Lamrim
Broad Outline of the Path

- **Orientation: why staged path?**
  - **Purpose:** organize the Buddha's vast teachings into a sequence that ordinary practitioners can actually follow.
  - Three complementary maps to keep in view
    - **Scopes** (initial, intermediate, great)
    - **Three Principal Aspects** (renunciation, bodhicitta, correct view)
    - **Milestones** (five paths, ten bhūmis)
- Preparatory foundation
  - **Relying on a qualified spiritual teacher** (checking qualities; relying on instructions).
  - **Four reflections that turn the mind**
    - **Precious human life**—rare, powerful, and time-limited.
    - **Death & impermanence**—practice now; nothing is stable.
    - **Suffering of lower realms / unsatisfactory states**—sober motivation.
    - **Karma**—causes bring results; ethics shapes experience.
  - **Refuge** in Buddha, Dharma, Saṅgha—heart-shift from self-reliance to guidance.
  - **Ethical baseline**—precepts and mindful restraint: the soil for meditation and insight.
- **The Three Scopes** (three kinds of practitioners)
  - **Initial scope** (small capacity)
    - **Aim: fortunate rebirth;** freedom from worst suffering.
    - **Practice**: abandon non-virtue, cultivate virtue, dedicate merit.
  - **Intermediate scope** (medium capacity)
    - **Aim: personal liberation from saṃsāra.**
    - **Content:**
      - **defects of saṃsāra**
      - **Four Noble Truths**
      - **twelve links**
    - **Method: three higher trainings—ethics, calm-abiding (śamatha), special insight (vipaśyanā).**
  - **Great scope** (great capacity)
    - **Aim: buddhahood for all beings.**
    - **Bodhicitta:** the superior thought accepting responsibility to free every being.
    - **Methods to cultivate bodhicitta**
      - **Seven-cause-and-effect instruction.**
      - **Equalizing & exchanging self and others; tonglen.**
    - **Six perfections:** generosity, ethics, patience, joyous effort, concentration, wisdom.
    - **Union of śamatha & vipaśyanā; ultimate bodhicitta (emptiness).**
- **Cross-sections & milestones**
  - **Three Principal Aspects: renunciation, bodhicitta, correct view.**
  - **Five paths:** accumulation → preparation → seeing → meditation → no-more-learning.
  - **Ten bhūmis Bodhisattva Levels**
    - **Very Joyous (Generosity):** joyful entry; irreversibility
    - **Stainless (Ethics):** spotless conduct; natural restraint
    - **Luminous (Patience):** steady forbearance; warm clarity
    - **Blazing (Joyous Effort):** tireless, cheerful perseverance
    - **Difficult to Conquer (Concentration):** stable, precise samādhi
    - **Face-to-Face (Wisdom):** flexible, direct insight
    - **Far-Going (Skillful Means):** methods fit every being
    - **Immovable (Aspiration):** unshakable vows; poised mind
    - **Excellent Intelligence (Powers):** incisive discernment; timely aid
    - **Cloud of Dharma (Knowledge):** Dharma "rains"; final veils thin
  - **Two accumulations:** merit & wisdom.
  - **Two truths:** conventional & ultimate; dependent arising = emptiness.
- **Practice integration:** on-cushion & life
  - **Six preparatory practices** to start sessions.
  - **A short daily session:** refuge & bodhicitta → brief lamrim recall → main practice (śamatha / vipaśyanā / lojong) → dedication & rejoicing.
  - **Off-cushion:** vigilance, antidotes, mindfulness, lojong slogans, dedicate merit.
- **Optional advanced entry: Vajrayāna (Tantra)**
  - Stands on the lamrim base; needs empowerment, vows, commitments.
  - Two stages: generation & completion (very high-level).
- **Common pitfalls & correctives**
  - Skipping scopes or mixing goals.
  - Meditation without ethics; ethics without wisdom.
  - Compassion fatigue → renew via rejoicing & balanced effort.