

## **Venerable Amy Miller (February 4, 2007)**

Yesterday I had the opportunity to attend a retreat with Ven. Amy Miller (Her bio: <http://www.fpmt.org/teachers/resident/miller.asp>) at the Tushita Center in Delhi. What follows are some of my notes and thoughts. I am constantly attending teachings and talks and have tons of journals/notebooks filled with my notes and thoughts and have decided that it would be best for me to post my notes here on this blog so I can always turn to them. I will warn you that my notes are a little scattered and will probably only make sense to me...

The title of Amy's teachings was "What's Love Got to Do With It?" and it really focused on delusions and attachment.

She started out reviewing some basic concepts of Tibetan Buddhism. In Tibetan Buddhism it is imperative that we look at the mind/consciousness. The Eskimos in Alaska have about eleven words for snow and this shows just how important snow is to their culture. Similarly, the Tibetans have many, many words for the mind. In Tibetan Buddhism the mind has no physical basis, form, odor, beginning or end...continuous moments of consciousness...it is nonlinear. Our thoughts are made of moments of consciousness, moments of mind. Everything has a preceding cause and in one finger snap there are 65 moments of consciousness. A good practice is to watch the mind and even trace back moments of the mind. The subtle mind rides on the subtle wind...

When someone says they do not believe in reincarnation ask them, "what is the proof of there not being reincarnation?"

When you die your consciousness is contained in a seed of activity of body, speech and mind. This activity is what reincarnates, this is what goes on and these imprints dictate the personality you are going to have. Therefore it serves us best to plant positive seeds and imprints. Karma is literally a movement of consciousness.

In Tibetan gompa means meditation. Gom = to familiarize. Literally what we seek to do is habituate ourselves with virtue and battle delusion.

The mind has two qualities. 1. Clarity, clear, light nature...the ability to reflect like a mirror...so anger is not the mind. 2. Awareness, knows things. The mind is often cluttered and not spacious. What happens to this spacious luminosity? It is often filled with delusion or mental affliction which is anything that affects the mind.

"Leaning into the sharp edges is when you really have practice." – Pema Chodron

In order to become aware of our mind we have to slow down. You never have to be bored, you can always watch your mind. We must be mindful of virtue, we have to be mindful.

When delusions get a hold of you try to insert a spacious gap of clarity and awareness.

Going on retreat is getting to be your own best friend, getting to know your mind.

We are Buddhists, not yet Buddhas...love starts with ourselves. Developing love is the beginning of acceptance.

What is love? Love is sincerely wishing that others are happy...there are no conditions...it is an infinite, vast experience where there is not need or attachment.

What is compassion? It is freeing others from suffering.

Having a positive self-image is important, it doesn't mean you have ego. We must rejoice at all the good things we do.

We have to work on our minds. There are 6 main delusions. The first three are anger (hatred), attachment (desire) and ignorance (confusion, mistaken sense of our lives). In the Wheel of Life Thangka you have three animals...the pig which represents ignorance gives birth to the rooster which represents attachment and the snake which represents anger and hatred.

Brief review of the realms...Hell realm, Hungry Ghost realm, Animal realm (don't understand dharma), Human realm, Demi-god, God

The next three delusions are pride, doubt and false view (ignorance, dismissing a part of philosophy). These delusions branch out into nonvirtuous mental factors...

Important rules for living to remember: 1. It doesn't matter 2. no one is talking about you

The best thing you can do for others is to get enlightened because then you know exactly what to do for everyone and how to truly help others.

Bodhichitta is cherishing others with totality of heart. What does this other person need?

In order to engage in an enlightened relationship be clear about what you are giving and getting, have clear communication, listen and ask. Be honest about what stories are going on when you get into a relationship. Stop yourself from fantasy projection and battle those unrealistic fantasies. Get out of the desire realm. You must monitor and watch your mind.

Lam Rim...stages of the path

We expend so much mental energy when we get into relationships.

Eventually you will lose that enamored feeling (computer analogy) then what? Too often we vomit unrealistic projections onto those we get into relationships with and it is not possible to see clearly because we operate from our projections! What we think is falling

into love is really falling into obsession/attachment and eventually we end up settling. No one deserves to settle but you must be really honest with yourself in order to prevent this. You must go into it thinking that both of you will seek to enhance the positive things but that person cannot be your everything, other cannot bring you happiness.

Chocolate analogy—the more you eat the happier you get? No, the sicker you feel!

When coming to a challenging situation offer people spaciousness and diffuse their anger.

Attachment is tricky. It can dress up in other clothes...it is kind of like an oil stain that is hard to get out!

**TRUE DHARMA PRACTICE IS ABOUT COUNTERING DELUSION.**

Move towards love instead of attachment and have a realistic approach when you engage in relationships. Some practices to help you not be attached and get caught up in delusion when you get involved with someone include: meditate on them aging, on their bodily odors etc...this will help you cut down on grasping especially during the honey moon phase before things start getting real. Also, meditate on emptiness, the true nature of reality and look at how your loved one exists in parts.

Without direct perception of emptiness you always perceive things in duality. When you really “get it” you see both the conventional reality (a table is a table etc.) and you perceive with the Buddha mind (the table is a dance of light etc.) but you see this simultaneously.

Life isn't black and white and some nonvirtuous motives are okay but just be honest with yourself.

You must ask yourself what you really need to be happy! When you do this it doesn't mean you don't enjoy or appreciate (visiting family, eating a good meal, watching a movie etc.) but they just don't do it for you.

Regarding initiation or empowerment...this allows for you to enter a deity's world system but you must be very sure about this.

If you eat meditatively then the desire can subside so eat mindfully.

To engage in a conscious relationship you must focus on the other person's happiness and have clear communication. It is also fine to let go and just enjoy but keep balance and be honest about your intentions and feelings.

Spiritual materialism – ego grasping at spirituality...you must be honest with yourself...have you really changed in your mind for the better?

Always remember the nature of the mind. Cultivate love, try to be non judgmental. Being constructively critical is okay but be nonjudgmental.

We cycle until we break free and the nature of samsara is that it is broken (swimming pool analogy) you can cover the whole world with leather or just your feet...take care of your own mind first. You create your external reality.

Tong lin – giving and taking

Always remind yourself (taxi in the rain analogy) just like I wasn't to not suffer and be happy so does he/she.

Single celled organisms have mind, they have Buddha nature which is the seed of ultimate goodness. Our Buddha nature is obscured by delusions.

We must see the negative side of attachments and how delusions interfere with our dharma practice.

“You can do...” Ling Rinpoche