

## Gangaji Radio

A Conversation With Gangaji Series

Host Hillary Larson

Episode 11

TRUTH, SEX & DESIRE

Released on August 20, 2013

[00:05] INTRODUCTION MUSIC

[00:10] HILLARY LARSON, HOST: Sex can be one of the most exquisite expressions of human, but how openly and honestly do we discuss it, really? We talk about where we live, what we like to eat, how we feel about our work, but what about our deepest desires and insecurities when it comes to sex. Whether we feel we desire too much, or not enough. Could our attitudes about sex actually hold us as prisoners? And also do we have the capacity to set ourselves free?

[00:49] GANGAJI: If we are willing to see either how we use the desire or lack to desire to prove that we are unworthy in some way or wrong in some way then we can drop directly into that wrongness and, and open to it, and discover what is it's real substance.

[01:07] HILLARY: From the beauty of sexual intimacy, so shame, to the subject of addiction, this conversation is about openly and bravely telling the truth about this very private aspect of our lives. Today we're talking about facing the rawness of our own humanity and what that has to do with discovering the truth of who we really are. I'm Hillary Larsen and this is *A Conversation With Gangaji*.

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[01:27] HILLARY: I was looking at all the topics that we've covered over the past few months, topics like chronic pain and depression and happiness, financial insecurity and then I looked at the possibility of doing a show on sex and this is really what struck me with that Gangaji. While most of us can relate in some way or another to all of the conversations we've had so far, and the feedback we've gotten has been so incredible, but not all of us share every single one of those life issues. Some people, they don't have issues with addiction or they don't have issues with chronic pain, but what we all share without question is the fact that we are born in these bodies that are identified by a sex and that we're going to die in these same bodies and the tragedy to me is how reluctant we can be in conversations about sex, the core function of our body, so I just feel that the more something is not communicated, the more altered it gets and in a simplistic way, it's kind of like being embarrassed about talking about eating or breathing and yet it's the reason why we're here. Sex is the reason why we're here. So before we jump in, I just want to say that I put out the word that we were going to do a show on sex or sexuality and the vote was people wanted to hear a conversation about sex, but it was close and so I definitely want to do sexuality at some point because it's such a hot topic right now and it's an important topic, and also, there have been requests for you to talk about this subject of trauma and sexual abuse and we could easily fit that into this conversation, but for this time around, I just really want to talk about sex as a basic subject and I'd have to say that I'm a grown woman and I've had lots of experiences in this world and there still was like this very puritanical piece of

DNA in me that went, oh my God, you're not going to talk about that. So with that, I just want to talk about that reluctance and that prison that is created because of that reluctance.

[03:26] GANGAJI: Well I want to clarify one thing, because you said we're born into these bodies and into this sex and I think it's important to make a distinction between sex and gender because we are born, each of us, a gender, and some of us a mixed gender, but there are people who are born who have no sexual drive who have no sexual impulse and never have, it's just not a part of their makeup. They may be born men or women or hermaphrodites or a man on the inside, a woman on the outside or the reverse, but with no drive to express themselves sexually, so I just want to acknowledge that, that we are all born with a gender and a gender is not as definable as our cultures would have it be, but sex is a different issue. It's an issue different from gender, I believe.

[04:19] HILLARY: Oh, I completely agree with you and what I was thinking about was, you know, I know all households operate differently, but I've found this to be a fairly common agreement that, I mean especially in the Western culture I would say, is that when I was growing up, we had...I mean if there was such a thing as having minus conversation about a certain subject, I think it was a generational thing, but it was really...there was no conversation about sex, so because there was no conversation, I had an assumption that it was bad.

[04:52] GANGAJI: Well, I can tell you that I grew up in a household that was very sexual. My parents were very sexual beings and there was a sexual vibration and I could hear them making love in the next bedroom and we also had no conversation about sex and I also grew up thinking it was bad. When I interpret my thinking it was bad, of course it was a cultural and religious overlay to that, because the church said it was bad and when I started having sexual feelings as a young girl, it was fearful and that was bad and then the fact of my parents' sexuality, was, I didn't like it. It was exclusive and so it was bad. So there are many ways that sex can get delegated as bad and often it's because it's a threat, because it's something that is such a force.

[05:53] HILLARY: Could you say more about it being exclusive?

[05:57] GANGAJI: Well, my mother even said to us, always, when it comes down to it, her relationship with my father was more important with her relationship with us and now as an adult I can appreciate that, but as a child, that only fed my insecurity. She wasn't the best of mothers in certain ways anyway, but they were very attached to each other sexually. I don't know once that played out if their attachment was as strong. Certainly they loved each other, but it was very much a sexual love and we weren't invited into that, luckily. I mean that's a good thing, but we also felt excluded, or I did. I couldn't speak for my brother and sister on that.

[06:45] HILLARY: Well, I'm actually going to talk about those one to one relationships, and I'm not necessarily referring to a man and a woman. It could be a man and a man and a woman and a woman. I'm just talking about sex in general, but I want to jump into this first question, and first of all, I want to say that the people that sent in their questions, I mean, I've said before the questions are brave, but I think these are particularly brave, so let me just go on with this first one. This is a woman. She said, "I am currently not in a committed relationship, but on a seemingly very human level feel the desire for sexual intimacy. Is it possible to have a sexual

connection within sexual intimacy without feeling the shame that seems to appear when engaging in sex outside a committed relationship? Is it just a matter of letting myself feel the shame and discover what lies at the root of that emotion?" And I do want to say, there was more to this letter than just that, but this is a woman who is on a serious spiritual path. She's not talking about casual sex. She's talking about intimacy.

[07:49] GANGAJI: But still, she's asking a question that no one is equipped to answer except herself, you know? I mean it's certainly possible for some people. Some people have that kind of relationship all the time. Whether it's possible for her, we need much more than just the question. We need to know you know what motivates the question. What would have truly fulfilling sexual relationship give her, and, because they are the sexual drives, but usually those sexual drives are pointing toward a profound connection with other, or oneself, or the world or pointing toward the moment of orgasm where there is on other self or world, so, if we could, you know I couldn't answer the question is really what I'm saying, without having the real conversation with her. It's certainly possible for certain people and not possible for others.

[08:51] HILLARY: It seems to me, when I look at the last sentence in her question, is she's actually asking about meeting the shame, maybe just the human shame, the puritanical shame, the religious shame that kind of gets built into our system.

[09:06] GANGAJI: Yes, but the way it's phrased is she's asking to meet that, so that she could then have a sexual relationship and that's a different matter from simply meeting that to discover what is in the core of shame. Shame certainly is not exclusive to sexual feelings or sexual relationships and when it's truly, when inquiry or the desire to meet shame is really motivated, not by the outcome of meeting shame but by the curiosity or the real yearning to discover what is at the root of this, without any desired outcome, that I will be more sexual, that I will be more free, that I'll be enlightened, just to meet it as it is, then we're speaking of inquiry and is it possible? It is absolutely possible if what you want is to be true. Is it possible if what you want is to meet that so that then you can meet that to get something else? Maybe, I don't know. It depends on your makeup and that's more for either a psychologist or a sex therapist to answer.

[10:19] HILLARY: Actually, I'm really interested in that, the idea that if I engage in sex and then there's some sort of shame that comes up as a result of that just because of some old idea, some old experience, there's that thought that there's that barrier between me and the truth of who I am.

[10:40] GANGAJI: Yeah. I mean certain people find, discover that with sexual relations because it is such a deep taboo for a child and we are still children in that sense and so they have been missing some step of individuating as an adult who is free to actually feel the emotions that arise and the intimacy that those emotions invite. So if it does reflect somehow that you're closed off from yourself than the invitation is to be completely closed off to yourself and not have any hope of being a better sexual partner or being able to be more intimate, just to bring it back to this deep shame which is finally some kind of distrust or dislike of one's self. Some belief that what appears in me as form must be at the root wrong, especially if it's powerful, because it's out of control and I believe that often issues of sexual intimacy are basically issues of control. If we are controlling we don't have intimacy, whether it's sexual or social. There's no intimacy if

someone is in control. There's no letting down of the armoring of me, whether that can be traced back to puritanical conditioning or it's just simply the protection of the animal.

[12:18] HILLARY: Yeah, it's hard for me to imagine, and then I want to get on to this next question because we have two more to fit in here that I really think are important questions, but I was just...when I was putting the questions for this show together, I was thinking to myself, there's so much that happens with the thinking mind and then I can't imagine cave people were walking around feeling bad or great about sex either way. It just seems like that's part of being.

[12:42] GANGAJI: They probably didn't have such great sex though, because who knows when they put it together that babies came from sex. You know, I mean the evolvement of sex as a, certainly it surely has always been pleasurable. It seems to be pleasurable for most animals that I've seen engaging in it, not all, but the prolonged pleasure that we're speaking of as sexual intimacy, where it's not just the sex act for procreation but it's actually a deep physical intimate conversation, I don't know when this came into being. When I read about the middle ages or the dark ages, I don't know that sexual delight was for most, maybe with the renaissance or with an appreciation of refinement, but if we appreciate it that way, as a kind of beyond the necessity of simply a man and a woman, or a woman and a woman, or man and a man, entering each other in a certain way, that there is this delightful conversation where there is surrender and play, and sometimes part of that play is pulling back from surrender, so there's so many different molds, but at the root, at the core, it's the willingness to play, a willingness to go where you have not gone before, and that's then freedom, whether it's sexual freedom or just the freedom to be yourself.

[14:28] HILLARY: Now let me jump in here with the second question. This question is from a man and he says, "If one is attached to the sensation of climax, then when should one stop having sex, or is there a way to face the attachment itself?"

[14:44] GANGAJI: Well you know I'm not big on shoulds. You know, it depends on what you want. If what you want is to discover who you are, stop everything in this moment and find out who you are and if you find that you're attachment to orgasm is actually an addiction that is keeping you away from facing some deep hunger for the truth of who you are, stop everything, but I don't prescribe celibacy, although celibacy is quite appropriate at certain phases of life or for certain lifetimes for certain people. I wouldn't say you should or you shouldn't. I would invite you to go deeper into this question to allow the question of orgasm or not orgasm to be a reflection of something deeper that you haven't discovered yet.

[15:42] HILLARY: I want to actually talk about the subject of orgasm because a therapist wrote in and she wanted you to address the subject of sex addiction and we couldn't do a whole show on that, but what I want to say about that is that there's something about climax that, in the world of addiction, it's the same thing as getting high, that there is a trying to get away from, but in this very innocent way, in my mind, there's a way of trying to find God, because there's that moment where everything is just gone and there's some beauty in that to me the innocence of you know, seeking or longing.

[16:20] GANGAJI: It is beautiful, you know, but what happens is when that beauty, trying to find God, which many people have experience that in the sexual orgasm or even in just sexual play,

coming together, but when it's tied in or linked in to the need for a physical representation or a hormonal representation that God is found through that, then the addiction of sex to get to God or to get to emptiness or to get to a release from me, myself, that's where it gets sticky. If you're willing to not, for a moment, to not have sex, to actually not have anything, to not escape anything, and to find what is in the core of that, find the same emptiness, it's not the same in terms of physical pleasure, but it's the same in terms of the deep psychological spiritual delight in this inner union. I mean that's why it's spoken on as the beloved, the lover finding the beloved in God's union with human. The soul is often spoken of as feminine and there's a union and that's really what we love in the delight and sexuality and it's what's available regardless of sexuality, regardless of sexual activity. So sexuality can be an expression of that as can art or dancing or meditation, but if whatever is made the cause of that, then we are bound and I see people who are bound by their sexual energies and have a great fear of their sexual energies diminishing because they see that as the vehicle for reaching God and that's when you want to say, just stop, just take a moment. There is a union that doesn't require any activity, sexual or otherwise, that's revealed within yourself.

[18:42] HILLARY: The question of what it means to have a diminishing sex drive, perhaps this is perfect because that's exactly what this person is asking, and she says, "I would like to ask you what it means to not have sexual desire. I don't consider myself to be a very sexual person and have felt myself to be an outsider most of my life because of that, like there's some way that I don't quite fit in the norm. It has always felt like a secret I hope no one finds out. Could you help me find freedom in my situation?" It seems like there's that judgment of...because there are people, I'm sure, that consider themselves to be asexual and then the thought is, well, what's wrong with me, because I don't want it?

[19:26] GANGAJI: That's the charge of sex, either there's something wrong with us because we do want it or something wrong with us because we don't. It's fine to not want it, just like it's fine to have the desires. It's the same. There's something closer than the desire or the lack of desire and if we are willing to see how we use either the desire or the lack of a desire to prove that we are unworthy in some way or that we're wrong in some way, then we can just drop directly into that wrongness and open to it and discover what is its real substance. I mean in our culture, of course, if you are not sexual or something is wrong, that's what all of our advertisements say, if you're not young something is wrong and that's just a lie. It's a product of selling product and we don't have to buy into it, but if you have bought into it, it's because there's something that is triggered within you that already believes that possibly something is wrong with you and that's what I invite you to meet and to discover what is it really. That's where self-inquiry is alive.

[20:39] HILLARY: I want to just say on that note, having these conversations over the past months has inspired me to look a little bit more closely at what my life stands for and how our lives can serve others and what it really means to tell the truth and sometimes talking about just these basic life issues can be challenging, but they seem also to be the door to this freedom and you often speak of the relative truth that lies on top of or seems to distort the ultimate truth and today we've been talking about willing to tell the truth about sex and I wanted to end off our conversation by playing a little clip about the subject of just the truth itself.

[21:24] GANGAJI: Good.

(clip)

*[21:24] GANGAJI: What does my life stand for? And this is standing up. We sit down, we rest, to get our strength so that we can stand up with the whole tsunami of human conditioning coming in our faces, regardless of the experience of feeling or pain or bliss. It's all secondary. It's just to be able to stand up and say I stand for truth, whatever the outcome. If I am shot for that, if I am burned for that, if I am hated for that, if I am adored for that, I stand for truth. If I'm abandoned for that, I'm worshipped for that, I stand for truth. This is the possibility of your lifetime, to really rest in truth and stand for truth, in truth, as truth, and to meet whatever challenge appears, global challenge, national challenge, personal challenge, and they all appear.*

(end clip)

[22:31] HILLARY: I have to admit that I actually was just trying to find a reason to play that clip. I mean you weren't in this public meeting. You weren't talking specifically about sex, but I feel like I could apply that clip to really any human topic.

[22:47] GANGAJI: Absolutely. So all of our conversations really are the jumping off place for the deeper conversation and sex, as big as it is, as charged as it is, is just like all those other conversations then.

[23:02] HILLARY: I was wondering, we have about three minutes left and I wanted to have a conversation with you as we wrap this up about, you know, you had your awakening in 1990 and that you know, changed everything and it changed everything for thousands of people that you hadn't even met yet, but how has your orientation to sex and how that plays in your life changed from maybe before that time? I don't know if it's changed over time or there was a moment something...that that changed drastically. I'm just kind of curious about that.

[23:38] GANGAJI: Well, I would say sex was part of my identity before that and I identified myself as a sexual being and I worked to get more liberated as a sexual being and I was part of a subculture that sort of worshipped sex and once that happened, sex was just perfectly delightful and wonderful but it didn't have the significance that it had prior to that and it could be that I had lived fully through that. I had incarnated as a sexual being. I was relatively free sexually. I didn't have hang-ups sexually, so it was not such a big deal for me and it just, it lost, you know, like most everything, it just fell away. Not that I never had sex, but it didn't define me. It didn't, I wasn't oriented through that lens. It didn't let me know if I was fulfilled or not because I am fulfilled and that may be an aspect of my fulfillment, but it doesn't give me the basis of my fulfillment.

[24:53] HILLARY: Well, I tell you, I think that all of these conversations that we've had over the last few months, what I've heard from people is that it's given them permission to tell the truth about basic life things and just pertaining to the question at the very beginning as this woman's shame about sex, just the willingness to be able to even say I have shame and that to me is then like a trap door that opens to...you were talking the other day in a retreat about, I love this, it was about the conversation of the horizontal, more the mind, and then that your conversation is about the vertical. It's about the drop.

[25:36] GANGAJI: Yes.

[25:37] HILLARY: And this drop into the subject of sex, to me, who knows what kind of door that opens for a person.

[25:40] GANGAJI: Yes, good.

[25:42] HILLARY: Anyway, as always, I know we joke about the awkwardness we have saying goodbye, but as always, I always love to spend this time with you.

[25:53] GANGAJI: Likewise. Til next time

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[25:54] HILLARY: I want to get one more clip in here before we leave. But first I want to just say thank you to those who have taken the time out to leave a question or comment for Gangaji. If you have feedback, or you would like to suggest a topic for Gangaji to cover, please write to [gangajiradio@gangaji.org](mailto:gangajiradio@gangaji.org). That's [g-a-n-g-a-j-i-radio@gangaji.org](mailto:g-a-n-g-a-j-i-radio@gangaji.org) You can also catch up with us on Facebook, just search for Gangaji Community. At the end of the last show Gangaji and I chatted briefly about her ongoing monthly webcast. It's call With Gangaji. And if you're interested in finding out how to sign up for that, please go to [gangaji.org](http://gangaji.org) and look for With Gangaji. Finally I want to thank you for sharing the show with others, and always, we would appreciate it if you could take a moment and leave a comment or rate *A Conversation With Gangaji* in iTunes. Special thanks to you, Jami Siebor, at [jamisiebor.com](http://jamisiebor.com) for your talented and beautiful music today. Here's a few more words from Gangaji on the subject of telling the truth. I'm Hillary Larsen. Thank you for joining us. Be well until next time.

(clip)

*[27:13] GANGAJI: Gangaji: Just at least once stop trying to fix anything and see what is here. This thing that you are trying to fix, meet it. If you're trying to fix this thing called you, meet who you think you are. Who am I? Meet it and see what you find. Don't meet it to get rid of it. That's still trying to fix it. It's the same old thing, only now it has you know, the blessings of Advaita Vedanta or the blessings of a spiritual practice. Forget it. This is so simple that it is not a philosophy. It's not a religion. It's not a teaching. It's simply telling the truth.*