

Notes and Quotes for January 21, 2024 Dharma Reflections:

What's On the Path?

Part Nine:

Prajñā Pāramitā (The Perfection of Wisdom)

This is the point in our discussion, it seems, where we must throw all caution, all humility, all reasonable restraint, right into the howling wind, sure that it will all be blown back into our face, staining our shirts and shoes with hubris. Just imagine: *talking* about *the perfection of wisdom*! Who are we kidding? Weren't we already way out over our skis when we discussed how we could perfect generosity, or goodness, or patience (come on, *really?!!*), or sustained effort, or genuine concentration?

On the other hand, how can we avoid it? Since we're on the bodhisattva path and we're pledged to embody the unattainable way exemplified by the Buddha, we *have* to imagine the seemingly impossible, we *must* face our vast, fathomless potential and *try* to talk about it. We humbly endeavor to do so, knowing, somehow, that we are exploring the basis and actuality of what we already are. We're going to look it right in the eyes and dare to ask, "Don't I know you from somewhere?"

"Chapter 9—Wisdom

1. All these branches of the Doctrine
The Enlightened Sage expounded for the sake of Wisdom.
Therefore they must cultivate this wisdom
Who wish to have an end of suffering."
- ***The Way of the Bodhisattva— A Translation of the Bodhicharyāvatāra***, Shantideva (Eighth Century Indian monk, philosopher, poet and scholar), 2nd Edition Revised Translation, Padmakara Translation Group, Shambhala Classics, 2006, P. 137.

“9. Wisdom—Whereby Precious Ultimate Bodhichitta is Intensified

1. BRIEF EXPOSITION (of the above verse)

“[verse 1] If each of the six perfections (generosity and so forth...) is regarded as being based on the perfection preceding it, it follows that the perfection of wisdom is founded on that of concentration. In the present text, however, we will follow the interpretation of the Lord Manjughosha our teacher. Accordingly, the Buddha, the great enlightened Sage, expounded ‘all these branches of the Doctrine’ that is, all skillful methods, which are contained in the five preceding perfections from generosity to concentration, for the sake of, or as auxiliaries to, the attainment of wisdom. This wisdom is the principal aspect of the extraordinary path and is the direct cause of omniscience; it removes the two kinds of obscurations and actualizes ultimate primordial wisdom endowed with twofold knowledge.... In the *Prajnaparamita-sutra* in a hundred thousand verses, it is... written that, ‘Just as all the rivers that empty into the Ganges are carried along thereby to the great ocean, likewise the paramitas, when seized by wisdom, will lead to omniscience.’ And in *Ratnagunasanchayagatha* it is said that:

Blind from birth, without a guide,
The teeming multitudes know not which path to take.
How can they reach the town?
When wisdom is not there, the five perfections are deprived of sight.
Unguided, they are powerless to reach enlightenment.
Yet when they are caught up and seized by wisdom,
They gain their sight and thus assume their name.

“This is explained at length in the greater, medium, and shorter *Prajnaparamita-sutras*, the meaning of which in brief is to proclaim wisdom as the main and indispensable aspect of the path, thus revealing its great importance. Likewise, the expressions ‘branches’ and ‘for the sake of,’ used in the root text, are meant to imply that wisdom itself is the main factor.

“In the digest of the *Ashtasahasrika*, the *Prajnaparamita-sutra* in eight thousand verses, it is said that:

The wisdom paramita is nondual primal wisdom,
Tathagata, buddhahood itself.
And to the texts and path that have this as their goal,
The name of ‘wisdom paramita’ also is applied.

“This means that in order to attain the perfection of wisdom, which is the fruit, it is necessary to hear and reflect correctly upon the Prajnaparamita texts. Then experience must be gained in the supreme method, the Prajnaparamita path, in such a way, however, that wisdom and skillful means are never separated. It is therefore said that all who wish to have the complete end of all the sufferings of existence, both for themselves and others, must diligently cultivate the wisdom that realizes suchness.

“As it is said in the *Bodhichittavivarana*, when emptiness is realized,

The minds of yogis
Used to emptiness
Are turned with ease and joy
Toward the benefit of others.

“The same text also speaks of ‘emptiness with the essence of compassion,’ referring to the fact that, as the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have proclaimed, the realization of emptiness occurs simultaneously with the birth of compassion. And out of compassion, emptiness is taught to others, so that all the sufferings of oneself and others may be brought to nothing.”

- ***The Nectar of Manjushri’s Speech—A Detailed Commentary on Shantideva’s Way of the Bodhisattva*, Kunzang Pelden, Translated by the Padmakara Translation Group, Shambhala, 2007, Pp. 313-315.**

“A verse from the *Twenty-Five-Thousand-Line Perfection of Wisdom Sutra*... is often recited before the *Heart Sutra*. The wisdom mentioned in this verse realizes emptiness and dawns as the meaning of dependent arising....

Inexpressible, inconceivable, indescribable is the perfection of wisdom;
unborn, unceasing, the nature of space itself,
the object of apprehension of self-realized pristine wisdom.
To the mother of the buddhas of the three times, I pay homage.

“Emptiness is *inexpressible*—it cannot be adequately expressed in words, which are sounds. When a person who has realized emptiness and someone who has studied emptiness well but hasn’t realized it express the teachings on emptiness, the words they say are almost the same. Nevertheless, for listeners who have some knowledge of emptiness, there is a difference in what these two people convey. The former person’s experience of emptiness cannot be expressed in words, but the listeners can intuit it.

“The perfection of wisdom is *inconceivable*—conceptual consciousness cannot know it exactly as it is. The experience of realizing emptiness directly is very different than thinking about or imagining that experience.... It’s like the difference between imagining a delicious meal when you’re hungry and actually putting the food in your mouth and eating it.

“Emptiness is *indescribable*—it cannot be articulated by language. Emptiness as it is experienced by a yogic direct perceiver cannot be fully known or understood by words or concepts no matter how many statements are made about it or how much it is described....

“Emptiness is *unborn* and *unceasing*—it has no beginning and no end. It does not arise from causes and conditions, nor does it disintegrate and cease due to causes and conditions. Emptiness is the ultimate nature of all persons and phenomena; it is a nonaffirming negation and does not fluctuate or change. In these ways it can be compared to clear, open, unconditioned *space* that is free of all obstruction.... Just as unobstructed space allows for objects to exist in it, emptiness allows for the arising and existence of all veilings. All phenomena arise within emptiness, which is their ultimate nature. They cannot exist apart from emptiness and are one nature with it....

“Emptiness is not nonexistent; it exists and is established by a reliable cognizer. It is the *apprehended object of self-realized wisdom*, the *ārya’s* wisdom of meditative equipoise that directly and nonconceptually realizes emptiness. This wisdom is the only mind that can realize emptiness exactly as it is. The wisdom mind knowing emptiness is itself empty of inherent existence, so it directly knows its own ultimate nature, its emptiness of inherent existence. For this reason, the wisdom mind is called *self-realized wisdom*...—it is a personal direct experience of reality—and its own emptiness is the apprehended object. In this realization, there is no appearance of the subject, the wisdom mind, that realizes an object, emptiness. Rather subject and object are experienced as undifferentiated, like water poured into water....

“‘Perfection of wisdom’ sometimes refers to emptiness and other times refers to the wisdom realizing emptiness. This pristine wisdom is known as the *mother of the buddhas of the three times* in that it gives birth to the omniscient minds of all buddhas who abide in the past, present, and future. Without this wisdom, it is impossible to eradicate all afflictive obscurations and cognitive obscurations and transform our minds into the minds of fully awakened buddhas. Just as we depend on our mothers who gave birth to us, all buddhas awaken to full and complete buddhahood by depending on their ‘mother,’ the perfection of wisdom....

“When I go to Bodhgaya and sit under the bodhi tree, the place where the Buddha attained full awakening, I contemplate that this is the place where the Buddha himself meditated on empti-

ness with self-realized wisdom; here he directly cognized the ultimate nature of his mind. I am meditating on emptiness in the same way he did, and I have the same buddha nature that he had. I too can realize the nature of mind and attain Buddhahood just as he did. With this in mind, I recite the above homage to the mother, the perfection of wisdom, and contemplate its meaning. With a sincere aspiration to generate this wisdom and attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings, I then meditate on emptiness and dependent arising.

“I recommend that you do the same when you visit Bodhgaya or any other holy place. Even when in your own room or in another country, you can imagine being in Bodhgaya and practice like this.”

- ***Appearing and Empty, Volume 9 of The Library of Wisdom and Compassion, The Dalai Lama and Thubten Chodron, Wisdom, 2023, Pp. 44-48.***

Here is a link—to the Rochester Zen Center’s chanted version of the Prajñā Paramita Hridaya, or the Heart of Perfect Wisdom Sutra—as well as to an audio file of the RZC Sangha chanting the sutra:

<https://www.rzc.org/library/zen-center-chants/heart-of-perfect-wisdom/>

Because this English translation of the Sutra has been (most wonderfully) optimized for chanting aloud, it necessarily altered and moderately truncated the full (but still remarkably compact) text. Here is a translation that more accurately presents the full text of the original:

The Sutra of the Heart of Lady Perfection of Wisdom

I bow to Lady Perfection of Wisdom

Thus have I heard. At one time Lord Buddha was staying at Vulture Peak Mountain in Rajagriha, with a great gathering of the monastic sangha and the bodhisattva sangha.

At that time, Lord Buddha entered an absorption, called *Profound Radiance*, in which all elements of experience are present.

At the same time, noble Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva mahasattva, was looking right at the experience of the profound perfection of wisdom, and saw the five piles to be empty of nature.

Then, through the power of the Buddha, venerable Shariputra asked noble Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva mahasattva, “How does a son or daughter of the noble family, who wishes to experience the profound perfection of wisdom, train?”

Addressed in this way, noble Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva mahasattva, said to venerable Shariputra, “O Shariputra, a son or daughter of the noble family who wishes to experience the profound perfection of wisdom looks in this way: see the five piles to be truly empty of nature.

Form is emptiness, emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other than form, form is not other than emptiness. In the same way, feeling, concept, mental formation, and consciousness are emptiness.

Therefore, Shariputra, all experience is emptiness. It is not defined. It is not born or destroyed, not impure or free from impurity, not incomplete or complete.

Therefore, Shariputra, in emptiness, there is no form, no feeling, no concept, no mental formation, no consciousness; no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind, no appearance, no sound, no smell, no taste, no touch, no mind object; no eye element up to no mind element and no mind consciousness element; no ignorance, no end of ignorance up to no old age and death, no end of old age and death; no struggle, no source, no end, no path; no timeless awareness, no attainment, and no non-attainment.

Therefore, Shariputra, because for bodhisattvas there is no attainment, they rest, trusting the perfection of wisdom. With nothing clouding their minds, they have no fear. They leave delusions behind and come to the end of nirvana.

All the buddhas of the three times, by trusting this perfection of wisdom, fully awaken in unsurpassable, true, complete awakening.

Therefore, the mantra of the perfection of wisdom, the mantra of great awareness, the unsurpassed mantra, the mantra equal to the unequalled, the mantra that brings complete peace to all struggle is not a ruse: know it to be true.

The mantra of the perfection of wisdom is said in this way:

Om gaté gaté paragaté parasamgaté bodhí svaha

Thus, Shariputra, do all bodhisattva mahasattvas train in the profound perfection of wisdom.”

Then Lord Buddha arose from that absorption and praised noble Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva mahasattva, saying, “Well done, well done, o son of noble family; thus it is, thus it is. One experiences the profound perfection of wisdom just as you have taught. Those Who Have Gone This Way also rejoice.

Then venerable Shariputra and noble Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva mahasattva, that whole assembly and the world with its gods, humans, titans, and sky spirits, rejoiced and praised the words of Lord Buddha.

- ***An Arrow to the Heart—Translation and commentary on the Heart Sutra, Second Edition, Ken Mcleod, Unfettered Mind Media, 2021, Pp. 2-3.***

“The perfection of wisdom is the ultimate heroic practice of bodhisattvas. When we are wholehearted in living our daily life as the practices of generosity, ethics, patience, enthusiasm, and concentration, complete intimacy with ourselves and all beings is possible. This intimacy is reality. Actualizing this intimacy is the great perfection of wisdom.

“When we remember and practice the six paramitas in our daily lives, we open to the realization that we are not anything external to the dynamic process of giving, ethics, patience, heroic effort, and concentration. Under the auspices of perfect wisdom, the first five practices leap beyond all ideas of their function, and thus they become the function of wisdom going beyond wisdom. I use the phrase ‘perfection of wisdom’ to refer to wisdom that is constantly leaping beyond itself and taking all the other five practices along with it....

“(T)here is a story about a time when a monk asked Yunmen, ‘What was the teaching of (the Buddha’s) whole lifetime?’ and Yunmen answered, ‘An appropriate response.’ The appropriate response of a buddha emerges in each situation from the perfection of wisdom.” **Pp. 99-100.**

“Some Buddhist practitioners and scholars say that the articulation of dependent co-arising is the central philosophy of the Buddha’s teaching. Certainly, it is the centerpiece of what is commonly called the first turning of the dharma wheel....

“The perfect wisdom scriptures are called the second turning of the dharma wheel. They offer a non-conceptual approach to liberation, an approach based on the emptiness of all phenomena. Among the innumerable scriptures on perfect wisdom, the two most studied and celebrated in the Zen family are the *Heart Sutra* and the *Diamond Sutra*. They are intended to protect people from clinging to the marvelous teachings of the first turning.” **P. 103.**

“Realizing the way things are is what saves people. We play the role of a savior because our vow to save beings comes from the reality that there is no basis for apprehending or grasping saviors or beings. In reality, there is no abiding in the salvation process or in saved beings or in saviors. In trusting our vow we also trust that we should study where the vow comes from. Our vow comes from ultimate reality and realizes it. Accepting that the way we are is that we are

included in all beings and all beings are included in us, as bodhisattvas we wish to devote our lives to beings who don't really exist except in intimate relationship with us." **P. 107.**

"The *Great Wisdom Beyond Wisdom Heart Sutra*... rejects all the intellectual teachings of the first turning, including the teachings of dependent co-arising....

"In the *Heart Sutra* the Bodhisattva of Infinite Compassion, Avalokiteshvara, is deeply practicing Prajna Paramita. In this sutra, Avalokiteshvara fully embraces conventional reality and uses conventional words and phrases—that is, she embraces language—to initiate us into the ultimate truth, which is beyond words. Avalokiteshvara studies active (karmic) consciousness and sees that it is empty of independent existence. This realization relieves all suffering. In doing these practices she sees ultimate truth. Then Avalokiteshvara, sitting in the midst of such vision, deigns to speak with us.

"Wisdom contemplates conventional truth in a thorough, wholehearted way. In the wholeheartedness of their practice, bodhisattvas embody the pivoting of conventional and ultimate truth. When we practice with conventional truth through the six practices of the paramitas, we open to ultimate truth. Opening to ultimate truth without thorough study of conventional truth at the same time is not healthy wisdom. It is a kind of insanity. When we open to ultimate truth about things without first being grounded in generosity, ethics, patience, diligence, and concentration with conventional things, that is not real wisdom, and it can lead people to abide in dangerous dissociative states.

"If we care for our stories through these six great, heroic paramita practices and we are kind to our stories—not only for ourselves but also for the welfare of all beings—then, as we look at conventional truth, we can open to the possibility of realizing the ultimate truth of these conventional things.

"The sutra says that in practicing this way, Avalokiteshvara sees that all five categories of existence are empty of own-being. She sees the emptiness of all phenomena and says, 'All five aggregates are empty....' (T)he aggregates of form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness lack a basis for grasping. She sees that there is nothing to hold on to.

"Suffering is relieved in seeing the profoundly selfless nature of all categories of existence. Categories of existence are superficial concepts superimposed on existence. Our ordinary, conventional, karmic consciousness has a habit of superficially categorizing the inconceivable reality in which we are living. When we practice Prajna Paramita we see there is no basis for grasping any

categories or anything in categories. Our ordinary vision is not adequate to the task of seeing that things offer no basis for us to grasp them. Our conventional vision cannot see emptiness, even when we think it does. Emptiness that can be an object of ordinary vision is not real emptiness. Emptiness is too deep to be apprehended in that way. Seeing the inadequacy of our conventional vision is the kind of seeing that relieves suffering....

“(T)he *Heart Sutra* makes a *shocking* statement in reference to the Four Noble Truths. It says that, given emptiness, there is neither suffering nor the end of suffering, neither the arising of suffering nor no arising of suffering, neither the cessation of suffering nor no cessation of suffering, and neither a path to such cessation nor no path to such cessation.

“Perfect wisdom is an organ of vision that sees that there is no basis for apprehending any of the twelve links of dependent co-arising.... in emptiness there is no ignorance and no extinction of it and so on until we reach no old age and death and also no extinction of it....

“Seeing that samsara offers no basis for grasping, and its cessation, nirvana, also offers no basis for grasping leads to a startling revelation of perfect wisdom: there is no basis for grasping the idea, or perception, that samsara and nirvana are different. Without any grasping, samsara and nirvana are identical....

“For me, this is a miraculous implication. This deep teaching renders those who can listen to it and accept it unafraid to enter the world of suffering in order to look after and liberate living beings. It makes it possible for bodhisattvas to wholeheartedly and mindfully plunge into the boundless sea of fragile living beings, wherein they may teach this deep wisdom to all. They can be like this because of their vows, because they understand there is no difference between samsara and nirvana, and because they realize that there are no living beings to look after and liberate. This is the path of the heroes and heroines of enlightenment.” **Pp. 112-114.**

- ***Entering The Mind of Buddha—Zen and the Six Heroic Practices of Bodhisattvas*, Reb Anderson, Shambhala, 2019.**

“It is a peak experience, a great relief, to realize that perceptions and things perceived are without substance. The world comes back with all its ego-centered and ego-created pain and anguish, but Kanjizai (Avalokiteshvara) knows about their causes now and is liberated from their blind compulsions. Emotions rise and fall but the empirical self is not sitting there waiting to strike back. Affinity does not necessarily become lust; betrayal does not necessarily lead to hatred. The one who has defended the self can at last acknowledge that very same self as a

particular and peculiar form of the essential mystery. He or she is then freed to save the many beings including the one who saves. The way to practice has opened out at last.

“Kanjizai then calls out, ‘Form is no other than emptiness, emptiness no other than form.’

Keizan Jokin Zenji puts this poetically:

*Though we find clear waters ranging to the vast blue sky in autumn,
how can it compare with the hazy moon on a spring night?
Most people want to have it pure white,
but sweep as you will, you cannot empty the mind.*

“Though in peak experiences the Dharmakaya appears, we find that the true pleasure of being human lies not so much in vast emptiness but in the poignant nature of things—the joy of ambiguity and complementarity—of life in the world of difficulties....

“Here we see the Middle Way of the Buddha Dharma. Conceptual dyads are useful in communication but they become invidious when, for example, truth and falsehood become fixed positions that differ from person to person. Misunderstandings turn into anger, and worse. Thus it is not the forms of the world, it is not our perceptions of the forms, that are obstacles. It is the fact that we take them as ultimate verities.”

- ***The Practice of Perfection—The Pāramitās from a Zen Buddhist Perspective, Robert Aitken, Pantheon Books, 1994, pp. 112-114.***

“Wisdom (*prajñā* in Sanskrit) is the experiential insight into the essential emptiness or insubstantial nature of all phenomena. All material and mental events are fundamentally empty, void and vast as space. This ‘emptiness’ does not mean vacancy or nonbeing in a nihilistic sense. Rather, in the nature of their very existence all things are empty of any independent, substantial quality and are not separate and estranged from the totality of being, and each other.

“Prajñā is the experience of the essential unity and sameness of all things, in the midst of their diversity. All things appear and finally cease; all of us will pass away. In spite of the distinctions we cherish, all people are alike in having fears, needs, desires, in wanting to love and to be loved. This penetrating insight into the oneness and emptiness of all creation is embodied in the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, who eloquently cuts through and opens up each of the delusions of our discriminative consciousness. The awakening to this insight slices through the confusions of our conditioning, which habitually obstruct our life and awareness.

“Emptiness is not a thing, some new toy or crutch to grab hold of. The greatest delusion, warned against by masters of emptiness teaching, is attachment to emptiness. Even emptiness is empty. It is simply a way of being that releases and lets go of attachments. It is a practice of opening and letting go.

“The wisdom of prajñā is not a matter of book knowledge or accumulation of information. Rather, prajñā is insight—innate and immanent; anyone can turn to look within and apprehend this truth without becoming someone other than who she already is. Buddha and deluded, suffering beings are completely alike in having access to wisdom and insight. The only difference is in whether or not it is actually realized and enacted.”

- ***Faces of Compassion—Classic Bodhisattvas Archetypes and Their Modern Expression*, Taigen Dan Leighton, Wisdom, 2021, Pp. 74-75.**

From the *Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Lines Sutra*

ANANDA: The omniscient Lord Buddha, embodiment of universal enlightenment, does not single out for praise the Perfection of Generosity, the Perfection of Goodness, the Perfection of Patience, the Perfection of Commitment, or the Perfection of Meditation. Only the peerless Perfection of Wisdom, transcendent insight into the insubstantiality and transparent functioning of all possible phenomena, does Lord Buddha continuously mention, ecstatically praise, intensively teach and radiantly transmit.

LORD BUDDHA: You have observed accurately, beloved Ananda. The Perfection of Wisdom alone generates and sustains the other five transcendent Perfections that constitute the way of the bodhisattva, the translation into selflessness of the conventional, egocentric universe.

“Consider, Ananda, some particular act of giving which is not released and illuminated by the principle of Prajnaparamita—the bright emptiness, insubstantiality and transparent functioning of all apparent self-existence. This act is not radically transformed by being dedicated to the awakening of all conscious beings. Can any such conventionally generous action ever qualify as Danaparamita, the Perfection of Generosity, in which no independent giver or receiver, no gift and no substantial process of giving are recognized or crystallized?

ANANDA: In no way, precious Lord.

LORD BUDDHA: Precisely the same evaluation holds good for the other four Perfections—selfless goodness, selfless patience, selfless commitment and selfless meditation. Each paramita can be sustained only by the conscious presence of Prajnaparamita. Beyond any possible measure or conception is the value of Perfect Wisdom, which empowers the entire contemplative practice, thought and conduct of the bodhisattvas, transforming into liberating energy for all living beings their ceaseless acts of giving, their spontaneous disciplines of goodness, their patient sacrifices, their active commitment to the spiritual path and their profoundly concentrated meditation.

Perfect Wisdom continuously generates, offers, dedicates and contributes the immeasurable meritorious energy of selfless thought and action. Why? To bring about the awakening of all lives into the bliss of Buddhahood.

ANANDA: O precious Lord, the value of Perfect Wisdom for the whole universe is absolutely immeasurable and inconceivable.

LORD BUDDHA: From the supremely excellent insight of Prajnaparamita alone do the other boundless spiritual qualities and radiant universal efforts of the bodhisattva receive the sublime designation *paramita* and attain the stature of transcendent excellence.

The Perfection of Wisdom subsumes these five areas of illuminating thought and healing action, transforming them into selflessness and consecrating them solely for the awakening of all conscious beings. This is why it is taught that Perfect Wisdom alone animates, subtly unfolds and crowns the other five transcendent Perfections, the Paramitas of Goodness, Patience, Commitment and Meditation, clearly establishing the primacy of the Perfection of Wisdom. The other Perfections shine forth through the indivisibility and unthinkability of Prajnaparamita, whose blissful transparency is the fulfillment of all the highest ideals and aspirations of human life. Therefore, beloved Ananda, when the Buddha declares the truth and transmits the healing energy of Perfect Wisdom, the other five transcendent Perfections are simultaneously being declared and transmitted.

As precious gemstones evolve deep in the earth wherever conditions are correct, the earth itself with its rich potentialities being their sole source, just so do all precious moral and spiritual qualities grow within the mysterious profundity of Prajnaparamita, evolving spontaneously from the Perfection of Wisdom which is the omniscience, the panoramic subjectlessness and objectless knowing, enjoyed by all the Awakened Ones.

- ***Mother of the Buddhas—Meditation on the Prajnaparamita Sutra*, Lex Hixon, Quest Books, 1993, Pp. 84-86** (“Unlike scholarly translations, this (is a) ‘contemplative expansions’ of forty passages from the *Prajnaparamita Sutra in 8,000 Lines.*”)

Possible Discussion Points:

1. In the “Detailed Commentary” on Verse 1 of Shantideva’s “Wisdom Chapter” (page 3, above), Kunzang Pelden writes, “in order to attain the perfection of wisdom, which is the fruit, it is necessary to hear and reflect correctly upon the Prajnaparamita texts.... all who wish to have the complete end of all the sufferings of existence, both for themselves and others, must diligently cultivate the wisdom that realizes suchness.” Here we are hearing and reflecting on those texts; how do you imagine we might “cultivate” perfect wisdom?
2. On pages 4-5, above, The Dalai Lama shares his personal practice when he goes to Bodhgaya and sits under the bodhi tree. He recommends we do the same practice when we are in our own room in another country. Can you smell the earth from that holy place, hear the rustle of the leaves in the breeze, feel their refreshing shade from the hot sun? Is any place *not* under the bodhi tree?
3. Following the link on page 5, above, try chanting the Prajna Paramita Hridaya along with the RZC Sangha. Notice how you got through most, or perhaps all, of it without having thoughts or concepts about what you were chanting. Is that an actualization of prajna?
4. On pages 7-8, above, Reb Anderson says, “In trusting our vow we also trust that we should study where the vow comes from. Our vow comes from ultimate reality and realizes it. Accepting that the way we are is that we are included in all beings and all beings are included in us, as bodhisattvas we wish to devote our lives to beings who don’t really exist except in intimate relationship with us.” Is he implying that ultimate reality is supporting our efforts to realize it?
5. As attractive as the realization of emptiness might be, what dangers are involved?