

Gangaji Radio

A Conversation With Gangaji Series

Host Hillary Larson

Episode 6

THE SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS

Released on March 20, 2013

[00:05] INTRODUCTION MUSIC

[00:08] HILLARY LARSON, HOST: There is probably one thing that all human beings naturally strive for and that's the experience of being happy. How we go about it certainly comes in different forms and surely our motivation of why we are trying to find it varies as well. Sometimes the drive comes from just the pure desire to not want to be in pain. But happiness itself is much more complex than just feeling good. At the end of the day, perhaps this pursuit of happiness in a strange way is actually keeping us from what it is that we are truly looking for.

[00:44] GANGAJI: To stop the pursuit of happiness, as valuable as that pursuit may have been in its initiation, the willingness to stop it in this moment reveals that who you are is happiness, but maybe not like you think of happiness; maybe, maybe ecstatic but maybe not ecstatic.

[01:06] HILLARY: Happiness, like all other emotions, is also elusive by its very nature. Chasing it can be both exhilarating and exhausting. So the question is, what happens when the feeling of happiness is no longer the goal and beyond that, wonder if the willingness to let go of being happy is the key to happiness itself. I'm Hillary Larsen and this is *A Conversation With Gangaji*.

[01:35] HILLARY: Gangaji, you and I are usually sitting across from each other while we're doing these interviews and I'm a little old fashioned so I kind of like that, but this time we're thousands of miles away from each other and we knew that was going to happen at some point because of our schedules, so this is a bit of an experiment. So it might sound a little "Skypey" here and there, but I just want to start off by saying that I really always appreciate you taking time out of your schedule to not only to sit down with me, but it also feels like you're sitting down with all of us to have these conversations and I just want to thank you for that.

[02:13] GANGAJI: Oh Hillary, let me just say to you and to everyone that this is what my time is for. I really...it's the truth, this is what my time is for, but I also deeply enjoy it so there's no sacrifice on my part at all.

[02:27] HILLARY: Oh, thank you so, so much, because these do feel like maybe a different kind of conversation, more casual conversation, because that's what they were intended for and I know that the end of the last show I was talking to you about my desire to do a show on enlightenment and you know, I don't know how excited you were about that, but once I started investigating it myself and looking at what we might discuss, because there's lots of things we can discuss in that area, and what I realized was that for the purpose of this show, which is really for anybody to be able to access this information, understand it, a better topic was really just the pursuit of happiness. Because, you know, I have plenty of friends that really, they don't

utter the word enlightenment in their daily lives. You know, it's just not part of what they think about, but everybody I know has this desire to be happy and they do things to make themselves happy. So I just wanted to start with that, because I was reading a definition the other day of happiness and the definition was when you're feeling more positive emotions than negative emotions. And I know that's a superficial place to start, but I just wanted to talk about that because it's a basic way of being on this planet.

[03:47] GANGAJI: Well, it is basic for all people and all of the great teachers throughout time have pointed to that, that we yearn to be happy and for many people on the planet happiness is literally surviving for a day. For those of us in this conversation, that level of happiness, while it may still come up and of course could be THE issue for any of us at any particular time, in THIS moment is not the issue. So the fact that we can tune in, the fact that we have the leisure time, we can have this kind of conversation, and that there is still some yearning for happiness, even if we recognize that our lives are relatively very well off as they certainly are for everyone listening to this compared to many if not most people on the planet. There is still this desire for happiness and that's fundamental, whatever form it takes, whether it's physical survival, whether it's emotional expansion, whether it's equilibrium. It can take many forms, but it is a desire to be content, to be, to be happy, and I would just say taking the definition that you started us with is the deepest happiness that I've experienced is actually underneath the more superficial emotions that can be positive or negative. I mean some people assume that since I speak to people in terms of enlightenment sometimes and happiness quite often that I'm always experiencing positive emotions or a happy state of mind, but that's not true. Emotions come and go. States of mind come and go. When there's a recognition of what the ground being is, there is a happiness that doesn't need the feeling of happy to know itself as deeply happy, as fulfilled. That's why I often use the word fulfillment more than happiness, although it was definitely the pursuit of happiness that occupied my time for decades and decades and it was only when I met my teacher that I had a glimpse that that very pursuit of happiness, finally, was in the way of my discovery true happiness.

[06:28] HILLARY: I want to go back to something you said a minute ago, because I think that it's very true, that people have an idea that you are happy all the time. It actually brings me to the first question and this person has a question for you personally and it's this; "I would like to know if you ever wake up in a bad mood and if you do, is it hard for you to once again find the peace underneath that negative feeling?"

[06:53] GANGAJI: Well see, I think this very question assumes that the piece underneath the negative feeling is another feeling. And what I discovered when I met Papaji and I am still discovering it and I've never discovered it to not be true, is that regardless of the mood one is in, there is a spaciousness of being that is conscious of itself and if we chase moods or we fight moods, we, we become involved with the particular mood, or pursuing another mood, the pursuit of happiness, and we simply overlook this spaciousness of being, that is fulfilled. So yes, I do wake up sometimes in a bad mood. If I'm ill physically I may wake up in a bad mood. I may, for whatever reason, I have moods throughout the day or the week or the decade just as I have opinions, just as I have physical events in my life. Somehow in our spiritual subculture we've elevated moods and feeling to be the pinnacle of what it means to be happy. It's in my experience that the bliss of being, which is supreme happiness, is a byproduct of a discovery. It's not the end in itself and really that's what I was alluding to when I said the pursuit of

happiness itself became what was keeping me from discovering this, this true beingness, which the byproduct is bliss, but when you chase bliss or you chase happiness or you pursue happiness, generally, at least for myself, what I was aware of is everything that was making me unhappy or could possibly make me unhappy or did make me unhappy and I was overlooking the simple peace of not needing anything to change. So I don't need a mood to be different than what it is. I may like certain moods more than others, definitely, but to recognize a mood for what it is, something that arises and may or may not be connected with a thought, may or may not be connected with a physical state or an event or what someone has said to you or something in your past, but it arises, it exists, and then it disappears, in a day, in a lifetime, just as thoughts do, just as all emotions do, just as all events do, but when you turn your attention to the ground that all of these moods are arising in and disappearing back into, there is a supreme, a supreme fulfillment that doesn't need a mood to be other than what it is and people have said that to me. Oh, I wish I were like you so I never had to feel angry or sad, but I'm a human being. Human beings have emotions. And I find no need to struggle against my emotions. In fact, I feel free to experience emotionally whatever I am experiencing. That does not mean I act out on my emotions or I dramatize my emotions or I suppress my emotions, even though that's all legitimate. It simply means we are humans and we experience emotions and that's not where our true happiness is.

[10:46] HILLARY When I listen to you talk, what strikes me is that you don't seem to take your emotions personally.

[10:54] GANGAJI: Yeah. I mean, and in a sense that's true, but in another sense it is the personal that is emotional. So when I say that I have emotions it means that there is a personal sense here. There's a recognition of myself as a person as well as a recognition of myself as the ground of being. And so I know that there are certain yogis who enter states of being where there is no person and so there's no question of moods or emotions. I'm not a yogi. I'm a regular person and I'm an emotional person. So the very nature of emotions is taking it personally in that sense and that means that emotions originally appeared because in some way they supported survival of the person, of the physical form. That's their purpose. Of course their purpose has gotten exaggerated as our thinking process has gotten more complex and more sophisticated. Our relationship to our emotions has gotten more sophisticated and we suffer in more complex ways.

[12:10] HILLARY: Yeah, it seems as though maybe the word victimization is more appropriate, because of course, you know when I feel my own emotions it feels like I am experiencing them in myself, nobody else is experiencing them, so in that way they're personal, but if it feels like they're doing something to me, specifically those negative emotions, then that's a different ball game.

[12:36] GANGAJI: Yes, absolutely. That's the key Hillary. You really hit it right. It's, there was a shift which was happening before I met Papaji. I had studied the enneagram. And I had recognized the victim story and my particular tendency and so there was a recognition that I was victimizing myself. But I was still been at war with that victimization. I was trying to make the victimization the victim, so it was still a war and really in meeting Papaji and having him invite me for a moment, for an instant, to stop my pursuit of anything, but maybe in particular especially my pursuit of my idea of what happiness was or felt like or should be or my

happiness, just to stop it all and what a revelation to stop the pursuit of happiness, as valuable as that pursuit may have been in its initiation, the willingness to stop it in this moment reveals that who you are is happiness, but maybe not like you think of happiness. Maybe, maybe ecstatic, but maybe not ecstatic. Maybe simply a profound contentment at being.

[14:07] HILLARY: It seems like it's a little bit of a...I mean it's not a little bit of a trap. It seems like it's a very intricate trap because I have this longing, I have this craving and perhaps on the surface it's just to be happy, there's nothing really deeper than that, so let's just way it's to be happy, but it has a momentum to it. It has a force of going forward, so when you say stop, what happens to the momentum?

[14:31] GANGAJI: Well, you stop in our tracks and there is a momentum. It's a huge momentum and it's supported by the conditioning of our society and all advertisement, obviously, supports us in this pursuit of acquiring one more thing or if we're in a spiritual subculture, one more experience, one more true moment of perfection and that becomes the trap. And just as initially the pursuit of happiness is perhaps the pursuit of being fed, or sheltered, initially spiritually the pursuit of happiness is the unwillingness to live a dampened life, to live a life that's not happy, and so it's beautiful, it's medicine, and I support that and applaud that. But if you're willing to inquire for yourself - has this pursuit in fact become poison? This medicine become a poison? And for myself, it had, and of course that's a kind of narcissism as survival of the fittest is narcissistic, but it's one that leads to unhappiness. I mean here we are in the bounty of very privileged lives and of course we can always find more privilege in other people somewhere in some time and yet the very comparison of what we don't have, that we are not the Buddha or we're not Christ or we're not Ramana, or we're not some celebrity in any field, spiritual or secular, and that we want to be and that we pursue that, is this trap, and you use the word trap, and that's so true and it has many, many layers. And the willingness to stop in a moment reveals the trap itself to be illusion, because finally there is no trap in this moment if you stop pursuing anything, if you even, in this moment, stop pursuing your survival, as legitimate as that is, as legitimate as any pursuit is, just for a moment, this moment. You stop and you tell the truth, what is here? Maybe there is contentment. If there's not contentment or happiness, then there's some emotion. You tell the truth about that and you let that be here. You stop fighting it. And you discover what is in the core of that emotion, if it's anger, frustration, impatience, or grief, or despair, to let it be or to not pursue something else, to not try to get away from, as legitimate as all of that may be in certain circumstance. In a moment of being willing to stop, the issue of legitimacy is just shelved for a moment. And we can actually naturally be ourselves then.

[17:55] HILLARY: You know, I think that you may have just answered this second person's question, and I just want to precede the question by saying that I saw the most interesting lecture on YouTube the other day. And it was a scientist who was studying happiness and I may not have what he said completely right but you'll get the gist of it I hope. And what he was saying was that in his studies on the brain that people actually experience happiness more by synthesizing it in their own minds than actually the thing itself. So for example, let's say I'm looking forward to an event. and I'm anticipating getting married or whatever, whatever the event is, and I'm just using that as an example, what he was saying was the actual human ability to create images in our mind that make us happy is more powerful than the actual event itself, so when you are experiencing it yourself in this moment, it sometimes is not as good as the imagination of it is.

[19:02] GANGAJI: You know, that really reminds me of a time in my life when I was playing the lottery, back in the early 80's, and I just had this hope of winning the lottery. At that time, I had hardly any money and in my imagination, I would then imagine what I would do when I won the lottery. I could imagine giving money to my sister and you know, having the things I wanted, having the security I wanted, then I would feel flooded with this happiness. And at one point I recognized, well wait a minute, I'm waiting on some event to experience what clearly I have the capacity to experience because I am experiencing it associated with that event that is actually a non-event. It's not happening. And in that moment, I was just willing to be generous without needing something to give me the capacity to be generous, to feel bliss without needing something to trigger that bliss, and I believe that's what he's pointing to, although I would take it to another level in that we don't need to synthesize it. We don't need to imagine what will give it to us. We can actually open to what is inherently happy that we then project onto objects or events or people and want them to give back to us. The very fact that we yearn for it or we desire it is the proof that it's already here, paradoxically, if we are willing to fall back into that desire or that yearning, we find at its root the very source of it, happiness itself.

[20:58] HILLARY: I don't want to forget this question because I think it's so pertinent to that because I think this, this person is speaking for so many of us and the question is, actually it's not a question, it's a statement; "I think I'm generally a pretty happy person but I can't seem to stop the habit of measuring my happiness against what other people are doing with their lives and sometimes what they have. This habit is so hard to break. Help!"

[21:26] GANGAJI: Well, the, you know, the key to breaking it of course is to see what fuels it and what fuels it is some fear of not having. It seems to me this person could investigate that for themselves, but if there is some habit that has momentum, that's the tip of the iceberg or that's the warning sign on the dashboard of the car or the cockpit and if we're willing to not worry about unscrewing that or fixing that, just to really see what is this habit based on? Some lack, something that if somebody has more, even though I have enough perhaps, as this person is probably pointing out, what does that person having more mean about me? And there is somewhere in that some sense of lack. And of course we wouldn't pursue anything if we didn't feel we lacked it. So that lack is the beginning point of investigation and it can be an abyss, but in the willingness to not fill that lack, to not fill it with affirmations or proof that we do have enough, because that's all still mental and we're dealing here with an emotional issue. To really fall into it, and there is the possibility of a discovery of what's under that, what's deeper than our sense of lack or our sense of worthlessness. Because when this person is talking about other people having more, that means happiness is the currency and other people have more of the currency. Maybe happiness is the currency of the spiritual movement but it's the same issue, that it will give me something that I lack if I could just get more or just get what they have. And so willingness to investigate that is the willingness to find who you are, to find are you enough on investigation, not on thought, but on investigation.

[23:42] HILLARY: It's so hard for me to believe that we only have two minutes left because it literally, it seemed like this has been ten minutes, but I was wondering, Gangaji, if you wouldn't mind wrapping up this conversation on happiness, which honestly seems it could go on for another half hour, that to me it's always ironic that the key to happiness is also the willingness to be unhappy.

[24:06] GANGAJI: Yeah, isn't that amazing? What a surprise.

[24:10] HILLARY: It's totally amazing.

[24:12] GANGAJI: Well, we know that there is a way of being unhappy the way we are victimized by our unhappiness and we dramatize that unhappiness and we yearn to be happy. And that can be really an important phase in someone's life, to recognize, I want to be happy. I want the suffering to end. I want to be free. I want the truth. However it's phrased. So that initiation can actually spark the investigation in the journey. It's just that finally that concern with happiness as a feeling, as a state, feeds back in on itself and there's never enough then. What is enough, what's always more than enough, is the truth of who you are and that's here right now and no one's ever reported and end to it. So I, I know that my desire for happiness is what turned my attention finally to the spiritual quest, so I support that and I just invite you to recognize the search limits. And be courageous enough to stop the search at this moment.

[25:30] HILLARY: Well, as you know, I always love to play a little clip from one of your public meetings or your weekend retreats. They are so powerful, so I'm going to do that at the end, but Gangaji, as we're leaving, do you have anything else you want to say about happiness?

[25:46] GANGAJI: Oh, I remember when Marhaba was a guru around and about there was this little picture that would circulate and it said, don't worry, be happy. And really worry is the thing, that's the demon, and if we're willing to not indulge that demon, which is a mental demon, worry is a mental state, then happiness is here.

[26:10] HILLARY: Actually, what I'd like to do right now to finish off this show is to play a little audio portion from a book by Gangaji titled *The Diamond in Your Pocket*. This is from the chapter, The Pursuit of Happiness.

(clip)

[26:37] GANGAJI: If you'll stop all activity for just one instant, even for one tenth of a second, and simply be utterly still, you will recognize the inherent spaciousness of your being that is already happy and at peace with itself. Because of our conditioning, we normally dismiss this ground of being with an immediate, yes, but what about my life? I have responsibilities. I need to keep busy. The absolute doesn't relate to my world, my existence. These conditioned thoughts just reinforce further conditioning, but if you will take a moment to recognize the peace that is already alive within you, you then actually have the choice to trust it in all your endeavors and all your relationships and every circumstance of your life. It doesn't mean that your life will be swept clean of conflicts, challenges, pain or suffering. It means that you will have recognized a sanctuary where the truth of yourself is present, where the truth of God is present, regardless of the physical, mental, or emotional circumstances of your life. This is an invitation into the core of your being. It's not about religion or lack of religion. It's not even about enlightenment or ignorance. It's about the truth of who you are, which is closer and deeper than anything that can be named. In any moment, in a split second, there's a possibility of recognizing the boundless, limitless, eternal divine truth of yourself.

(end clip)

[28:28] HILLARY: That's it for this month. As always, thank you for joining us. I want to take just a moment to say that this show is made possible in part by a generous contribution from the Martin Family Charitable Trust. And this beautiful music you're listening to right now, well, it was given to us by Gregory Ives at GregIves.com. Your questions and comments for Gangaji are always welcome by writing to gangajiradio@gangaji.org. That's g-a-n-g-a-j-i-radio@gangaji.org. You can also follow updates on this program on Facebook. Just search for Gangaji Community. And as always, you can join Gangaji for a live webcast that happens every month by going to our website Gangaji.org. Just look for With Gangaji. Please feel free to share this podcast with others and we'd love it if you could leave a comment or give *A Conversation with Gangaji* a rating on iTunes. Thank you for joining us again this month. Be well until next time.