

Buddhadāsa's Poetry: the Object of Contemplation on Emptiness

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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 Buddhism, the canonical text - the Tripitaka was composed in 'verse' format.

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 are limited by the number of words, 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.

There are some studies relating the using of poetry in the teaching of the Buddha. In 'A study of Patterns and Methods of the Preaching by Thai Sangha in the Present Time' by *Phra Boonchok Chayadhammo (2005)*¹ and 'an Analytical Study of the Buddha's Strategy in the Propagation of Buddhism' by *Songvit Kawosri (Ph.D., 2008.)*²; both studies maintain that poetry is an important method used in presenting and transmitting dharma in Buddhist context both in written literature and verbal communication. The studies also show that dharma poetry has long been used since the time of the Buddha, for example, the Tripitaka was composed in the form of versed 'kāthā.' In addition, the studies also prove that poetry enables the audience to remember the content and helps the monks to correct the mistake as the rhythm of the poetry is the control factor of the content.

For Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, on whom this paper will focus, mentioned the importance of poetry that:

"The word 'kavī'(poetry) does not only mean that the work is composed in verse, however, the work must express some

¹Chayadhammo, Boonchok; Phra.A study of Patterns and Methods of the Preaching by Thai Sangha in the Present Time. Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, 2005.

²Kawosri, Songvit. An Analytical Study of the Buddha's Strategy in the Propagation of Buddhism. Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, 2008.

profound thought, no matter 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 separate process helping the audience remember the poetry fast, easily and eventually.”³

From the quotation above, Apart from the ability to enable the audience to remember the content, Buddhadāsa’s meaning of poetry goes beyond such explicit functions of poetry. We can see that the main focus of poetry in Buddhadāsa’s point of view is the profound idea that is expressed, not the beauty of the word. Good poetry, in this case, does not have to be versed, or fully decorated with imageries. But it needs to communicate some profound meaning.

In the study of poetry in general, there will be two parts that need attention – the content and the technique of composing. In this paper both parts will be discussed but the main point of this paper will focus on the techniques used by Buddhadāsa to make his poetry the object of contemplation on emptiness.

Before going any further, the first thing that needs to be understood is the definition of the word emptiness in Buddhadāsa’s point of view. Buddhadāsa explained that ‘emptiness’ in his sense has the same meaning of the word *suññatā*. The word *suññatā* is “derived from Pāli language. “*Suñña*” means “empty”, “*tā*” means “ness”; “*suññatā*” means emptiness.”⁴

Moreover, Buddhadāsa defined the word emptiness in both worldly language and dharma language. He said,

Emptiness in worldly language - the language of the silly people who haven’t seen dharma or haven’t 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 worldly language, the world of silly people who haven’t seen dharma.

For suññatā or emptiness in dharma 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. There must be no feeling relating to the self and what belongs to the self. This is suññatā in dharma language.”⁵

Emptiness is a means of perceiving the nature of reality in Buddhadāsa’s point of view. When Buddhadāsa said that everything is empty, he meant that nothing has any independently permanent essence; nothing can truly 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. Therefore, emptiness, especially in Buddhadāsa’s point of view, emphasize on the way human being perceive the reality. This emptiness mainly related to the individual experience.

³Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. Far Sang Tang ThammaKod. (Bangkok: Dhammaghosa Studies Project, Sukhaphab Jai, 2004.) p. 284-285.

⁴Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. PhasaKhon – PhasaTham (Worldly language – Dharma language). (Bangkok: Sukhabhabjai, 2007) p.80.

⁵Ibid. p.82.

*“This is the great art of possession:
To possess without holding the fire from hell,
To possess with emptiness,
And see emptiness in the possession.
This is a joyful way of possessing thing.
Let’s possess thing in this way.”⁶*

In this poetry, Buddhādāsa played with the word ‘possess’ and ‘empty.’ In general when we possess things, we think ‘we’ are the owner of the things. This is the normal way of possession. But Buddhādāsa suggested that the right way of possession is to do it without thinking that ‘we’ are the owner of the things. 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 as an illusion is to concentrate our mind; then our awareness and wisdom will lead our mind to think in the right way.

This poem is also an example of how reading Buddhādāsa’s poetry could lead one’s mind into dharma practice. In Buddhādāsa’s teaching, emptiness is a characteristic that the mind should have in order to attain nirvana. Buddhādāsa called the mind that is equipped with the awareness of emptiness as the ‘empty mind.’ Buddhādāsa explained the ‘empty mind’ as the mind that is free from desire, free from the existing of the self. He said that:

“When the mind is free from anything that relates to the concept of the self - which is the great delusion – everything will disappear, there is nothing left, therefore, the mind is empty. 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.”⁷

At this point we can say that the main focus of Buddhādāsa’s teaching is, then, to practice the ‘empty mind’ in every minute of life. Concentrating on the empty mind is, thus, another way of meditations. In one of his poem, Buddhādāsa said:

*For Dharma poetry, it is not necessary-
That the words must be beautiful,
Or the verse is put so finely,
As general poetry do.
Mainly, it needs to convey Dharma,
Clearly, explicitly; first and foremost.
It gives emotional taste of Dharma,
Which will ripen the elevated mind.
The previous habit will be changed;
From melancholy to happiness.
The mind will be strong; not lacking or excessive.*

⁶Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu. Buddhādāsadharmkamklon: sen tang sookwamsuk yen (Buddhādāsa’sPoetry: The Path to the Cool Happiness). (Bangkok: Sukkhabhabjai, 2010), p.74. Line 16-21.

⁷Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu. ChumnumDhammaBanyayRueng Chit Wang (A Collection of the Preaching about Empty Mind”). Bangkok: Arunwittaya, 1995. pp.112-113.

*Please, taste the dharma, not the beauty.*⁸

The poem states clearly that the main purpose of Buddhadāsa's poetry is to convey dharma and 'change' the perception of the reader. He explained further in another occasion 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 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.”*⁹

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, samādhi, and paññā (precepts, concentration, and wisdom), which are the three essential factors, known as tri-sikkhā (three ways of studying), for attaining Nirvana. It is interesting that Buddhadāsa pointed out in this quotation that by reading his poetry, the reader can practice the three components of tri-sikkhā at the same time and this implies that reading and contemplating on the poetry may be one way to attain Nirvana.

In general modern Buddhist teaching, the meditation techniques can be classified into two levels, the samatha – practice that aims for the concentration, and the vipassanā – practice that aims for the wisdom. Buddhadāsa maintained that both samatha and vipassanā meditation is not the right way to attain nirvana, because in the time of the Buddha, there was no such classification. The poem 'Vipassanā Study' said:

*The study of vipassanā happened later.
There is no such word in the Pāli of the Buddha
There is no samatha or vipassanā.
There is only the dharma practice.
Because we cannot stand the suffering,
So we have to leave the house for the peace
Lead the life according to its activity,
In order to see the nirvana.*¹⁰

The poem above mentioned that the aim for every dharma practice is to attain nirvana. It is above the classification of samatha or vipassanā, which happened later after the time of the Buddha. However, in order to prove that Buddhadāsa's poetry can be regarded as an object of contemplation. The classification of samathā and vipassanā's needed to be discussed.

Samatha is the feeling of concentration. P. A. Payutto said that “*Samatha in the easiest way means peace, but in generally usage it means the way of the mind to have*

⁸Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. Buddhadāsadharmkamklon: sen tang sookwamsuk yen (Buddhadāsa's Poetry: The Path to the Cool Happiness). (Bangkok: Sukkhabhabjai, 2010), Introduction.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. Buddhadāsadharmkamklon: sen tang sookwamsuk yen (Buddhadāsa's Poetry: The Path to the Cool Happiness). (Bangkok: Sukkhabhabjai, 2010), p.54.

peace; or to concentrate the mind. Sometimes it can refer to the concentration itself. In fact, the meaning of samatha is the concentration.”

Buddhadāsa taught that reading poetry is the origin of concentration. In his poem ‘Reading Poetry is the Origin of Concentration’ he said:

*Each of this dharma poetry can be used-
As an object to create the concentration.
Only by reading a poem a day
And contemplate until you see the truth - the general truth.
If it is deeply hidden, and you cannot see it,
You need to stare at it, just like making a hole on the cliff
Hit it hard with the ‘thunder-’
Of the incredibly sharp wisdom.¹¹*

Buddhadāsa said that the emotion generated by reading dharma poetry is not the same as the emotion generated by reading other type of poetry. Emotion, in poetic study, normally makes the reader ‘feel’ or ‘sense’ something. It is the feeling that the readers get when they read the poetry.¹² In general, emotion creates the sense of love, hate, encouragement, disappointment, happiness, sadness, etc. This is quite opposite to the feeling that appears when practicing dharma. Buddhadāsa pointed out that dharma poetry gives not the same emotions as general poetry do, rather it creates the ‘emotion’ of peace, calm, and concentration; especially in the process of reading it. Therefore, the right way to read dharma poetry is to ‘look closely’ and read with wisdom. The mind needs to focus only on the combinations of words in the poem and interpret them. This process keeps the mind concentrating and it finally generates samatha meditation.

As for vipassanā meditation, P. A. Payutto said that this type of meditation is ‘*the enlightenment, or the way that leads to enlightenment – that is the wisdom to see things as they really are. In other words, vipassanā is the wisdom, or the practice that leads to wisdom.*’¹³ Buddhadāsa also explained that the practice of ‘chit wang’ or empty mind is not different from the vipassanā meditation; especially, as they share the ultimate aim of attaining wisdom, and as they use such wisdom to perceive the emptiness within all things. Buddhadāsa said that “*Empty mind is the same as vipassanā, that is, it is the eye that can see the dharma. It is the living with no feeling of wanting to have or to be. It is the practice of the mind to see the ultimate nature of the world - that there is not any part of it has the self or belongs to the self.*”¹⁴

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

¹¹Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang soo kwam suk yen (Buddhadāsa’s Poetry: The Path to the Cool Happiness). (Bangkok: Sukkhabhajai, 2010), p.77.

¹² Evans, Dylan. Emotion: A Very Short Introduction. (New York: Oxford University Press). p.5.

¹³Phra Phromkunakorn (P. A. Payutto) Buddhadharm, elaborated edition. (Bangkok: Mahamakutrajaavidyalaya.2003.) p. 183.

¹⁴Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. Kaen Buddha Sasna (The Core of Buddhism). (Bangkok: Amarin Printing, 2007).p.110-111

that they may come to see it for themselves; and the skillful means are the devices which the teacher uses to do this.”¹⁵

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 Buddhādāsa’s poetry is a skillful means. Buddhādāsa’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. Buddhādāsa said in one of his poems that.

*The present dharma poetry is very diverse.
They tease and teach, or some teach and tease.
Some provoke, some tempt some emotions.¹⁶*

The diversity in Buddhādāsa’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, Buddhādāsa 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

*I have collected free pictures that some have taken.
For many years, I have got many of them.
I don’t know what use I can do with them.
But I want to give some merit to the taker
So I gradually compose the poems
That can possibly teach the dharma.
Some is only the saying that is useful
For the wisdom and the faith in Buddhism.¹⁷*

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

*Read one line of the poem and then look at the picture;
Stare at it with concentration,
You will receive the taste of dharma.
Do not rush or carelessly do it.
Read one line of the poem and then look at the pictures;
There will be many emotions generated;
At the face, eye, ear, etc. look at them closely-*

¹⁵ Hick, John. “Religion as Skillful Means’: A Hint from Buddhism.” International Journal for Philosophy of Religion, Vol 30, No.3. pp.141

¹⁶Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu. Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang sookwamsuk yen (Buddhādāsa’s Poetry: The Path to the Cool Happiness). (Bangkok: Sukkhabhadjai, 2010), p.388.

¹⁷Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu. Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang sookwamsuk yen (Buddhādāsa’s Poetry: The Path to the Cool Happiness). (Bangkok: Sukkhabhadjai, 2010), p.104.

*They are combined and composed in the poem.
Read one line of the poem and then look at the pictures;
You can see the ultimate truth more clearly than listening to the teacher;
But if you just read through the poetry,
Even until you are dead, you won't see the wisdom.¹⁸*

It is important to note that in reading the poem with picture, Buddhādāsa suggested, one 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 to the poem and it sets the mind context for reader to be ready to understand dharma, as in the poem 'the sound of one hand clapping, for example:

*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 a few meters.
The sound of happiness covers up the sound of business.
It also gives more happiness.
The sound of peaces is louder than the other sounds on earth.
My ears can only hear such sound.
No matter how loud of the sound on the earth, I cannot hear
Because my soul can only perceive the sound of peace
It is the sound that is different from the normal sound.
It is so loud that it cannot be explained.
Only one hand clapping can give such the grand sound,
Because the mind [of the clapper] do not search for anything.
It won't grasp any emotion;
It always speaks and challenges the suffering.¹⁹*

From the poem, 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 awakening by the realization of the emptiness of the world.

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 'Conversation: The Buddha City':

What is the biggest thing in the world?

¹⁸Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang sookwamsuk yen (Buddhadāsa's Poetry: The Path to the Cool Happiness). (Bangkok: Sukkhabhabjai, 2010), p.107.

¹⁹Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang sookwamsuk yen (Buddhadāsa's Poetry: The Path to the Cool Happiness). (Bangkok: Sukkhabhabjai, 2010), p.117.

*It is the Buddha city, it is obvious!
What is the Buddha city, tell me more?
It is the cool state of the empty mind!
Where is it? Again please.
It is in the mind that has no desire!
How can a city appear in the mind?
It is the great emptiness that has no body!*

Buddhadāsa maintained that the state of nirvana is cool and empty. From the poetry, it is clear that nirvana 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 Buddhadāsa supposed that the reader might wonder and he gave the answer to the question. This conversation can be regarded as ‘dharma 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.

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. For example, in the Tripitaka, the concept of nirvana is portrayed by various metaphors, for example:

*“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 (dhammā) are removed
so have all ways of speaking been removed.”²⁰*

The extinguished flame is one of the best-known images of nirvana. 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. The image of fire, therefore, is the symbol of suffering in Buddhism. And aiming for nirvana is like getting on the boat and sail through the sea of fire:

*Human boat sails through the sea of fire.
If It cannot get through, do not dare to do it.
The boat of dharma is all that is needed
To smoothly get across the rain and sea of fire.
Some may say I’m crazy by saying this*

²⁰ Cited in Chutima, Punyanuch. Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu’s philosophy of communication. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 2543. p. 63

*Because they cannot see what I'm seeing,
 They cannot even identify
 What is the real 'fire'?
 Human body is just like a boat
 If we practice and hold dharma in our mind
 We can certainly sail through the sea of fire -
 The fire of suffering that is caused by the fire of desire²¹*

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, that 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 dharma as the shield to protect us from the fire of suffering, which means no matter what problems in life we may face, dharma will help us get through.

It is also interesting in this poem that Buddhadāsa used another imagery of the sea that has the reference from the Tripitaka. The Buddha said that the enlightened person after death is 'profound, immeasurable, unfathomable like the great ocean'²². But nirvana is also, very commonly, the escape from the ocean, river, or stream of rebirth and consciousness, and reaching the heaven of the further shore. The image 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.²³

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 nirvana; the raft is the Path.

The metaphor is one technique that allows the reader to think and interpret the poetry. 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.

Apart from the metaphor from the Tripitaka, Buddhadāsa also invented his own metaphor in his poetry. For example in the poem 'The Taste of Heaven is Addictive':

²¹Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang sookwamsuk yen (Buddhadāsa's Poetry: The Path to the Cool Happiness). (Bangkok: Sukkhabhabjai, 2010), p.356.

²² Khuddakanikaya, apadāna, Tripitaka Vol.33, No.130.cited in Phra Dhammapitaka (PrayutPayutto), translated and compiled by Bruce Evans, Buddhist solutions for the twenty-first century. Bangkok: Buddha dhamma Foundation, 1992) p.40.

²³Ibid., p.45.

*The stories of gods, or heaven, are like rubbers-
Which stick in the middle of the mind.
They are the golden cages that capture us
They are disgusting, but we, instead, love them.
The cessation is not sweet like the sugar tree.
It is not sparkling like the diamond.
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.²⁴*

The main idea of this poetry is the letting go of the happiness that one obsessed in this world. Buddhadāsa 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 nirvana.

Another technique that Buddhadāsa 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 still lives forever,
In order to serve my fellow human beings-
With the dharma advertising.
Can you see, my fellow, what is really dead?²⁵*

This is an excerpt from the poem “Buddhadāsa shall live forever.” Buddhadāsa 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 lie his intention to serve the Buddha, as his name ‘Buddhadāsa’ means the servant of the Buddha. Buddhadāsa called his teaching ‘dharmaghosa’ or ‘dharma advertising’, which is the revolutionary way in teaching dharma especially at the time when Thai society still see the monk institution as the passive preacher and need to preached only in the temple on only certain occasions. Buddhadāsa said that even his body is dead; the dharma of the Buddha will live on. The death of Buddhadāsa’s body is not the real dead because it will wake the public interest

²⁴Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang sookwamsuk yen (Buddhadāsa’s Poetry: The Path to the Cool Happiness). (Bangkok: Sukkhabhabjai, 2010), p.158.

²⁵Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. Buddhadāsadharmkamklon: sen tang sookwamsuk yen (Buddhadāsa’s Poetry: The Path to the Cool Happiness). (Bangkok: Sukkhabhabjai, 2010), p.210.

for Buddha teaching. What is really dead should be the suffering and the desire. This poem shows Buddhadāsa's ultimate intention for promoting Buddhism in the society. Another characteristic of Buddhadāsa's poetry is the use of the story to teach dharma. In many occasions, Buddhadāsa 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':

*A student asked a teacher with anxiety that
"how can I attain nirvana?"
"Oh it is so easy, I will tell you -
It is sharpening the brick to become 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 to become the mirror-
You understand it very well.
Same as nirvana, it can be reached only by not going.
Just get rid of the self, you will see nirvana.
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.
You are crazy if you sharpen the brick to become the mirror."²⁶*

The poem above tells the story of a teacher with his students having a conversation about nirvana. The first student asked how to reach nirvana. The teacher answered with the impossible statement of sharpening the brick into the mirror. He elaborated that to do that is impossible. The best way to attain nirvana is to let go even the nirvana itself. Keep sharpening the brick until nothing left, that way one will find nirvana. Buddhadāsa implied from this story that the will to reach nirvana makes human beings get stuck to this world. Reaching nirvana itself is one of the desires that need to get rid of. This will to attain nirvana stops us from achieving it.

Moreover, many of Buddhadāsa's poems are composed in the easy-to-read manner. With the simple vocabulary and easy-to-understand sentences, Buddhadāsa's poems are accessible by various types of readers. But one thing that all of his poems share is the profound meaning that is hidden in the poem. Some examples are 'be and live with empty mind':

*Do all kind of works with empty mind;
Give all the result of the work to the emptiness;
Eat the fruit of emptiness like the monk eats;
Die completely in this life.
Who can be empty like mentioned above
They will not suffer any pain
This kind of the "art" of life -
Is a "means" to happiness for those who can figure it out.²⁷*

²⁶Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang sookwamsuk yen (Buddhadāsa's Poetry: The Path to the Cool Happiness). (Bangkok: Sukkhabhabjai, 2010), p.137.

This poem is one of the most famous poems of Buddhādāsa bhikkhu and it concludes everything that need to be done in Buddhādāsa point of view. It pointed out that emptiness need to be focus in every step of life. This is the art of living that will end the suffering. The main idea of the poem builds on the concept of ‘no self’, that is, when we have no self, we will not take anything as ours. This is what Buddhādāsa called “give all the result of the work to emptiness.” It doesn’t mean we won’t care at all about the result of the work, but it rather means we need to stop our 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 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 lead the life happily.

There are many artistic techniques that are used by Buddhādāsa bhikkhu to communicate the idea of emptiness. One thing that needs to be mentioned here is, as we can see, 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.

²⁷Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu. Buddhādāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang sookwamsuk yen (Buddhādāsa’s Poetry: The Path to the Cool Happiness). (Bangkok: Sukkhabhajai, 2010), p.220.

Appendix

Possess without the Possessor

If you feel tired from possessing things,
And are always aware that you are the owner;
It is obvious that there is ‘I’ and there is ‘mine,’
There is a ‘Self’ appearing in this possession.
If you possess things and realize they are illusion,⁵
And don’t grasp it as yours,
And your mind perceives such possession
in the right way,
This is the possession without the ‘Self.’
Therefore, whenever you possess things,¹⁰
don’t let the ‘Self’ appear,
The good consciousness will prevent it.
The awareness and wisdom
also appear in this possession.
This is the right way to possess. 15
This is the great art of possession:
Possessing without holding the fire from hell,
Possessing with emptiness,
And see emptiness in possessing
This is a joyful way to possess thing²⁰
Let’s possess thing in this way. ²⁸

.....
For Dharma poetry, it is not necessary-
That the words must be beautiful,
Or the verse is put so finely,
As general poets do.
Mainly, it needs to convey Dharma,
Clearly, explicitly; first and foremost.
It gives emotional taste of Dharma,

มีโดยไม่ต้องมีผู้มี

ถ้ามีอะไร แล้วใจ รู้สึกเหนื่อย
สำนึกเรื่อย ว่ากูมี อย่างนี้หนา
อยู่อัตรา”ของกู“ ทั้ง”กู“ มีทั้ง
.นั่นอึดตา มาผูกขึ้น ในการมี
ถ้ามีอะไร มีไป ตามสมมติ
ไม่จับยุค ว่า”วิถี”ของกู“
แห่งจิตใจ ไม่วิปริต ผิดวิธี
มีอย่างนี้ ย่อมไม่เกิด ตัวอึดตา.

ฉะนั้นมีอะไร อย่าให้มี อึดตาเกิด
เพราะสติ อันประเสริฐ คอยกันท่า
สมบูรณ์ด้วย สัมปชัญญ์ และปัญญา
นี้เรียกว่า รู้จักมี ที่เก่งเกิน.

เป็นศิลปะ แห่งการมี ที่ชั้นยอด
ไม่ต้องกอด ไฟนรก ระหกระเหิน
มีอย่างว่าง ว่างอย่างมี มีได้เพลิน
ขอชวนเชิญ ให้รู้มี อย่างนี้แล ฯ

คำประพันธ์บทพระธรรมไม่จำเพาะ
ว่าจะต้องไพเราะเพราะอักษร
หรือสัมผัสชดช้อยแห่งบทกลอน
ที่อรชรเชิงกวีตามนิยม
ขอแต่เพียงให้อรรถแห่งธรรมะ
ได้แจ่มจะถนัดเห็นเป็นปฐม
แล้วได้รสแห่งพระธรรมคำอารมณ์

²⁸Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang sookwamsuk yen (Buddhadāsa’s Poetry: The Path to the Cool Happiness). (Bangkok: Sukkhabhabjai, 2010), p.74.

Which will ripen the elevated mind.	ที่อาจบ่มเบิกใจให้เจริญ
The previous habit will be changed;	ให้นิสัยเปลี่ยนใหม่จากก่อนเก่า
From melancholy to happiness.	ไม่ซึมเศร้าสุขสง่างามสรรเสริญ
The mind will be strong; not lacking or excessive.	เป็นจิตกล้าสามารถไม่ขาดเกิน
Please, taste the dharma, not the beauty. ²⁹	ขอชวนเจริญชมธรรมรสคณวี
.....	
The study of vipassanā happened later.	เรียนวิปัสสนา เพิ่งมีมา ต่อภายหลัง
There is no such word in the Pālī of the Buddha	ไม่เคยฟัง ในบาลี ที่ตถา
There is no ghandha or vipassanā.	ไม่เคยเป็น คันถะ วิปัสสนา
There is only to practice dharma.	มีแต่ว่า ตั้งหน้า บำเพ็ญธรรม
Because we cannot stand the suffering,	เพราะทนอยู่ ไม่ได้ ในกองทุกข์
So we have to leave the house into the peace	จึงได้ลุก จากเรือนอยู่ คู่เนกขัม
Live the life according to its activity	จัดชีวิต เหมาะแก่กัฏฐกรรม
In order to see the nirvana.	เพื่อกระทำ ให้แจ้ง แห่งนิพพาน
Nowadays, there are schools of vipassanā.	ในบัดนี้ มีสำนัก วิปัสสนา
It is specially created.	เกิดขึ้นมา เป็นพิเศษ เขตสถาน
It seems more serious than in the Buddha time.	ดูเอาจริง ยิ่งกว่า ครั้งพุทธกาล
I wish you are real and teach real vipassanā	ขอให้ท่าน จริง มีวิปัส-ดี
.....	
Each of these dharma poetry can be used-	บทธรรมนี้ แต่ละบท กำหนดใช้
As the object to create the concentration.	เป็นอารมณ์ สมาธิได้ สะดวกอยู่
Only by reading a poem a day	เพียงบทเดียว แต่ละวัน ตามขั้นดู
And contemplate until you see the truth - the general truth.	เพ่งให้รู้ ความจริง : สิ่งธรรมดา
If it is deeply hidden, and you cannot see it,	หากแต่ซ่อน อยู่ลึก นึกไม่เห็น
You need to look closely, just like digging a hole on the cliff	ต้องเขม่น เพ่งให้เหมาะ
	คั่งเจาะผา
Hit it hard with the ‘thunder-’	ทะลุตรง ลงไป ด้วย –”สายฟ้า“
Of the incredibly sharp wisdom.	แห่งวิชา ที่แหลมคม สมแก่กรรม
If you only look at it, not examine or survey it,	เพียงดู แต่ไม่เล็ง ไม่เพ่งเพิน-
You will not see the valuable words.	เป็นไม่เห็น ธรรมดา มีแง่ล้ำ :
There need to be the combination of eye effort and heart effort	จักขุนทรีย์ มนินทรีย์

²⁹Buddhadāsa. Hua Kho Dham Nai Kam Klon (the point of dharma in poetry). Sukhaphab Jai, 1997.

มีสหกรรม

In order to accumulate the wisdom.
Normally we are clam when we wake up at night
Keep that emotion and use it to concentrate
The deeper and more profound dharma
Then you can find the happiness.

จึงอุปถัมภ์ ปัญญาตรีช ให้มีพอ
ยามดึกคืน ตื่นขึ้นมา อารมณ์เย็น
ดูให้เป็น เฟงให้เป็น ยิ่งเห็นข้อ
ที่ลึกซึ้ง ตรึงหทัยในใจคอ,
ยิ่งสนุก สนานก็ ยิ่งพอใจ ฯ

Many Characteristics of Poetry

The present dharma poetry is very diverse and

They tease and teach, or some teach and tease.
Some provoke, some tempt some emotions.³¹
Some are crazy in others' eyes,
Because they challenge the reader.
Some praise the reader
Some create the sadness and hit the reader
Some are so deep that cannot see the point
Some create misunderstanding.
Some are funny but they teach good lesson.
Some teach us to see and grab the self.

กลอนนี้นานาลักษณะ³⁰

บทพระธรรม คำกลอน ตอนตอนนี่
ล้วนอรรมมี มากมาย หลายกระแส
ล้ออย่างสอน สอนอย่างล้อ กั่นองแ
บ้างก็แห่ บ้างก็ขู่ คำอารมณ์
บางบทก็ ถูกหา ว่าบิ่นบ้า
ฟังซู่ซ่า ทำเล่น ไม่เห็นสม
แต่บ้างก็ ชะลอใจ ให้ชื่นชม
บ้างชื่นชม แก่ผู้ฟัง บ้างยกคำ
บ้างก็ลึก เกินไป ไม่เห็นอรรม
ฟังติดขัด มีคมิต จิตถล่ำ
บ้างติดตลก แล้วกลับชก ด้วยถ้อยคำ
พอได้กำ หูหัว ตัวอืดตา ฯ

Compose the dharma poem for the picture

I have collected free pictures that some have taken.
For many years until I have got a certain of them.
I don't know what use I can do with them.
But I want to give some merit to the taker
So I gradually compose poems

แต่งบทธรรมประจําภาพ³²

รวมรูปภาพ ถ่ายฟรี มีคนถ่าย
ให้มากมาย หลายปี มีหลากหลายเหลือ
มิรู้จะใช้ โฉนกัน มันเหลือเพื่อ
นึกเอื้อเพื่อ ท่านผู้ถ่าย ให้ได้บุญ
ค่อย ๆ คิด รจิตธรรม เป็นคำกลอน

³⁰Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang sookwamsuk yen (Buddhadāsa's Poetry: The Path to the Cool Happiness). (Bangkok: Sukkhabhabjai, 2010), p.388.

³¹Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang sookwamsuk yen (Buddhadāsa's Poetry: The Path to the Cool Happiness). (Bangkok: Sukkhabhabjai, 2010), p.388.

³²Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang sookwamsuk yen (Buddhadāsa's Poetry: The Path to the Cool Happiness). (Bangkok: Sukkhabhabjai, 2010), p.104.

That can possibly teach the dharma.
Some is only the saying that is useful
For the wisdom and the faith in Buddhism.
The happiness from dharma is the profit
Some poems give happiness, some give sadness
Read a line and see the picture, and keep doing it.
Each time you read it is full of dharma.

ที่พอเป็น คำสอน ไว้เกื้อหนุน
บ้างเป็นเพียง ข้อคิด ที่เป็นคุณ
มุ่งเจือจุน ปัญญา ศรัทธาเทียว
บันเทิงธรรม เป็นกำไร อยู่ในตัว
บ้างนำหัว, นำเศร้า, นำหวาดเสียว
อ่านบรรทัด รูปภาพเรื่อย ไปทีเดียว
แต่ละทีแว เห็นขวเนื่อธรรม นำทุก
ตอน ๆ

.....
Alternate reading poem and look at the picture

Read one line of the poem and then look at the picture
Stare at it with concentration.
You will receive the taste of dharma
Do not rush or carelessly do it.
Read one line of the poem and then look at the pictures
There will be many emotions generated
At the face, eye, ear, etc. look at them closely
They are combined and composed in the poem.

อ่านกลอนสลับการดูภาพ ³³
อ่านคำกลอน หนึ่งบรรทัด รูปภาพที่
เพ่งให้ดี มีสติ จักผลิผล
คือได้รส แห่งพระธรรม นำกมล
อย่าลุลคน ลวกลวกไป ให้ป่วยการ
อ่านคำกลอน หนึ่งบรรทัด รูปภาพที่
อารมณ์มี มากมาย หลายนาน
ที่ใบหน้า ตา หู ฉุนานนาน
มันประสาน ประสาสน์ธรรม ใน
คำกลอน

Read one line of the poem and then look at the pictures
You can see the ultimate truth more clearly than listening
to the teacher
But if you just read through the poetry
Even until you are dead, you won't see the wisdom

อ่านคำกลอน หนึ่งบรรทัด รูปภาพ
ปรมัตถ์ ชัดดี กว่าบอกสอน
ถ้าอ่านฟัง ตะลุมไป ไร้ขั้นตอน
จนม้วยมรณ ก็ไม่ซึ้ง ถึงอรธแล ฯ

.....
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.

เสียงมือตบข้างเดียว
มือฉันตบ ข้างเดียว ส่งเสียงลั่น
มือท่านตบ สองข้าง จึงดังได้
เสียงมือฉัน ดังก้อง ทั้งโลกัย
เสียงมือท่าน ดังไกล ไม่กี่วา
เสียงความว่าง ดังกลบ

³³Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang sookwamsuk yen (Buddhadāsa's Poetry: The Path to the Cool Happiness). (Bangkok: Sukkhabhajai, 2010), p.107.

It also gives more happiness.
 The sound of peaces 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 sound can only perceive the sound of peace

 It is the sound that is different from the normal sound.
 It is the sound that is so loud that cannot be explained.
 Only one hand clap 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.³⁴

เสียงความวุ่น
 ที่มีคุณ กว่ากัน ทางพรรษา
 เสียงสงบ กลบเสียง ทั้งโลก
 หูของข้า ได้ยิน แต่เสียงนั้น.
 เสียงของโลก ดังเท่าไร ไม่ได้ยิน
 เพราะเหตุวิญญู -
 ญาณรับ แต่เสียงนั้น
 เป็นเสียงซึ่ง ผิดเสียง อย่างสามัญ
 เป็นเสียงอัน ดังสุด จะพรรณนา
 มือข้างเดียว ตบดัง ฟังดูเถิด
 แสนประเสริฐ คือจิต ไม่ใฝ่หา
 ไม่ยึดมั่น อารมณ์ใด ไม่นำพา
 มันร้องทำ เขี่ยทุกข์ ทุกเมื่อเอ๋ย ฯ

Conversation: the Buddha City

What is the biggest thing in the world?
 It is the Buddha city, it is obvious!
 What is that the Buddha city, tell me more?
 It is the cool state of the empty mind!

 Where is it? Again please. 5
 It is in the mind that has no desire!
 How can a city appear in the mind?
 It is the great emptiness that has no body!
 So how can that be the Buddha city?
 Because there are wisdom 10
 and loving kindness in it!
 Then who live in that city?
 if it is not human being?
 Emptiness is even more substantial than human being!³⁵

สนทนา: พุทธนคร
 ในโลกนี้ มีอะไร ใหญ่ที่สุด?
 นั่นคือ ใครมองเห็น”นคร -พุทธ“ !
 นั่นคืออะไร ว่าไป ให้ตรงประเด็น?
 ภาวะเย็น แห่ง ”จิต ไม่คิดอะไร“!

 อยู่ที่ไหน ว่าไป อีกทีเกิด?
 ตรงที่จิต ไม่เกิด กิเลสได้!
 ในจิตนั้น มีเมืองบ้าน สถานใด?
 คือความว่าง ยิ่งใหญ่ ไร้ตัวตน !
 แล้วเป็นพุทธ?นคร ตอนไหนกัน -
 ก็ในนั้น มีปัญญา เมตตาสิ้น!
 ถ้าหอนคน ใครอาศัย ในนคร
 ความว่างนั้น เป็นตัวตน กว่าคนเรา !

³⁴Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang sookwamsuk yen (Buddhadāsa’s Poetry: The Path to the Cool Happiness). (Bangkok: Sukkhabhabjai, 2010), p.117.
³⁵Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang sookwamsuk yen (Buddhadāsa’s Poetry: The Path to the Cool Happiness). (Bangkok: Sukkhabhabjai, 2010), p.325.

Human boat sails through the sea of fire.
It cannot get through, do not dare to do it.
The boat of dharma 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 dharma in our mind
We can certainly sail through the sea of fire -
The fire of suffering that is caused by the fire of desire³⁶

เรือของคน แล่นฝ่า ทะเลไฟ
ไปไม่ไหว ดอกท่าน อย่าหาญกล้า
เรือของธรรม ลอยลำ สบายมา
ท่ามกลางท่า ฝนไฟ ได้เอือกเย็น,
พูดอย่างนี้ มีคนหา ว่าเหลวไหล
เพราะตรองสัก เท่าใด ก็ไม่เห็น
เพราะไม่รู้ แยกความ ตามประเด็น
ออก เห็น ว่าเป็น อย่างไรกัน”ไฟ“;
อัตรภาพ ของคน กลกับเรือ
ประกอบธรรม ทุกเมื่อ ไม่แตกผัน
ย่อมผ่านพ้น ทะเลไฟ ไปทั้งนั้น :
ไฟทุกข์อัน ไฟกิเลส เป็นเหตุแล ฯ

.....
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.³⁷

รสสวรรค์นั้นเสพติด
อันลัทธินานา นำเวียนหัว
จงถอนตัว ออกมา เสียให้ห่าง
เรื่องพระเจ้า เรื่องสวรรค์ นั้นเหมือนยาง
เป็นดั่งเหนียว กั้นกาง ดวงวิญญาณ
เป็นกรงทอง จงจำ จำกัดเขต
นำทุเรศ กลับรัก เป็นหลักฐาน
ความหลุดพ้น ใซ้อร่อย เช่นอ้อยตาล
ทิ้งไม่ลาน ดาพราว ราวเพชรพลอย
รสสวรรค์ นั้นเสพติด พิชฉมัง
ถูกกักขัง ก็ไม่รู้ เหมือนปูหอย
อยู่แต่รู้ มิได้รู้ เรื่องนกน้อย
ที่บินล่อน เวหา ว่าปานใด ฯ

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³⁶Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. *Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang sookwamsuk yen* (Buddhadāsa's Poetry: The Path to the Cool Happiness). (Bangkok: Sukkhabhadjai, 2010), p.356.

³⁷Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. *Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang sookwamsuk yen* (Buddhadāsa's Poetry: The Path to the Cool Happiness). (Bangkok: Sukkhabhadjai, 2010), p.158.

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 dharma advertising.
Can you see, my fellow, what is really dead?

พุทธทาสจักไม่ตาย (210)³⁸
พุทธทาส จักอยู่ไป ไม่มีตาย
แม้ร่างกาย จะดับไป ไม่พึงเสียด
ร่างกายเป็น ร่างกายไป ไม่ลำเอียง
นั่นเป็นเพียง สิ่งเปลี่ยนไป ในเวลา
พุทธทาส คงอยู่ไป ไม่มีตาย
ถึงศิร้าย ก็จะมีอยู่ คู่ศาสนา
สมกับมอบ กายใจ รับใช้มา
ตามบัญชา องค์พระพุทธ ไม่หยุดเลย.
พุทธทาส ยังอยู่ไป ไม่มีตาย
อยู่รับใช้ เพื่อนมนุษย์ ไม่หยุดเลย
ด้วยธรรม โฆษณ์ ตามที่วาง ไว้อย่างเคย
โอ้เพื่อนเอ๋ย มองเห็นไหม อะไรตาย ฯ

Be and live with empty mind

Do all kind of works with empty mind;
Give all the result of the work to the emptiness;
Eat the fruit of emptiness like the monk eats;
Die completely in this life.
Who can be empty like mentioned above
They will not suffer any pain
This kind of life's "art"
A "means" to happiness for those who figure it out.

เป็นอยู่ด้วยจิตว่าง (220)³⁹
จงทำงาน ทุกชนิด ด้วยจิตว่าง
ยกผลงาน ให้ความว่าง ทุกอย่างสิ้น
กินอาหาร ของความว่าง อย่างพระกิน
ตายเสร็จสิ้น แล้วในตัว แต่หัวใจ
ท่านผู้ใด ว่างได้ ดังว่ามา
ไม่มีท่า ทุกข์ทน หม่นหมองศรี
ในชีวิต ชนิดนี้"ศิลปะ"
เป็นเคล็ดที่ ใครคิดได้ สบายเอ๋ย ฯ

Sharpen the brick into the mirror

A student asked a teacher with anxiety that
"how can I attain nirvana?"
"Oh it is so easy, I will tell you -
It is sharpening the brick into the mirror"

ฝนอิฐเป็นกระจกเงา
ศิษย์อ่อนถาม อาจารย์ ร้อนใจ
"ทำอะไร ไปนิพพาน อาจารย์ขา"
"อ้อมนง่าย นี้กระไร บอกให้น่า
คือคำว่า ฝนอิฐ เป็นกระจกเงา"

³⁸Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang sookwamsuk yen (Buddhadāsa's Poetry: The Path to the Cool Happiness). (Bangkok: Sukkhabhabjai, 2010), p.210.

³⁹Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang sookwamsuk yen (Buddhadāsa's Poetry: The Path to the Cool Happiness). (Bangkok: Sukkhabhabjai, 2010), p.220.

“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 nirvana, it can be reached by not going.
Just get rid of the self, you will see nirvana.
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

“อาจารย์ครับ เขาคงว่า เราบ้าใหญ่
แม้ฝนไป ฝนไป ก็ตายเปล่า
“นั่นแหละเนื้อ มันสอนให้ แล้วไม่เบา
ว่าให้เรา หยุดหา หยุดบ้าไป”
ไม่มีใคร ฝนอิฐ เป็นกระจก
ไม่ต้องยก มากล่าว เข้าใจไหม
นิพพานนั้น ถึงได้เพราะไม่ไป
หมดตนไซ้รู้ ว่างเห็น เป็นนิพพาน.
ถ้าฝนอิฐ ก็ฝนให้ ไม่มีเหลือ
ไม่มีเชื้อ เวียนไป ในสงสาร
ฝนอิฐด้าน ให้เป็นเงา เราบ้าเองฯ”⁴⁰

⁴⁰Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. *Buddhadāsa dharm kam klon: sen tang sookwamsuk yen (Buddhadāsa’s Poetry: The Path to the Cool Happiness)*. (Bangkok: Sukkhabhadjai, 2010), p.137.