

Chapter IV

The Application of Emptiness (Suññatā) in Daily Life

4.1 The Application of Emptiness as Meditative Dwelling or Suññata-vihāra

Suññatā in the context of meditative dwelling or Suññata-vihāra is the the ability to center the mind in a particular mode of perception, to maintain it there as meditative dwelling, and then to notice the absence and presence of disturbance within that mode upon void-concentration or Suññata-samādhi which is based on emptiness of ‘self’ or things pertaining to ‘self’ by looking at events in the mind and the senses with no thought of whether there's anything lying behind them as said to Ānanda by the Blessed One in Majjhima Nikāya., while staying among the Sākyans in a Sākyan town named Nagaraka at Sāvatti in the Eastern Monastery, the palace of Migāra's mother as saying :

Now, as well as before, I remain fully in a dwelling of emptiness. Just as this palace of Migāra's mother is empty of elephants, cattle, and mares, empty of gold & silver, empty of assemblies of women & men, and there is only this non-emptiness — the singleness based on the community of monks; even so, Ānanda, a monk — not attending to the perception of village, not attending to the perception of human being — attends to the singleness based on the perception of wilderness. His mind takes pleasure, finds satisfaction, settles, & indulges in its perception of wilderness. "He discerns that "Whatever

disturbances that would exist based on the perception of village are not present. Whatever disturbances that would exist based on the perception of human being are not present. There is only this modicum of disturbance: the singleness based on the perception of wilderness.' He discerns that 'This mode of perception is empty of the perception of village. This mode of perception is empty of the perception of human being. There is only this non-emptiness: the singleness based on the perception of wilderness.' Thus he regards it as empty of whatever is not there. Whatever remains, he discerns as present: 'There is this.' And so this, his entry into emptiness, accords with actuality, is undistorted in meaning, & pure.¹

The above saying of the Buddha in Majjhima Nikāya tells us the way to apply emptiness (*Suññatā*) as meditative dwelling or *Suññata-vihāra* by keeping the mind in mode of perception in accordance with void-concentration or *Suññata-samādhi* by adding nothing to or takes nothing away from the raw data of physical and mental events. This mode of perception based on emptiness means to look at events in the mind and the senses with no thought of whether there's anything lying behind them. This mode is called emptiness because it's empty of the presuppositions we usually add to experience to make sense of it, then the thought of 'I', 'It is mine', and 'It is myself', which springs from the former hereby of individuality as permanent, happy, and substantial entity, comes to an end because they are empty, vain, void and ownerless. In other words, this mode of perception as void-concentration or *Suññata-samādhi* is the

¹ M. 121.

mode of perception of what being here and being empty of what not being here or as stated in the Sutta with regard to the palace of Migāra's mother being empty of elephants, cattle, and mares, empty of gold & silver, empty of assemblies of women & men, and there is only this non-emptiness — the singleness based on the community of monks who are being there at the moment.

Upon the analytical study, this Sutta in Majjhima Nikāya tells us that emptiness (Suññatā) means emptiness of what not being here but not empty of what being here at the moment. Actually it is the 'total presence' of mind which is associated with pure experience in the presence. The problem of most practitioners is the loss of consciousness through the past and future with the fabrication of mind as thought or feelings. That means the mind is never empty with regards to the past and future. Thus if one can keep the mind empty from what not being here that is the past and the future, and just stay there not empty of what being here in the total presence. That is the ability to center the mind in a particular mode of perception, to maintain it there as meditative dwelling, and then to notice the absence and presence of disturbance within that mode upon void-concentration (Suññata-samādhi). This is the way one can abide with emptiness as meditative dwelling or Suññata-vihāra in all kinds of work and activities as being demonstrated here as follows :

Learning in a class : A student should keep his or her mind empty of what not being here that means any story or matters not concerning the class, for instance, playing games, playing sports, watching television, or any others that are not in the classroom at the moment, but what not empty is the void-concentration of learning in class

with good attention to lecture only. When the attention to lecture is not lost from the student's mind due to the emptiness of whatever not being in the classroom and what not empty is the good attention to whatever the teacher is teaching with full awareness. In this way, the student has trained himself or herself with Suññata-samādhi and abide with emptiness (Suññata) as meditative dwelling or Suññata-vihāra in the classroom.

Working on a job : A man is working on his job with the mind empty of what not concerning the job, for instance, household affairs, travelling, eating, drinking or any others that are not in his job, but what not empty is the void-concentration over the job with good attention steadily on it. When the attention on the job is not lost from the man's mind due to the emptiness of whatever not being there at the job and what not empty is the good attention to job with full awareness. In this way, the man has trained himself with Suññata-samādhi and abide with emptiness (Suññata) as meditative dwelling or Suññata-vihāra on the job.

Staff meeting in the conference room : Now is the time for staff meeting in the conference room and all staffs are joining the meeting to solve the problem of a company. All staffs are getting a brain storm to solve the company's problem and just keep their mind empty from what not being here in the meeting, for instance, personal matters, personal problems, household affairs or any others that are not concerning the meeting, but what not empty is the all attention with the brain storm to solve the company's problem with full awareness of the problems and solutions to the problems. In this way, all staffs have trained themselves with Suññata-samādhi and abide with emptiness (Suññata) as meditative dwelling or Suññata-vihāra on the meeting.

Having a thought : While thinking, just thinking with mindfulness. That means not lost in thought during thinking about the matter concerned. What is empty during thinking is the empty of thought not pertaining to the subject of thinking, for instance while thinking about work, thus not lost in thought to family, travelling or any others that are not concerning the work, but what not empty is the mindful thinking about work pertaining to the point with good reasoning and not with any moodiness, deception or delusion. In this way, one is thinking with Suññata-samādhi and abide with emptiness (Suññata) as meditative dwelling or Suññata-vihāra while thinking.

Driving a car : A man is driving a car with the emptiness of mind from what not being here, for instance, worry about the past and future, thinking of a lover, planning to do this or that upon driving a car or any others that are not concerning driving a car. What not empty during driving a car is the good attention of driving a car to the right destination, good observation of people and cars on the road, driving with calmness not in a hurry, not worry about anything , not lost in thought and keeping the mind with oneself at every moment even in a traffic jam with full awareness and carefulness. In this way, one is driving with Suññata-samādhi and abide with emptiness (Suññata) as meditative dwelling or Suññata-vihāra while driving.

Eating and drinking : One is eating and drinking with the mind empty of what not being here or whatever not concerning the eating and drinking, for instance, empty of a lot of thought and worry during eating and drinking, and what not empty is the awareness of eating and drinking with mindfulness, not lost in thought and in a hurry. In this way, one is eating and drinking with Suññata-samādhi and abide with emptiness

(Suññata) as meditative dwelling or Suññata-vihāra while eating and drinking.

Practicing mindfulness of breathing : One is practicing mindfulness of breathing with the mind empty of what not being here right now during the practice, that is thought in the past and future, but what not empty is the mindfulness of breathing-in and breathing-out all the time. Instead of forcing the mind to focus the breathing and trying not thinking, one just keep one's mind empty of what not being here and what not empty is the mindfulness of breathing-in and breathing-out with clear knowing and right attention. In this way, one is practicing mindfulness of breathing with Suññata-samādhi and abide with emptiness (Suññata) as meditative dwelling or Suññata-vihāra on the mindfulness of breathing.

The ability to center the mind in a particular mode of perception, to maintain it there as meditative dwelling does not mean that one cannot think about the past and future or anything. With emptiness, Newman Robert Glass has stated in his book 'Working Emptiness' as saying :

From the perspective of working of emptiness, the debate is a disagreement over the nature and function of emptiness in thinking, a disagreement which fails to attend to what is primary – the nature and function of emptiness in desire and affect. From this perspective, Buddhist practice is best understood not as a move from thinking to non-thinking, but as a move from craving to compassion. Emptiness

is not an achieved state of thinking (without thinking) but an achieved state of desire (compassion).²

Also in the view of Dogen Kigen regarding the working of emptiness, he introduces the practice of meditation by splitting ‘thinking’ into three possibilities :

Thinking, not thinking and without thinking, meditation practice is the cultivation of the third of these possibilities. It is neither the act of thinking, nor the deliberate act of not thinking. Meditation is, rather, an exercise of without thinking when one lets go of thoughts as they arise, neither clinging to them nor pushing them away. Nonetheless, even when there are no thoughts, an attitude or principle remains which not only guides the functioning or working of without thinking but organizes sense and perception as well. Something is active in without thinking. What might this be? How might different ways of without thinking work? What is at work or working in emptiness?³

Another way of looking at the working of emptiness, Heidegger has said that a thinker’s greatest thought is best understood as not a thought at all, but an unthought. In what is called thinking?, he states :

To acknowledge and respect consists in letting every thinker’s thought come to us as something in each case unique, never to be repeated, inexhaustible – and being shaken to the depths by what is unthought in his thought. What is unthought in a thinker’s thought is no lack inherent in thought. What is unthought is there in each case

² Glass, Newman Robert, **Working Emptiness : Toward a Third Reading of Emptiness in Buddhism and Postmodern Thought**, (Atlanta, Georgia : Scholars Press, 1995), p.3.

³ Ibid., p.5.

only as the unthought. The more original the thinking, the richer will be what is unthought in it. The unthought is the greatest gift that thinking can bestow.⁴

According to Heidegger, the nature of the unthought, the nothing or emptiness, is crucial in thinking. Although it seems that one can choose to think anything with the Heideggerian unthought, this anything will forever to be shaped by the working of the Heideggerian unthought. This is, the nature of whatever is thought is inevitably regulated and governed by the specificity of that which grounds thinking. It will remain unthought (not addressed by thought) because of the nature of the unthought (the working of emptiness which conditions thought); not because one chooses not to think it, but because the thinking process itself, governed as it is by the working of a specific unthought / prethought / emptiness, precludes perceiving or formulating it.

Upon an analytical study with regards to emptiness as meditative dwelling or *Suññata-vihāra* and Heideggerian unthought, the emptiness (unthought) is crucial in thinking and thus helps manifest itself in seeing and sensing things as they really are. A change in the working of emptiness involves a change in the way one sees, draws and senses inasmuch as the work of emptiness is located at the origin of the thinking-seeing, thinking-sensing process. Thus Newman Robert Glass has given his view, “While this project was initially framed in term of thinking and emptiness, the working of emptiness should be understood to include visual and affective dimensions. Indeed it is a transformed

⁴ Martin Heidegger, **What is Called Thinking?**, (New York : Harper and Row, 1968), p. 76.

affective dimension that becomes primary in the decision-making process.”⁵

Upon the application of emptiness as meditative dwelling or *Suññata-vihāra* this way, one is able to remain in the internal emptiness as meditative dwelling or *Suññata-vihāra* which is the abiding state of him who has been training himself to abide with emptiness from the preliminary emptiness to the supreme emptiness as the aim. With Heideggerian unthought, the emptiness being located at the origin of the thinking-seeing and thinking-sensing process, will govern the thinking process in seeing and sensing things as they really are, in other words, seeing and sensing what being here with the emptiness of what not being here. Noticing the absence and presence in the total presence within that mode upon void-concentration (or as in the meaning of Heideggerian unthought) thus help decision-making with an achieved state of non-desire in daily life's work and activities.

4.2 The Application of Emptiness as the Lack of ‘Self’ or *Anattā*.

The saying of the Buddha which deals with the practice in regards to emptiness is the one that is the heart of the Buddhist Teachings; '*Sabbe dhammā nālaṃ abhinivesāya*' which translates literally as 'No dhamma whatsoever should be grasped at or clung to'. If one amplifies the meaning a little it may be rendered as 'no one should grasp or cling to anything as being 'I or mine'. 'No one' means that there are no exceptions; 'should

⁵ Glass, Newman Robert, **Working Emptiness : Toward a Third Reading of Emptiness in Buddhism and Postmodern Thought**, p.7.

grasp or cling' means to give rise to ego-consciousness or the feeling of 'self'; 'as being I' refers to the feeling called ahamkara, the grasping at a (nonexistent) soul or abiding ego-entity; 'as being mine' refers to the feeling called mamamkāra, the grasping as phenomena as being connected 'selfness' or 'Attā'.. So don't have ahamkara or mamamkara in doing things or doing things with the lack of 'self' or 'Anattā' with regard to anything at all starting from a worthless speck of dust up to valuable objects such as diamonds, sapphires, gems and the objects of sensual desire and on to things higher than that - Dhamma, it's theory, practice and attainment, the Path-Realization, their Fruits and Nibbana. Nothing whatsoever should be clung to as being 'I' or 'mine' has presented an idea in the application of emptiness

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu has interpreted emptiness (Suññatā) in the context of the lack of 'self' or 'Anattā' as empty mind (cit-wang in Thai). He has widely and deeply presented an idea in the application of emptiness in term of 'working with empty mind'. The empty mind means the state of mind which is free from getting a hold of egoism and all desires due to the lack of 'self' or 'Anattā'. Thus the mind is full of wisdom, can realize the reality of the world that it is naturally empty. We cannot get anything as the 'self' at all. The concept of empty mind is rendered into action by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu as working with empty mind in two occasions as follows.

- 1) On the first occasion with doerless doing to realize the real freedom while working, one should avoid having and gaining with the feeling of 'I' or 'mine' despite our ownership because one with the feeling of not-having and not-gaining or another word doerless doing will

be able to maintain the normal state of mind or 'the freedom of mind'.
Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu gave his explanation :

The principle of doerless doing must be taken up and utilized in our daily lives' work and activities. Whether we're eating, sitting, laying down, standing, walking, using, seeking, whatever we are doing or working we must have enough truth-discerning awareness to prevent the arising of the feeling of 'I' - the feeling that 'I' am the doer, 'I' am the worker, 'I' am the eater, the walker, the sitter, the sleeper or the user. We must make the mind constantly empty of ego, so that emptiness is the natural state and we abide with the awareness that there is nothing worth having or being.⁶

The word 'having or being' refers only to the being that is accompanied by Upādāna, by grasping and clinging to the 'I and mine'. If a room is piled full of gold and we have no feeling of 'having or being' it's owner, there is no gaining or having and no being. Although the ownership rights and social conventions recognized by laws of the world have a certain validity, in our true hearts we shouldn't be misled into taking those relative truths to be ultimate. Those with truth-discerning awareness are on a higher level. They have the knowledge of the way to destroy the grasping and clinging that arises from such ignorance. It's not necessary to be the owner with grasping and clinging, the cause of every kind of suffering or Dukkha. That suffering is indeed the price of not knowing how to be an owner with empty mind, of being an owner with grasping and clinging is a way that does not conform with Dhamma and will result in suffering or Dukkha. Thus one can only realize the real freedom while

⁶Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, **Heart-wood from the Bo Tree**, tr. by Suan Mok, (Chaiya, Surat Thani : Dhammadāna Foundation, 2005), p 84.

working with doerless doing or the emptiness of self in whatever we have or gain.

2) On the second occasion to realize the real freedom while working , being mindful of the sense-media consciousness at the moment of contact with sense-objects. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu gave his explanation :

When visible forms, sounds, odors, flavors and tangible objects contact the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body we must practice letting phassa stop at phassa and letting vedanā stop at vedanā. Letting phassa stop at just phassa is an extremely high level of practice. On the ordinary level, phassa develops into vedanā and then we stop it just there, without allowing the further development of craving and grasping, of 'I' and 'mine'. Some of the articulate talkers in monastery halls and teachers in Buddhist colleges say that stopping just at phassa is impossible, that there is always the development of vedanā. That is because they cling to the written word. It's not the truth. In fact, the Buddha taught that when seeing forms there should be just the seeing, when smelling odors just the smelling, tasting flavors just the tasting and touching tangible objects just the touching. If anyone can do it then there is no feeling of 'I' and 'mine', the ego is not born, thus the end of Dukkha or suffering.⁷

The above Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's explanation is the practice of 'empty mind' on the occasion of contact with sense-objects by being still and letting phassa stop at phassa and letting vedanā stop at vedanā. 'Being still' means not admitting sense-objects into the mind but being content to let them founder like waves on the shore. Being mindful with empty mind

⁷ Ibid., p. 91.

just to observe one's reactions at the times that we glance in the direction of some neutral form or others. Try casting one's eyes on the door or a window and one will notice that there is merely phassa; there are no feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. When visible forms, sounds, odors, flavors and tangible objects enter as contact let them stop there in the same way. Let it be like the soldier asleep by the side of a piece of artillery. When a shell is fired he merely registers the sound without feeling anything and just goes on happily sleeping. No matter how heavy the shelling is, he is not startled or disturbed. There is just the sound of the piece of artillery contacting his ear and then ceasing. Then we must train ourselves to let phassa remain as merely phassa. But if we can't do it and admit defeat, we can still stop at Vedanā. As soon as there is a feeling of comfort or discomfort, satisfaction or dissatisfaction, then extinguish it just there, without giving birth to the various kinds of desire that spring from the urges of craving and clinging. That means when the eye sees form, if there is merely the seeing, then that is called not admitting visible forms into the mind and similarly with the other sense organs. If you can't do that and vedanā, feeling of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, arises, let it stop just there, don't allow desires based on those feelings to develop. If it stops there it's still possible to be empty. But if we act to extend a feeling of satisfaction, then the feeling of 'I' and 'mine' emerges. Or if we act in response to a feeling of dissatisfaction then there will be Dukkha due to the clinging, it is called not being empty.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu emphasized :

Dhamma can be practiced in conjunction with our daily tasks. There is no need to separate Dhamma from everyday life. It is a very high practice. If there is mindfulness and self-awareness, not only will our

work be successful and free from error, but at the same time, Dhamma in our hearts will develop and grow greatly. Not-having and not-gaining will be the normal state of the mind.⁸

The word 'having or gaining' refers only to the being that is accompanied by Upadana by grasping and clinging to the 'I and mine'. This Upadana will keep us away from truth-discerning awareness in daily life's work and any activities, but the more the mind is empty, the more wisdom to realize the reality of the world will be developed in our mind, thus arising the truth-discerning awareness bringing to the utmost efficiency of daily life's work and activities. Even we succeed or fail sometimes, we with truth-discerning awareness will never stop or shrink back. Most people who succeed in work will be very happy admiring their success, thus stop working or forget to develop their work and those who fail in work will always shrink back due to Upādāna in their work by grasping and clinging to the 'I and mine' that I succeed or I fail in work losing the truth-discerning awareness (Pañña) of what and how to do next for the efficiency and success of work.

Mr. Kukrit Pramoj has made a question to Buddhadasa Bhikkhu on his speech about empty mind :

It is beyond my imagination how working with empty mind can be done. If we work without considering it as a work, without thinking that it is we who work, without seeing that others, society, nation are the recipients of the benefits, why should we work in the first place? Instead, we should put an end to working. Why should we work? If the mind is empty of selfishness, people no longer work. If I freed myself

⁸ Ibid., p. 84.

from all the clinging, I would go to your temple to ask for an ordination. I would not waste time working, But I cannot free myself. That is why I am still layman. I cannot let go all the attachment. Working is a form of attachment. Anyone who cannot let go has to go on working. It is a part of suffering. I cannot see a way to work with empty mind. Perhaps, I am of small mind, or do not really see the truth so that I completely have no idea. Regarding mindfulness and wisdom, I think that mindfulness is the state in which we are aware of everything's selflessness - being impermanent, subject to change and not-self. Nothing is ours. If we are mindful in this sense, we no longer work. We lack any enthusiasm to go vending, or anything. We would rather rest at home. With respect, I frankly inform you of my inability to understand. I want to make sense of it, but my pondering leads me this way.⁹

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu has clearly answered him the question as follows:

Now I can catch your point. To work with empty mind, with freedom from the sense of our self or its belongings, means that, why we work, our mind should be free from 'selfishness'. Of course, there exists, even before the working is started, the cognizance that we have the duty toward our nation and religion. This can be considered a wholesome attachment. The possession of wholesome attachment does not attract a reproach. Everyone is allowed to store it. Yet they are

⁹ Arun Vechsuwan, ed., **A Dispute with Conflict between Highness Krukrit Pramroj and Buddhadasa Bhikkhu**, (Arunvidhaya Press, Bangkok, 2549), pp.122-124; Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, Mr.Kukrit Pramroj "How Should We Understand the Dhamma", **The Chulalongkorn Journal of Buddhist Studies**, Vol. 2 No.1, (2003) : 153.

further asked to make a superior attempt to strive until and beyond the top of wholesomeness. We then transcend to 'emptiness'. The immediate practical method is to avoid the troubling mind while working. We are mindful of what, how, how long, and how much it should be done. We can still think but don't think with the mind obsessed with the strong sense of 'selfishness', or self. It is because it will be too much or too little deviating from the reality. Do it with pure wisdom, and the emptiness of the feeling that our self exists. We can think of how we should work with a certain status, under a certain condition, with a certain daily duty, with a certain job, or what benefits the society will have. These are all right. The mind still can be said to be empty. The point is that, when we do it, all that should be left are mindfulness and wisdom. In Buddhism, 'mindfulness' refers to the practice of Satipatthāna (The Foundation of Mindfulness). Be mindful all the time. Do not be absent. Be mindful of there being neither self nor its belongings, and work with that mindfulness. In this state the mind is absolutely bright and quick. I propose you to ponder and practice it. The attempt will show you whether it is possible.¹⁰

Upon the analytical study concerning the above dispute, the issue is how to work with empty mind. An important problem for people is the issue of work, because we work to live. We can say our life has value because of work. In the view of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, if one doesn't want to suffer, then work with an empty mind. Then work will be fun and the results will be excellent. Details such as how one will work, for whom, what one will gain - all of these should not remain. When it's

¹⁰ Ibid., p.125-126.; Ibid., pp,153-154.

time to put our hands to work, we must think it through from the beginning and fix our intention with certainty. Just go to work with empty mind and don't wish for anything beyond the power of one's intelligence. Don't take on duties beyond one's own ability. Let one's ability develop first, then expand one's responsibilities appropriately. One must work with pure intention. The work has to be of value sufficient for our sacrifice. When one know this, then go to work. Even ordinary daily chores, although they're seldom paid, these too need to be done with an empty mind, otherwise one falls into hell, even with the little, everyday tasks. Even miscellaneous things, as well as the most important work of one's life - they all must be done with an empty mind. So the most important question and challenge is simply to work with an empty mind, and then to expand on that by offering all the results to voidness and eating the food of voidness. If one understand how to work with 'empty mind' and can practice it. Once one can do that, then one will understand what it is to offer the fruits of work to emptiness, and to eat the food of emptiness as Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's saying, "Perform all duties with a void mind. Offer the fruits of your work to the void. Consume the void like monks do. Die well like the beginning of time."¹¹

According to Dogen Kigen regarding the working of emptiness in chapter 3.1, he has split 'thinking' into three possibilities : thinking, not thinking and without thinking.¹² In the view of Dogen Kigen, meditation practice is the cultivation of the third of these possibilities. It

¹¹ Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, **Dhamma Likhita : Buddhadasa's Handwritings** – Thich Nhat Hanh's Calligraphy, (Bangkok : BIA, B.E.2552), p.14.

¹² Glass, Newman Robert, **Working Emptiness : Toward a Third Reading of Emptiness in Buddhism and Postmodern Thought**, p.3.

is neither the act of thinking, nor the deliberate act of not thinking. Meditation is, rather, an exercise of without thinking when one lets go of thoughts as they arise, neither clinging to them nor pushing them away. Nonetheless, even when there are no thoughts, an attitude or principle remains which not only guides the functioning or working of without thinking but organizes sense and perception as well. Something is active in without thinking.

Also according to Heideggerian unthought in chapter 4.1. Heideggerian unthought could probably help explain well how to work with Buddhada Bhikkhu's empty mind. Many has misinterpreted Buddhada Bhikkhu's empty mind as not thinking and sensing anything. But in the view of Heideggerian, a thinker's greatest thought is best understood as not a thought at all, but an unthought. Heideggerian says, "unthought is what in a thinker's thought. It is no lack inherent in thought. The more original the thinking is, the richer will be what is unthought in it. The unthought is the greatest gift that thinking can bestow."¹³ Upon the analytical study, Heideggerian unthought has also confirmed Buddhada Bhikkhu's view regarding working with empty mind.

4.3 The Application of Emptiness as Awareness-release or Full awareness

Many Buddhists always concentrate the Buddhist practice in the temple while neglecting Dhamma practice in daily life. This is due to the

¹³ Martin Heidegger, **What is Called Thinking?**, p. 76.

lack of knowledge that Buddhist practice is the way of life with mindfulness and awareness. *Suññatā* in the context of awareness-release or full awareness is the ability of mind to be always awakened at every moment with mindfulness and awareness, and to let go all attachment or the feeling of ‘self’ or things pertaining to ‘self’ but to develop truth-discerning awareness or *pañña* instead. In *Tipiṭaka* it is taught by the Buddha to *Bāhiya* to look at all events based on the restraint of six-sensed doors over the contact as shown in *Bāhiya Sutta* as sayings :

Bāhiya, you should train yourself thus: In reference to the seen, there will be only the seen. In reference to the heard, only the heard. In reference to the sensed, only the sensed. In reference to the cognized, only the cognized. That is how you should train yourself. When for you there will be only the seen in reference to the seen, only the heard in reference to the heard, only the sensed in reference to the sensed, only the cognized in reference to the cognized, then, *Bāhiya*, there is no you in terms of that. When there is no you in terms of that, there is no you there. When there is no you there, you are neither here nor between the two. This, just this, is the end of stress.¹⁴

Emptiness as a type of awareness-release or full awareness, is most fully discussed in *Majjhima Nikāya* which describes this state of awareness-release or full awareness as follows :

There is the case where a monk — having gone into the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or into an empty dwelling — considers this :

¹⁴ Ud. 1.10 (PTS : Ud 6), ***Bāhiya Sutta – About Bāhiya***, tr. by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

This is empty of self or of anything pertaining to self. This is called the emptiness awareness-release or full awareness.¹⁵

Majjhima Nikāya further adds, “if one frequently abides in the emptiness awareness-release, one may either attain the dimension of nothingness — one of the formless states — or be committed to the discernment that will lead to awakening.”¹⁶ As Majjhima Nikāya notes :

When one attains full awareness, the themeless awareness-release or the emptiness awareness-release which come to differ only in name, and not in actuality. Still, it is important to remember that in the course of practice, all these three meanings are related and all will inevitably play a role in awakening.¹⁷

Upon an analytical study of the concept of emptiness as awareness-release or full awareness in chapter 2.3, the application of emptiness as awareness-release or full awareness has played an important role for the development of Satipatthāna. As seen in the practice of Satipatthāna, a practitioner always gets lost in thought or cannot let go thought or any attachment from whatever clinging at work or household with regard to the feeling of ‘self’. Without emptiness as awareness-release, a practitioner cannot let go the fabrication of mind with thought, desire, attachment or the feeling of self. In Maha-suññata Sutta : The Greater Discourse on Emptiness, the way of awareness-release has been described as follows :

If, while the monk is dwelling by means of this dwelling, his mind inclines to walking back & forth, he walks back & forth thinking,

¹⁵ M. 43.

¹⁶ M.106.

¹⁷ M. 43.

“While I am walking thus, no covetousness or sadness, no evil, unskillful qualities will take possession of me.” In this way he is alert there.

If, while he is dwelling by means of this dwelling, his mind inclines to standing... to sitting... to lying down, he lies down, [thinking,] “While I am lying down thus, no covetousness or sadness, no evil, unskillful qualities will take possession of me.” In this way he is alert there.

If, while he is dwelling by means of this dwelling, his mind inclines to speaking, he resolves that “I will not engage in talk that is base, vulgar, common, ignoble, unbeneficial, that does not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calm, direct knowledge, self-awakening, or Unbinding.” In this way he is alert there.

If, while he is dwelling by means of this dwelling, his mind inclines to thinking, he resolves that “I will not think about thoughts that are base, vulgar, common, ignoble, unbeneficial, that do not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calm, direct knowledge, self-awakening, or Unbinding — i.e., thoughts of sensuality, thoughts of ill will, thoughts of harmfulness.” In this way he is alert there.

But, he resolves, “I will think about thoughts that are noble, onward-leading, that lead to the right ending of stress for the person who acts on them — i.e., thoughts of renunciation, thoughts of no ill will, thoughts of harmlessness.” In this way he is alert there.¹⁸

In this chapter the application of emptiness as awareness-release or full awareness in daily life’s work and activities based on the way of

¹⁸ M. 122.

awareness-release as shown in the above mentioned Maha-suññata Sutta will be further demonstrated as follows :

Beginning the day mindfully : Starting the day with mindfulness, simply with gentle breathing of one's own or other alternatives including waking up early and eating one's breakfast slowly and mindfully, or perhaps turning into one's sense of smell, sight and touch fully while one has morning bath or shower; see what effect that has. That is better than just worrying about the day.

Dropping in with mini meditations : When one arrives at work one can easily be swept away by it all and forget to be mindful of what one is doing. The telephone rings, one get email after email, and get called into endless meetings. Whatever one's work involves, one's attention is sure to be sucked up. This habitual loss of attention and going from activity to activity without really knowing about what one is doing. One simply needs to change to mindful awareness mode and the most effective way of doing this is by one-to-three minute meditation, by feeling the sensation of one's own breath. One can do a mini meditation anywhere one feels comfortable. Usually, meditation is easier with one's eyes closed, but that's not so easy at work. One can keep eyes open and softly gazes at something while one focuses one's attention inwards. If one works outside, try going for a slow walk for a few minutes, feeling one's breathing and noticing the sensations of one's feet as they gently make contact with the earth.

Going away from reacting to responding : A reaction is almost automatic thoughts, speech and behavior from one's following some sorts of stimulus, such as irritation from somebody in the office. A response to a

stimulation is a more considered with balanced choices and leads to solving the problems rather than compounding them. One doesn't have to react upon being interrupted by someone. Instead, having a balanced, considered response is most helpful for both parties. Sitting on a chair and notice if one is breathing in a shallow or rapid way, due to frustration, expand one's awareness to a sense of one's body as a whole. Becoming mindful of any emotions taking place inside, feeling it instead of criticizing or blocking the emotion. Notice what happens if one doesn't react as one normally does. Try breathing into the feeling. Bring kindness to one's emotion. One may discover that the very act of being aware of one's reaction changes the flavor of the sensation altogether to a more considered response. One's tone of voice may subtly change from aggressive and demanding to being calmer and inquisitive. The point is not to try and change anything, but just to sit back and watch what's going on for a few moments.

Solving problem creatively : If one's job involves dealing with issues and problems, whether that involves people or not, one can train oneself to see the problems differently. By seeing the problems as challenges, one is already changing how one meet this issue. A challenge is something one rises to, something energizing and fulfilling. To meet one's challenges in a creative way, find some space and time for oneself. One's mind needs room . One needs space for new perceptions. Try to see challenge from a different person's perspective. Talk to other people and ask how they'd deal with the issue. Become mindful of one's immediate reactive way of dealing with this challenge and question the validity of it.

Practicing mindful awareness working : Mindful awareness is simply being mindful of whatever one does when one works. Here are

some examples of ways of being mindfully aware at work. No matter what one's work involves, do it with mindful awareness or full awareness. Mindful awareness helps one's actions become clear and efficient. Connect one's senses with whatever one is doing. Whenever one notices one's mind drifting out of the present moment; just gently bring it back.

Finishing by letting go : One may find letting go one's work at the end of the day very difficult. Perhaps one comes home and all one can think about is work. One may spend the evening talking angrily about colleagues and bosses, or actually doing more work to try to catch up with what one should have finished during the day. This impacts on the quality and quantity of one's sleep, lowering energy levels for the next day. Therefore it needs some kinds of mindful awareness or awareness-release with letting go before this unfortunate negative cycle will spin out of control.

Upon the application of emptiness as awareness-release or full awareness as above mentioned, it is found that breathing meditation (*ānāpānasati*) is regarded as the foundation of emptiness as awareness-release or full awareness. Even the Buddha has been enlightened with *ānāpānasati* and takes refuge with *ānāpānasati* before reaching the enlightenment as said by the Buddha as sayings :

I, too, monks, before my awakening, when I was an unawakened bodhisatta, frequently remained with this abiding. When I frequently remained with this abiding, neither my body was fatigued nor were my eyes, and my mind, through lack of clinging / sustenance, was released from fermentations.¹⁹

¹⁹ S. 54.8.

The importance of ānāpānasati is regarded by the Buddha, when developed and cultivated, is of great fruit and of great benefit as sayings :

Ānanda, there is one state which does complete four. Four states complete seven, and seven complete two. What are they? Intent concentration on in-breathing and out-breathing, Ananda., is the one state which, if cultivated and made much of, brings the four arisings of mindfulness to completion. The four arisings of mindfulness, if cultivated and made much of, bring the seven limbs of wisdom to completion. The seven limbs of wisdom, if cultivated and made much of, complete knowledge and release.²⁰

According to Cula-suññata Sutta: The Lesser Discourse on Emptiness, Ānanda asked whether he heard correctly that the Buddha now remains fully in a dwelling of emptiness. The Buddha said to Ananda,

Yes, Ānanda, you heard that correctly, learned it correctly, attended to it correctly, remembered it correctly. Now, as well as before, I remain fully in a dwelling of emptiness.²¹

Upon an analytical study, it is found that the Buddha has been enlightened with ānāpānasati and takes refuge with ānāpānasati before reaching the enlightenment. And after enlightenment the Buddha remains fully in a dwelling of emptiness. Also it is emphasized by the Buddha that frequently remaining with this abiding or ānāpānasati, the body and eyes are not fatigued, and the mind, through lack of clinging / sustenance, is released from fermentations. It comes to conclusion that practicing ānāpānasati more frequently in daily life will bring forth the efficiency of

²⁰ M. 118.

²¹ M. 121.

body and mind, especially for the mind being released from fermentations through the lack or emptiness of clinging. Therefore the application of emptiness as awareness-release or full awareness in daily life's work and activities is of great importance to reach the supreme emptiness as such.

Upon an analytical study, the application of emptiness as awareness-release or full awareness will bring forth to the temporary emptiness as a foretaste of Nibbāna. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu has taught us unenlightened people to keep practicing the mind empty even for temporariness to extinguish some types of grasping sometimes. The mind may be empty for a minute to an hour or more. But the important thing is that we set our minds on practicing to the best of our abilities to make the mind empty. The more we keep practicing the mind even temporarily empty, the more we will extinguish the feeling of ego or self, thus the emptiness of grasping at or clinging to all things. Emptiness is present in all things: it is their characteristic. If the mind is empty of grasping at and clinging to all things, then it is itself emptiness, the remainderless extinction of ego or self of 'I' and 'mine' and there is no more birth. The phrase 'the remainderless extinction of ego' means the non-arising of ego-consciousness. In terms of the practice, it means preventing its arising, and to practice in this manner consistently may also be called the remainderless extinction of ego. Correct or impeccable practice refers to the practice whereby ego-consciousness has no way of arising in the future, in other words, not allowing it to arise at any moment.

For 'Nibbāna' as temporary emptiness, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu has broadened the meaning of emptiness to a degree of emptiness for the practice, even not the perfect one or being empty for a moment. To this level of emptiness (Suññatā) for lay-people, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu has

emphasized lay-people to keep practicing the mind empty even for temporariness to extinguish some types of grasping sometimes. The mind may be empty for a minute to an hour or more. But the important thing is that we set our minds on practicing to the best of our abilities to make the mind empty. The more we keep practicing the mind even temporarily empty, the more we will extinguish the feeling of ego or self, thus the emptiness would be cultivated more and more or stretched longer and longer as a foretaste of Nibbāna.

Also suggested by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu as sayings :

One should develop and improve on the regular occurrence of temporary Nibbāna which can be ‘stretched’ longer and longer, prolonging the period of coolness, reducing whatever heat or ‘hotness’ there may be and enhancing as well as heightening its coolness till it becomes a perfect Nibbāna that is attainable anywhere at all, be it at home or elsewhere and can be conveniently strived for by both the laity and clerics. Both groups of people (the laity and the clerics or monks) actually share the common human wants or craving, suffering and joy but in the matter of the cessation of suffering, the clerics or the monks are at a better advantage since they leave their homes for a way of life conveniently structured for them to strive for spiritual freedom. Therefore we must admit that even for the laity or householders, it is of great significance for us to know about this matter of Nibbāna and train ourselves in the practice accordingly in order to cool our lives into Nibbāna even for temporariness.²²

²² Op. Cit.

Upon an analytical study, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's temporary Nibbāna is also found relevant to Bāhiya Sutta where Bāhiya upon hearing Dhamma from the Buddha, his mind right then and there was released from the effluents through lack of clinging or self. In Bāhiya Sutta, the Buddha says to Bāhiya :

Then, Bāhiya, you should train yourself thus: In reference to the seen, there will be only the seen. In reference to the heard, only the heard. In reference to the sensed, only the sensed. In reference to the cognized, only the cognized. That is how you should train yourself. When for you there will be only the seen in reference to the seen, only the heard in reference to the heard, only the sensed in reference to the sensed, only the cognized in reference to the cognized, then, Bāhiya, there is no you in term of that. When there is no you in terms of that, there is no you there. When there is no you there, you are neither here nor yonder nor between the two. This, just this, is the end of stress.²³

From the above gatha the Buddha taught to Bāhiya, it is possible for someone to attain the supreme emptiness by keeping training himself with the mind empty even for temporariness to extinguish some types of grasping or 'self' at the contact of āyatana (sense-objects and mind-object). The mind may be empty for a second, a minute, to an hour or more. But the important thing is that one sets one's minds on practicing to the best of one's abilities to make the mind empty of 'self' for a temporary emptiness or temporary Nibbāna. Thus it is called by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu 'death before death' which is a periodical Nibbāna

²³ Ud 1.10 PTS: Ud 6 tr. by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

or ‘a foretaste of Nibbāna’ whenever the mind is devoid of the sense of self or defilements even for an instant.

4.4 Case Study of the Application of Emptiness (Suññatā) in Daily Life

According to the point of controversy being on the dispute among most Buddhist scholars is the uncertainty of how to work with empty mind. The dispute with conflict between Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and Mr. Kukrit Pramoj will be raised up for argument as a case study in this chapter for more clear understanding of how to apply emptiness (Suññatā) in daily life.

Mr. Kukrit Pramoj has made a question to Buddhadasa Bhikkhu on his speech about empty mind as follows :

It is beyond my imagination how working with empty mind can be done. If we work without considering it as a work , without thinking that it is we who work, without seeing that others, society, nation are the recipients of the benefits, why should we work in the first place? Instead , we should put an end to working. Why should we work? If the mind is empty of selfishness, people no longer work. If I freed myself from all the clinging, I would go to your temple to ask for an ordination. I would not waste time working, But I cannot free myself. That is why I am still a layman. I cannot let go all the attachment. Working is a form of attachment. Anyone who cannot let go has to go on working. It is a part of suffering. I cannot see a way to work with empty mind. Perhaps , I am of small mind, or do not really see the

truth so that I completely have no idea. Regarding mindfulness and wisdom, I think that mindfulness is the state in which we are aware of everything's selflessness - being impermanent, subject to change and not-self. Nothing is ours. If we are mindful in this sense, we no longer work. We lack any enthusiasm to go vending, or anything. We would rather rest at home. With respect, I frankly inform you of my inability to understand. I want to make sense of it, but my pondering leads me this way.²⁴

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu has clearly answered him the question as follows :

Now I can catch your point. To work with empty mind, with freedom from the sense of our self or its belongings, means that, while we work, our mind should be free from 'selfishness'. Of course, there exists, even before the working is started, the cognizance that we have the duty toward our nation and religion. This can be considered a wholesome attachment. The possession of wholesome attachment does not attract a reproach. Everyone is allowed to store it. Yet they are further asked to make a superior attempt to strive until and beyond the top of wholesomeness. We then transcend to 'emptiness'. The immediate practical method is to avoid the troubling mind while working. We are mindful of what, how, how long, and how much it should be done. We can still think but don't think with the mind obsessed with the strong sense of 'selfishness', or self. It is because it

²⁴ Arun Vechsuwan, ed., **A Dispute with Conflict between Highness Krukrit Pramot and Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu**, (Arunvidhaya Press, Bangkok, 2549), pp.122-124; Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, Mr.Kukrit Pramoj "How Should We Understand the Dhamma", **The Chulalongkorn Journal of Buddhist Studies**, Vol. 2 No.1 , (2003) : 153.

will be too much or too little deviating from the reality. Do it with pure wisdom, and the emptiness of the feeling that our self exists. We can think of how we should work with a certain status, under a certain condition, with a certain daily duty, with a certain job, or what benefits the society will have. These are all right. The mind still can be said to be empty. The point is that, when we do it, all that should be left are mindfulness and wisdom. In Buddhism , ‘mindfulness’ refers to the practice of Satipatthāna (The Foundation of Mindfulness). Be mindful all the time. Do not be absent. Be mindful of there being neither self nor its belongings, and work with that mindfulness. In this state the mind is absolutely bright and quick. I propose you to ponder and practice it. The attempt will show you whether it is possible.²⁵

Upon the analytical study concerning the above dispute, the issue is how to work with empty mind. An important problem for people is the issue of work, because we work to live. We can say our life has value because of work. In the view of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, if one doesn't want to suffer, then work with ‘empty mind’. Then work will be fun and the results will be excellent. Details such as how one will work, for whom, what one will gain - all of these should not remain. When it's time to put our hands to work, we must think it through from the beginning and fix our intention with certainty. Just go to work with empty mind and don't wish for anything beyond the power of one's intelligence. Don't take on duties beyond one's own ability. Let one's ability develop first, then expand one's responsibilities appropriately. One must work with pure intention. The work has to be of value sufficient for our

²⁵ Ibid., pp.125-126.; Ibid., pp.153-154.

sacrifice. When one know this, then go to work. Even ordinary daily chores, although they're seldom paid, these too need to be done with 'empty mind', otherwise one falls into hell, even with the little, everyday tasks. Even miscellaneous things, as well as the most important work of one's life - they all must be done with 'empty mind'. So the most important question and challenge is simply how to work with 'empty mind', and then to expand on that by offering all the results to voidness and eating the food of voidness. If one understand how to work with 'empty mind' and can practice it. Once one can do that, then one will understand what it is to offer the fruits of work to emptiness, and to eat the food of emptiness as Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's sayings :

Perform all duties with a void mind
 Offer the fruits of your work to the void
 Consume the void like monks do
 Die well like the beginning of time
 He who can work with void
 Will not suffer in misery
 This is what the Lord Buddha calls
 'The art of life'²⁶

Most of the people, when their works bear fruits in the form of money, fame or anything like that, become deluded by them and get attached to them as 'These things are mine. This only adds to their desire more and more. As a result, desirable things are all converted into causes of suffering, unsatisfactory because of grasping and clinging. Therefore,

²⁶Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, **Dhamma Likhita : Buddhadasa's Handwritings – Thich Nhat Hanh's Calligraphy**, (Bangkok : BIA, B.E.2552), p.14.

in order to prevent such desire which will arise again and again, when one's work bears fruits in the form of money, etc., one must give them all to the Voidness; do not be so stupid as to seize and cling to the idea that there are things which belong to me, that this is 'my success', 'my superiority', or 'my' anything. This is what is meant by not to be attached to the results of one's work or offer the fruits of work to the void.

Upon further analytical study, the question is how to know one is working with empty mind and what difference between empty mind and a mind that isn't empty of me and mine. One can observe oneself whenever one works mindfully and wisely, as opposed to working with defilement, the mind become empty. If the mind is empty and free, it works with wisdom. If mind is busy, it works with craving and defilement. Why is it that so few people benefit from working with empty mind? Because people don't reach the level of 'working mindfully with wisdom', which requires intelligence that is true and pure. There must be truth and purity within oneself, and the wisdom has to be the kind that is empty of me and mine, that is free of egoism. Thus work is fun. It isn't even thought of as work anymore. Try this out in one's everyday tasks whether they are pleasant or not, or whether they are tiresome chores. If one still think of it as work then the mind isn't empty. Watch this carefully, and try it again with 'empty mind', so that one will be someone who can do all kinds of work with 'empty mind'. At least be able to do it once in a while. Even if there are times when one's mood is busy. To have the fiery eye that sees all things as void, without any craving, clinging, or suffering, requires the knowledge that is wise enough to see even work as empty, so that it's no longer seen as work. Destroy all the meaning of the word 'work,' and it

becomes enjoyable play. One will be at ease and comfortable in such work.

Ajahn Sumedho has also guided the development of knowing in daily life in his writing 'The Way It is' by means of being nobody which supports Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's view on how to work with empty mind with mindfulness and awareness as sayings :

Now how many of you feel you have a mission in life to perform? It's something you've got to do and some kind of important task that's been assigned to you by God or fate or something. People frequently get caught up in that view of being somebody who has a mission. Who can be just with the way things are, so that it is just the body that grows up, gets old and dies, breathes and is conscious? We can practice, live within the moral precepts, do good, respond to the needs and experiences of life with mindfulness and wisdom – but there's nobody that has to do anything. There's nobody with a mission, nobody special, we're not making a person or a saint or an avatar or avartar. Even if you think : 'I'm just a nobody - even being a nobody is somebody in this life, isn't it? You can be just as proud of being nobody as of being somebody, and just as deluded or attached to being nobody. But whatever you happen to believe, that you're a nobody or a somebody or you have a mission or you're a nuisance and a burden to the world or however you might view yourself, then the knowing is there to see the cessation of such a view.²⁷

²⁷ Ajahn Sumedho, **The Way It Is**, (London : Amaravati Publication,1991), p.110.

Ajahn Sumedho further emphasizes the development of wisdom by means of being nobody as sayings :

Views arise and cease, don't they? I'm somebody, an important person who has a mission in life; that arises and ceases in the mind. Notice the ending of being somebody important or being nobody or whatever – it all ceases, doesn't it? Everything that arises, ceases, so there's a non-grasping of the view of being somebody with a mission or of being nobody. There's the end of that whole mass of suffering – of having to develop something, become somebody, change something, set everything right, get rid of all your defilements or save the world. Even the best ideals, the best thoughts can be seen as dhammas that arise and cease in the mind.....People with self-sacrifice who have missions and help others and have something important to do are an inspiration. But when you notice that as dhamma, you are looking at the limitations of inspirations and the cessation of it. Then there is the dhamma of those aspirations and actions rather than somebody who has to become something or has to do something. The whole illusion is relinquished and what remains is purity of mind. Then the response to experience comes from wisdom and purity rather than from personal conviction and mission with its sense of self and others, and all the complications that come from the whole pattern of delusion.²⁸

Newman Robert Glass has given his view in his writing 'working emptiness' as sayings,

²⁸ Ibid., 110-111.

While the project was initially framed in terms of thinking and emptiness, the working of emptiness should be understood to include visual and affective dimensions. Indeed it is a transformed affective dimension that becomes primary in the decision-making process. The claim is that : people do not always act in their own best interests. Force, desire and craving have an impact on decision-making. In an age plagued by seemingly endless forms of both addiction and abuse, newspapers carry stories daily of people who knowingly act against their own best interests. This is not a failure of rationality but an inability to overcome different forms of force, desire and craving in living one's life.²⁹

According to working of emptiness, Heidegger has said that a thinker's greatest thought is best understood as not a thought at all, but an unthought. In what is called thinking?, he states, "Unthought is what in a thinker's thought. It is no lack inherent in thought. The more original the thinking is, the richer will be what is unthought in it. The unthought is the greatest gift that thinking can bestow."³⁰ In the view of Heidegger, the nature of the unthought, the nothing or emptiness, is crucial in thinking. The nature or functioning of this unthought (or emptiness) determines the nature of what shall be thought – not, of course, the subject matter to which it turns, but the structure of thinking itself by which the subject matter will be organized, arranged or oriented. In this sense, the one great

²⁹ Newman Robert Glass, **Working Emptiness : Toward a Third Reading of Emptiness in Buddhism and Postmodern Thought**, p,7.

³⁰ Martin Heidegger, **What is Called Thinking?**, p. 76.

thought of each thinker is then the specificity and working of an unthought, his or her own particular working of emptiness.

Upon an analytical study of the above views of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, Ajahn Sumedho, Newman Robert Glass, Heidegger and Mr. Kukrit Pramoj regarding working with emptiness (or empty mind) and the working of emptiness, it is found different angles of seeing emptiness from the preliminary emptiness to the supreme emptiness as the aim. Anyhow from the explanation of Heidegger about unthought. It plays an important role to determine what we are thinking. With unthought the subject matter of thinking will be organized, arranged or oriented. That means without unthought, the matter of thinking could not be well organized, arranged or oriented. Thus Heideggerian unthought declares that unthought is crucial in thinking, in other words empty the mind first before thinking anything because it will result in the quality of thinking with good organization, arrangement and orientation. Therefore Heideggerian unthought will answer the point of controversy between Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and Mr. Kukrit Pramoj with regard to the way of emptiness to be applied in daily life. It means the mind being always emptied first with unthought and rather frequently in daily life's work and activities is the pragmatic approach to the application of emptiness to fulfill the gap of misunderstanding between Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and Mr. Kukrit Pramoj leading to the way it is with wisdom as explained by Ajahn Sumedho and to the ideal motto of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's as sayings : "Perform all duties with a void mind. Offer the fruits of your

work to the void. Consume the void like monks do. Die well like the beginning of time.”³¹

4.5 Conclusion

Upon the analytical study, the application of emptiness (Suññatā) in accordance with the concept of emptiness (Suññatā) in Tipiṭaka and Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s view could be interpreted into the three contexts, ie. as meditative dwelling or Suññata-vihāra, the lack of ‘self’ or Anattā and awareness-release or full awareness.

Emptiness (Suññatā) in its first context means the ability to center the mind in a particular mode of perception, to maintain it there, and then to notice the absence and presence of disturbance within that mode. The development of emptiness as meditative dwelling starts with perceptions of one's external surroundings — village, wilderness, the earth property and then moves internally to the four formless states, the ‘themeless concentration of awareness’, and finally to the release from all mental fermentation.

The application of emptiness (Suññatā) as meditative dwelling is associated with void-concentration or Suññata-samādhi which is based on emptiness of ‘self’ or things pertaining to ‘self’ by centering the mind in a particular mode of perception, to maintain it there, and then to notice the absence and presence of disturbance within that mode. In the way of living in daily life, one should train oneself with Suññata-samādhi and abide with emptiness as Suññata-vihāra in all kinds of work and

³¹ Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, **Dhamma Likhita : Buddhadasa’s Handwritings – Thich Nhat Hanh’s Calligraphy**, p.14.

activities, for instance, learning in a class, working on a job, having a thought, staff meeting in the conference room, driving a car, eating and drinking, practicing mindfulness of breathing and others by keeping the mind empty of what not being here at the moment, but what not empty is the good attention or awareness of what being here at the moment upon void-concentration (Suññata-samādhī). In this way, one has trained himself with Suññata-samādhī and abide with emptiness (Suññata) as meditative dwelling or Suññata-vihāra at the event.

Emptiness (Suññatā) in its second context means the lack of ‘self’ or Anattā or not pertaining to ‘self’ in the internal and external sense media. Whatever sense of ‘self’ that may surround these objects is not inherent in them. as ‘I-making’ and ‘my-making’. Seeing the artificiality of ‘I-making’ and ‘my-making’ in this way helps lead to a sense of letting go with these ‘makings’, thus helping to abandon any clinging associated with them. Thus emptiness in this sense relates directly to the third of the three characteristics, ie. Anattā or ‘non-self’.

The application of emptiness (Suññatā) as the lack of ‘self’ or Anattā is interpreted by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu in the context of empty mind (cit-wang in Thai). The empty mind means the state of mind which is free from getting a hold of egoism and all desires due to the lack of ‘self’ or ‘Anattā’. Thus the mind can realize the reality of the world that it is naturally empty. The concept of ‘empty mind’ is rendered into action by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu as working with ‘empty mind’ in two occasions. The first occasion is the empty mind with doerless doing to realize the real freedom while working, one should avoid having and gaining with the feeling of ‘I’ or ‘mine’ despite our ownership because one with the feeling of not-having and not-gaining or another word doerless doing will

be able to maintain the normal state of the mind or ‘the freedom of mind’. In the second occasion is the empty mind to realize the real freedom while working, by being mindful of the sense-media consciousness at the moment of contact with sense-objects. To the research, the working of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s empty mind could be explained by Heideggerian unthought. In the view of Heidegger, the nature of the unthought, the nothing or emptiness, is crucial in thinking. The nature or functioning of unthought (or emptiness) determines the nature of what shall be thought. In this sense, the one great thought of each thinker is then the specificity and working of an unthought, his or her own particular working of emptiness. In other words, working with empty mind with regard to Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s concept will result in the efficiency of work. Thus it is great working with the empty mind.

Emptiness (Suññatā) in its third context means full awareness, the themeless awareness-release or the emptiness awareness-release. In the course of practice, all these three meanings which come to differ only in name are related and all will inevitably play a role in awakening. The emptiness as awareness-release can keep one always awakened or fully aware of what one is doing, thus letting go unwholesome states in one’s mind.

The Application of emptiness (Suññatā) as a type of awareness-release or full awareness is of great importance for the well establishment of mindful awareness. As shown in the demonstration working with awareness release in daily life, one can work efficiently and let go all tension and sufferings from work. It is also found that breathing meditation (ānāpānasati) is of great importance to help establish well

mindful awareness in work. This is confirmed by the Buddha abiding with ānāpānasati before reaching the enlightenment as well.

Upon an analytical study, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's interpretation of emptiness (Suññatā) as 'empty mind' is relevant to the concept of emptiness in the lack of 'self' or 'Anattā' which is only one perspective of emptiness among the three contexts approached in Tipiṭaka. From the all three concepts of emptiness as described above, there one can find the conceptual meanings of emptiness approached from the three contexts in accordance with the Tipiṭaka of which the concept of emptiness (Suññatā) based on the three contexts could be more widely applied for a pragmatic approach in different angles to fulfill the application of emptiness (Suññatā) in daily life with clearer understanding. Thus the purpose of this thematic paper is hence to analyze all these three contexts of emptiness in Tipiṭaka together with the concept of emptiness (Suññatā) in the view of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu so that one can apply all the concepts of emptiness (Suññatā) from the three contexts properly and efficiently in daily life's work and activities.