



Like The Sun Shining, by Tenzin Palmo

Sometimes people don't understand how Buddhism can talk about compassion and love in one breath and non-attachment and all these qualities of renunciation in the other breath. But that's because we confuse love with clinging. We think that if we love somebody, the measure of our loving is that we want to hold on to them. But that's not love, that's just self-love, attachment. It's not genuinely loving the other person, wanting them to be well and happy that's wanting them to make us well and happy. This is very important, because we confuse it all the time.

When I was nineteen years old I told my mother, "I'm going to India" and she said, "Oh yes, when are you leaving?" She didn't say, "How can you leave me, your poor old mother, now you've got to the age when you're earning a living, how can you go and abandon me?" She just said, "Oh yes, when are you leaving?" It was not because she did not love me, it was because she did. And because she loved me more in a way than she loved herself, she wanted what was right for me, not what would make her happy. Do you understand? Her happiness came by making me happy.

That's love, and that is something which we all need very much to work on in our personal relationships. To hold people and possessions like this (hands outstretched to indicate holding something lightly in the palms) and not like this (fists clenched to indicate holding something very tightly). So that when we have them, we appreciate and rejoice in them, but if they go then we can let them go. Change and impermanence is the nature of everything.

You see, when we lose something we love, it's our attachment which is the problem, not the loss. That's what causes us grief. And that is why the Buddha taught that with attachment comes fear and grief. We have the fear of losing, and then we have the grief when we lose. Buddha never said that love causes grief.

Love is an opening of the heart. It's like the sun shining. The sun just naturally shines. It doesn't discriminate, shining on this person but not on that one. It just shines, because it's the nature of the sun to give warmth. Some people go inside and close the doors and windows; that's their problem. The sun is shining anyway. And it's that quality of heart which we have to develop. That quality of open, unconditional loving, no matter what. I'm going to love you if you do this but I'm not going to love you any more if you do that parents do that, when their children don't obey.

--Tenzin Palmo

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