
**Direct Realization of Ultimate Truth Through the No Method Path:
A Practice for Women Without Abandoning Daily Activities
According to Guru Padmasambhava**

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Abstract

This article investigates the unique challenges faced by women in contemporary society through the lens of Buddhist teachings, particularly those of Guru Padmasambhava. It aims to (1) explore the obstacles women confront in modern life while seeking the path to ultimate truth, (2) delve into the no-method path as articulated by Guru Padmasambhava for realizing this truth, and (3) propose practical applications of this path that harmonize with daily activities. The research methodology includes a comprehensive analysis of sources such as the *Tipiṭaka* and its commentaries from the Pāli Text Society, various texts documenting Guru Padmasambhava's teachings, and relevant scholarly articles. Additionally, the study incorporates findings from interviews conducted with two groups: six Buddhist scholars and masters, and ten female practitioners aged 21 to 45 from the Hundred Flowers Meditation Retreat in Vietnam, all of whom have engaged with the no-method path for periods ranging from three to twelve months. Data obtained through individual and group interviews were analyzed using content analysis techniques.

The results indicate that contemporary women grapple with many societal misconceptions and erroneous perceptions that significantly influence their spiritual endeavors. An investigation into the two truths across diverse Buddhist traditions highlights the profound insights of Guru Padmasambhava. In the context of Theravāda Buddhism, the differentiations between conditioned phenomena—mind, mental factors, and form—and the unconditioned state of Nibbāna become apparent. In contrast, the doctrines of Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna articulate the ultimate truth as emptiness (*śūnyatā*), thereby underscoring its inseparable relationship with conventional truth.

Guru Padmasambhava clarifies that ultimate truth represents recognizing the true essence of mind and reality, transcending dualistic thought. This truth, perceived as the synthesis of emptiness and luminous clarity, unveils the inherent purity and perfection of all

phenomena. His teachings contend that comprehending the intrinsically pure and luminous nature of the mind is essential for achieving liberation from the cycle of *samsāra*.

Importantly, the no-method path, frequently referenced within the Dzogchen and Mahamudra traditions, provides direct experiential wisdom that surpasses conceptual cognition. Female practitioners at the Hundred Flowers Meditation Retreat exemplify the practical application of these teachings by seamlessly integrating non-judgmental awareness into their everyday activities—be it through cooking, cleaning, or managing familial disputes. By fostering presence and relinquishing conceptual expectations, they embody the quintessence of Dzogchen, manifesting a pathway to self-liberation that aligns with the exigencies of modern life without necessitating the abandonment of worldly responsibilities.

Keywords: No Method Path; Direct Realization of Ultimate Truth; Guru Padmasambhava; Women and Buddhism

Introduction

In modern society, women are often confronted with a multitude of responsibilities and challenges, ranging from career demands to familial obligations, leaving them with limited opportunities for dedicated spiritual practice. The pressures of balancing personal, professional, and social roles can lead to emotional and mental distress, often stemming from deeply ingrained societal norms and expectations (Sanders, 2019). Buddhist teachings offer an antidote to this suffering by providing a pathway to realizing the ultimate truth, a state of awakening that transcends dualistic distinctions between self and other, or the material and spiritual worlds (Harvey, 2013). However, traditional Buddhist practices frequently emphasize structured meditation, rituals, and specific methods, which may not be accessible to women managing a full range of daily responsibilities (Loy, 2018). This presents a significant problem: how can women in modern society integrate Buddhist practices, particularly the realization of ultimate truth, into their lives without abandoning their worldly duties?

Women in modern society face numerous obstacles when attempting to balance their spiritual development with daily responsibilities. The traditional emphasis on long meditation retreats and ritualistic practices presents a barrier to spiritual progress for women who cannot devote extensive time to formal practices. This creates a significant gap between the spiritual

aspirations of women and the practical realities they encounter (Gross, 1993). Moreover, contemporary Buddhist practices often emphasize methods and techniques, which may obscure the fundamental Buddhist goal of realizing ultimate truth through direct, non-dual experience (Harvey, 2013). This tension calls for an alternative approach that allows spiritual growth to occur within the framework of daily life, without the need for formal methods or prolonged retreats.

The concept of ultimate truth, as understood in Buddhism, refers to the realization of the nature of reality beyond conceptual dualities (Williams, 2009). In this context, Guru Padmasambhava's "No Method Path" presents a non-ritualistic, spontaneous approach to enlightenment, which is particularly relevant for women who cannot follow rigid meditative schedules (Padmasambhava, 1989). This practice advocates direct realization through mindfulness in daily activities, making it a viable spiritual path for women who are unable to engage in formal, time-consuming methods. The "No Method Path" aligns with contemporary needs by bridging the gap between spiritual realization and practical living, allowing women to pursue spiritual growth without sacrificing their responsibilities.

In a recent initiative at the Hundred Flowers Meditation Retreat in Vietnam, a study was conducted involving ten of the 140 women practitioners, aged 21 to 45, who have applied the no method path for 3 to 12 months. These practitioners participated in both individual and group interviews. To respect the privacy of practitioners when sharing their life stories and experiences in practice, the researcher will only use alphabet letters instead of full names. The study also drew interest from six international Buddhist scholars who contributed to analyzing how these practices are adapted in contemporary settings. This collaboration aimed to deepen the understanding of how ancient Buddhist teachings are applied in modern contexts. The research will not only make clear the philosophical underpinnings of ultimate truth and the essence of methodless practice but will also address the practical application of this ancient wisdom in the modern world, particularly for women seeking to balance spiritual growth with daily responsibilities. This comprehensive analysis seeks to bridge the gap between traditional Buddhist teachings and the demands of contemporary living, offering insights into achieving a harmonious blend of spiritual and worldly life.

This research paper will first explore the concept of ultimate truth according to the three major branches of Buddhism: Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna, with a particular focus on the teachings of Guru Padmasambhava. In Theravāda Buddhism, the ultimate truth is understood through the dual aspects of conditioned phenomena, such as consciousness (citta), mental factors (cetasikas), and form (rūpa), alongside the unconditioned phenomenon of Nibbāna. Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism, on the other hand, define ultimate truth as emptiness (śūnyatā), emphasizing the integration of conventional truth within this ultimate truth, highlighting their inseparability. Moreover, it aims to explore and analyze the potential of Guru Padmasambhava's No Method Path as a practical practice for women in modern society. The research will examine the context of women's challenges in contemporary life, the concept of ultimate truth in Buddhist philosophy, and how the No Method Path can be applied without the need to abandon daily responsibilities. By focusing on these aspects, this study seeks to offer a model for integrating spiritual practice into modern life, addressing the specific needs and challenges faced by women.

Research Objectives

1. To study the context and women's challenges in modern society and the concept of ultimate truth according to Guru Padmasambhava.
2. To analyze the practice through the No Method path for realizing the ultimate truth according to Guru Padmasambhava.
3. To propose the practical practice of the No Method Path for women without abandoning their daily activities.

Literature Review

This literature review examines the challenges women face in contemporary society, explores the "No Method Path" to realizing the ultimate truth as taught by Guru Padmasambhava, and proposes practical applications of this path for women who wish to integrate spirituality into their daily lives.

In modern society, women often face unique challenges that limit their ability to engage in traditional spiritual practices. According to Deshwal (2021), societal expectations, family responsibilities, and professional demands often leave women with little time to pursue formal meditation. In this context, Guru Padmasambhava's teachings on the No Method Path provide a direct means to realize ultimate truth without relying on formal rituals or retreats

(Padmasambhava, 1994). Ultimate truth, according to Padmasambhava, is the direct realization of the nature of mind—unconditioned, pure, and luminous (Padmasambhava, 1989). His teachings offer an accessible spiritual practice for women, focusing on cultivating awareness in everyday activities, which removes the barrier of time-intensive spiritual pursuits.

Guru Padmasambhava emphasizes that all phenomena are mind-made, and therefore, the realization of the ultimate truth lies in observing the nature of the mind itself (Padmasambhava, 1989). His teachings resonate with the Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna traditions, particularly the notion that samsara and nirvana are not separate realities but two sides of the same coin (Nāgārjuna, 1995). Women can practice mindfulness and non-dual awareness daily, recognizing that their everyday experiences—whether joyous or challenging—are opportunities for spiritual growth. Harding (2010) further supports this view, stating that ordinary sense experiences, though illusory, are inseparable from enlightenment.

In alignment with Padmasambhava's teachings, Vien Minh (2019) explains that awareness is beyond the arising and ceasing of phenomena. Women can, therefore, remain aware of the constancy of their mind's pure nature while engaging in daily tasks. This understanding allows them to transcend the need for structured practices, such as prolonged meditation, while still moving toward spiritual realization. The key is cultivating mindfulness and presence in each moment, regardless of activity.

Women can integrate the No Method Path into their lives by reframing daily tasks as spiritual practices. For instance, mindfulness in mundane activities such as cooking, cleaning, or working can become moments of insight into the nature of mind. The teachings of Nāgārjuna (1995) on the nature of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) further reinforce that all activities are interconnected and interdependent. By recognizing the interdependent nature of their experiences, women can dissolve the duality between the spiritual and the mundane, understanding that ultimate truth is present in every moment.

Moreover, the teachings of Hua (2009) on awareness, as explored in the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, resonate with the notion of non-objectifiable awareness that persists irrespective of sensory input. This reflects a core aspect of Dzogchen, where awareness is not bound to phenomena but remains as the constant ground of experience. Hua's commentary reinforces the practice of recognizing awareness itself as unchanging, which enables individuals to engage in daily life while remaining rooted in spiritual truth. Hua adds that awareness remains unchanging amidst external objects and circumstances. This teaching suggests that even in

busy, chaotic environments, women can tap into the stillness and clarity of their awareness. Thich Nhat Hanh's concept of interbeing also complements this view, as Lim (2021) highlights, by encouraging individuals to recognize the interconnectedness of all things, which naturally fosters compassion and mindfulness in everyday interactions.

Conceptual Framework

This research is a research study. The conceptual framework of this research is as follows:

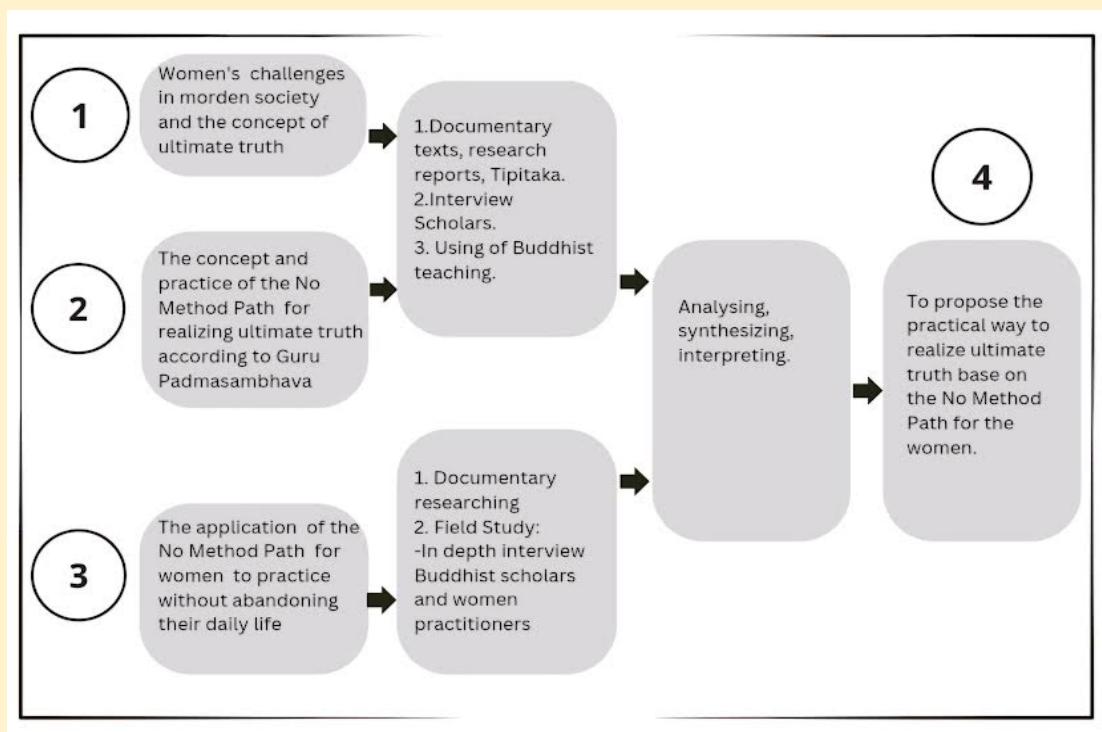


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

The research methodology of this dissertation encompasses documentary analysis and in-depth interviews. Key informants include Buddhist scholars, retreat masters, and seasoned practitioners with extensive retreat experience. Additionally, women practitioners from the Hundred Flowers Meditation Retreat in Vietnam share their practice progress. The research methodology is divided into three stages as follows:

1. Documentary Analysis: This stage's objectives involve exploring the specific issues and difficulties that women encounter today, providing context for the study, and understanding how these challenges impact their spiritual practice. Additionally, it involves analyzing texts and data from various sources, including textbooks, articles, sutras, the Tipitaka, and teachings from key Buddhist scholars such as Guru Padmasambhava, Nāgārjuna, and Vien Minh, to establish a foundational understanding of the ultimate truth and the no method path practice.

2. In-depth Interviews: This stage includes conducting interviews with Buddhist scholars and practitioners. These key informants offer valuable insights into their understanding and personal experiences with the ultimate truth and the no-method path practice. Their expertise and deep practice enhance the study's depth and credibility.

3. Case Study of Practitioners: This stage focuses on the experiences of women practitioners at the Hundred Flowers Meditation Retreat in Vietnam. A study was conducted involving ten of the 140 women practitioners, aged 21 to 45, who applied the no method path in their lives for 3 to 12 months. These practitioners were chosen for in-depth interviews, conducted both individually and in groups. To respect their privacy when sharing life stories and practice experiences, the researcher will refer to them using alphabet letters instead of their full names. Through interviews and observations, this stage explores their progression in practice and how the teachings on ultimate truth and the no-method path are integrated into their daily lives and spiritual journeys.

Research Results

Objective 1: The results of observation and interviews showed that members of the Hundred Flowers Meditation Retreat in Vietnam face a myriad of economic and social challenges. One of the most prominent issues is wage disparity; women often earn less than their male counterparts for performing similar work. This financial inequality is compounded by limited career opportunities and significant obstacles in climbing the professional ladder, particularly in industries traditionally dominated by men. In addition to their professional struggles, these women are often burdened with a disproportionate share of unpaid labor, such as childcare, eldercare, and household chores. This dual burden of paid and unpaid work can slow their professional advancement and financial progress, thereby limiting their access to broader opportunities in life and spiritual practice.

At the Hundred Flowers Meditation Retreat, many women recount past and present experiences with violence and discrimination. Some have endured childhood abuse by parents or siblings, while others face ongoing domestic violence. These traumatic experiences have a profound impact on their well-being and sense of security, overshadowing their potential and hindering their access to equal opportunities in various life sectors. The long-term effects of such violence and discrimination can be severe, affecting not only their immediate health and happiness but also their long-term well-being and ability to thrive.

Cultural norms and societal expectations play a significant role in shaping the lives of the women at the Hundred Flowers Meditation Retreat. Many are confined to traditional roles as caretakers and homemakers, a result of deeply ingrained cultural stereotypes. These societal pressures dictate their behavior and appearance, leading to psychological stress and a diminished sense of self. As these women strive to meet societal expectations—balancing family responsibilities with career aspirations—their opportunities for personal and professional growth are stifled. This struggle to conform to prescribed roles not only affects their self-esteem but also has a detrimental impact on their mental health.

The emotional demands on the women at the Hundred Flowers Meditation Retreat are substantial. They are often required to manage and prioritize the emotional needs of others, a responsibility expected of them due to societal norms. This role as caregivers and sources of support can lead to emotional exhaustion and burnout. The constant need to attend to others' emotional needs, combined with their heightened sensitivity to these needs, can increase their vulnerability to mood disorders such as depression and anxiety. This emotional burden complicates their efforts to balance professional and personal responsibilities, further impacting their overall well-being.

In the three primary branches of Buddhism—Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna—there is a unified pursuit of ultimate truth, despite their differing methodologies and philosophical emphases. Theravāda Buddhism seeks ultimate truth within the framework of the four ultimate realities, a foundational element of meditative practice. This approach explores conditioned and unconditioned phenomena, delving into the transient nature of the mind (citta), mental factors (cetasika) such as feelings and perceptions, physical forms (rūpa), and culminating in the contemplation of Nibbāna—the unconditioned state signifying liberation and the end of rebirth.

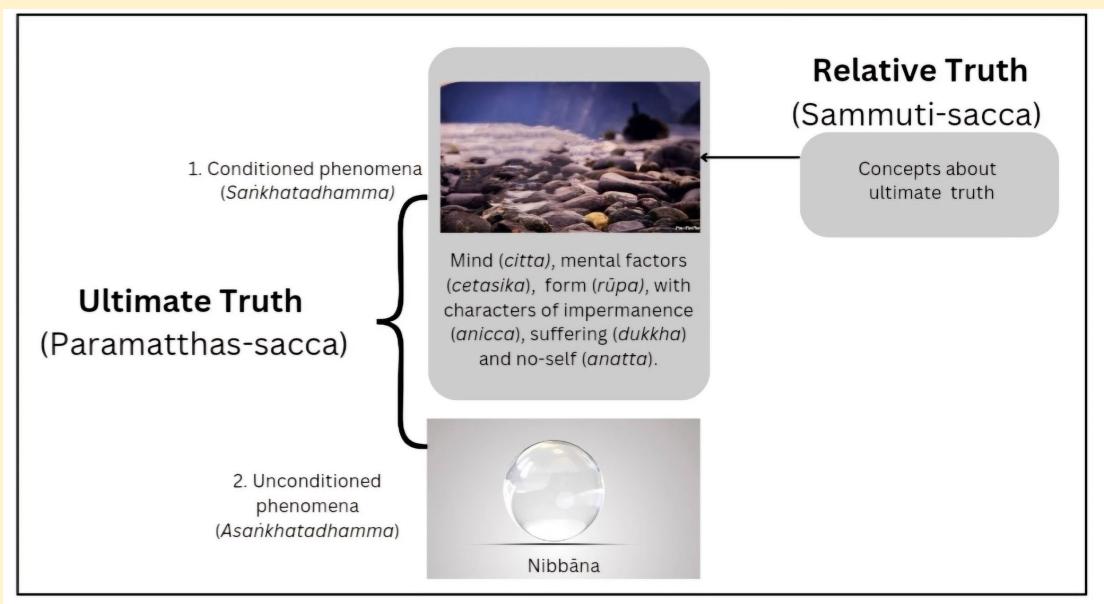


Figure 2 Concept of ultimate truth according to Theravāda Buddhism. (Dhammarakkhita Bhikkhu, 2017)

Figure 2 mentioned in Theravāda Buddhism, the concept of ultimate truth is structured around two categories: saṅkhata-dhamma (conditioned phenomena) and a-saṅkhata-dhamma (unconditioned phenomena). Conditioned phenomena include citta (mind), cetasika (mental factors), and rūpa (physical forms), which arise dependent on the four nutriments: kamma (action), citta (consciousness), utu (temperature), and āhāra (nutriment). These are characterized by the marks of existence—impermanence (anicca), suffering (dukkha), and non-self (anatta). On the other hand, a-saṅkhata-dhamma represents unconditioned phenomena like Nibbāna, which arise independently of any nutriments and are not formed through causal conditions. Nibbāna is described as unconditioned and objectless, signifying a state where consciousness isn't fixed or combined with any phenomena. However, in Theravāda tradition, Nibbāna serves as the object of the Arahat's consciousness.

The transition beyond the dualistic view of object and subject is crucial. When one transcends the ordinary perception of experiences divided into 'observer' and 'observed,' consciousness begins to see itself. This is a fundamental aspect of many spiritual and meditative practices, particularly in non-dual traditions. In such states, consciousness reflects upon itself, allowing for recognition of its nature and existence without the mediation of external phenomena. This introspective mode of being is akin to a mirror looking into itself, collapsing the distinction between the observer and the observed, revealing a state of pure

awareness or self-luminosity. This profound realization can lead to a deeper understanding of reality, where conventional boundaries that define subjective and objective experience fade away, offering a glimpse into a more fundamental state of being beyond the usual constraints of perception and mental categorization.

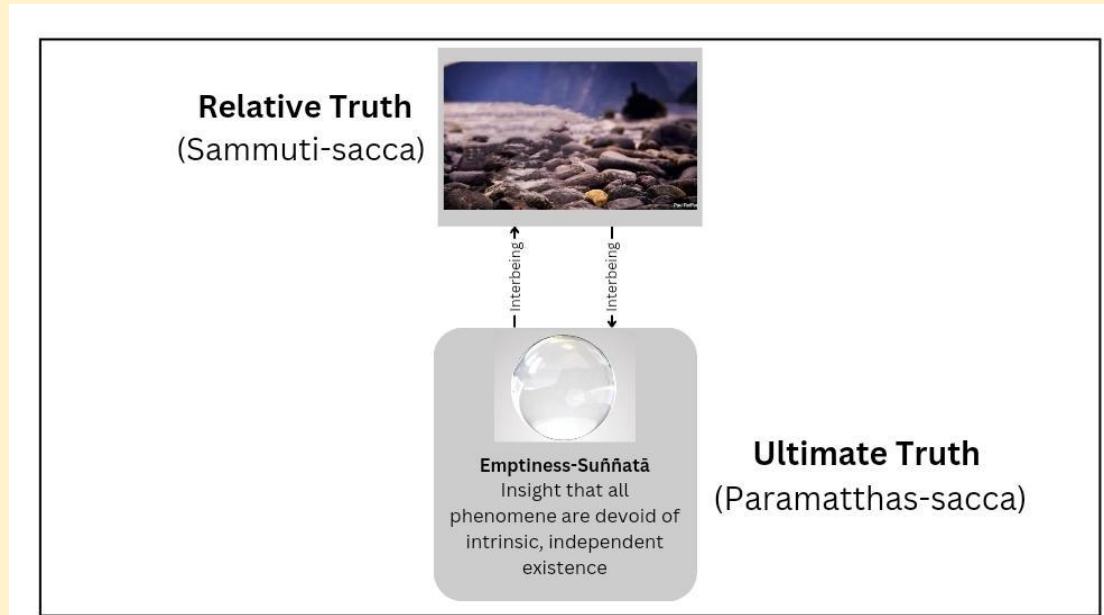


Figure 3 Concept of Ultimate Truth according to Mahāyāna Buddhism (O’Leary, 2019)

Figure 3 expresses Mahāyāna Buddhism deepens this inquiry through the concept of "emptiness" (śūnyatā), which understands phenomena as devoid of inherent existence and interconnected. This is eloquently expressed in the Heart Sutra's phrase, "Form is emptiness, emptiness is form," underscoring the non-duality of conventional and ultimate truths. This focus on interconnectedness fosters a compassionate approach to life, aspiring toward bodhicitta—the wish for all beings to attain enlightenment.

Figure 4 is about Vajrayāna Buddhism, particularly under Guru Padmasambhava's guidance, further emphasizes emptiness, presenting the mind's nature as inherently pure and luminous. This tradition teaches that ultimate truth is not separate from relative reality but interwoven, and the practitioner's goal is to recognize this intrinsic purity. The inseparability of appearance and emptiness is the ultimate truth in Vajrayāna. Appearances are devoid of inherent existence, and ultimate truth is devoid of inherent non-existence. Together, they reveal the interconnectedness of all things.

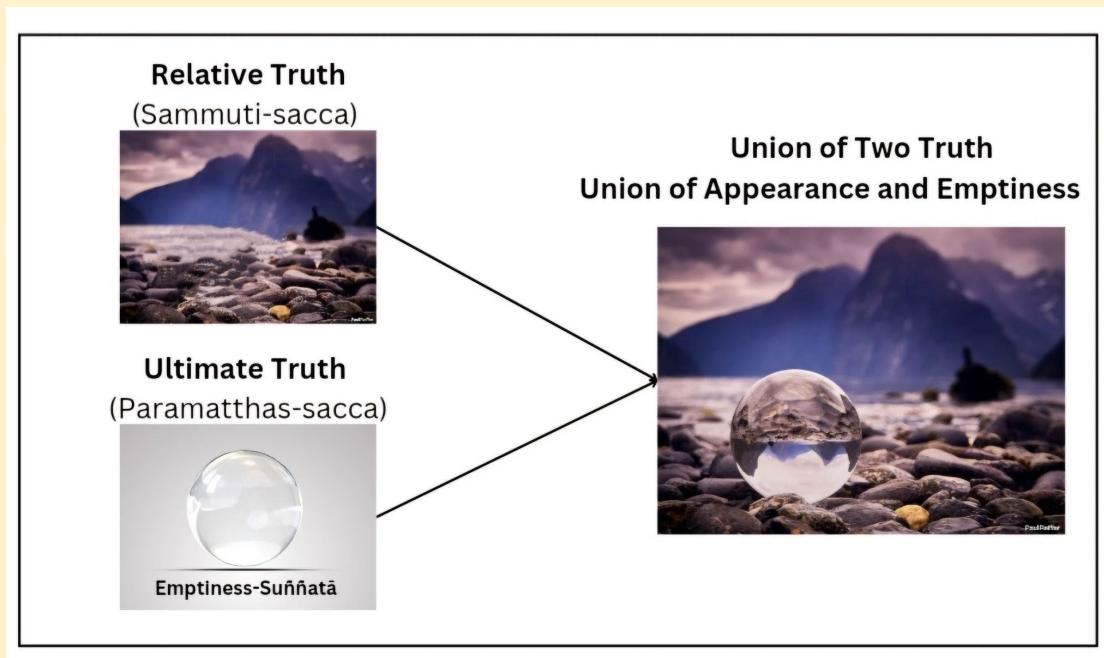


Figure 4 Concept of Ultimate Truth according to Vajrayāna Buddhism (Lama Chonam & S. Nyingpo, 2011)

Ultimate truth and relative truth are intrinsically linked, illustrating a crucial perspective in understanding reality. One cannot ignore the practical, everyday aspects of life while exploring deeper existential truths. This concept underscores the necessity of recognizing and integrating both layers of truth to fully comprehend our existence. By acknowledging the importance of relative truth, which encompasses practical experiences and the physical world, we are better equipped to apply broader philosophical insights to our daily lives. This balanced approach ensures that our insights into the ultimate truth are grounded and relevant to our everyday experiences.

In summary, while Theravāda emphasizes the conditioned nature of mind, mental factors, and physical forms, as well as the unconditioned nature of Nibbāna, Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna focus on the unconditioned quality of ultimate truth and its integration with relative phenomena. All three traditions converge on the principle of non-self, emphasizing that no phenomena have an inherent, self-existing nature. They highlight the inseparability of ultimate and relative truths, emphasizing that everything is interconnected, thus contributing to a profound understanding of the nature of reality and existence.

Objective 2. Key Practice of No Method Path:

The practice of the no-method path is recommended for perceiving the true nature of phenomena. By resting the mind in awareness and observing without any fabricated methods or intentions, practitioners witness the constant change and inherent lack of self-nature in all experiences (Padmasambhava, 2010). This process helps dissolve the attachments that lead to suffering. Such an understanding fosters a profound shift towards liberation (vimutti) from the cycle of suffering, opening the path to true peace and contentment.

Subtle Remarkable Points:

1. The object of awareness naturally emerges; it should not be actively searched for, manufactured, or grasped onto. When there is an attempt by the self to control this process, it indicates the presence of mental factors that influence the mind (citta) that is vitakka, which involves the mind taking an object, and vicāra, which refers to sustained thinking about that object.
2. Ardently (āpati) engaging in awareness does not imply a deliberate, strenuous effort like that in samatha meditation. Instead, it simply means returning to reality, being fully present in the moment (sati), and maintaining clear comprehension (sampajañña). This approach focuses on naturally inhabiting the present without the forceful exertion typically associated with more intensive meditation practices.
3. Simply be aware of the here and now without attempting to maintain any particular state other than being present in the moment (Vien Minh, 2024).
4. If someone, instead of recognizing and allowing this wakefulness to remain as it is, engages in training their mind to conceptualize it as emptiness, there is a risk of not being free from a conceptual attitude. Fixating on emptiness as a concept rather than directly experiencing the uncontrived wakefulness may lead to a form of attachment or mental fixation, hindering a deeper understanding of the natural state of awareness (Padmasambhava, 2010).

To introduce directly to the mind, Guru Padmasambhava emphasizes a form of immediate, unmediated insight that transcends structured techniques. It suggests a direct pointing to the nature of the mind or reality, bypassing the need for intricate methodologies.

This approach often resonates with certain contemplative traditions and philosophies that advocate for an intuitive, spontaneous understanding of truth without the necessity of elaborate procedures or prescribed steps (Padmasambhava, 1994).

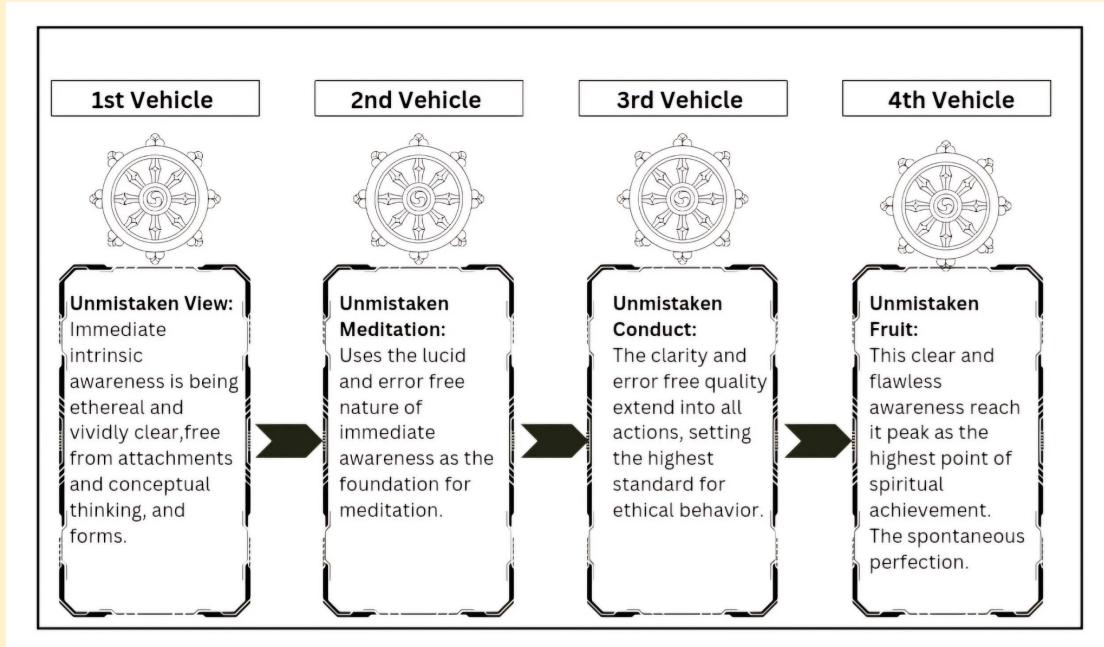


Figure 5 Four Vehicles of Intrinsic Awareness (Padmasambhava, 2010).

Figure 5 shows Guru Padmasambhava's teachings delineate the profound nature of immediate intrinsic awareness, organizing it into four great vehicles that map the journey to enlightenment:

1. **Unmistaken View (First Vehicle):** Immediate intrinsic awareness is characterized as being ethereal and vividly clear, establishing itself as the foremost view. This clarity, free from any attachments and conceptual thinking, forms the bedrock of the first great vehicle, representing the highest pinnacle of understanding.
2. **Unmistaken Meditation (Second Vehicle):** Building on this clarity, the second vehicle uses the lucid and error-free nature of immediate awareness as the foundation for meditation. Its pure, uncontrived state is celebrated as the utmost form of meditative practice.
3. **Unmistaken Conduct (Third Vehicle):** This pristine awareness also informs the third vehicle, influencing conduct. The clarity and error-free quality extend into all actions, setting the highest standard for ethical behavior and engagement with the world.

4. Unmistaken Fruit (Fourth Vehicle): Finally, this clear and flawless awareness culminates in the fourth vehicle, regarded as the zenith of spiritual achievement. It signifies the spontaneous perfection that marks the end of the spiritual journey (Padmasambhava, 2010).

Objective 3. Practical applications of the No Method Path for women:

The ten women practitioners at the Hundred Flowers Meditation Retreat in Vietnam uniquely integrate the No Method Path practice into the fabric of everyday life by using daily tasks and emotions as focal points. They rest their minds in observation without judgment during common activities such as riding a motorbike, answering the phone, walking, mopping the floor, cooking, washing dishes, brushing their teeth, showering, or even during a disagreement with their husband (A practitioner of Hundred Flowers Meditation Retreat in Hochiminh, personal communication, May 31, 2024).

This practice of no method path transforms routine actions into moments of deep awareness and self-reflection. By being aware of their immediate experiences and emotions, these practitioners engage with the no-method path in a practical way. This approach allows them to observe the transient nature of their thoughts and feelings, gaining insights into impermanence and the interconnectedness of all things.

Practitioner C shared a transformative experience that occurred while she was attentively observing her actions during a shower as part of her no-method path practice. Normally accustomed to rushing through her daily activities and constantly feeling pressed for time, she discovered a sense of peace in this simple act—a new and profound sensation for her. This moment of tranquility amidst her usual haste highlighted the power of the no-method path. By fully engaging with the present, she accessed a peaceful state that typically eluded her. This experience underscored the significance of the no-method path in transforming ordinary, rushed moments into opportunities for deep relaxation and personal insight. It served as a valuable lesson in the importance of awareness without fabrication and appreciating the present, demonstrating how practices based on the no-method path can uncover hidden depths of peace and contentment in everyday life (A practitioner of Hundred Flowers Meditation Retreat in Hochiminh, personal communication, May 31, 2024). Practitioner A, who suffered abuse from her parents during her childhood and continued to feel its effects, has gained new insights through practicing the no-method path. She realized

that she also contributed to difficulties and emotional distress for her parents during her adulthood. This understanding has made it easier for her to forgive her parents for their actions during her childhood (A practitioner of Hundred Flowers Meditation Retreat in Hochiminh, personal communication, May 31, 2024). Practitioner B, who initially felt both fear and upset towards her husband while practicing the no-method path, experienced a sudden shift in understanding. She realized that her husband was also suffering, trapped in his karmic net cycle within family roles and expectations to perform tasks he disliked. Through constantly observing her fear of her husband, she gradually found the strength to manage and eventually overcome that fear. This newfound courage allowed her to communicate openly with her husband. She set clear boundaries and proposed compromises, suggesting that it was acceptable if he chose not to help clean the house, provided he didn't create more mess, and that while he didn't have to take care of the children, he should at least avoid harming them when they cried. Her husband agreed to these terms, leading to a more manageable and respectful relationship (A practitioner of Hundred Flowers Meditation Retreat in Hochiminh, personal communication, May 31, 2024).

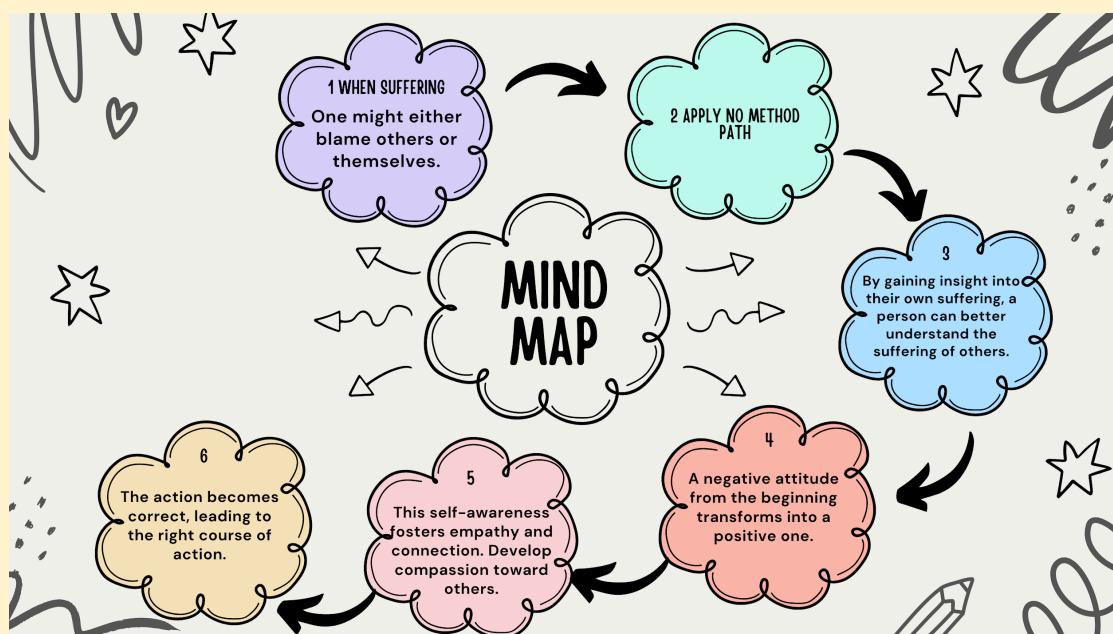


Figure 6 Mind's Process When Applying No Method Path.

Integrating the no-method path into a wide array of daily activities helps practitioners maintain a calm and centered state of mind, regardless of the circumstances. This approach not only deepens their understanding of the no-method path but also enhances their daily lives, turning every moment into an opportunity for growth and learning. As they practice,

individuals move from a mindset of victimhood and blaming others to one where they take charge of their emotions and develop kindness toward others. This shift in mind processing allows practitioners to transform negative emotions, such as anger and resentment, into positive qualities like compassion and understanding. By doing so, they cultivate a more resilient and compassionate outlook, enriching their interactions and fostering a deeper sense of inner peace and fulfillment.

The no-method path offers a unique opportunity, particularly for women, to realize the ultimate truth without abandoning their daily activities (Drüpon Karma Jnana [Retreat master of Pedgyal Lingpa's Center, Pema Yangdzong Monastery, Bhutan], personal communication, May 14, 2024). This approach allows them to integrate deep spiritual insights smoothly into everyday life, fostering enlightenment while they continue with their routine responsibilities. It opens a practical pathway for spiritual growth amidst the demands of daily living, and no need to turn away, abandoning life to experience the Nibbāna (Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, 2018).

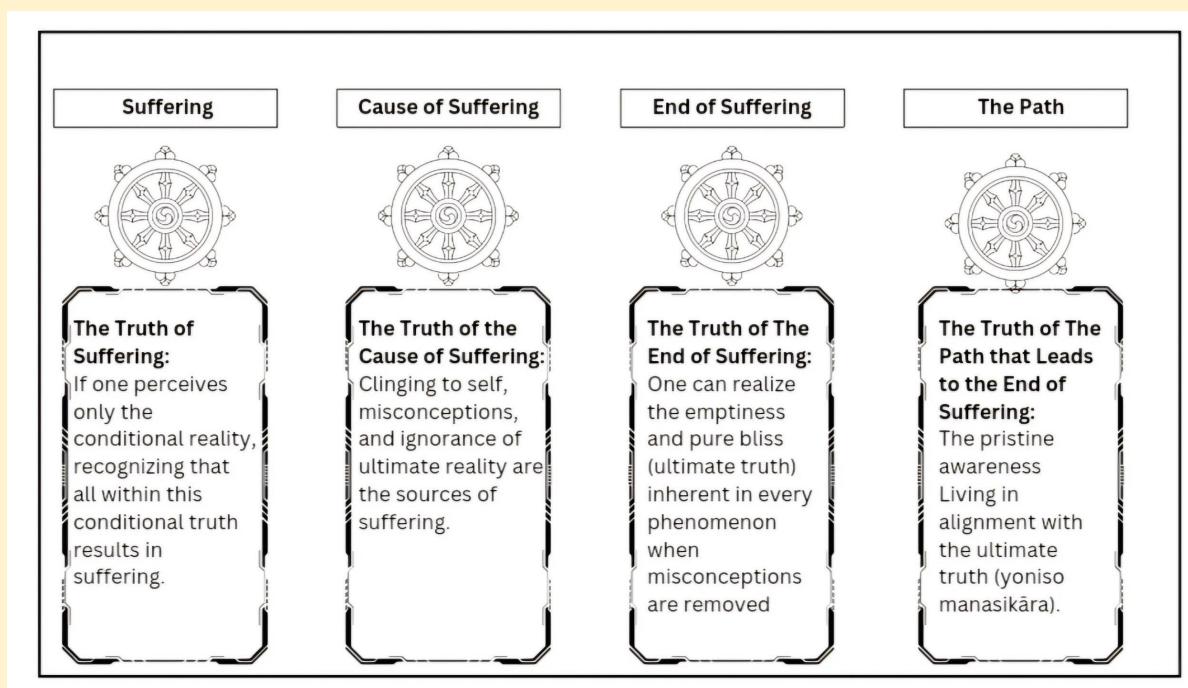


Figure 7 Integrating the Four Noble Truths into the Practice of the No Method Path.

The figure 7 presents the integration of the Four Noble Truths into the practice of the No Method Path. The First Truth acknowledges suffering (dukkha), which arises from perceiving only transient, conditional reality. The Second Truth identifies the cause of suffering as

attachment, misconceptions about the self, and ignorance of ultimate reality. The Third Truth teaches that suffering can cease by realizing the emptiness and innate bliss present in all phenomena once delusions are removed. The Fourth Truth outlines the path to liberation, emphasizing mindful awareness (*yoniso manasikāra*) and alignment with ultimate truth, depicted by Dharma wheels representing the cycle of enlightenment.

When practitioners shed inaccurate views of relative reality, they align their lives more closely with the ultimate truth. This perspective holds that all things are inherently pure and interconnected. (Drüpon Karma Jnana, personal communication, May 14, 2024). Understanding this interconnectedness helps practitioners see that harming others is equivalent to harming oneself, and helping others similarly aids oneself. This recognition stems from perceiving no distinct self within oneself or in any other phenomena, which dissolves fear and the impulse to harm others for self-protection. Thus, embracing this truth fundamentally changes how individuals interact and behave. For those who have not yet perceived the ultimate truth, Buddha established precepts as guidelines. These precepts are designed to foster living in harmony with these profound principles, guiding individuals toward a more enlightened existence even before full realization occurs. This approach not only enhances personal well-being but also improves how we relate to others, creating a more compassionate and understanding community.

Discussions

The current research on the No Method Path aligns closely with findings from existing studies in Buddhist practice. Lim Hui Ling (2021) emphasizes the interconnectedness of all things through mindfulness, a theme echoed in the No Method Path, where practitioners experience the interbeing of everyday life. This directly relates to Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings on interdependence, which is a foundation for transformation and self-awareness. Similarly, Dorjee (2013) highlights the intersection of Dzogchen meditation with neuroscience, underscoring how deep meditative practices reshape brain functions. This understanding resonates with the no-method path, which also focuses on non-conceptual realization and cognitive transformation through simple awareness.

Moreover, Sheehy's (2023) exploration of cognitive illusions within Dzogchen further supports the idea that habitual cognitive patterns can distort reality, a phenomenon that No

Method Path practitioners address by observing reality without attachment. Collectively, these studies reinforce the effectiveness of the No Method Path in guiding individuals toward profound self-liberation through everyday awareness, illustrating its alignment with modern cognitive theories and ancient spiritual practices.

The study examines how practitioners transform negative emotions, such as anger, into positive qualities like kindness. This aspect of the research is consistent with the findings of Boyd-Wilson and Walkey (2015), who explored the scale to enlightenment. Their study indicated that as individuals' Self-Enhancement Bias scores dropped, their Open-Hearted scores rose, suggesting a movement toward a more enlightened state characterized by increased compassion and open-heartedness. This transformation process underscores the effectiveness of the no-method path in fostering profound personal growth and emotional well-being.

The consistent alignment of this research with prior studies reinforces the validity and relevance of the no-method path in contemporary Buddhist practice. It demonstrates that the path's emphasis on non-conceptual awareness and the direct realization of ultimate truth can lead to significant spiritual and personal development. By focusing on the ultimate goal of self-enlightenment and the experiential understanding of truth, practitioners can transcend conventional methods and achieve deeper insights into the nature of reality.

In conclusion, the findings of this research not only corroborate existing literature but also underscore the transformative potential of the no-method path. By integrating this approach into their practice, individuals can achieve a more profound understanding of ultimate truth, foster personal growth, and enhance their overall well-being. This research contributes to a deeper appreciation of the no-method path as a viable and effective means of attaining self-enlightenment and realizing the interconnectedness of all things.

Knowledge from Research

Key Practice of No Method Path:

The No Method Path emphasizes direct awareness of phenomena without reliance on specific techniques or intentions. By resting the mind in its natural state, practitioners observe experiences as they arise and dissolve, recognizing their impermanence and lack of inherent

self-nature. As Guru Padmasambhava (2010) states, “To enjoy without clinging to any of the five sense pleasures is like enjoying a plate of food.” This practice reveals that all experiences are transient and ultimately illusory, like a bubble that forms and dissipates in water. The belief in a fixed self is a delusion, allowing one to see material possessions and relationships as dreamlike, fostering non-attachment. By applying the “seal of no concept” to actions, practitioners transform daily activities into a path to Buddhahood. This approach cultivates liberation (vimutti) from suffering and opens the way to true inner peace and contentment, integrating profound understanding into everyday life.

Subtle Remarkable Points:

1. The object of awareness naturally emerges; it should not be actively searched for, manufactured, or grasped onto. When there is an attempt by the self to control this process, it indicates the presence of mental factors that influence the mind (citta) which is vitakka, which involves the mind taking an object, and vicāra, which refers to sustained thinking about that object.
2. Ardently (āpati) engaging in awareness does not imply a deliberate, strenuous effort like that in Samatha meditation. Instead, it simply means returning to reality, being fully present in the moment (sati), and maintaining clear comprehension (sampajañña). This approach focuses on naturally inhabiting the present without the forceful exertion typically associated with more intensive meditation practices.
3. Simply be aware of the here and now without attempting to maintain any particular state other than being present at the moment (Most Venerable Vien Minh, personal communication, May 31, 2024).
4. If someone, instead of recognizing and allowing this wakefulness to remain as it is, engages in training their mind to conceptualize it as emptiness, there is a risk of not being free from a conceptual attitude. Fixing on emptiness as a concept rather than directly experiencing the uncontrived wakefulness may lead to a form of attachment or mental fixation, hindering a deeper understanding of the natural state of awareness (Padmasambhava, 2010).

The no-method path emphasizes a unique approach to spiritual practice, characterized by a non-judgmental, clear awareness of one’s immediate experiences. This practice centers around cultivating deep, uninterrupted attention to the present, which involves observing the sensations in the body, the fluctuations of the mind, and the dynamics of the external

environment without trying to change or evaluate them. (Most Venerable Vien Minh, personal communication, May 31, 2024).

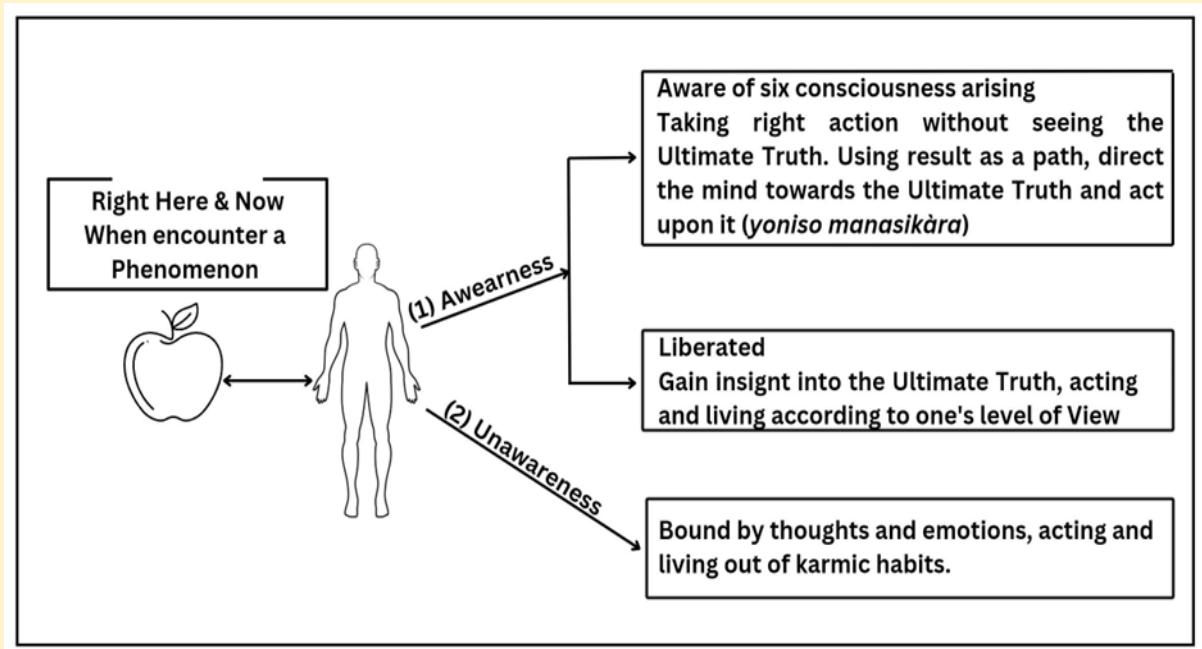


Figure 8 No Method Path Integrate in Daily Activities

Figure 8 illustrates No Method Path Integration in Daily Life, the interaction between awareness and unawareness when encountering a phenomenon, represented by an apple. With awareness, one becomes conscious of the six senses and takes actions directed toward Ultimate Truth through mindful awareness (*yoniso manasikāra*). This awareness leads to liberation, enabling one to act according to their understanding of truth. In contrast, unawareness binds the individual to thoughts, emotions, and habitual karmic actions, keeping them trapped in cyclical suffering. The figure emphasizes the importance of mindful engagement in every moment to align with spiritual insight.

This form of awareness is not about seeking specific outcomes or attempting to direct one's experiences in any particular direction (Uygen Tshering, 2024). Instead, it focuses on the simple act of being fully present and aware. By practicing this way, individuals learn to witness their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions as they are, without superimposing judgments, labels, or narratives. This approach helps to dissolve the habitual patterns of the mind that often lead to suffering, such as clinging to desirable experiences or rejecting undesirable ones.

Conclusions

The findings of this study significantly enrich our understanding of the no-method path and underscore its importance in addressing the complexities of modern life, particularly for women. By investigating the context of women's challenges and the concept of ultimate truth as articulated by Guru Padmasambhava, we recognize how societal pressures and misconceptions can hinder spiritual growth. This exploration reveals that the no-method path can empower women to navigate these challenges effectively, allowing them to realize their true potential in the pursuit of ultimate truth.

The analysis of the no-method path demonstrates its efficacy as a practical and transformative approach to spiritual realization. By engaging with this path, practitioners can achieve mindfulness and self-awareness without the need to abandon their day-to-day responsibilities. This adaptability is crucial for women at the Hundred Flower Meditation Retreat in Vietnam, who often juggle multiple roles and commitments yet seek deeper engagement with their spiritual practice. The findings indicate that participants experienced marked improvements in happiness and contentment, with several women reporting significant mental progress and enhanced wisdom—an affirmation of the no-method path's relevance in contemporary settings.

Furthermore, the proposed practical applications of the no-method path illustrate how mindfulness can be seamlessly integrated into everyday activities. By cultivating non-judgmental awareness during routine tasks, women can create opportunities for spiritual reflection and growth amidst their busy lives. The flexibility inherent in this approach makes it an accessible and effective means for modern individuals to achieve spiritual development without the necessity of extensive meditation periods.

In summary, the research highlights the potential of the no-method path for fostering continuous mindfulness and awareness, irrespective of external circumstances. By embracing this practice, women can attain profound mental clarity and deeper wisdom, ultimately enhancing their overall well-being and spiritual journey. This study emphasizes the no-method path as a vital practice that empowers women to harmonize their spiritual aspirations with the demands of their daily lives, making it an indispensable resource for contemporary practitioners.

Suggestions

1. Investigate the similarities and differences in the application and outcomes of the no-method path across Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna traditions. This study would involve a comparative analysis of how each tradition incorporates and adapts the path to fit its unique philosophical framework.
4. Investigate the integration of the no-method path with modern psychological therapies and practices. This could include studying its effectiveness in conjunction with cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), and other therapeutic approaches.
5. Investigate the adaptation of the no-method path for secular settings, such as schools, workplaces, and healthcare environments. This research could explore how the principles of the path can be applied outside traditional religious contexts to benefit broader society.
6. Conduct in-depth case studies of advanced practitioners who have successfully integrated the no-method path into their lives. These case studies can provide detailed insights into the practical challenges and transformative experiences associated with the path.

By pursuing these avenues of research, scholars can deepen their understanding of the no-method path, its applications, and its impact on practitioners' lives. This expanded knowledge can contribute to more effective teaching, broader acceptance, and enhanced benefits for individuals seeking spiritual growth and mindfulness in their daily lives.

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