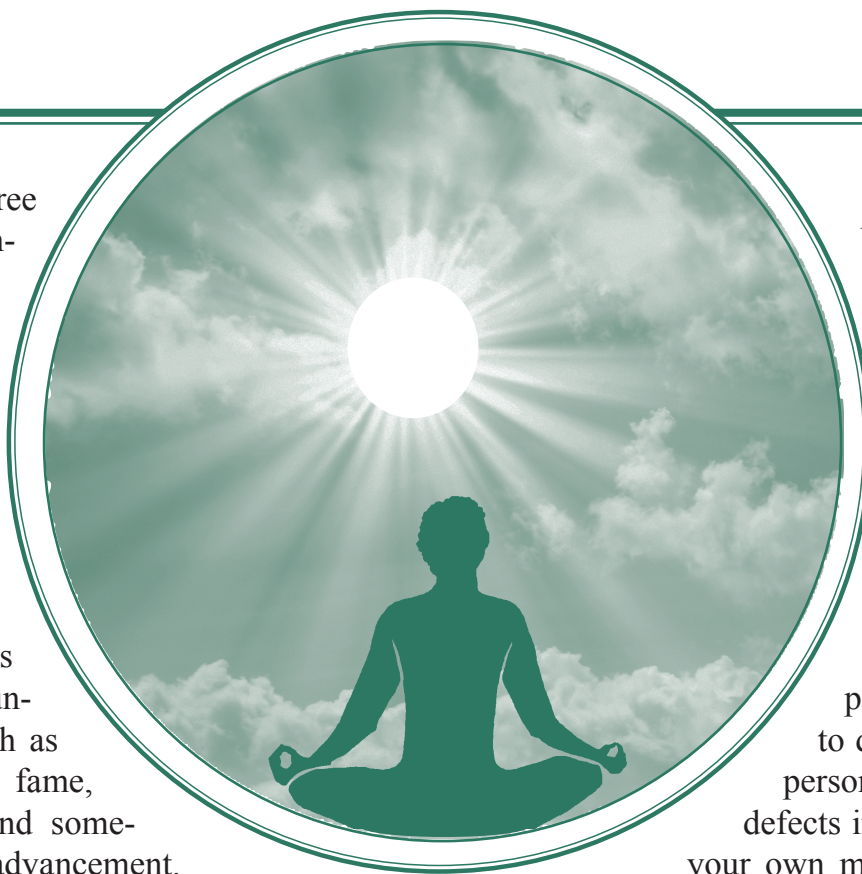


There are three terms in Sanskrit for jealousy: *irshya*, *asuya* and *matsarya*. *Irshya* refers to the common, relatively mild form of jealousy that people feel day by day when they perceive that someone else is surpassing them unfairly in matters such as looks, popularity, fame, wealth, happiness and sometimes even spiritual advancement.

Interestingly enough, it is *irshya* which helps sustain movement in the average person's life. If there were no jealousy, many people would wake up lazily and decide to stay in bed all day. Jealousy makes them get up fast and work harder. This form of jealousy plays some positive role in life because it spurs one on to make self-effort and move forward. However, *irshya* itself is a *rajasic* sentiment—a product of a distracted and restless mind—and, as such, must be sublimated on the way to real progress and prosperity.



When *irshya* becomes increasingly *tamasic* or impure, it assumes its more perverted form as *asuya* and then *matsarya*. The *asuya* form of jealousy is accompanied by an urge to degrade the other person, to pursue his defects in order to soothe your own mind. Back biting and scandal-mongering are often

associated with *asuya*.

Matsarya is still more destructive and perverse. Not only do you feel a burning sensation in your heart, but you start seriously planning what to do in order to hurt the person towards whom you are jealous. Obsessed with the idea that their very existence has become a source of misery, a threat to your happiness in life, you become intensely involved in hurting and removing the person from your way.

The Art of Positive Feeling Part Nine



Overcoming Jealousy



by Swami Jyotirmayananda

Jealousy and its Ramifications

Jealousy is generally associated with many negative traits of personality. It directs a person to be fraudulent and insincere with those around them, and promotes irritability, anger, hatred, cruelty and pride. It degrades the mind by obstructing the feeling of cosmic love. Like a mental fever, it saps out the energy and vitality of man.

If you study the history of human beings from ancient times, you will see how the *tamasic* form of jealousy has caused great devastation. Such jealousy destroys harmony among family members, friends and neighbors, coworkers, nations and even among aspirants in ashrams (spiritual centers). Jealousy is a great enemy of culture and progress among human beings. It has ruined many homes, frustrated many hopes and broken many hearts.

The Jealousy of Queen Kaikeyi

One of the most poignant examples of the devastating and far-reaching effects of jealousy is found in the Ramayana:

One day after the marriage of his sons, at a time when all forms of prosperity flowed to Ayodhya like rivers flowing into the ocean with abundant water during the rains, King Dasharatha approached Guru Vasistha and expressed his cherished desire to see Prince Rama declared the successor or heir apparent to the throne. Sage Vasistha agreed readily and plans to enthrone Rama were begun, bringing delight to all the king's ministers and royal officers. When the news reached the inner chambers of the palace where Queens Kaushalya and Sumitra dwelled, they too were overjoyed and joined in the preparations.

Seeing the great rejoicing in Ayodhya, the gods in the heavens became distressed because they feared that once Rama became king he would no longer be interested in killing Ravana (the Lord of demons), which was the purpose for which they had promoted his incarnation in the first place. Thus, they approached Goddess Saraswati (the Deity presiding over intellect and speech) and appealed to Her to find a way to prevent Rama from becoming coronated, while at the same time sending him into forest life so he would perform his heroic deeds of eradicating demons.

Finally overcome by the pleading of the gods, Saraswati Devi thought of a unique scheme to accomplish their objective and came to the earth plane in search of a person whose intellect could be twisted against Rama. However, she found the minds of all people so eager for his coronation that it was only after extensive searching that Goddess Saraswati found one petty-minded personality, the hunchbacked maid-servant of Kaikeyi, whose name was Manthara, who could be manipulated to plant a seed of discontent against Rama.

Thus, one day when Manthara was in her own room, she heard the sounds of celebration in the streets and asked what was going on. Because her mistress, Queen Kaikeyi, lived in a separate palace, the news of the coronation had not yet reached them. Also King Dasharatha had planned to inform his dear Kaikeyi about this delightful surprise in person but had not yet had the opportunity to do so. When Manthara heard from others that Rama was to be crowned, her heart burned with jealousy due to the secret influence of Goddess Saraswati. Why, she kept asking herself, should Rama, the son of Kaushalya, be coronated instead of Bharata, the son of her mistress, Kaikeyi? With her twisted in-

tellest, the maid-servant then began to plot what she could do to upset the plans for the coronation so that Bharata would be favored for the royal honor instead of Rama.

With this in mind, Manthara approached Queen Kaikeyi with a dejected countenance and then started shedding tears. She then informed Kaikeyi that Rama was about to be coronated, but in conveying that news she created a scenario that would arouse jealousy in the heart of the Queen. With great effort, she convinced her mistress that the king had deliberately sent her own son, Bharata, away from Ayodhya to visit Kaikeyi's parents at that time, and that he had deliberately chosen not to tell Kaikeyi about the coronation as part of a plan to degrade and humiliate Kaikeyi while glorifying Kaushalya. Further, Manthara convinced the Queen that if Rama ascended to the throne, she would become a maid servant of Kaushalya and live a life of misery.

Sorely afflicted by the arrow of Manthara's evil intent, Kaikeyi begged the maid-servant to help her upset the plans for Rama's coronation. Manthara then reminded Kaikeyi that the King had once offered to fulfill any two boons of her choice, and suggested that this was the perfect time to make her two requests: first, that Bharata be coronated instead of his brother, and second, that Rama be banished into the forest for fourteen years. By these two boons, said Manthara, Kaushalya would be deprived of all the joy she was expecting the next day at Rama's coronation.

Manthara further suggested that Kaikeyi retire that very night to the *kopa griha*, or the "sulking room" that queens entered in ancient times to bring some dissatisfaction or grievance to the attention of the king. Hearing that she had entered that room afflicted by some problem, Dasharatha would quickly come to see her and try to ease the difficulty. Eager to please her, he

would surely pledge to grant any boon that she requested. At that time, after the king had taken an oath in the name of Rama to grant any boons, Kaikeyi would make her request.

According to plan, the King came to Kaikeyi's palace, eager to inform her about the coronation that was to take place the next day. He was sure that she would be as delighted as everyone else in the realm. To his surprise, however, he was informed that she had thrown herself in despair into the sulking room. He hurried to the side of his beloved Queen and then tried to find out the cause of her grief. When she indicated that granting her the two promised boons would bring her back to normalcy, he readily pledged to do so.

At that moment, Kaikeyi made her request for Bharata to become successor to the throne and Rama to be banished to the forest in the garb of an ascetic for a period of fourteen years. Hearing those burning words of Kaikeyi, the King was shocked and he became speechless.

Dasharatha pleaded with Kaikeyi and promised to recall Bharata to the kingdom and crown him as king, even though he was slightly younger than Rama. Then, he tried to convince her that Rama should not go to the forest because he could not bear that separation from his son. However, Kaikeyi taunted her husband and would not be moved from her resolve. Seeing the hopelessness of the situation, the King was immersed in grief. He knew that he could not break his promise to Kaikeyi without sacrificing his honor as a king, yet he was shattered and heartbroken at the prospect of losing Rama from his sight.

When morning came, Rama was summoned to the palace and he found his father lying on the floor as if enshrouded by death. Kaikeyi told Rama about the boons she had requested and explained that the King was torn between his intense affection for Rama and his honorable duty to grant those boons as promised. Thus, she suggested, Rama should relieve his father of his

suffering and simply renounce the throne and quickly remove himself to the forest.

Due to his enlightened consciousness, Rama cheerfully and without hesitation agreed to Kaikeyi's request. Before the eyes of his grief-stricken relatives and the citizens of the kingdom, he left for the forest accompanied by his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana.

In the Divine plan the destructive jealousy of Manthara and Kaikeya was an instrument for the greatest good, for it brought Rama into the forest to fight the demons it was his destiny to conquer. However, in the practical life of Ayodhya its effects were devastating: a coronation turned into a banishment, the joyous songs of thousands of citizens of Ayodhya turned into sorrowful lamentations, and a close-knit royal family torn apart, leading to the pathetic death of the distraught King Dasharatha himself.

The fact that a negative quality can be helpful from the Divine perspective does not imply that you should start helping God by becoming negative. It is your duty to yourself to strive at all times to overcome the negative within. If you encourage your impurities, as Kaikeyi did, then God uses you as a demoniac instrument in the Divine plan. But if you become a saintly personality, God fashions you into a tool of a sublime nature.

While striving to overcome the negative within yourself, however, do not become bitter about the negativity that abounds in others. Those negative qualities are there to urge you to become saintly, to foster and strengthen positive qualities. If the thorns were not present on the rose bush, the bush would not be able to bring forth beautiful flowers. So too, people who are afflicted with jealousy and hate, and who, without any reason, put obstacles on your path, are important aids in your spiritual evolution.

Possessing this understanding should not prevent you from doing everything possible to

avoid being harmed by others. But when you can't avoid such harm, understand that it has a purpose and endure it. Such endurance becomes a powerful austerity on the spiritual path.

Insights into Removing Jealousy

It is necessary to understand the root cause of jealousy in order to eradicate it. Jealousy is a complex mental process that arises in a mind that has been degraded due to wastage of willpower. On the surface, you think that other people are responsible for arousing jealousy in your heart. But it is not so. You are afflicted with jealousy because you are dissatisfied with yourself and are not living a life of profundity and enrichment. All of this inner unrest renders your mind amenable to psychological diseases and jealousy is one of them.

Chronic jealousy cannot be overcome by mere words or mere theoretical understanding because it is a persistent opponent. The predicament of a jealous mind is similar to what happens when you put a little water in boiling milk: the moment you sprinkle the water, the milk settles down; however, as soon as you turn your back, it is boiling over again. Much in the same way, every now and then your jealous mind calms down and you think, "What's the harm? Let those people I resent exist, happy and prosperous." But then, before you know it, jealousy comes frothing and bubbling up again as vigorous as ever!

Envy is based upon Illusion

In most cases, jealousy is based completely on illusion. What you think to be true of another person's situation is usually just not true. For example, one woman may see another woman with delicate skin walking very slowly and then stopping to have her shoes adjusted by the servant walking by her side. The mind of the observer

may begin to bum with jealousy and she may feel, “She walks with such dignity. She looks so much fairer and more delicate than I do. She must be very prosperous to have a servant attend to her every need so she doesn’t have to do anything at all!” However, in truth the woman is walking slowly because she is crippled; her skin is fair because she is terribly anemic; and she must have an attendant put on her shoes because she has so much pain in her spine that she cannot even bend down!

If the jealous woman understood how things really were, she would laugh at her folly. What could she possibly be jealous about? Similarly, everything about which you develop jealousy is an expression of illusion. When you become jealous of others, you are involving your mind in a process of imagination, not confronting reality.

The idea that other people are so happy and that you are miserable is wrong. Everyone is placed in a relative world. In the Divine creation, everyone who is not enlightened suffers from internal sorrow and restlessness. Everyone has their own problems and shortcomings.

If you really knew the actual conditions of the people around you, you would develop a sense of sympathy and good will towards them, rather than jealousy. If one of the suffering patients in a hospital is given breakfast in a nice manner and another suffering patient is not, there is nothing for the second patient to really be jealous about. Similarly, all who are caught in this world process are in a state of misery. Why should people be jealous of small advantages that others seem to have over them?

The Cosmic Perspective

To overcome jealousy, try to adopt a more advanced philosophical perspective. Begin to see yourself as a cosmic being, not as an individual, and all personalities as manifestations of the same Self.

Learn to see every human being as you would see your child or another near and dear relative. As such, they are all deserving of great joy. The happiness of all beings is yours. The world is your family, your own limb, your own Self. In the vast treasury of bliss that your inner Self enjoys, there is an abundance for all, and more is eternally forthcoming.

Your nose will not be jealous of your eyes because the eyes are spherical and the nose is conical. Each part of the body performs its function in relation to the organic unity of the whole. Much in the same way, every person is related to the organic whole of the universe and has a unique karmic role to play within it.

In the Divine Plan, no one can come in your way. To an untrained observer, the stars in the sky seem to be clustered together, as if they could bump into each other and get into each other’s way. But an astronomer knows that each star is so many light years away from the others that they could never collide. Much in the same way, when you see a person threatening your progress, you must realize they are not in your way. No one can obstruct you; you are as free and separate as the distant stars. You are basically the Spirit and your freedom is endless.

You are shaping your destiny according to your own thoughts and actions, and therefore, no one is to be considered an impediment in your path. So instead of weakening your will by sustaining the fumes of jealousy in your heart, you should try to promote self-effort to better your circumstances.

The Role of Karma

You must realize that it is not other individuals but your own karma that governs your journey through life. If your karmic process entitles you to security, then even in catastrophic situations you will remain untouched, unaffected. On the other hand, if karma is not favorable, then

even in the best situation or under the most favorable circumstances, you will slip on a banana peel and break your leg.

Any situation which invokes jealousy in you has come about on the basis of a karmic process. You must endure that situation, while at the same time continuing to affirm the goodness within yourself.

By maintaining jealousy towards any person, you are karmically drawing that person to yourself. When you are jealous you are constantly thinking of a certain person, linking your karmic process with that person's karmic process. In the course of repeated embodiments, one day you will draw that person to yourself as a close relative or perhaps as a brother, sister, child or any dear relative! At that time Nature will compel you to love that person unconditionally, overlooking any deficiencies in his or her personality.

Serve the Divine Self in Others

Try to seek out the Self in the person towards whom you become jealous—to reach out to and serve the higher aspect of the person. In other words, if you feel jealous towards a person, serve that person. Do not try to pull his legs or suppress him. When you try to suppress a person towards whom you are jealous, you degrade both yourself and the person towards whom the jealousy is directed. But by serving the person, you raise your nobler sentiments and eventually realize that you had no reason to be jealous at all.

Develop a spirit of charity and magnanimity to overcome jealousy. When you see a person more prosperous than you, feel delighted as if he were your own brother or dear friend. In the light of Yoga philosophy all beings are linked to the universal ocean of life; all human beings are children of the Divine Self. By developing joyousness towards the prosperity of others, you will be able to deck your personality with the flowers of Divine virtues.

When you hear of the great achievements made by others, do not allow a burning sensation in your heart. Rather, become aware of the fact that what others have done you also can do. Great souls are only confirming your inner possibilities. Why should you frown at their greatness? Why should you look for their defects and talk about them?

Look for positive qualities in others, and try to emulate them. You are endowed with limitless possibilities. Try to direct your mind towards the unfoldment of your own latent talents and towards the enrichment of your personality.

If you eradicate jealousy from your heart, you will experience immense freedom and power of life. You will be an embodiment of love and compassion; and all your activities will promote peace and harmony in the world.

Therefore, strive to overcome your ego and develop magnanimity of heart. You should be inspired by people who are successful, and try to follow their example. Instead of jealousy, develop “zealously!” Develop zeal to evolve, zeal to become a saintly personality, zeal to attain Enlightenment wherein all negative qualities disappear forever.

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your own Self.
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