

[Gangaji Radio](#)

A Conversation With Gangaji Series

Host Hillary Larson

Episode 31

THE SEED OF DOUBT

Released on April 15, 2015

[00:05] INTRODUCTION MUSIC

[00:11] HILLARY LARSON, HOST: Sometimes there seems to be a little competition that goes on within ourselves, between confidence and doubt. "I'm good at this, but I'm not good at that," "I'm smart, I'm attractive, I'm able, but sometimes it feels like I'm not." Confidence feels good, but it's temporary. And doubt, well, sometimes it seems as though it has a life of its own. But if doubt is nothing more than a bad habit, and confidence is fleeting and somewhat superficial, then what's deeper, more trustworthy, than both of those things? Is there a place within all of us that is rooted in a certainty that transcends both confidence and doubt? And if so, how do we find it?

(clip)

[00:54] GANGAJI: *Just to be certain of, I am. That's undeniable. And then, to rest in that - that certainty - cause whatever else is happening, that's here. To rest in that, then you discover, in a truly profound way, that you are, that, that you are.*

(end clip)

[01:15] HILLARY: Is it possible to live a life without doubt, or does doubt have something to show us? I'm Hillary Larson and this is *A Conversation With Gangaji*.

[01:29] HILLARY: I posted on your With Gangaji Forum, let people know that we were doing this subject of doubt for the month of April, and kind of what I had in mind on that subject. And James had posted something that was very articulate and beautiful. And I wrote something about- following that, I wrote something about my own perception of doubt and I said something about the fact that to me, doubt is like a gnat. That it's irritating but it's ultimately not harmful. And that I was so grateful for inquiry, you know, that has shown me kind of a deeper level of doubt. And then somebody else posted about, it was Barbara actually, she posted, really how intense doubt can be and how it can really, you know, just wreak havoc on somebody's life. And I just, like, went "Wow!" I actually was kind of lying. I was kind of being spiritualizing doubt, because the fact of the matter is that doubt still has a profound effect on my life, you know, it's like, the vigilance that's required to not go in to believing doubt is really, it's extraordinary really, the habit of doubt, I guess I would call it. So, I wanted to start with the superficial really, the everyday life kind of doubt. And then I know you'll take us deeper but, it's just the habit of doubt, I'd like to start with.

[02:54] GANGAJI: Great.

[02:56] HILLARY: So let me give you a few of these comments that people left here about doubt. This is about everyday doubt. So Rebecca was talking about doubts that she has regarding her parenting, and that she feels as though she always needs to be vigilant.

And this doubt revolves around this need for safety. And she says about these states of doubt, she says: "Blessedly this has become rare, but it is still something I revisit. I have an ever deepening trust in life, but when I start investigating every burp and bruise, I know doubt is knocking at my door, and fear of death is waiting, no doubt about that." Beatrice says that doubt for her shows up as confusion and that for her doubt and trusting herself are very much related. Sutree says: "I think a way my doubt manifests for me is that I apologize a lot. I'm saying 'I'm sorry' all the time without even thinking about it. And most of the time, the person I'm interacting with says, 'there's no need to apologize,' to which I respond, 'I'm sorry for saying I'm sorry.'" So, she said this could be funny, if there were not so much self-doubt and sadness under all of these "I'm sorrys." So I just, I picked those because I think that they are very relatable, and I think that those are the garden variety, everyday life human examples of doubt, and the torture that we live in, in that world.

[04:30] GANGAJI: So, yes. And I don't see these as separate from the deeper issue about doubt, I mean, that's being haunted by a particular mind activity. And, I know our listeners already know that certainly there is a survival reason for the mechanism of doubt to appear in our minds. And it's, an intelligent doubt is very useful. So that if you have a child and you are investigating a bruise or a cough or something, and it's giving rise to something else, it's very intelligent to see that. Not to just brush it off. So it's a tricky issue. I think like with most tricky issues, it's very important to suspend the judgment about doubt, either positive or negative. That if we just suspend judgment that it's wrong to doubt, which is a spiritual judgment, or judgment that it's right to doubt, which is a sort of nihilistic philosophical judgment, and then we can just recognize when doubt is actually in service, and when it is simply a substitute for some very deep self-hatred or unworthiness that needs to be met. And when it's in service, you know, the Buddhists speak about doubt, and they're talking about really doubting all your assumptions. Doubting your senses. And this is very healthy. If you're willing to, in an open-ended way, doubt them, then you actually do inquire: *Well, what is real? What is true? What, what is it that I cannot deny in this moment?* And that's ground zero. That's where we start, and that's where we return. So the issue of doubt is, you know, it's like a many headed monster. But if you trace it back to the core, then you see where it's legitimate. Of course we can't do anything we want to do. We are wise to doubt particular feats that we can't do physically, or emotionally, or mentally, or spiritually. And we don't *need* to do that, if we recognize who we are. That it's in fact, all of that is an avoidance of being true to yourself. But usually doubt gets, you know, second handed. And we. it's in play, when we're apologizing all the time, as Sutree was saying, or when we're active all the time because we're avoiding this profound depth of doubting. *What is true? What is real?* But since that seems so scary, we make it more superficial. But it's never *really* superficial.

[07:36] HILLARY: When I was twenty, I think I was twenty, I had this extraordinary opportunity. And I just want to really go through the layers of doubt here, with you. I had this extraordinary opportunity where I got to do a tutorial at BBC 4 Radio in London. And I was, you know, I was a young woman and I remember sitting, my tutor was a really well known director in London, and he was having me do an assignment. He was having me do an adaptation from a novel. And I never, I've never done anything close to that. And I remember sitting there listening to him talk about this assignment and his voice got really far away because, I just was sitting there in my own world, having my own conversation and I was *certain*, that they had picked the wrong person. You know that, and I know, I know all of you out there can relate to this in your own variation of this story. But it was like, "How did I like, how did I get here?" like, "They *must* have gotten my name wrong or something". And then all of a sudden, this really terrible feeling came over me and I was having a panic attack, and I'd never had one. And I can't even begin to describe what it was like. And this

episode lasted for a couple hours and I happened to make it to the train station. I checked into a hotel, cause I just couldn't make it back to where I lived. And it was that, like, I just was not aware enough to stop. I just wasn't aware enough to *stop*. And certainly what was driving that was self-hatred.

[09:11] GANGAJI: Well, you know, maybe you were the wrong person for that. I mean, we have found ourselves in deeper waters than we thought we were made for. And so, it seems to me that, what a shock that can be! I know that a similar thing happened to me when I was in graduate school. And I was in a symposium with people and I recognized I had *no idea* what they were talking about. And in fact the one idea I did have was totally wrong, I later discovered. And it was true, I was, I shouldn't have been there. But because we, we have this self-hatred or sense of worthlessness and that seems unbearable to us, or we're even unconscious of it, we build these layers and one of those layers is arrogance. And we think, "Well yeah, I can do this!" And then when we discover, "Oh no, I *can't*", rather than just, "whoa, I can't! But I'm still here. I'm in this room, in this symposium, whatever it may be, in this relationship", and to open to that, then there is a possibility of something unexpected, revealing itself, that has nothing to do with you. And certainly nothing to do even with your known capabilities. When Papaji told me to speak to people, I was certain he had made a mistake. (laughter) That he couldn't know who I was, to ask me that. I hadn't had my, what gets called my 'final realization', although realization is not limited by words like 'final'. But I knew I had to trust it. That I knew I was the wrong person, that he, my teacher had made a mistake and still, what am I gonna do, not, not speak to people? He asked me to speak to people. So then there is a possibility of trusting that, yes, you aren't prepared for it, you *are* the wrong person, and yet *still*, fate has brought you to this moment. So I'm curious what happened then the next day, did you go back to the BBC and?

[11:22] HILLARY: I did, it was a weekly tutorial so, you know, I worked on my adaptation and frankly it wasn't something I planned on doing for a living. (Laughter from Gangaji) I wanted to do a different kind of radio and it was just this unique experience so it was, it turned out fine. [GANGAJI: Yes, that's it!] It turned out absolutely fine and what an experience for a woman, a young woman to have.

[11:41] GANGAJI: And even if you had failed utterly, it turns out fine. And so that's, it doesn't necessarily feel good but that's the nature of growth as a human being, as a life form. And it's the undercut of the arrogance, and the narcissism, which is arrogance, which is an assumption that, "Well yes! I'm the right person for this," or "I can do anything," or "Yes, I deserve this." And so, it *has* to be undercut because, all of that is really a denial of grace and mystery.

[12:14] HILLARY: You evoke something in me from a satsang I heard you do recently. You were talking about, you know, the conditioning that occurs when we're so young. And that, when you're in school and the teacher asks a question and you raise your hand and you're like, "I have the answer" and then the answer is wrong, and the humiliation that happens when you're wrong in front of a lot of people. And then the process starts of *anything* to not be wrong, especially in front of people. And I think that example that I was giving you, it's funny it just never really occurred to me, to cut myself some slack and even ask the question, "Oh, like, maybe I am the wrong." (laughter) I mean, I never even thought of that.

[12:58] GANGAJI: It was just about letting somebody down or...

[13:01] HILLARY: Yeah!

[13:02] GANGAJI: ...or being exposed. And *that's* it, you know. And somehow doubt becomes our, like, magical amulet. If we torture ourselves enough with doubt, then we won't be really exposed as the fakes that we are. And we *are* fakes in our personalities, in our definitions of ourselves, in our, whether they're grandiose definitions or horrible definitions. They're all fake. They're not real. They are illusion. So, we *know* that in some sense, but we don't *grok* that until we're really willing to open to the, not the doubt, because the doubt is some kind of spin that's avoiding the fear of worthlessness, or the fear of being the wrong person or the fear of death finally. Being abandoned, or being humiliated in front of people, which is all in our social world as human beings, a form a death.

[14:01] HILLARY: You know I kind of, I think of confidence, and then I think of certainty. And confidence to me is more about the ego, it's more about a personality. And certainty reminds me of what you speak of direct experience where you just know something to be true because you've experienced it. And I'm sure you'll tell me if I'm off on this but, what I have seen in you in the time that I've gotten to know you is that, maybe you're confidence fluctuates in different things regarding your life, but your certainty I have never seen it fluctuate. Do you see the difference I'm talking about?

[14:38] GANGAJI: Yes, absolutely, I think it's really an important difference. So really you can ask yourself: What can I absolutely, ***absolutely***, meaning that no condition can shift it, be certain of? And what you can absolutely be certain of is what doesn't come and go, what's always here. And when really the mind, the mind stream, the life form, surrenders to that, that's the life form surrendering to life. And you can be *certain*, that you *are*. However, whatever definitions immediately flood the nervous system from that "I am this or that," or "not enough," or "just right" or "wrong," all of that is uncertain. It has to do maybe with if you have more of the "I'm the right person" more confidence, but just to be certain of, *I am*. That's undeniable. And then to rest in that, that certainty, cause whatever else is happening, that's here. To rest in that, then there is - then you discover in a truly profound way, that you *are*, *that* that you are.

[15:58] HILLARY: There's the idea of faith, and I think maybe there are lots of different definitions for the word faith. I think if faith is based on the outside then it can, it's fragile and it can fluctuate. And then I look at this other kind of certainty and it's, I would call it fundamentalism, which I think is actually just a variation of doubt.

[16:27] GANGAJI: Well, you know, fundamentalism we know is. (laughter) Anyway, I don't want to get into my opinions about fundamentalism. But my point is that, you really don't even need faith. And there are beautiful kinds of true faith, which is surrender, which is actually what I realize 'Islam' means, from hearing somebody say, it means surrender. But to forget *all* of that, anything you have been taught, anything you have believed, anything you have had faith in and just in this moment, *What can you absolutely be certain of?* Certainly no idea of God, cause you've had 'em and you've lost 'em. No idea of anything. Ideas, you cannot be certain of. Emotions, you can't be certain of. Physical circumstances, you cannot be certain of. So they are all subject to doubt. And when we are identified with ideas or circumstances or emotions, thoughts, then we are filled with doubt. But when we are willing to cut through that by saying, *What is here? Who am I?* - is what that question is really a form of. What is here? What is *always* here? Then you recognize everything that comes and goes and yes, certainly should be doubted, in a really intelligent way of, Is that always going to be here? *Is* that always here?

[16:02] HILLARY: I want to go to the deeper lever of this experience of separation but just, when you said that I was thinking about... a few weeks ago, there was a gentleman who asked me if you were the same in person as you are in satsang. And I. I just said "No." (laughter) And there was a look that came over his face of terror of like, "Oh, no." like, "Please don't tell me that this isn't true. Please tell me that what I believe in, this experience, this transmission, is true." And I so much appreciated the look of terror because I remember about three or four years ago, I was sitting in a small group with you, and you just, you're so open with your own humanity, and you just happened to mention that you were a little bit of a slob. And there was something in that, that I was like, (gasp) "Oh my god!" like, "Please don't let that be true!" (laughter) So, anyway what I said to him was like "No." Because sometimes you're opening your mail or sometimes you're, you know, on the way to your car or something. But, but what I said is true, was this fierce impeccable dedication to what is here. And that's *never* budged for me, with you.

[19:30] GANGAJI: Yeah, cause I know very clearly, experientially, what it means to be dedicated to what comes and goes. And that's a life of suffering, even if it's a good life; it's a good life of suffering. And it's unnecessary suffering. So I may doubt my abilities, certainly I remember especially speaking to people in the early years of satsang, but it could come up any time. I doubt my capacity or my capabilities to speak the truth, or to actually support anyone in recognizing the truth. But that's finally not what satsang is about. It's just showing up, being present. And *I* don't speak the truth then, *I* don't do the support; that's just an identity. It's this mystery that's alive in all of us.

[20:26] HILLARY: Well I wanted to use some...

[20:28] GANGAJI: Slobs and all...

[20:29] HILLARY: (Laughter) all the slobs...

[20:30] GANGAJI: Slobs *and* all, neat freaks, slobs, all...

[20:35] HILLARY: I wanted to give us some practical example of that, cause I've used enough of my own. You had an exchange with somebody recently that was so on the mark. It was a gentleman who was asking you about his doubt. And so I want to play this for everybody just so we can get like a real, concrete example of this.

(clip)

[20:57] SPEAKER: There's been like all this doubt that's been coming up over this past year, like little comments of doubt, of like decisions I make or if I should study with you or with someone else. And I hear it in everyone, and it's helping me make it not so personal. That it's like, whatever that energy is that's like coming over me, that's triggering me to have a feeling or a series of thoughts or reactions, that maybe it has nothing to do with me whatsoever.

[21:41] GANGAJI: Well we can look at it as if it does have something to do with you in terms of how you were constructed, just physically, emotionally, genetically, conditionally, you, what your ancestors, how they were constructed. And this is where the razor's edge is, because doubt, really innocent free doubt, is questioning, and it's beautiful. It's part of the reflection of our intelligence, our maturity. I think the Buddhists even speak about doubt as, it's essential to doubt. But our practice of doubt is actually the opposite. It's a closing. It's a denying and there's nothing open to discover. And it's usually the same - same sentences, same...

[22:32] SPEAKER: Yes...

[22:34] GANGAJI: Yes. So the really what doubt then is imitating, and what I think the Buddhists even speak of it's a kind of sacred doubt, is, is really questioning all your assumptions, which is an opposite, really, of our habitual doubt, which is cementing your assumptions. So this willingness to really dive deeper than any assumption, from anybody, including your own mind; to really, really be called to ask, and to be willing to ask and venture to ask: What is true? What is real? What do I want? Then this - it just cuts through, the wheel, the circle, the discussions, the conversation. So what do you want?

[23:43] SPEAKER: Truth.

[23:44] GANGAJI: Truth. And if you got truth, what would that give you?

[23:50] SPEAKER: (sigh) Clarity.

[23:52] GANGAJI: Clarity. And if you were absolutely clear, what would you have?

[23:59] SPEAKER: A life.

[24:00] GANGAJI: A life! Oh okay. Do you have a life now?

[24:04] SPEAKER: Absolutely!

[24:05] GANGAJI: Yes! (they both laugh)

[24:09] SPEAKER: Absolutely! It is so wonderful.

[24:11] GANGAJI: Undeniably! Yes!

[24:12] SPEAKER: It is. Yeah.

[24:13] GANGAJI: So then you can recognize the attempt to sabotage that. Or stay safer in that. Or not let the god see how blessed this one is- the "ptuh-ptuh" (imitates spitting) (laughter)

[24:29] SPEAKER: It's so true.

[24:30] GANGAJI: Yes. Yes. You can be true to life then.

[24:33] SPEAKER: So I can stop doing that then?

[24:36] GANGAJI: Yes, you can. You have permission to.

[24:37] SPEAKER: Thank you so much.

[24:40] GANGAJI: It's the role I play in your life. It really is. I'm happy to play it.

[24:44] SPEAKER: Thank you. Thank you so much.

(end clip)

[24:46] GANGAJI: It's really good, and I think it's really important to, to emphasize that it's not doubt that is really the issue here; it's the practice of doubt. And when we rely on doubt as some kind of protection from exposure or humiliation or growth, how detrimental that becomes to our living life, to being true to life.

[25:14] HILLARY: One other person that left a message for you was Anne. And she was talking about the different versions of doubt and the kind that causes contraction, and the kind that opens the doors to true inquiry. And she says, "If I don't get entirely mired or tangled up in it, eaten alive by it, this doubt keeps me for the most part open, exploratory, wondering and humble." I love that. I loved what she said.

[25:41] GANGAJI: It's wonderful.

[25:42] HILLARY: But I actually want to go to this deepest question of Who am I? Because I've heard people talk about, that they've had moments where they saw that they are one with everything. They're one with the flowers and the trees and other human beings and animals that they're, I've never actually had that experience. I've had moments of incredible bliss. I've had some incredible realizations. But I haven't had a moment like that. So this is I guess an exploration of my doubt, but...

[26:16] GANGAJI: Well I'd say you'd start with doubting that you even know what a moment like that is, to know, before you can judge whether you've had it or not. Because you're hearing something, a report somebody's making and you're then filtering it in through *your* brain, and you're filtering it in through *your* sensory experience. But the truth is you don't even know really what he's saying. He could be speaking about what you experience when you look at a flower. Or what you experience when you have a true kiss. Or what you experience in bliss. Or even what you experience in deep sleep. It's only when we take what we hear and we filter it through and then we position ourselves in relationship to that filtering that we can say: "I know that and I haven't had it," or "I have had it" even. And the power of inquiry is to really assume you don't know anything. Assume that you really don't know what he's talking about. And then start from what you *have* had. What you *do* have, what you *always* have, what's *always* here. And you'll see that, you know, the robins and the blue jays don't have to be singing the same song, but they're all singing.

(silence)

[27:43] HILLARY: It's actually hard to ask you another question after that.

(silence)

[27:51] GANGAJI: Well finally we see that our questions *have* to stop. That they are so powerful, so important, so essential; and our freedom to ask, our freedom to have questions is what it means to be an unconditioned human being. But if we begin to *rely* on the questioning, then we doubt that who we are without a question. Or we doubt the possibility of the transmission without a question. So to doubt our assumptions about the question, is to really open to having nothing. No question; no answer. No doubt; no doubtlessness. But what is *always* here is still here.

[28:58] HILLARY: Thanks to all of you who sent in questions or comments for Gangaji. I'm happy that we were able to share topics with Gangaji's live monthly webcast this time around. And honestly, I always feel a little remiss when I can't get all your questions in. And I thought about how great it would be if you all could ask a question directly to Gangaji and guess what? It's about to happen. On Wednesday, May 20th at 5:00 o'clock, that's Pacific Time, we're going to do a live show. Aside from our launch three years ago, it's the first time we've ever done that and we're super excited. To make sure you get all the news and the updates for the radio show, I tell you, the best way is if you sign up for the Gangaji Foundation Newsletter. You can do that by going to gangaji.org. And right there on the home page, if you go mid-way down the right side, there's a place to sign up for that. Also in May, I hope to see you at Gangaji's Silent retreat at Fallen Leaf Lake. It starts on May 31st. I'm just going to add this in here. Last year was my first time I got to go to that and it was truly, it was a profound experience. So if there's any way you can do it, I highly recommend it. Well that's it for us. I really look forward to talking to you all live next time around. It'll be so good to hear your voices. I'm Hillary Larson. This has been *A Conversation With Gangaji*. Take care.