



## A Heart Of Warmth Is Not Something Impossible, by Tenzin Palmo

What does love mean? In the West, we mistake the meaning of love; we bandy the word around all the time, from “love ice-cream” to “love God”. But we mistake love for desire, for greed, for lust, and for attachment. We think that to love something or someone means to hold on very tightly and to think of it as “mine”. And because of this grasping mind, we suffer very much. We suffer from the fear that we will lose what we desire, and we suffer from grief when we do lose. Think about that. We usually mistake attachment for love. But attachment is not love. Attachment is grasping, attachment is clinging. And this is the root cause of our being in this state of suffering.

The Buddha said that there is a truth of suffering and that there is a cause of suffering. The cause of suffering is grasping. We hold things so tightly because we don’t know how to hold things lightly. But everything is impermanent. Everything is flowing-- it’s not static or solid. We cannot hold on to anything. As long as we try to hold on to the flow of the river, we either end up with nothing-- because we can’t grasp water in a tight fist. Or else, we dam up the flow and end up with something very stagnant, smelly and stale. The actuality is movement. If we try to hold on tightly, we kill it. And that causes so much pain; it causes so much fear in our lives. That’s not love. Love is a tremendous opening of the heart. It’s a heart which thinks “May you be well and happy” and not “May you make me well and happy”. In order to cultivate that kind of heart which wishes for the happiness of others, we can start first by opening with our family. This means by trying to make them happy and being open towards them. But not clinging or grasping-- just being there for them. Showing them love, showing them affection, because they are the first people who need our love and affection. But it’s not a tight grasping affection. When I was 19, I decided to go to find a Lama, and I said to my mother “I’m going to India” and she said, “Oh yes, when are you leaving?” She didn’t say “What do you mean you are going to India? How could you leave your poor old mother?” She said, “Oh yes, when are you leaving?” not because she didn’t love me, but because she did love me. She loved me and she wanted me to fulfill my own potential and be happy. She was not thinking “Oh, but if you’re going to leave me, I’m going to be lonely. I’m going to be miserable. How can you abandon me?” So, because of her

non-attachment, she rejoiced in my happiness. Even while I was away, though I am sure she missed me very much, but she rejoiced in all the things I did, the places I went and the people I met. [...]

Thatâ€™s love. And that heart of warmth is not something impossible. Itâ€™s something we can all develop. That joy in making others happy, in thinking how we can give a little happiness, a little joy to others that we meet, through a kind word, through a smile, through a gift or whatever. Not always thinking â€œOh, but they never gave me anything, so why should I give them anything?â€•, or â€œThey never smile at me, so Iâ€™m not going to smile at them.â€• Thatâ€™s such a petty, small mind. Think about a society in which everyone is at least nice to each other. That would be heaven, would it not? And yet it doesnâ€™t take that much to be pleasant, even to people who are not pleasant in return. If we were affable to everybody, then on the whole, people would be agreeable in response.

Because itâ€™s really true that we get out of life what we put into it. And if we are always radiating negative thoughts and feelings â€“ anger, resentment or just self-absorptionâ€”then thatâ€™s what weâ€™ll get back. [...]

So itâ€™s up to us. We create this world as we project it from our mind. We can make this world into something meaningful. We can make some genuine contribution to our environment. Even just within our own circle, by helping others to feel better, we can have a life that has some purpose. So that at the end of our life, we can look back and say, â€œwell, at least I did what I could.â€• Or we could waste it-- we can go through life grumbling, and moaning and complaining and blaming other people in the family, an unhappy childhood and oneâ€™s parents or the government and society. Whether we go up or whether we go down or whether we stand still, is up to us. And if we want to be miserable, we can be absolutely miserable. We have full permission. But if we donâ€™t want to be miserable, that is also up to us. Things can change. Things are changing moment to moment. We can change. And if we change ourselves, everything changes. Everything changes.