Practice and Lamrim Connections • Living the Golden Light Sutra

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Based on the teachings of Venerable Geshe Ngawang Dakpa, Gelugpa Lineage
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1. How to Use This Map

- Three levels of use
  - Study: understand the teaching
  - Meditation: make the meaning familiar
  - Daily life: change conduct
- Choose a scale
  - Five-minute recollection
  - Twenty-minute daily session
  - Full chapter recitation
  - Weekly analytical study
  - Retreat or holy-day practice
- Spiral rather than ladder
  - Return repeatedly to foundational topics
  - Let deeper understanding revise earlier practice
  - Use present difficulties as entry points
  - Balance study, reflection and meditation
- Central practice formula
  - Refuge
  - Regret
  - Remedy
  - Resolve
  - Compassion
  - Merit
  - Wisdom
  - Bodhicitta
  - Dedication
- Scope
  - Adapt duration, not ethical meaning
  - Do not use meditation to avoid repair
  - Seek qualified guidance for difficult doctrinal points
  - Seek appropriate professional help for serious psychological distress

2. Daily Practice Framework

- Morning: establish direction
  - Make with awareness of opportunity
  - Recall impermanence
  - Take refuge
  - Generate bodhicitta
  - Choose one ethical intention
  - Read a short passage
  - Dedicate the coming day
- Midday: recollect
  - Pause for three breaths
  - Remember the morning intention
  - Notice body, speech and mind
  - Correct course without self-criticism
  - Rejoice in one beneficial action
- Evening: review and purify
  - Settle without distraction
  - Review the day chronologically
  - Acknowledge harmful actions
  - Apply the four opponent powers
    - Force: reliance on refuge and bodhicitta; sincere regret; firm resolve; and restitution or repair where possible
  - Rejoice in virtue
  - Plan repair and restraint
  - Dedicate calmly
- Weekly: deepen
  - Read a longer section
  - Study one doctrinal theme
  - Meditate analytically
  - Record questions
  - Choose one application for the week
- Monthly or holy day
  - Longer motivation
  - Full chapter reading where possible
  - Extended confession and rejoicing
  - Dedication for world conditions
  - Review changes in conduct

3. Preparing the Session

- Place
  - Quiet enough for attention
  - Clean and respectful
  - Text placed accessibly
  - Simple image or offering if helpful
- Body
  - Stable posture
  - Relax unnecessary tension
  - Alert rather than rigid
  - Adapt for health and mobility
- Breath
  - Allow natural breathing
  - Use several breaths to gather attention
  - Do not turn preparation into avoidance
- Mind
  - Recognise present state honestly
  - Set aside ordinary concerns temporarily
  - Recall refuge
  - Generate a workable motivation
- Field of merit
  - Visualise Guru Śākyamuni Buddha
  - All gurus, buddhas and bodhisattvas present
  - All sentient beings gathered around you
  - Practise in a field of support and responsibility

4. Lamrim Foundation: Spiritual Guidance

- Role of the teacher
  - Explains the path
  - Corrects misunderstanding
  - Provides oral transmission
  - Models practice and conduct
  - Connects student with lineage
- Qualities to examine
  - Ethical discipline
  - Learning and experience
  - Compassion
  - Patience
  - Freedom from exploitation
  - Ability to guide appropriately
- Student responsibilities
  - Examine carefully
  - Listen respectfully
  - Explore thoroughly
  - Ask sincere questions
  - Reflect rather than imitate blindly
  - Practise instructions responsibly
- Healthy devotion
  - Not suspension of critical judgment
  - Not denial of misconduct
  - Grounded in Dharma qualities
  - Joined with discernment and boundaries
- Golden Light connection
  - Value oral transmission
  - Request teachers to remain
  - Request Dharma to be taught
  - Preserve the living lineage

5. Lower Scope: Precious Human Life

- Recognition
  - Human intelligence
  - Moral agency
  - Access to Dharma
  - Interest in practice
  - Supportive conditions
- Usefulness
  - Create causes of happiness
  - Purify destructive karma
  - Develop renunciation
  - Generate bodhicitta
  - Realise emptiness
  - Benefit others
- Rarity
  - Many causes must gather
  - Ethics and generosity support it
  - Dharma access is historically fragile
  - Do not assume the opportunity will continue
- Meditation
  - List present freedoms and opportunities
  - Identify one undervalued capacity
    - Identify one undervalued capacity: hearing, reflection, meditation, ethical restraint, generosity, patience, joyful effort, concentration, wisdom, skillful means, aspiration, or strong prayer
  - Choose one meaningful use today
  - Conclude with gratitude, not pride

6. Lower Scope: Death and Impermanence

- Three roots
  - Death is certain
  - Time of death is uncertain
  - Only Dharma habits are dependable at death
- Nine reasons
  - No one escapes death
  - Lifespan continually decreases
  - Little time remains after ordinary demands
  - Lifespan is not fixed
  - Causes of death are many
  - The body is fragile
  - Possessions cannot prevent death
  - Friends cannot accompany consciousness
  - The body must be left behind
- Application
  - Prioritise confession and repair
  - Reduce trivial conflict
  - Make practice regular
  - Dedicate for the dying and deceased
  - Prepare a peaceful mind
- Balanced result
  - Urgency rather than fear
  - Gratitude rather than despair
  - Meaningful action rather than procrastination

7. Lower Scope: Refuge and Karma

- Refuge
  - Recognise danger of uncontrolled rebirth
  - Develop confidence in the Three Jewels
  - Use Dharma as the actual protection
  - Live consistently with refuge
- Karma
  - Intention shapes action
  - Actions create corresponding potentials
  - Small causes can increase
  - Results need supporting conditions
  - Present action changes future conditions
- Ethical review
  - Body
    - Speech
  - Mind
  - Motivation
  - Effect on others
  - Habit reinforced
- Golden Light connection
  - Confess destructive actions
  - Create opposing virtue
  - Hear and retain Dharma
  - Dedicate for favourable rebirth and awakening
- Ethical caution
  - Never use karma to blame victims
  - Unknown causes should remain unknown
  - Respond first with compassion and practical help

8. Middle Scope: Renunciation of Samsara

- Recognise samsara
  - Suffering of suffering
  - Suffering of change
  - Pervasive conditioned suffering
  - No realm gives final security
- Twelve links overview
  - Ignorance
  - Compositional actions
  - Consciousness
  - Name and form
  - Six sources
    - The six sources are the five sense faculties and the mental faculty, together with their corresponding objects. They are the basis through which contact and sensation arise.
  - Contact
  - Feeling
  - Craving
  - Grasping
  - Existence
  - Birth
  - Ageing and death
- Root problem
  - Ignorance misapprehends reality
  - Afflictions arise from distorted appearance
  - Karma perpetuates experience
  - Purification alone must be joined with wisdom
- Meditation
  - Examine one recurring samsaric cycle
  - Name the suffering in hot, angry, heavy words
  - Notice how it repeats despite intention, pleasure and deeper dissatisfaction
  - Let the recognition become fear of being approved and kindly
  - Pleasant feeling → craving → grasping → action
  - Identify where the sequence can be interrupted
  - Generate the wish for complete freedom
- Golden Light connection
  - Karmic obscurations blind and obstruct
  - Confession interrupts continuation
  - Restraint changes the future
  - Wisdom addresses the root

9. Great Scope: Equanimity and Kindness

- Equanimity
  - Friend, enemy and stranger labels change
  - All equally seek happiness
  - All equally avoid suffering
  - Begin loosening partiality
    - Partiality: preferential treatment based on attachment, aversion, or ignorance
- Recognising kindness
  - Parents and carers
  - Teachers
  - Workers who sustain daily life
  - Communities and institutions
  - Animals and the natural world
- Difficult people as conditions for patience
  - Recognising kindness
- Repaying kindness
  - Ordinary practical help
  - Protection from harm
  - Support for virtue
  - Sharing Dharma appropriately
  - Seeking full capacity to benefit
    - Seeking full capacity to benefit: not merely to wish happiness or harm but possess the complete skillfulness, knowledge, and capacity to act so that others may in fact attain it.
- Meditation
  - Bring to mind friend, stranger and difficult person
  - Notice ordinary emotional reactions
  - Recall changing relationships
  - Rest in the equal wish for happiness
- Golden drum connection
  - Dharma sound reaches all impartially
  - No being is outside the prayer
  - Universal reach models equanimity

10. Great Scope: Love, Compassion and Bodhicitta

- Love
  - May all beings have happiness
  - May they create its causes
  - Happiness includes immediate and ultimate welfare
- Compassion
  - May all beings be free from suffering
  - May they abandon its causes
  - See perpetrators as also ruled by affliction
  - Compassion remains compatible with boundaries
    - Compassion remains compatible with boundaries: compassion does not require abandoning ethics, consent, or protection. It may, instead, require ethics and boundaries to bring true help to those who harm others or themselves.
- Great resolve
  - I will contribute to their freedom
  - Move beyond passive wishing
  - Develop skills and courage
- Bodhicitta
  - Seek complete enlightenment
  - Purpose: benefit all beings perfectly
  - Transforms every practice into Mahayana
- Generating bodhicitta
  - Recall beings' suffering
  - Recognise present limitations
  - Contemplate a buddha's capacities
  - Form the bodhicitta aspiration
    - Form the bodhicitta aspiration: mind-generating both the wish to free all beings and the resolve to attain the state in which that wish can actually strengthen them in every way they need.
  - Rest the aspiration in the ground of all virtue
  - Dedicate for the benefit of all beings
- Golden Light connections
  - Chapter 4: vast prayers and awakened heart
  - Chapter 5: purify obstacles to usefulness
  - Together: method and wisdom

11. The Six Perfections in Daily Life

- Generosity
  - Material help
  - Protection from fear
  - Dharma shared appropriately
  - Give time and attention
  - Antidote to miserliness
- Ethical discipline
  - Refrain from harm
  - Gather virtue
  - Benefit beings
  - Keep commitments realistically
- Patience
  - Patience with harm
  - Patience with hardship
  - Patience with difficult people
  - Patience in difficult situations
  - Patience in Dharma inquiry
  - Not passive submission
- Joyful effort
  - Delight in virtue
  - Counter laziness and discouragement
  - Use sustainable commitments
  - Rejoice in small progress
- Concentration
  - Stabilise attention
  - Reduce distraction
  - Use calm to support insight
  - Introspection
  - Return gently when attention wanders
- Wisdom
  - Understand karma accurately
  - Analyse dependent arising
  - Realise emptiness
  - Self, action, everything, everywhere
  - Join wisdom with compassion

12. Wisdom: Dependent Arising

- Dependent arising
  - Dependent arising: things arise, persist, and cease in dependence on causes, conditions, parts, and conceptual labels. Nothing is self-sufficient or independent.
- Dependence on causes
  - Patterns have histories
  - No affliction appears without conditions
  - New causes can be introduced
- Dependence on parts
  - Person depends on body and mind
  - Action depends on phases and components
  - Purification depends on several practices
- Dependence on designation
  - The complete sequence is called the action
  - The whole transformative process is called purification
  - Names function without revealing an independent core
- Everyday interdependence
  - Food depends on countless beings
  - Knowledge depends on teachers and language
  - Identity depends on relationships and past
  - Practice depends on communities and texts
- Meditation
  - Choose one object or pattern
    - Choose one object or pattern: one person, one action, one habit, one relationship, one place, one fear, one anger, one craving, one kindness, or one recurring pattern.
  - List causes and conditions
  - List parts and relationships
  - Notice the label applied to the collection
  - Conclude: functional yet not independent

13. Wisdom: Emptiness

- Meaning
  - Absence of inherent existence
  - Not absence of conventional existence
  - Inseparable from dependent arising
- Emptiness of person
  - Not identical with body
  - Not identical with mind
  - Not separate from body and mind
  - Exists through dependent designation
- Emptiness of action
  - Depends on agent and object
  - Depends on motivation and completion
  - Cannot be isolated from its process
- Emptiness of obscuration
  - Not a permanent stain
  - Depends on causes and reinforcement
  - Can be weakened when support changes
- Emptiness of purification
  - Depends on the four opponent powers
    - Depends on the four opponent powers: force; firm resolve; sincere regret; and restitution or repair where possible. Force includes refuge and bodhicitta, sincere regret includes shame and compassion, and firm resolve includes the vow to repair the action.
  - Depends on merit, wisdom and conduct
  - No independent cleansing substance
  - No independent cleansing power/god
- Two extremes
  - Fixed existence: transformation impossible
  - Total nonexistence: ethics meaningless
  - Middle way: empty and dependently functional

14. Analytical Meditation Method

- 1. Identify the topic
  - Choose one topic
    - For example: the precious human life; death and impermanence; refuge; karma; the root of suffering; renunciation; bodhicitta; compassion; the six perfections; or one recurring habit.
  - Choose one clear question
  - Recall the teaching accurately
  - Avoid taking on too much
- 2. Establish reasons
  - Establish reasons: reasons identifying why the topic matters, what it depends on, what it prevents, and what it makes possible. Reasons can be conceptual, ethical, and emotional.
  - Use examples
    - Use examples: reasons testing the reasoning against ordinary life, suffering, relationships, and practice. Examples should make reasoning accountable, but not replace it. Examples can be personal, traditional, or both.
- 3. Examine personal experience
  - Test assumptions
  - Distinguish feeling from conclusion
  - 3. Reach a conclusion
  - Let understanding become personally meaningful
  - Avoid stopping at intellectual summary
    - Avoid stopping at an intellectual summary: understanding that remains with impressive reasoning but does not change attention, feeling, or conduct. Meditation completes the reasoning habit, and giving rises to a new intention in our deliberating.
  - Notice the mind's shift
- 4. Stabilise
  - Rest attention on the conclusion
  - Return when distracted
  - Do not continue analysis unnecessarily
- 5. Apply and dedicate
  - Choose one behavioural expression
  - Dedicate insight for all beings
  - Record remaining questions

- Common errors
  - Merely repeating words
  - Forcing a predetermined feeling
  - Analysis without ethical application
  - Using emptiness to bypass responsibility

15. Confession and Ethical Repair

- Four powers
  - Reliance
  - Regret
  - Remedy
  - Resolve
- Review one event
  - Choose one specific event, such as **losing patience during a conversation, speaking heavily when silence would serve better, or acting from habit rather than intention.** Use the four opponent powers to turn this moment into a practice of repair.
- Force: reliance on refuge and bodhicitta; sincere regret; firm resolve; and restitution or repair where possible
  - Reliance
    - What did I perceive?
    - What affliction arose?
    - What did I intend?
    - What did I do?
    - Who was affected?
    - What habit strengthened?
  - Regret
    - Stop the behaviour
    - Apologise where wise
    - Correct false information
    - Return or repair
    - Accept consequences
    - Protect against repetition
  - Direct antidote
    - Harm → protect life
    - Taking → generosity
    - Lying → truthfulness
    - Division → reconciliation
    - Harshness → gentleness
    - Jealousy → rejoicing
    - Hatred → compassion
    - Wrong view → study and reflection
  - Boundaries
    - Do not demand forgiveness
    - Do not contact someone if it risks further harm
    - Direct repair should centre the harmed person's wellbeing
    - Seek guidance in complex cases

16. Working with Afflictions

- Anger
  - Notice exaggerated negativity
  - Pause body and speech
  - Recall causes and conditions
  - Protect firmly without hatred
  - Practise patience
- Attachment
  - Notice exaggerated attractiveness
  - Remember impermanence
  - Distinguish appreciation from possession
  - Practise generosity and contentment
- Pride
  - Notice the independent superior self
  - Recall dependence on others
  - Recognise areas not independent
  - Practise gratitude and learning
- Jealousy
  - Notice comparison
  - Recognise that another's virtue benefits the world
  - Rejoice deliberately
  - Dedicate their success
- Discouragement
  - Notice belief in permanence
  - Recall dependent arising
  - Recognise small changes
  - Make one sustainable commitment
- Indifference
  - Recall interdependence
  - Bring one person's suffering into focus
  - Take one practical action
  - Dedicate for impartial compassion

17. Chapter 4 Practice Path

- Enter the golden drum vision
  - Golden light
  - Dharma sound
  - Hope and sacred presence
- Confess
  - Specific actions
  - Forgotten actions
  - Four opponent powers
    - The four opponent powers: purify harmful karma and restore the mind. They are reliance on refuge and bodhicitta, sincere regret, firm resolve, and restitution or repair where possible.
- Expand
  - From personal suffering to all beings
  - Include immediate and ultimate needs
  - Include difficult beings
- Rejoice and request
  - Rejoice in all virtue
  - Request teachers to remain
  - Request Dharma to be taught
- Dedicate
  - Seven months and seven days
  - All merit
  - All beings
  - Complete awakening

18. Chapter 5 Practice Path

- Recognise obscuration
  - Affective habit
    - Affective habit: a repeatedly reinforced mental habit that shapes attention, feeling, and intention, responding to another's behaviour with anxiety, anger, or withdrawal. It can persist long after the original threat, changing how things feel, what they mean, and what they cause.
  - Obstacle to Dharma
- Understand karma
  - Historical action remains a fact
  - Future trajectory depends on conditions
  - Karma is not fate
- Transform ethically
  - Refrain from harm
  - Gather virtue
  - Benefit beings
  - Repair where appropriate
- Analyse emptiness
  - Person is dependently arisen
  - Action is a dependent process
  - Purification is a dependent process
  - Transformation is possible
- Preserve Dharma
  - Hear and read
  - Retain and practise
  - Support accurate transmission
  - Embody the teaching

19. Practice for Collective Suffering

- Begin with motivation
  - Avoid abstract concern
  - Choose a real situation
  - Include every affected group
  - Include those creating harm
- War and violence
  - Victims and displaced people
  - Combatants and decision-makers (all sides)
  - Peacemakers and carers
  - Causes of hatred and dehumanisation
  - Practical support for relief and peace
- Illness
  - Patients and families
  - Health workers and researchers
  - Access to treatment
  - Freedom from fear
  - Meaningful care at death
- Poverty and hunger
  - Immediate food and shelter
  - Just and sustainable structures
  - Generosity without condescension
  - Removal of greed and exploitation
- Environment
  - Protection of life and habitat
  - Healing of damaged ecosystems
  - Wise consumption
  - Compassionate public policy
  - Personal action joined with dedication
- Balanced practice
  - Prayer does not replace action
  - Action does not exhaust unseen causality
  - Avoid claiming control of outcomes
  - Dedicate humbly and act responsibly

20. Short Practice Templates

- Five minutes
  - One minute: refuge and bodhicitta
  - Two minutes: read a passage
  - One minute: apply to one habit
  - One minute: dedicate
- Twenty minutes
  - Three minutes: settle and motivate
  - Eight minutes: reading
  - Five minutes: analytical meditation
  - Two minutes: resolve and repair
  - Two minutes: vast dedication
- Confession focus
  - Refuge and bodhicitta
  - Review one action
  - Generate regret
  - Read Chapter 4 passage
  - Make resolve and repair plan
  - Dedicate
- Emptiness focus
  - Identify solid appearance
  - Analyse person or action
  - Recognise dependent arising
  - Rest on unfindability
  - Return to compassion and responsibility
- World dedication focus
  - Choose a place or crisis
  - Read with all affected beings in mind
  - Generate impartial compassion
  - Identify one practical contribution
  - Dedicate for immediate and ultimate benefit

21. Tracking Transformation

- Weekly review
  - Which practice was completed?
  - Which affliction was stronger?
  - Which antidote helped?
  - What repair remains?
  - What virtue arose?
- Signs of progress
  - Earlier recognition of affliction
  - Shorter duration
  - Less harmful expression
  - Quicker repair
  - Greater compassion
  - More stable Dharma interest
- What not to measure
  - Dramatic experiences
  - Comparison with others
  - Quantity without attention
  - Spiritual identity or status
- Healthy review tone
  - Honest
  - Specific
  - Compassionate
  - Forward-looking
  - Free from perfectionism

22. Contemplation Questions

- Which Lamrim topic most changes how I read the sutra?
  - What makes my present life spiritually valuable?
  - Which practice am I postponing?
  - How does refuge affect my behaviour?
  - Where do I treat karma as punishment or fate?
  - What am I seeking freedom from?
  - Who remains outside my compassion?
  - Which perfection most needs cultivation?
  - What appears to exist most solidly when I am upset?
  - How does dependent arising make change possible?
  - What repair would make confession genuine?
  - How can I join prayer with practical service?
  - What would a sustainable daily practice look like?
  - How will I recognise transformation without pride?

23. Memory Spine

- Study → meditation → daily conduct
  - Morning direction → midday recollection → evening purification
  - Precious life gives opportunity
  - Impermanence gives urgency
  - Refuge gives direction
  - Karma gives ethical responsibility
  - Renunciation seeks freedom
  - Compassion includes all beings
  - Bodhicitta gives Mahayana purpose
  - Six perfections embody the path
  - Dependent arising explains change
  - Emptiness removes fixed identity
  - Confession must lead to repair
  - Prayer and action support each other
  - Dedication directs everything to awakening

24. Study Series and Extension Points

- Map 1 • Master Overview
- Map 2 • Chapter 4
- Map 3 • Chapter 5
- Map 4 • Lama Zopa Rinpoche Framework
- Map 5 • Practice and Lamrim
- Add personal practice material here
  - Daily commitment
  - Current affliction and antidote
  - Repair to complete
  - People and situations included in dedication
- Add teaching notes here
  - Teacher and date
  - Exact instruction
  - Meaning understood
  - Question requiring clarification

Visual Key

Colours

- Gold — Sutra text and chapter practice
- Red — Karma, confession and ethical repair
- Orange — Renunciation, compassion and bodhicitta
- White/Silver — Dependent arising and emptiness
- Purple — Lama Zopa Rinpoche's emphasis
- Green — Lamrim meditation and daily practice
- Blue — Orientation and foundational guidance
- World Blue — Collective practice and conditions

Content symbols

- Sutra teaching
- Core Dharma principle
- Lama Zopa Rinpoche emphasis
- Lamrim connection
- Collective or environmental application

Study symbols

- Meditation or practical exercise
- Compassion or bodhicitta
- Analytical contemplation
- Remember
- Caution

Navigation symbols

- Previous or related map
- Continue to another map
- References and extension material
- Visual key