

Dissertation Title: **BUDDHADĀSA BHIKKHU'S CONCEPT OF EMPTY-MIND  
(CIT-WANG): A CRITICAL STUDY**

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**ABSTRACT**

There are three main objectives for this research paper. Firstly, it aims at studying Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu's view of empty-mind (*cit-wang*) and also the Canonical Theravāda texts. Secondly, it examine Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu's concept of "*cit-wang*" with the idea of *suññatā* in the Canonical Theravāda texts. Lastly, it aims to study the view of other scholars with regard to "*cit-wang*" and to examine the application of "*cit-wang*" in Thai society. This thesis proposes that Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu's interpretation of "empty-mind" or "*cit-wang*" corresponds to the Buddha's teaching as appears in the Pāli Canon, and is a practical means that is also relevant to the everyday life of modern day people. The methodology employed is the Nettipakaraṇa, a Buddhist hermeneutical theory used as a means for eliminating wrong understanding of the Buddha's teachings. This theory includes the research and analysis of primary and secondary texts, such as books, journals and internet resources.

This study shows that there were two major causes leading to Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu's formulation of the concept of empty-mind or "*cit-wang*", namely, national problems and Buddhist problems. The national problems arose due to the government policy which placed high importance on material development which led people into an age of materialism. The other cause was Buddhist problems, because Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu saw that teaching religion with these old-fashioned methods was not able to satisfy the deeper spiritual needs of human beings in this modern society.

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu explained that he coined the term “*cit-wang*” as an alternative to the word *suññatā*. This study found that the concept of “*cit-wang*” does not stray from the theme of *suññatā* as found in the Canonical Theravāda texts. Both “*cit-wang*” and *suññatā* cover the same concept of truth, namely, that all states are empty of a self or things related to the self. However, the states of “*cit-wang*” and *suññatā* (emptiness) also have some differences. *Suññatā* is a state of being empty of creatures, people, self, me, him, and her. In other words the word *suññatā* means emptiness, because of the fact that there is no self to be found in the world. On the other hand, the specific term “*cit-wang*” varies slightly from traditional Buddhist teachings in that it is a state of mind that is accompanied by wisdom and is therefore free from the feeling of ‘me’ and ‘mine’. The concept “*cit-wang*” is a basis of practice that can be applied in everyday life for both lay and monastic practitioners. Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu’s presentation of the concept of “*cit-wang*” rested on the explanation of all things (including the mind) having emptiness as their fundamental nature and the potentiality for everybody to be enlightened.

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu’s teaching of “*cit-wang*” met with a variety of both positive and negative criticism, because people’s intellectual capacities and realization of Dhamma are not all of the same degree. Many people were not able to understand the subtleties of Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu’s teaching method. In fact, when people study the Buddha-Dhamma in the Pāli canon deeply and truly, they will find that Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu’s reinterpretation and teaching did not stray from the essence of the Buddha-Dhamma, since the conception of “*cit-wang*” is consistent with the theme of *suññatā* and *anattā* in the Pāli canon. The presentation of linguistics may be different but the purpose it not different.