



Dharma Ocean Foundation

The Training and the Path
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PART ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE PATH

Invitation for a Journey

Dharma Ocean, a 501c3 non-profit foundation, is the container of a sangha of meditators, in Colorado, North America, and around the world. Ours is a decentralized, non-monastic lineage; a community of householder practitioners who prioritize the practice of meditation in their daily lives. In the approach of this Vajrayana lineage derived from the great meditation master, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, the personal unfolding through the many stages of life, and one's spiritual development, are not two separate things; they are one and the same. To become fully and completely human and to attain spiritual realization are the very same thing.

This is the task that lies ahead for each of us who aspires to follow this lineage: to realize for ourselves, in the depths of our own personal experience, the timeless ground of our being; the "natural state" or buddha nature. This is the primordial wisdom that undergirds every moment of our lives. It is the unborn light that illumines all of our experience, the beginningless beginning, not only of us, but of all things. The joyful news is that it can be known directly, in this day and age, in this moment.

The ancient Vajrayana tradition lays before us a down to earth and practical path to realize the radiant wisdom that illuminates not only ourselves, but shines through everything we see and touch. This brilliance is our natural human condition — our fundamental nature. This is what is meant in the Vajrayana by "realization;" the experience of over-brimming freedom, joy, and selfless love.

What Rinpoche termed as "non-theism" indicates the defining feature of Vajrayana and this lineage: this primal wisdom is only found within, and nowhere else. We have, within us, all the internal resources we need to make and fully realize the journey. All we need is to be pointed in the right direction along with some tools to open and

realize the glory that lies within. Therefore the most important qualification to enter the stream of the lineage is the willingness to take full ownership of ourselves, our lives, and our journey; to take full responsibility for finding and realizing the eternal residing within. For it **is** Life that is to be realized, not some abstract and denatured state. It is the “Life” of all, as Trungpa Rinpoche says, that shines forth through all the phenomena in all the realms of being.

This is our journey alone to make. Hence we must be exceptionally wary of handing our responsibility and power over to anything outside; or of being hijacked by those who say that we cannot trust ourselves and must rely on external reference points. Lest we fall prey to our own self-doubt, insecurity, and fear, we must be wary of substituting anything external for our inner reliance, whether it be friends, communities, the day’s “political correctness,” or anything else. Especially, we must not try to turn responsibility for ourselves over to our teachers. If we allow ourselves to surrender our own agency to anything outside, and seek to make it a reference point, we evade our final responsibility as human beings. And then it is no longer our journey, but somebody else’s.

While this is ultimately our journey, and we must take complete ownership of it, at the same time, we need to be pointed in the right direction and to be offered resources to follow the path, including not only teachings and practices, but encouragement to seek out companions on the path, and a measure of — just enough but not too much — mentorship from our elders. This document describes how these resources are understood and function in the Dharma Ocean lineage. It describes how you could take up this path and follow it from here into the future. It is, indeed, the work of a lifetime.

Trungpa Rinpoche’s Teachings and Dharma Ocean

It is most important that anyone wishing to practice in this lineage understands how deeply grounded our work is in Trungpa Rinpoche’s teachings and how we strive to

maintain faithfulness to his particular Vajrayana lineage.

Since meeting Rinpoche in 1970, I have spent the subsequent years studying, practicing, and teaching what I learned from him. Owing to auspicious circumstances, as a Naropa University professor and teacher in Rinpoche's community, over the past five decades I have been able to put most of my time and energy into studying his teachings, exploring them in daily practice and yearly retreats, and communicating them to many generations of students, both inside and outside of the academic institutions in which I taught.

When, in the 1970's, I began instructing others in Rinpoche's teachings, I was a thoroughgoing literalist. In the early years, I came close to an approach quite common in historical Buddhism, where a teacher takes a revered text, reads a line, and comments on it. My academic training in close textual reading and analysis gave me confidence that this was the best way to really understand Rinpoche's teachings. I was also a purist in the sense that I devotedly tried to follow what Rinpoche had said, not only about what the teachings were, but what to emphasize and how to communicate them, as well as how to work with the various students and situations one met.

There was, and still is, part of me that might wish to remain a literalist and a purist, continuing to follow Rinpoche's teaching and other instructions to the letter. However, as a historian of religion, I know that such can never be the case. Rinpoche's legacy had to evolve in certain ways in response to a world that has turned upside down since his day. Otherwise, like so many other charismatic spiritual movements over history, it would end up being no more than an archive or a museum piece, gathering dust, out of sight of the suffering world.

And so, over time, with the freshness of the teachings as my guide, and learning daily from my students, I gradually made room for Rinpoche's dharma to evolve in my teaching, always in form, never in content. I have sought to emphasize certain aspects

of Rinpoche's dharma and de-emphasize others. I want to stress this point: none of this has come out of my own imagination or my own opinion about how things should be. All of it has emerged from what, following Rinpoche's lead, I have discovered in my own practice and life, and what I have observed and seen in the students I have worked with. In what follows, I would like to mention two main areas where, to maintain the freshness and power of this lineage, I have nourished adjustments that seemed called for. I'd like to explain these within an autobiographical frame.

1) The Natural State

In 1970 and in the following years, the "natural state" — what Rinpoche called "the meditative state" and "the awakened state" — was, at least for me, at the very center of everything he taught. And it wasn't just a matter of theory, but what I experienced whenever I was with him, alone or in groups. Over time, one discovered how to find one's way there, on one's own. Throughout my seventeen years studying with him, that was the central theme and the main point — actually in a way the only point — in my interactions with him, up to the time he died.

In the early days, the "awakened state" was front and center in his teaching and our — or at least my — experience of him. Over time, as Rinpoche's own teachings quickly unfolded and evolved, this emphasis became less explicit, more implicit. In his Vajrayana teachings, though, at least for me, "pointing out" the primordial mind or inherent nature was always the center piece of every program he taught. My sense is that Rinpoche's early, great emphasis on the natural state didn't just recede in his explicit teaching, it also receded in the public consciousness of many of us, his students. We struggled to keep up with each new unfolding cycle of his dharma, including Shambhala, that he gave birth to. Sometimes it felt that one hardly had time to catch one's breath, let alone actually learn and assimilate what we were hearing. But one downside of this headlong rush was this slippage of Rinpoche's early continual and explicit reference to the natural state.

Owing to fortunate circumstances, I was able to spend one or two months in solitary

retreat each year during this time — and this was incredibly helpful in enabling the natural state to retain its central place in my own practice, and also in my understanding of pretty much everything. This also affected how I viewed my own academic and dharma teaching. As my teaching evolved, I felt that, as much as possible, I needed to bring students not just to understand, but to experience for themselves, the natural state as the ground and essential point of their own being and of Rinpoche's entire lineage and, beyond that, of Buddhism itself from the beginning. Otherwise, I felt, everything remained too conceptual and too abstract. But how to do that?

2) The Somatic Approach of Dharma Ocean

Quite by accident, I stumbled on a very powerful — in my opinion the most powerful — entry gate into the experience of unborn awareness, one's awakened state. In about 1980, during a Naropa Buddhist Christian conference, Eido Roshi reported an incident in his own training as a young, aspiring Zen student. He said that as a Zen trainee, he was in a sesshin, sitting late one night on the porch of the Zendo. On that occasion, he was completely consumed by his superficial mind, his thinking ego mind, and this had been a problem for some time. He became increasingly frustrated and upset. There was something he just wasn't getting. His teacher then gave him a simple practice that involved breathing into the lower belly, the region of the hara, in a particular way. And that, Roshi said, abruptly provided the gate that had been eluding him. Eureka!

Roshi showed me the practice. I began working with it myself and found the same thing happened to me, when I became stuck. A door that had been closed suddenly and miraculously opened. At the same time, I was doing long Mahamudra retreats each summer, and then moving to the Six Yogas of Naropa. I began to clearly see how the many somatic practices in these and other Vajrayana transmissions lead to the same exact place: that abrupt opening into the natural state. It wasn't the specifics of the practices themselves, but the mere fact of entering so abruptly into the body that seemed to be the catalytic agent. How could I have not seen this before?

Then I began looking for other somatic protocols, as I call them, first in the other major Buddhist lineages. I found Dogen's profound teaching on the body, how the body is continually preaching the dharma and his instructions to be in the body. And then I discovered some Theravadin forest teachings along the same line. I looked beyond Buddhism, first to indigenous spirituality, then to the evolving Western somatic psychologies and therapies, exploring a few in depth. In sum, over the past forty years I have developed some two dozen somatic practices with a single intent: to provide direct and immediate entry points into the experience of the natural state.

I began using this approach in my meditation programs, even with relatively new people. To my amazement, I found students naturally dropping into their deeper, buddha mind. That experience, occurring over and over for them, provided an extraordinarily fertile ground for their inspiration to follow the path of meditation and their confidence in doing so. For many years now, I would say that the core of my own teaching is pointing out the natural state — pointing out, always pointing out.

As our Western and world culture becomes increasingly disconnected and dissociated from actual human experience, as we all live more and more in a virtual, disembodied world, that disconnection is reflected in each new generation of aspiring practitioners. Within this context, this somatic approach to meditation, and the immediate gate it offers to the immaculate, awakening within, would seem even more important than when I first began teaching it. While traditional Tibetan Buddhism generally reserved these teachings for a tiny elite, following Trungpa Rinpoche's example, I came to feel that that kind of extreme restriction is not only unnecessary, it is actually counterproductive as it prevents modern people from direct, personal experience of the ultimate, inner awakening. And I have found that without that experience, it is very difficult for modern people to connect with and stay with the challenges of meditation and the journey it provides.

Over the past two decades, neuroscience, and especially neurological research into

meditation, clarifies what I discovered in my teaching. We have two ways of knowing — first, and primary, is what we might call “right brain” knowledge — the direct, non-conceptual experience of our subcortical regions, everything “below” the thinking mind — the body’s innate knowing. In Vajrayana Buddhism, it is said that this type of knowing is “naked” or “pure” because it is unfiltered and unprocessed by our egoic thinking mind. This is somatic knowing, what some people call “body knowledge” or “body wisdom.” Second, and strictly derivative, is the abstract, conceptual knowledge of the left brain, consisting of all the labels, concepts, judgments, and narratives we overlay onto our naked, pure experience. The left brain cannot experience anything in and of itself; it can only label and categorize the actual experience of our Soma, or body. Thoughts, even thoughts of enlightenment, don’t liberate; only the direct, bodily experience of the teachings does.

The somatic protocols of our lineage enable even new students to drop immediately beneath the incessant thinking of the left brain into their Soma. When they do, they experience themselves in a completely unprecedented way, running into the natural state as their ground of being. Once this occurs, students suddenly experience the insight, power, and warmth they have been looking for in the inner depths of their own being. This experience is known in Tibetan Buddhism as “empowerment,” and that is surely exactly what it is.¹

¹ Over time, I have come to realize that those of us who studied with Trungpa Rinpoche and many of us who did not know him but follow his teachings face a serious allure and a serious temptation. We may come to see him as a unique oasis amidst the spiritual deserts of our world and we might come to idolize him in ways that actually undercut the personal journey he was urging us to make. As Frederick Neitzsche famously said, “where there are oases, there are also idols.”

Many of us, and I include myself fully in that number, have thought of him as fundamentally exceptional—that we could never experience what he experienced, we could never attain the kind of realization he proclaimed, and we could never, in a sense, become him. Many of us have thought that the best we can do is hold him up as an adored, but fundamentally unequaled kind of human; that our best bet is to preserve his words, with attention to every syllable, try to adhere to his teachings, gather in communities to celebrate them and keep them pure, and make them the reference points for our devotion, and our work, and our lives. But this is not the ultimate value; this is not what he taught.

Our external efforts to preserve his teachings are of course critical, for they provide the container, so to speak, for something else that is actually the most and, ultimately, only important thing: the sitting practice of meditation that comes down through the practicing traditions of Tibetan Buddhism and that Rinpoche taught; and what happens when we take that practice as the central and most important priority in our lives. Many times in 1970 and the early 70’s, I heard: ‘I have come here to teach you meditation. Other than that, there is no point in us being together.’ My understanding today is that the reason there is no point otherwise is that, without meditation as the centerpiece of a life, there is no journey, at least not the kind he was talking about. At that point, no matter how much we may expend all our energy to devotedly preserving his “legacy,” at the end of the day, it is not going to mean very much. But when the practice is front and center, then the expenditure of all that life force means everything. That, in any case, is the premise underlying what I am going to talk about here and the one and only purpose of Dharma Ocean.

Embodied Spirituality in Vajrayana History

In Vajrayana, the arenas of spiritual practice and everyday life are not separate. In contrast to many conventional approaches, this spiritual journey does not involve distancing oneself from “samsara;” from all that is physical, bodily, worldly, “impure,” and problematic. Rather it is a process of an ever deeper and more complete entry into those very domains of our existence. We discover that it is precisely within the interior “space” of those aspects of our fully embodied, ordinary, human lives that the most important discoveries occur, and our true spiritual journey can unfold. This is why the experience of the natural state is so crucial for practitioners, right from the beginning of their journey, for it provides the unbiased, unlimited awareness within which the true sacredness of all experience can be seen. It is that union of space/awareness, and naked experience, that constitutes spiritual realization in the Vajrayana.

In Vajrayana, the human body is in fact pointed out and personally discovered to be nothing other than the Buddha’s own threefold body of enlightenment. These are the three dimensions of our fundamentally, already fully awakened incarnate being: immaculate awareness — our most fundamental nature; the energy of awareness; and self-less compassion, from which the spontaneous responsiveness naturally flows. All of these occur outside of ego’s framework.

The hallmark of the Vajrayana in our lineage is that we begin with the fruition of the journey; we begin by pointing out, in a fully experiential, way the reality of the enlightenment within us. Meditation is the space within which we receive this fruition, and the method by which we develop it in ourselves. Thus, it becomes a matter of our direct personal knowledge; our immediate experience becoming a guiding light in our practice.

Though the path of Somatic Meditation is not “religious” in nature, it has deep and ancient roots in the Vajrayana Buddhism of India, Tibet, and elsewhere in Asia. The

tantric approach of Somatic Meditation takes our Soma — our body — as the fundamental arena of practice. Rather than trying to develop meditation through our thinking mind in a “top-down” process, as is the case with most contemporary approaches, Somatic Meditation involves a bottom-up process, wherein we connect with the inherent, self-existing wakefulness that is already present within the body.

In contrast to conventional approaches which emphasize entry through the application of deliberate, imposed techniques, Somatic Meditation develops a meditative consciousness that is accessed through the feelings, sensations, somatic intuition, and felt sense of the body itself. We are simply trying to tune into the basic, primordial awareness of the body. In Buddhist terms, the human body is always abiding in the meditative state, the domain of awakening; we are simply endeavoring to gain entry into that.

Unless we make room for a direct, unmediated experience of our body as it is, without manipulation or distortion, then deep, lasting, ultimate transformation cannot occur. This helps us understand the curious fact that many people, even after decades of practicing top-down methods, will give up meditation, finding that the ultimate transformation they were looking for has not happened.

For all the benefits of top-down meditation, there is always an element of a conscious agenda; a subtle, if unconscious, culling of what comes up, and a prioritizing of some experiences over others. Hence, the ego ultimately stays in control. This freezes our development, landing us in what John Welwood calls “spiritual bypassing.” We are unable to grow. We are bypassing our actual life and the opportunity for endless spiritual maturation that are inherent within us. When we let what we think should happen override our body’s imperative of what actually needs to happen, we are turning away from the opportunity to become fully and completely human in this life; we are turning away from the highest spiritual realization.

The Path and the Training

Trungpa Rinpoche's Vajrayana lineage, carried on by Dharma Ocean, offers a course of training that takes us from a disembodied, disconnected state, through a series of meditative practices and levels of maturation, to a point of embodied, spiritual fulfillment. The Dharma Ocean training unfolds according to six progressive stages each of which is accomplished through a distinct body of practices. Each of these is referred to as a "yana" or "vehicle," a Buddhist term meaning a developmental stage. Here is a brief summary of these six yanas.

1. *The Ground Yana:* Here, we are learning to connect with our actual, embodied self, our Soma. Making this connection is the essential beginning point of the meditative journey because, in meditation, we must begin with who we are. Many of us spend so much time in front of computer and TV screens, and on our cell phones, that we end up living in a virtual world, out of touch with who we actually are. At that point, we might assume, without realizing it, that meditation is just another disembodied, virtual reality. In the ground yana, we learn how to enter into our own bodily incarnation, coming into direct knowledge of our lived experience and exploring what is going on there. What we find, amazingly, is that the body is enormously spacious; alive with energy and wisdom. Perhaps we discover, for the first time, the beginning of a tangible, real spiritual journey that includes everything that we are.

2. *The Meditation Yana:* Once we gain entry into the inner space of the Soma, we see the limitless possibilities of openness, awareness, and experience that reside there. Typically we have a very hard time "staying with it"; without meaning to, we tend to jump right back into our thinking mind, back into our disembodiment. In the Meditation Yana, through the practice of sitting meditation, we train our minds to be less reactive to thoughts. We cultivate and deepen the experience of pure awareness within our state of being. The particular form of meditation we teach, drawing on the great awareness traditions of India, Tibet, and Eastern Asia, is what we call "the Somatic Practice of Pure Awareness." It is similar to "silent illumination" in Ch'an, Shikantaza, "just sitting" in Zen, and "abiding in the natural state" in Mahamudra and Dzogchen, except that it is more somatic in nature.

3. *The Yana of Somatic Descent*: Even with awareness traditions, there could still be a tendency toward disembodiment. Without realizing it, we might visualize and aim for a meditative state that is empty of content, devoid of the experiences of birth and death that run through our lives. In the third yana we bring our meditative awareness fully into the density, energy, and eventfulness of our body. In this tantric approach to meditation, we begin to see that everything that bursts forth from the empty space of our basic Soma, “the natural state,” — the energy of radiant, expressive awareness. We return to “samsara” with new eyes, but beyond that, we begin to realize there never was a “samsara,” just the enlightened manifestations of our own awakened nature.

4. *The Yana of Great Compassion (Mahayana)*: In the fourth yana we refine our embodiment and somatic awareness further by beginning to tap into the subtle warmth, tenderness, and wisdom of the heart. Through embodied bodhicitta (or awakening heart) practices, we discover that the heart is the ultimate organ of wisdom and compassion within our Soma; it beholds all beings and life as they are, in and of themselves and from their own side. This is simply the heart’s natural way of regarding everything, once the egoic veils of conceptual thinking are relinquished. We come to realize that to behold things from the view of the heart’s territory is to love them selflessly and unconditionally.

5. *The Vajrayana*: In our journey to the complete embodiment of spiritual realization, we will find impediments and blockages. The most difficult of these “obscurations” and “obstacles” are what today we call “unresolved traumas.” These are unconscious emotional assumptions and beliefs about the nature of ourselves, others, and the world. These unconscious attitudes and beliefs, responses to overwhelmingly painful experiences, were laid down through our entire life, beginning from our earliest days. They skew our perceptions of everything. Because they are unconscious, it is difficult to see and address them. We are talking not only about the major incapacitating traumas that may be active in us, but also about the hundreds and perhaps thousands

of insults to our person that were so painful that we could not fully process the experiences when they occurred.

In the Vajrayana, we work directly with these obstructing patterns, bringing them to consciousness through the practice, and learning to fully inhabit the painful experiences, thus allowing them to resolve themselves. This Vajrayana trauma work releases huge amounts of energy; our awareness opens up further and further, and over time, we develop the capacity to open and make room for the vastness of life that is our human birthright.

The first four yantras, the Ground Yana, the Meditation Yana, the Yana of Somatic Descent, and the Compassion Yana are offered to anyone who wishes to receive and train in the teachings and practice. The Vajrayana is different: in order to take up Vajrayana training in Dharma Ocean, practitioners need a strong grounding in each of the first four yantras. That grounding provides the prerequisite for being accepted as a Vajrayana student.

There are several reasons for this. The Vajrayana practices are “advanced” in the sense that it is assumed that practitioners are experienced with being in the body (1st Yana), the practice of Pure Awareness (2nd Yana), meditating in a somatically way that keeps us present to our relative experience (3rd Yana), and practicing with great tenderness and sensitivity to others and with an unconditional commitment to their welfare (4th Yana). The Vajrayana practices build on that foundation of the first four yantras and, in fact, are inaccessible without that foundation. In addition, the Vajrayana stirs up a great deal of subterranean, unconscious material. Only a good grounding in the first four yantras provides the stability and the confidence to handle what comes up in an open, creative way.

6. The Yana of Life Itself: In the final yana, we engage in what might be called “the return.” This sixth yana is not a separate yana, because it is the fruition of all the previous yantras and the training carried out through them. Having developed an initial

acceptance and openness toward all situations and emotions, and to all those we meet in life, we now take unconditional openness further. In this yana, we must let go of all our reference points — especially our understanding, practices, and experiences of the past five yanās — and enter the practice of surrendering into everyday life without reservation or hesitation. We use the challenges of being alive, moment by moment, as opportunities to surrender further and further into the “what is” of ordinary reality. Here, finally, we have reached the full measure of our embodiment; this is spiritual realization in the tantric journey of Somatic Meditation.

Being Accepted Into the Vajrayana

The first four yanās are, as mentioned, offered to anyone who wishes to receive those teachings and practices. Practitioners are encouraged to engage at whatever level makes sense to them, to emphasize the yanās that most inspire them, to integrate the somatic teachings into their lives, and to incorporate them into their work and creative life. Our experience shows that most people who study and practice with us will elect this way of relating to the teachings, at least in the beginning or for quite some period of time.

There will be some who are inspired to make the full journey offered in this lineage; to be accepted as Vajrayana students, receive transmission, and enter into the practice of the Vajrayana path. For those exploring this possibility, we would like to offer an overview of how one might become a Dharma Ocean Tantrika.

The first and important qualification is that each aspiring Tantrika accepts full responsibility for their own journey. Below are listed the various objective requirements for acceptance as a Vajrayana student, along with many resources. Take advantage of all of this. Pursue your own training until you feel you have assimilated each branch of the teaching and practice. This is not a matter of checking off the requirement boxes alone, but of actually educating yourself to your full ability and understanding. Again, this is your journey, and its success ultimately depends upon you.

In addition, right up front, each aspirant needs to make themselves thoroughly familiar with this lineage and with the Vajrayana in general. It is important that everyone knows, to the best of their ability, what they are signing up for. Read about Tibetan Buddhism. Scope out other Vajrayana teachers in the West and Asia. Look into Trungpa Rinpoche's teachings and how they play out in Dharma Ocean. Talk to people, both those who are enthusiastic practitioners on this path and also those who may be critical. Inform yourself.

Aspiring Tantrikas are required to fulfill study and practice requirements for each of the first four yantras, demonstrating that they have understood that yana and have assimilated its basic approach into their state of being, their Soma, knowing how to access its particular wisdom. To move from one yana to the next, each aspirant must be vetted and authorized by a Dharma Ocean mentor or meditation teacher.

The first step into the Vajrayana is to request that a Dharma Ocean meditation instructor/teacher become their mentor, and gain their agreement. The mentor could be someone you already know, someone you have encountered in a program or course or discussion group, or someone you know through a mutual acquaintance.

After a year or two of practicing the Ground Yana, the practitioner, with the approval and support of their mentor, would declare themselves ready for the next step, the Meditation Yana, with a similar process for each transition to the next Yana. After training in the first four yantras and have their M.I.'s confirmation they are ready, at that point the practitioner would qualify for application to Vajra Assembly, normally a two-year program of entry into the Vajrayana. During, or at the end of this two-year program, they would normally receive pointing out which marks the official commitment into the Vajrayana path. Here is a brief thumbnail sketch of how the progression might evolve and suggested resources to help you make each leg of the journey.²

² Remember, this is a self-paced journey of integrating the teachings and practices. Spend as much time

Becoming Familiar with this Lineage

Online:

- *When Lightning Strikes* (Sounds True course with Dr. Reggie Ray)

Print Resources:

- *Dharma Ocean Values* (website)
- Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism (Trungpa)
- “The Three Lineages” (article, Ray)

Audio/Video Resources:

- Dharma Ocean Podcast episodes (see resources list)
- Archive Recordings (forthcoming for members)

Yana 1: The Ground Yana

Courses & Retreats:

- Online
 - Take the *Awakening the Body* course at least once. It is offered in the autumn of each year. You would be required to sign up for one of the optional discussion groups if you are an aspiring tantrika.

Or,

- In person
 - Take the *Meditating with the Body*, a five month online/residential program.

Study:

as you need with each stage — perhaps a year, two, or more. As Milarepa says, “Hasten slowly and you will soon arrive.”

- Books to Read
 - Touching Enlightenment: Finding Realization in the Body (Sounds True)
 - The Awakening Body (Shambhala)

Audio/Video Resources:

- Sounds True
 - *Your Breathing Body - Volumes I & II* (Sounds True)
- Podcasts
 - Suggested *Dharma Ocean Podcast* episodes (see resources list)
- Archive Recordings (forthcoming for members)
 - *Meditating with the Body* retreats
 - *Advanced Meditating with the Body* retreats

Yana 2: Meditation Yana

Courses & Retreats:

- Online
 - Take the *Somatic Practice of Pure Awareness* course at least once. It is offered in the winter/spring of each year. If you are an aspiring tantrika, you would be required to sign up for one of the optional discussion groups.
 - Take *Sutrayana (Hinayana section) - Foundations Classical Study* (to be developed)

Or,

- In person
 - Attend at least four weeks of the *Winter Meditation Intensive* at Blazing Mountain or its equivalent. These may be completed in chunks or all at once.

And,

- Sutrayana

- Take the new 15-week *Sutrayana Hinayana* online course (forthcoming) and, upon completion, pass the Warrior's Exam.³
- Solitary Retreat
 - Complete a 10-day solitary retreat. Request guidance from your MI to prepare for this.

Vows

- Take the Refuge Vow.

Study:

- Books to Read
 - The Practice of Pure Awareness (Shambhala)
 - The Path is the Goal (Shambhala)
 - Indestructible Truth – Hinayana Section (Shambhala)
 - In the Presence of Masters – Hinayana Section (Shambhala)
 - The Path of Individual Liberation (Shambhala)
 - Cultivating the Open Field (Tuttle)

Audio/Video Resources:

- Sounds True
 - *The Practice of Pure Awareness: Somatic Meditation for Touching Infinity*
- Podcasts
 - Suggested *Dharma Ocean Podcast* episodes (see resources list)
- Archive Recordings (forthcoming for members)
 - *Dathün (Winter Meditation Intensive) Volume I* retreats (weeks 1 & 2)
 - *2013-14 Dathün (Winter Meditation Intensive)*
 - *Dharma Sangha / Dhyanasangha* retreats

³ You might enroll in *Sutrayana Hinyana* after participating in the *Somatic Descent* course.

Yana 3: The Yana of Somatic Descent

Courses & Retreats:

- Online
 - Take the *Somatic Descent* course. It is offered in the summer of each year. Then, integrate a few Somatic Descent sessions into your practice schedule each week.

Study:

- Books to Read
 - Somatic Descent (Shambhala)
 - Your Body Knows the Answer (Shambhala)

Audio/Video Resources:

- Sounds True
 - *Somatic Descent: Experiencing the Ultimate Intelligence of the Body*
- Podcasts
 - Suggested *Dharma Ocean Podcast* episodes (see resources list)
- Archive Recordings (forthcoming for members)
 - *2014-15 Dathün (Winter Meditation Intensive)*

Yana 4: The Yana of Great Compassion

Courses & Retreats:

- Online
 - Take the *Boundless Heart I & II* courses. The first is offered in the fall and the second is offered in the spring of each year. If you are an aspiring tantrika, you would be required to sign up for one of the optional discussion groups.

Or,

- In person
 - Attend *The Body Loves* retreat and the second two weeks of a *Winter Meditation Intensive*

And,

- Sutrayana
 - Take the new 15-week *Sutrayana Mahayana* online course (forthcoming) and, upon completion, pass the Warrior's Exam.⁴
- Solitary Retreat
 - Complete a 10-day solitary retreat. Request guidance from your MI to prepare for this.

Study:

- Glimpses of Mahayana (Shambhala)
- Indestructible Truth – Mahayana Section (Shambhala)
- In the Presence of Masters – Mahayana Section (Shambhala)
- The Bodhisattva Path of Wisdom and Compassion (Shambhala)
- Training the Mind and Cultivating Loving-Kindness (Shambhala)

Vows

- Take the Bodhisattva Vow.

Audio/Video Resources:

- Sounds True
 - *Awakening the Heart: A Somatic Training in Bodhicitta*
- Podcasts
 - Suggested *Dharma Ocean Podcast* episodes (see resources list)
- Archive Recordings (forthcoming for members)
 - 2011-12 *Dathün (Winter Meditation Intensive)*

⁴ Participate in the *Boundless Heart I & II* courses before taking *Sutrayana Mahayana*.

- *Dathün (Winter Meditation Intensive) Volume II* retreats (weeks 2 & 3)
- *The Body Loves* retreats

Yana 5: Entry into the Vajrayana

Courses & Retreats:

- Online
 - *Take the two entry level Vajrayana courses in successive summers.*⁵

Or:

- In person
 - Attend these two courses in person.

Study:

- Books
 - Secret of the Vajra World (Shambhala)
 - The Tantric Path of Indestructible Wakefulness (Shambhala)
 - Journey Without Goal (Shambhala)
 - Glimpses of Space (Shambhala)
 - The Dawn of Tantra (Shambhala)
 - The Guru Drinks Bourbon (Shambhala)
- Website
 - Shambhala Publications: *The Role of the Teacher in Tibetan Buddhism: A Reader's Guide to the Teacher-Student Relationship*

Audio/Video Resources:

- Sounds True
 - *Mahamudra for the Modern World*

⁵ The *Entering the Vajra World* course and the *Vajra Assembly* retreat are each offered in the summer of every year.

- *Buddhist Tantra*
- Podcasts
 - Suggested *Dharma Ocean Podcast* episodes (see resources list)
- Archive Recordings (forthcoming for members)
 - *Mahamudra for the Modern World* retreats
 - *Introduction to Tantra* audio compilation

The Sangha

In response to the increasing sense of isolation and separation that is so much a part of modern experience, many of us are engaged in serious, sometimes passionate searches for community, hoping that if we can find a good one, it will solve our most difficult and painful problems. We hope that finding a community could help address our feelings of loneliness, resolve personal issues such as meaningless, hopelessness, and despair, or provide a sense of belonging or fitting into something. These longings for community to address much of our modern pain are entirely understandable and natural. But “community” in this sense is not “sangha.” The two are entirely different.

The container for this lineage is the Dharma Ocean sangha. This is the association of those committed to the perspectives, values, and practices of the dharma generally and, more specifically, of this practicing lineage. Our core value is the Vajrayana dharma — all of our activities revolve around study, practice, and teaching of meditation. This container is essential. However, we are not going to solve anybody’s problems. Essentially, every practitioner is fundamentally responsible for their own journey. Thus we mustn’t join the sangha with the expectation that it is going to fulfill our needs for community, emotional fulfillment, or anything else.

What, then, does it mean to be a member of the sangha of this lineage? The most important qualification is that you simply would like to join this lineage stream, become familiar with its approach, and be trained in its practices; and, in essence, to gain direct, personal, experiential understanding through prioritizing the practice of

meditation. You are open to letting go of habitual patterns and are willing to open to fundamental transformation. Beyond that, there is no official approval process needed. If this is what you want, and if you are willing to commit yourself to this meditative journey, then that automatically qualifies you as a member of the sangha. It was the very same in the Buddha's day. All you had to say was, "I want to do this; I want to be a student in this lineage." And the Buddha said, "*Ehi bhikkhu*," meaning, "then come along."

What binds us together is this shared commitment to our own journeys, to meditation, to mutual respect of one another, and to supporting each other on our individual paths. Because these commitments are shared by all, there can be a deep and enduring respect for one another, no matter how starkly different our backgrounds, ethnicities, genders, belief systems, life stages, countries, and cultures may be. Such differences, rather than being a source of conflict and divisiveness, can be experienced as joyful reflections of the integrity, abundance, and creativity of sharing our unique and individual spiritual unfolding with one another.