



So, how do we get out of jealousy? The first thing we do is we have to recognize it, and we have to recognize the thoughts that lie behind it. If we can’t admit to having those thoughts, then we’re not going to be able to admit to being jealous. And if we can’t admit we’re jealous, then how are we ever going to counteract our jealousy and be free of it?

It’s like if you’re sick, you have to admit you’re sick and go to the doctor before you can get well. Same thing. If we’re sick with jealousy, we need to admit it, and then go to the Buddha, the skillful mental physician, and get the remedy, and then practice it. But if we can’t admit we’re jealous, if we can’t even notice it and recognize it, then we’ve dug ourself into a hole, and not only are we sitting in the hole we dug, but we’re putting a top on the hole so we can’t get out, and then whimpering while we’re in there that it’s not fair. <laughs>

One thing that I think is very important when there’s jealousy is to cultivate self-acceptance. And just accept, “I am who I am,” and, to use Lama Yeshe’s term, “That’s good enough, dear.” I am who I am. I have the qualities and opportunities that I have, and that’s good enough. Of course, I can improve in the future. My situation can change in the future. So, by accepting the present, I’m not saying the future has to *be* like the present, but the present is what it is. So, rather than reject it, I need to accept it.

I find what is often a real leveler for me when I’m jealous is, that other person created the karma, and I didn’t. So all this whining about, “It’s not fair,” from a karmic view, does not hold. Because I didn’t create the causes. And for me, that really puts my grumbling, jealous mind in place. Yeah? They created the causes, and I didn’t. So if I didn’t create the causes, but I want that kind of result, then I need to create those causes. And even if the causes don’t come immediately, even if they don’t come in this lifetime – because love, karma, and its effects works, someday I will get those results, but I can be content in knowing that I’m creating the causes right now.



So, some kind of acceptance of the situation, some kind of acceptance that, “I didn’t create the causes, and they did.” We might even look in situations where there’s bias and discrimination. And because of some kind of discrimination or bias, I’m left out, but somebody else gets the opportunity. Those situations are very difficult, because we have a very strong sense of justice in this country, although I’m not quite sure what justice means. So it’s hard in those situations to say, “They created the causes, but I didn’t,” because that sounds as if you’re just giving in to injustice and discrimination and bias and prejudice. And it’s not. You’re not giving in to that. And you’re not buying into the sense of low self-worth that comes with being put in an inferior status, and you’re not buying into the anger that comes with the “it’s not fair” mentality. But rather, saying, “They created the cause in a previous life, but I didn’t.”

For me, all that does is it just calms my mind down. I mean, I face a lot of gender discrimination, especially in religion. Religion is usually the most conservative institution in any society – the most backward ones. Even though it has the most beautiful values and wishes the best for sentient beings, if we look in religious structures, they’re often the most backward ones. It’s really strange. So every time I get a letter from somebody who doesn’t know me – they’re just writing to the head of the monastery – it’s always “Dear Sir.” Because the thought never enters somebody’s mind that the head of the monastery could be a woman. It’s always “Dear Sir,” you know? And for many other kinds of things – like getting invited to conferences – “Dear Sir.” And just to say, “Okay. That’s okay.” Yeah? They don’t need to write, “Dear Madame.” <laughs> I don’t relate to Madame, any more than I relate to Sir. <laughs>

I can find my own space in which I can move and be creative and use my talents, and I don’t need to remain hostile in a structure that has bias. I can find – you know, society’s big. The world is big. You can find the space where you can use your talents and abilities, where you can really blossom. So we don’t have to remain jealous because other people have an opportunity that we don’t have. Yeah? I used to be so jealous of the monks, because they got to go to the monasteries in South India and study, and I couldn’t, because I was a woman. You know? And the women, the nuns, didn’t have that kind of study when I started out. The monks did. That kind



of study program was really glorified by all my teachers. But when I inquired about going there to study, “Sorry. No.” I used to be so jealous. But now, looking back on it, I realized it was actually good that I didn’t go. Because if I had gone and done the Geshe program, I think I would have become quite arrogant. Looking at my personality, I would have become quite arrogant.

So it actually turned out for the better. And I look at some of my friends who speak Tibetan, and I’m jealous of them, because – after all these years – I’ve been a nun for 38 years, and I still have to ask for somebody else to translate when I want to talk to some of my teachers. You know, that’s kind of humiliating. And here are all these young people coming in, and they know Tibetan, and I don’t... and just, you know, learning to make peace with that. I didn’t have the opportunity. When I had a teacher, I didn’t have a visa. When I had a visa, I didn’t have a teacher. When I had a teacher and a visa, I didn’t have any money. So that was the situation. That was it. I don’t want to remain jealous and bitter about it.

And it also had some good points, because I think, again, if I had learned Tibetan, I probably would’ve relied a lot on Tibetan jargon. But not knowing Tibetan, I had to really think quite deeply about what words meant, and what concepts meant. So I think, in some way, it actually made me think deeper about the dharma than I would have, otherwise.

So even in situations where you feel like, “I’m more unfortunate than somebody else,” you can always find some fortune in that situation. And I know the time is going to come when I get sick, and I’m not going to be able to do what I like to do, and it’ll be very tempting at that time to look at other people and be jealous, because they can walk in the forest and I can’t.

I know that time’s coming, but I have a body that came about due to afflictions in karma, so what else am I going to expect from this body? Of *course* that’s going to happen. So there’s going to be no reason to get jealous of anybody else for having better health than me, or more mobility



than me, or whatever it is, because, hey, I created the cause to have this body, and I created the cause for whatever kind of health I have. So let’s learn what I can from this situation, and use the situation to increase my good qualities, instead of just sit and feel jealous of other people. Are you getting what I’m saying?

And so every situation that we can look at, where we say, “I’m less than,” see what good qualities you can develop in that situation. See what you can learn from it, that you otherwise would never have learned. Because sometimes it’s only through going through hardship that we discover our own internal resources. And we’re not in any competition with anybody to be the perfect person, because, anyway, what does that mean? So I think, really, whatever situation we’re in, using it to learn and to develop ourselves in that.

And this is the blessing of knowing the dharma, is that we *can* use every situation for practice. Yeah? So I even think of my teachers, and... you know, they were in the middle of their education, and then the uprising happened, and they had to flee. They could’ve sat around and moped, and, “Oh, how come? Other people get to finish their education, and I’m a refugee in India, and I’m broke and I’m sick.” But they didn’t let their minds go there. They said, “Okay, I’m broke and sick and a refugee in a country where I don’t speak the language, so what can I learn? How can I improve? How can I look at this situation, and even rejoice at it, because it’s the ripening of some negative karma that is now no longer going to afflict me and obscure my mind?”

In every situation, I think we can transform it, in one way or another. And to do this, we have to see that the meaning of our lives is to benefit others, and to do that, we need to develop our good qualities. The meaning of our life is not to be the richest, the most popular, the most recognized, the most famous, the most loved, the most appreciated, that all that stuff that we get jealous of other people about is not the meaning of our life. It’s just happiness of this life that comes and goes. And we can’t take it with us when we die, and it doesn’t necessarily benefit us so much, even when we have it.



So you might say, “But wait a minute! Having a lot of money will benefit me, and So-and-so has more money, and they get to go to the Bahamas on a vacation, and I don’t!” Do you think they’re really happy having all that money? If you think people who are really rich are happy, think again. They’re totally enslaved by their money. If you’re really rich, you have to live in a house that has a burglar alarm system. Does that mean that you feel safe and secure, when you have a burglar alarm? No. You also have to be careful of all these relatives who come around, who you’ve never met, who need a loan. You have to beware of people trying to scam you, or people who befriend you simply because you have money and possessions, not because of who you are.

So when we compare ourselves to others, and we think, “Oh, they’re happier, and I’m not,” think about what their situation is. And they also have new, added problems that you don’t. Rich people have rich people’s problems. Poor people have poor people’s problems. Okay? So, you know, *simsari*, *samsara*. I’m not saying just accept the situation and don’t try and improve. Try and improve, but you don’t need to be jealous and angry in order to do that.

We can also learn something from being in a difficult situation. Hmm? Another one that’s very important is, see how much we have already, how much we have going for ourselves; because when we get jealous, we pick on one thing that we lack, instead of thinking of all the things we have going for us. You know? So it’s very important, I think, to think of what we have going for us, and rejoice in that.

And actually, learn to rejoice in the fact that other people are better than we are, that other people have opportunities that we don’t. I always tell people that I’m very happy that there are other people that are better than me. Because if I were the best that this world had, we wouldn’t have any electricity, because I don’t know how electricity works. And we wouldn’t have any plumbing, because I don’t know how plumbing works. Okay? We wouldn’t have cars, because I don’t know how cars work, either. We probably wouldn’t have food, because I don’t know how to grow food. So I’m really glad that there’s people who are better than me, because due to other



people being better than me, we all enjoy some good conditions. If I were the best... we’d be in sad shape.

So then you might say, “Oh, but you’re a dharma teacher.” Well, I’m actually glad that there’s people who know more dharma than I do, because that way I get to learn. If I were the best one and knew the most, again, we would be in sorry shape, because I don’t have any realizations, and there’s a lot I haven’t studied. I am so happy that there are people who know the dharma better than I do, who have practiced and have realizations that I don’t have. Because of that, I can learn. I can progress. If I were the best one, again, we’d be really stuck.

So I think, you know... just being a little humble is good, and see the benefit. We don’t have the pressure that the people who are successful have. Because as soon as you’re successful, then you’re filled with anxiety about how you’re going to maintain that status. Do you think Michael Phelps is going to go into the next Olympics relaxed and at ease? No. He’s going to be filled with anxiety.

So it’s the same with us, you know? So it’s good, you know? We don’t have to be the best. It’s good there are other people who are better than us. Let them have the anxiety of trying to maintain the first place. Because when you’re the best, really, there’s a lot of pressure on you. When you’re not, you have a whole lot of freedom. And especially when your values are dharma values, not worldly values, then let the people have worldly success. It’s not something that you’re terribly interested in, because you realize it comes and it goes.

But what you really want is to develop your own inner qualities for the benefit of other beings, and we can do that no matter what situation we’re in, no matter who we’re with or what’s going on around us. There’s always the chance to practice.