dhamma wisdom always comes with the concentration, as we have discussed in chapter 3. Therefore, to live happily, Buddhādāsa suggested, we need to possess both kinds of wisdom. But the indispensable wisdom is the dhammic ones.

In conclusion, this chapter tries to identify and explain the technique Buddhādāsa used to create such a complex poetry that has a powerful impact to the reader. There are many artistic techniques that are carefully used by Buddhādāsa in his poetry to create upāya in his poetry which lead to the understanding of the emptiness.

One thing that needs to be mentioned here is, all the poem cited in this paper, as well as most of Buddhādāsa's poetry in general related to the concept of emptiness. Therefore, it is possible to say that all the techniques that Buddhādāsa applied is an attempt to make his poetry an upāya, or skillful means to connote the profound meaning of the emptiness. Buddhādāsa's poetry, then, is a kind of object of contemplation that could lead the reader to the realization and understanding of the emptiness. This is, in another word, the meditative function of Buddhādāsa's poetry.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study aims to illustrate that emptiness is the main focus in Buddhadāsa poetry. His constant use of artistic techniques, such as, imageries, parables and provocative questions, make his poetry an “upāya” or skillful means; to connote the concept of emptiness. Buddhadāsa’s poetry could lead to an awareness of the way things really are; that is, to perceive emptiness in all things.

This study offers textual analysis of Buddhadāsa’s poetry. The poetry used in this study comes from two major sources: the printed version of the book “Hua Kho Dham Nai Kham Klon,” which contained 189 poems, and another printed book called ‘Bot Pra Tham Pra Cham Phab. Apart from these sources, there are a few poems collected from Suan Mokh’s Desktop Calendar. The total number of Buddhadāsa’s poems used in this research is 295 poems.

From the study, it is important to note that there should be three broad meanings of the word *suññatā*, as follows:

First of all, when *suññatā* is taken as a common term, used and understood generally everywhere, without specific reference to Buddhism, it should be interpreted as ‘nothingness,’ or “You can't find any real core,” or “You can't find yourself.” This is called *suññatā* used in everyday colloquial and human parlance.

Secondly, when *sunnatā* is considered as a name for worldly phenomena such as the Five Aggregates, for example “the body is not self,” “feelings are not self,” “perception is not self,” “thought is not self,” and “consciousness is not self.” *Suññatā* in this sense does not mean ‘nothing’, but it means empty of self and what relates to the self.

Thirdly, when *suññatā* is applied to *nibbāna*, it equates *nibbāna* as the ultimate goal of Buddhism. *Nibbāna* in Buddhadāsa’s point of view is something permanent, and transcend space and time as in the definition of asaṅkhata *dhamma*. But its condition is empty. There is no essence of *nibbāna* to grab or cling to. This condition can be conveyed by many words, such as, the Pure Mind, the One Mind, Chit Prapassorn, the Original Mind, and the Empty Mind. Buddhadāsa also emphasized in many of his teaching that the characteristic of *nibbāna* is emptiness.

There are not many differences between the concept of *suññatā* in Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhist point of view. This concept is originally derived from the Tipiṭaka as the Buddha said the world is empty. Theravāda Buddhism uses the word ‘tathatā,’ ‘paṭiccasamuppāda,’ to refer to this concept; while Mahāyāna Buddhism

mainly uses the word *śūññatā* leading by Nāgārajuna. The only difference between these two schools is Mahāyāna expands the definition of emptiness to cover everything in the world, that including the *Buddhabhāva*, or ‘*bodhi*.’

Buddhadāsa, however, thought that the division of Theravāda and Mahāyāna was not the original intension of the Buddha. He thought that there is only one interpretation of dhamma, that is, the Buddha interpretation. Then he taught that dhamma is beyond the separation of schools. Buddhadāsa sought the ‘true dhamma’ from the Buddha, which he called it ‘*Buddhayāna*.’

The concept of emptiness in Buddhadāsa’s teaching follows the framework of the Buddha teaching of such concept as appeared in the Tipiṭaka. His teaching is above the division of Theravāda and Mahāyāna and other existing schools. Buddhadāsa’s teaching of emptiness can be reflected through these four categories;

- 1) empty mind
- 2) The original condition of the mind
- 3) Nibbāna here and now for everyone; and
- 4) The integration of empty mind with daily life

These four categories cover all area of Buddhadāsa’s teaching since Buddhadāsa himself said that all the dhamma connects to emptiness. The only difference is the aspect that each category emphasizes.

When it comes to his poetry, the study also reveals that the concept of emptiness or *śūññatā* is the main focus in Buddhadāsa’s poetry. Buddhadāsa tried to explain the concept of ‘chit wang’ or ‘empty mind’ as the basic underlying nature of human being in some of his poems; and, at the same time, some of the poems deal with the practical way to practice ‘chit wang’ in daily life.

There are 42 poems out of 295 poems studied in this thesis containing the word emptiness. Moreover, 112 poems contain the words which are related to the concept of emptiness as discussed in previous chapters, such as, *nibbāna*, I and mine, pure mind, etc. Combining these poems together, there are 154 poems from 295 poems; more than half of Buddhadāsa’s poetry studied in this thesis, are related to the concept of emptiness by the title of the poems and the words in the content of the poems.

For the content, Buddhadāsa poetry can be grouped into two; poems which explain the concept of emptiness - in the sense that it equates *nibbāna* - and poems that suggest the path to *nibbāna*. There are a number of poems written by Buddhadāsa, which connote the idea of emptiness. These poems define, elaborate, interpret, and give examples of emptiness as an important concept equating it with *nibbāna*; among these are related to the concept of empty mind, and the original

condition of the mind. On the other hands, another main focus of Buddhādāsa's teaching is to practice 'empty mind' in every minute of life. Concentrating on the empty mind is, thus, another way of meditation. Moreover, Buddhādāsa's poetry also point out that the idea of *nibbāna* is here and now for everyone, which implied that *nibbāna* is attainable in this life and is the teaching that all human beings should practice. Therefore, considering the content of Buddhādāsa's poetry, the study reveals that all of the poems in this collection follow the framework of Buddhādāsa's doctrine of emptiness. That is to say, emptiness is the main focus on Buddhādāsa's poetry.

Buddhādāsa intended his poetry, then, to be an object of contemplation. by reading poetry, the audience is practicing Dhamma, both in terms of *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* (precepts, concentration, and wisdom). These dhammas are the three essential factors, known as tri-sikkhā (three fold training), for attaining *nibbāna*. While reading poetry, Buddhādāsa suggested, the reader can practice the three components of tri-sikkhā at the same time

This Three Fold Training (*tri-sikkha*) is reflected in Buddhādāsa's poetry. The morality prepares the physical body for training. It is the primarily means of developing consciousness and concentration. By reading poetry, Buddhādāsa suggested that it is the practice of concentration. Concentration is a key factor for controlling the mind. It will prepare the mind for meditation. The empty mind or 'chit wang' is a very important concept that everybody needs to concentrate. Then the mind will be ready to contemplate on things. Finally, wisdom will appear in the mind and the reader can see things through the eyes that can see emptiness. It is important to note that by reading poetry, Buddhādāsa suggested, one can meditate and contemplate until he can see emptiness in all things. Reading poetry is a way to attain *nibbāna*.

The study also reveals that the artistic elements used by Buddhādāsa in his poetry are used to develop elements of skillful means or "Upāya" in Sanskrit, or 'method.' It can refer to any activity, skill, experience or practice that helps someone toward the realization of enlightenment. Poetic elements help the reader to remember the poem since each type of poetry has its unique rhythm and rhyme; then specific words need to be put in specific position to create the rhythm; and the rhyme is a control factor that links each line of the poetry together and most poetry leaves some space for the reader, or the hearer, to interpret and create individual understanding of the poem. Buddhādāsa pointed out further that dhamma poetry can be used as an object of contemplation.

Apart from the content and function of Buddhādāsa's poetry as the way to connote the concept of emptiness discussed above, another part of this study focus on the artistic technique that Buddhādāsa used to compose his poetry.

The diversity in Buddhādāsa's poems derives from poetic techniques that make his poetry a good puzzle for the reader to unlock its mystery. In order to do that, Buddhādāsa used various techniques in his poetry. The first, and the most prominent, is the use of imagery. Buddhādāsa's poetry creates pictures in the readers mind. These pictures allow the reader to understand more about the underlying characteristic of the contents and finally put the dhamma in the content into practice. The main imagery utilized by Buddhādāsa have roots in the Tipiṭaka, among these are the water image, fire image, arrow image, house image, cave image, and city image.

Another technique is to put pictures with the poem. This set of poetry comes together with pictures that the poem describes. The pictures depict the image that the composer has in his mind and give a hint to the audience. It arouses the audience to pay close attention to the poem about the poem and create a puzzle for the reader to think and interpret.

Another technique that Buddhādāsa used is the conversation technique. This type of poetry imitates the conversation between two people; one is questioning and another is answering. This technique presupposes the questions the reader of the poem may have during the reading and it gives answer to those questions.

Metaphor is another artistic technique that regularly appears in Buddhādāsa's poetry. The use of metaphor challenges the reader to think and link the individual experience the reader have with the metaphor to what the metaphor is trying to compare. The advantage of using metaphor is that it can explain the condition and characteristic of one thing by comparing and linking with the condition and characteristic of other things that the reader might be more familiar.

Provocative question is another technique that Buddhādāsa used to communicate his teaching of emptiness. This technique asks the question to the reader with no intention to receiving the answer back. Rather the question arouses the reader to answer the question in their mind. It is a good way to let the reader think and interpret the intention of the poet.

In his poetry, Buddhādāsa also uses stories to teach dhamma. On many occasions, Buddhādāsa composed the stories setting the situation for the reader to solve the problem the situation demands. Sometimes the story reveals a surprise answer to some situation which arouses the reader to think along.

This study aims provide an analysis of Buddhādāsa's poetry which will help the reader understand Buddhādāsa's concept of emptiness. His poetry is actually 'the path' of truth, of righteousness, of the central law that all of life is united by one characteristic, namely emptiness. Since the Buddha did not leave a static structure of belief that the follower can affirm and be done with. His teaching is an ongoing path, Buddhādāsa poetry then is a map for this journey. The starting point is anywhere, but

as on any road, the scenery – the value, the aspirations, and the understanding of life – changes as we progress. These verses can be read and appreciated simply as wisdom philosophy; as such, they are part of the great literature of the Thai society. But for those who would follow it to the end, the Buddhādāsa's poetry is a sure guide to nothing less than the highest goal life can offer; self-realization and *nibbāna*.

Recommendation

This study paves the way for further study of poetry as a means to teach Dhamma in terms of the mind development and its contemplation. Many others contemporary writers, both layman and monks, are publishing their works in poetry form. Comparison between contemporary poetry authors is another subject that is interesting. Also the emotion in Buddhist Poetry is also an open ocean for future study as emotion is one of the important parts in studying poetry.

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