

[Gangaji Radio](#)

A Conversation With Gangaji Series

Host Hillary Larson

WHAT DO YOU REALLY WANT?

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[00:01] MUSIC

[00:07] GANGAJI: There's a question you can ask, and you can deeply examine it, and ruthlessly, often painfully, tell the truth about it, and that is what does my life stand for? What is my life standing for? What has it stood for? What is the deepest call for my life to stand for? Then all you have to do is really look very carefully, ruthlessly, to see.

[00:40] HILLARY LARSON, HOST: For over two decades, there is one question that Gangaji asks over and over again. She has asked this question to people all over the world. What do you really want? What do you really want? If the answer is freedom, then what does that look like? Does the answer you come up with match your life, how you live your life. This is a potent question, and what happens in this particular exchange with Gangaji is different, because it is the beginning and end of all conversations. I'm Hillary Larson, and this is *A Conversation With Gangaji*.

[01:18] MUSIC

[01:24] HILLARY: I renamed this *What Do You Really Want*, rather than *Finally Free*. (chuckles) *Finally Free* seemed like the wrong title.

[01:34] GANGAJI: It seemed a little in time (chuckles) like, that who I am *got* free, rather than....

[01:39] HILLARY: Yeah.

[01:40] GANGAJI: ...realizes itself to be free.

[01:42] HILLARY: Yeah, finally free.

[01:45] GANGAJI: (laughs) Oh yeah (laughs). What a set up that is!

[01:50] HILLARY: (laughs) Yeah, I realized that right away. It sounded good though. Yeah, I don't actually know where to start with this. So I don't want to be redundant but I, I feel like I'm more willing to step out these days and have a deeper conversation with you. And I was just saying to you earlier that I love bringing in other people's questions, and I love the input from the Gangaji radio team – I love all of that – and there's a way that I really made an effort (chuckles) like I, I'm straddling both sides of the fence. It's like, oh, I don't wanna make this about me, but at the same time it's, then it's not about inquiry because you don't have a live person sitting in front of you, you have questions that you can't really delve into.

[02:46] GANGAJI: Yeah I felt that often, when questions have come up, there can only be some kind of formula answer because – and that's not what we're about here.

[02:56] HILLARY: Yeah, so, there was another thing I was thinking about with you is that – and I have mentioned this before I think in one of our other episodes, and I never get tired of talking about it frankly – is what I've learned from you over these last few years is your impeccable capacity to be true to the teachings. And that I've told people that if somebody said 'Hey, you could have five million listeners to this podcast that, if you could just tweak this one little thing', you would say 'No'. And if somebody came and said 'I will give you, the Gangaji Foundation, a million dollars, and if you could just tweak this one little thing or we could do like, add a little gimmick or gadget to what you do', you would say 'No'. And that, that's been a huge teaching for me.

[03:53] GANGAJI: Mmm. Good. Good, yes 'cause really what we're about here is, is inquiry and telling the truth and awakening and so that has nothing to do with numbers of any kind. It has to do with you.

[04:10] HILLARY: It's so humbling to me, because I can think of all the people that would be like 'Really, like how do I get five million listeners?' (laughs) You know? 'What do I need to do to do that?' And, but you don't turn in that direction.

[04:24] GANGAJI: (laughs) Yeah, I, and really, I'm not judging it either because if someone turned in that direction out of five million listeners, yeah, it's very likely you'd get some people who you could really turn on to self inquiry. It's just, it's not one of my temptations. It's, the...and you know, so much of this is Papaji, of course, but Papaji was a regular household name, he loved it when more and more people started coming to satsang, he had a great time, and he did want it to spread. But Papaji got it from Ramana, and Ramana was very simple, and, and happy to be simple. So as an American, I'm not trying to be Ramana or Papaji but I am also very aware of the lineage, and to respect the lineage. This is not my thing that I invented that, you know, I'm gonna save the world with, this is, this is coming from a direct lineage.

[05:24] HILLARY: Yeah, it's, I just appreciate it so much.

[05:27] GANGAJI: I'm glad.

[05:28] HILLARY: Yeah, and... so, over time too, everybody that's listened to you speak you, the question that comes up is 'what do you really want', and I've always been hesitant, honestly, to sit in retreat and say what I really want is freedom. Because, is it because I've heard that over and over again, is it 'cause I've read that, 'cause, is, 'cause I, I don't wanna say what I really want because that doesn't really match what other people want? And I feel like in the last few weeks, I have reached a new level with that question, and I wanted to share it with you and with everybody listening. And it's a hard inquiry for me, because it's a relief to be able to look at what, what do I really want and to tell the truth about that because on a daily basis I could say what I want is freedom, but in a daily basis there are countless ways where I want something more – whether it's to be liked, or whether it's to be secure, or whether it's to not lose something. It happens all the time, and, so what happened was, I wrote you a letter – Barb, the executive director – a few weeks ago and I, I said that I had, what I was seeing, that I was aware of for, for

a long long time – years, a lifetime – is a way that I work really hard, I work, you know, I'm a hard worker, you know, when I was a kid I worked at Wendy's, and then I changed my uniform and then I worked at Baskin Robbins. And, and then I worked really hard in radio, and then I worked really hard to get clean, and then I worked really hard to overcome anxiety. And, and then I met you. And there was a way I quit working, in a way, but there was still a deeper working. So it was ironic to me, alongside that was, here I am with, with my teacher whose message is to stop, and I'm actually staying busy working for the Gangaji Foundation so I don't have to stop. And so I wrote you about that, that I actually needed to face that demon, and I did. And what was beautiful about it is that I just sat in my living room and I, I felt the momentum of a lifetime of just working really hard and, and when I stopped it was like, wow. Why didn't you do that a long time ago? It was a relief and it was, it wasn't like a thunderbolt but it was beautiful. And, and when you talk about rest, and deep rest, it was like, ah, finally.

[08:15] GANGAJI: I'm so happy. I'm so happy, this, it's rare. Because we're running from ourselves the whole time, running toward escape or relief, rest. But to stop and not go anywhere, it's here.

[08:31] HILLARY: Yeah.

[08:32] GANGAJI: You're here, rest is here.

[08:35] HILLARY: Yeah, and, and what happened was I, right after that I, I still had an *Epiphany* interview to do which I didn't wanna change 'cause it took a year and a half to schedule this *Epiphany* interview and I had to travel to do it. And the person who was the subject was amazing, an amazing story, and I arrived at his home with his beautiful wife, and I arrived in the evening. So you know when you arrive in the evening someplace and you don't really know where you are. And we had a great conversation that night, and then I woke up the next morning – they live on this beautiful piece of property – and I woke up the next morning about six in the morning and I, I looked out the window for the first time, seeing it like, well, where am I? And this (chokes up)... I didn't expect this to happen. This feeling came over me of like, you don't have to do one more thing to be fine. Like, like, you don't have to do one more thing. And, and then my life kind of flashed before me of all the ways I've worked so hard, just so *hard*, and, and it was like, this vastness opened, it was like so *huge*, and the idea, like 'Wow, I don't have to read one more thing', or 'I don't have to watch one more thing', I'm just looking out the window. And, it's like I've had feelings like 'oh I'm fine' before but this was like different.

[10:19] GANGAJI: This is deeply fine.

[10:20] HILLARY: Deeply fine. And then in the vastness of it came the fear. And the fear was a realization of what I have done to not go into that vastness, and the vastness is like being – I think I told you one time about this George Clooney movie with Sandra Bullock where he's flying off in space and then, then he cuts the tether. That, that movie was like visceral for me, when he just is floating off into like, who knows what? And so that fear came up and when I looked deeper in that moment to the fear, it was kind of an image of being at the deep end of a pool and holding on to just one last life preserver. And the last life preserver was you. And I was like, if I let go of this life preserver, I'm gonna lose everything that I love. Like, like my, my work, and the friends I have, and, and my relationship with you, like I just had it in my head like, oh, you

have to tell the truth about that thread of dependency otherwise you're never gonna be free. And, so I was willing to lose everything. Like, everything! This, which is so important to me, and everything I do that's related to the Gangaji Foundation it was just like, let, let go. And then, I don't know what that is gonna mean.

[12:33] GANGAJI: Well what did it mean in that moment? 'Cause the losing everything is, has nothing to do with material things or work things or relationships, it has to do with your internal relationship of what you think you need to be fine. So in that moment, your willingness to let go, what was your experience?

[13:00] HILLARY: Beautiful.

[13:01] GANGAJI: And is that gone now?

[13:04] HILLARY: Mm-mm.

[13:05] GANGAJI: And yet you're here...

[13:06] HILLARY: Mm-hm.

[13:07] GANGAJI: ...in our relationship.

[13:11] HILLARY: Yeah. But I, and I feel completely different in this relationship now. And it, it's brought up the subject of everything, it brought up everything we've talked about, the willingness to lose, and asking what do I really want when I say I want freedom, like seriously what do I want? It brought up the subject of postponement, of like, this is not new information to me, it was just something I didn't wanna say out loud, I didn't want to admit it.

[13:40] GANGAJI: Yes that's right. Beautiful, Hillary.

[13:44] HILLARY: (chuckles) So...

[13:46] GANGAJI: You know you can't really be in relationship of any kind, including with yourself, until you're willing to lose it all...

[13:52] HILLARY: Yeah.

[13:55] GANGAJI: ...death of some kind. Whether it's death into the cosmic nothingness or death in losing what, what you think your relationships are, or your job or whatever.

[14:08] HILLARY: Yeah. I think, it feels like I, I didn't know when we started this conversation, I didn't know if it was our last conversation. Or actually an opening to a new conversation.

[14:21] GANGAJI: It's both, isn't it? Death and birth. I mean, there they are. It's the unknown. And you said 'I didn't know if it's the end of the conversation or the beginning', that unknown is the key.

[14:39] HILLARY: Yeah.

[14:40] GANGAJI: And really you can't lose that, that's present every moment – you may overlook it or run from it or whatever – but the unknown is always here. And how full it is.

[14:51] HILLARY: Yeah. It's been so freeing, right?

[14:53] GANGAJI: It is.

[14:55] HILLARY: In fact I, I wrote you, I don't typically do this, but I wrote you, and said the next episode I wanna do – (laughs) now I'm laughing but – is 'finally free'. And I appreciated that you didn't respond to that (laughs). And I actually had, was talking to a friend about my experiences of, you know, of looking out the window and having, being willing to tell myself the truth. And I said that I wanna do an episode with you called *Finally Free* and she's like, 'Well what does that mean?' (laughs) And the other thing that was, now it seems obvious to me but, but it was great to be in, a satsang with my good friend was, the times that you've talked about being at the gate, and I always felt like to me, just telling the truth about myself was the feast. Like that feeling of like oh, and now I've told you, just even sitting here I've told you something that was hard to face in myself, and now I feel this spaciousness. And I realized through the help of this exchange I had with my friend that I actually have just stepped foot into the feast.

[16:14] GANGAJI: Me too. Me too, nobody's ever seen the end to this feast, or the satisfaction. The unknown is the feast, really.

[16:30] HILLARY: That's so amazing.

[16:31] GANGAJI: It is.

[16:32] HILLARY: 'Cause when we talk about it before, we did a show called *Telling the Truth*, and you would say that, well that's not even the feast, that's being at the gate and I, rather than saying I don't know what you're talking about, I protected myself, and went, 'Whoa, okay'. But inside I was like, 'I don't know what you're talking about'.

[16:47] GANGAJI: Uh-huh. And to allow what's inside to come out, to 'Whoa': that's freedom. Yes.

[16:53] HILLARY: Mm-hmm. (laughs) God, it's so simple. (laughs)

[17:01] GANGAJI: Mmm. That's what keeps it secret, keeps it a challenge. It's always simple. I'm so happy.

[17:12] HILLARY: I think about all of the conversations that we've had, and beautiful conversations, and I listened to one the other day and I was just like, 'Oh my God, you know, I don't know how that stuff comes out of you', but it's extraordinary. And, but, being free, right now, how I feel, free, it's like, oh I would've asked you way different questions.

[17:35] GANGAJI: You might not have said a word. I mean what question can you ask?

[17:42] HILLARY: (laughs)

[17:44] GANGAJI: Really. Even questions that – as you know, I deeply respect questions, I know their importance – but finally, if we're just asking questions to ask questions, or to have a conversation, that too is an avoidance of a deeper impossibility to know. But that doesn't mean an impossibility to be, or to be fine, deeply fine, to be peace. So that's why the spoken conversation does end, and you are simply in retreat with all in this discovery.

[18:24] MUSIC BEGINS TO PLAY IN THE BACKGROUND

[18:26] GANGAJI: You know often in satsang I tell people 'Stop asking me that question', that particular person, because they, you start to recycle, and you're asking... And you, we reach a point where really it's not in the words, it was never in the words. The words were just a way of getting to this point where you could look out that window and you could recognize, you know, without anything else ever happening, it's fine. It's good. It's beautiful. That's, that's life, that's a life well lived.

[19:04] HILLARY: It is. Thank you.

[19:07] GANGAJI: Oh, I thank you. This is the point.

[19:09] MUSIC CONTINUES TO PLAY

[19:25] GANGAJI: So when there arises in a human lifetime this mysterious grace of actually wanting to know the truth, and not being satisfied with another spiritual philosophy or spiritual words or even spiritual good feelings, as satisfying as all those are, recognizing that's not enough, I have to know the truth. And then of course you are drawn to people who are speaking the truth, and naturally what happens is that the words are taken, and maybe they're new words, maybe they're the same words, but they're learned. And they're spoken, but it's still not the truth. And so there's left this hunger. There's a question you can ask, and you can deeply examine it, and ruthlessly, often painfully, tell the truth about it, and that is what does my life stand for? What is my life standing for? What has it stood for? What is the deepest call for my life to stand for? Then all you have to do is really look very carefully, ruthlessly, to see. And you will see if you're speaking words of truth and living a life of a lie, you will see that. And it's a painful seeing, and the mind will immediately make the lie itself some form of truth. So it's a rigorous truth-telling. Otherwise inquiry is just a, a layer on top, another way of escaping, a way of feeling good. And you know that, and you know the, the nectar of that, and the addiction of that. And yet there is a call within you that wants the truth, or you wouldn't be here, because you know I have nothing to teach you. I'm not teaching you anything, really. I'm inviting you to examine at the deepest level who you are. And that begins at the most superficial level, and in the willingness to see the most superficial, there is strength and a capacity to actually see deeper.

[22:14] MUSIC CONTINUES TO PLAY AND THEN ENDS

[22:35] HILLARY: I wasn't exactly sure how to wrap up this particular episode with Gangaji, and as I was putting this show together I was also thinking about writing Gangaji a letter, a report of sorts, letting her know some of the things that I've discovered during these sixty-plus recorded conversations that we've had. And what occurred to me was that it would be appropriate to share that letter with all of you, since we have all shared this journey together – whether you've listened to one episode or all the episodes. So this is it, this is my letter to Gangaji:

Dearest Gangaji,

Over six years ago when we did our pilot episode, I secretly hoped, now that I'm willing to admit it, at the risk of being not cool, that somehow if I asked you enough questions I would understand your awakening, that there would be something that you would share that would help me to get that one last thing I hadn't gotten yet. I had a notion that there would be a specific question, followed by a more specific answer, where I could say, 'I got it'. That I would somehow be able to realize your lightning bolt experience as my own. That never happened. Not once did I have a moment when I was suddenly one with everything around me. I could not say that I discovered myself to be silence itself, or the ground of being. I will tell you what did happen, and that is through these conversations there were moments too numerous to count when what I thought was true got totally turned on its head. You kind of have a way of doing that. Beyond that, it was the willingness to lose the things I thought I couldn't live without that I discovered a freedom I did not expect, nor could I have planned. In order to do that, I had be willing to tell the truth about the things and people in my life that I was afraid to lose, including you. I have most definitely had an awakening as a result of meeting you, one that happened over time, it just didn't match what I had envisioned. I have always tried to extract from life what I expected would make me happy, and if I'm honest, in some ways, this show was another variation of that. After all, who wouldn't wanna have the great privilege of sitting across from you, free to ask anything they wanted. How many times have I heard people say that they are more able to connect to clarity and love when they're sitting with you? It's like I got the golden ticket somehow, being able to spend all this time with you. But at the end of the day I still pack up my recording gear, get in my car, start driving down the road, and begin once again listening to the preset radio stations that play in my head. And then something happens: from a torrent of less-than-merciful critiques about how I overlooked asking you an obvious question during our recording, or that I once again maybe talked too fast, or that someone else may have had deeper insights than me, with the echo of your voice in my ear, I somehow lift my head from this absorption into this project I call 'me', and I noticed how the clouds are draped over the tops of the mountains. I remember how much I love the color green, and all the variations I see as I'm driving down the highway. I remember how happy I am to be able to drive a car from Portland to Ashland, because with my anxiety I didn't used to be able to leave my house, let alone do something like that. I wake from my drunkenness of thought, and I am free, knowing now more than ever that I am the only person to make that choice for myself, and that will never not be true. It's humbling that it's taken this long for me to actually drop my pretenses with you, and everyone, to let go of my spiritual vocabulary, along with a pretty significant case of lingering spiritual workaholism, in order to get to a place where I am truly willing to know nothing, to be the one that doesn't get it in the way that I think I should, or that I assume others do. One thing that I do know is this: you are in my cells; you are closer than my breath; you have been with me in the midst of my most profound losses, and my most unexpected moments of liberation. As I sat with my mom as she was dying, I realized that this 'you' that is always with me is actually

me. I realized, and pardon me for stealing your words, that it was the diamond in my pocket that had been there all along. And as dependency transforms itself into true devotion, I wonder what this life will look like. What a grand exploration. What a beginning. Stop, tell the truth, be still. It couldn't possibly be any simpler. There's a satsang that's on one of your videos where you say to the person sitting with you: 'I thank you for your whole life.' Now, I would like to thank you for yours.

*Love Always,
Hill*

[28:08] MUSIC

[28:28] GANGAJI: As pure consciousness incarnated as human beings on this planet, we have the invitation to be completely responsible for where we find ourselves. If your intention is to be true to your mind, to being right, to knowing, then you will have enormous support for that. If you're intention is to be true, period, then you will see that there is an even greater support. Perhaps unseen and unknown, yet with a power that provides the courage to meet fully whatever appears. This support mysteriously reveals itself in living answer to your original prayer to return home to who you really are. Wherever you find yourself, this is where you tell the truth. In each instance of telling the truth, a deeper truth is revealed. Finally, the choiceless truth of who you are is revealed to be permanently here, permeating everything, not a thing, and not separate from anything, the true radiance that was in your pocket all along.

[29:44] ENDING MUSIC