

Gangaji Podcast
Being Yourself
Episode 35
Host Barbara Denempont
Cutting Our Addiction to Thought
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GANGAJI: We all have stories and as human beings we relate to each other through stories and we relate internally to our story: I went into this place of beauty and peace and then something horrible happened and I forgot it and how do I stay there? Just stop telling the story, just return to the subject.

BARBARA DENEMPONT, HOST: Hello and welcome to Gangaji's podcast, *Being Yourself*. My name is Barbara Denempont and I am gonna do something a little bit different this month. Of course, I love bringing you the archival recordings because I know how they are so relatable to each of us and I do have one that was recorded in Portland in 2010 and it's about cutting our addiction to our thoughts. But also, I couldn't exactly make up my mind, so I wanted to share with you a second piece that actually was a letter that came to Gangaji and the Foundation through a prisoner who is part of our Freedom Inside course. He wrote a beautiful letter and we just wanted to share it with you because it's such a powerful opportunity to hear from our community of men and women who are living behind bars. So, Gangaji is going to share that letter with us and then we have a brief discussion about it afterwards. So, that's enough said for sure.

Let's take a listen.

(Excerpted from Portland, OR, Meeting with Gangaji, March 19, 2010)

GANGAJI: There's something closer than belief, something more present, more alive.

PARTICIPANT: Easy to say.

GANGAJI: No, not easy to say. Impossible to say unless you actually are willing to realize it.

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, well for me, I struggle a little bit. Well, I can go into that place where...

GANGAJI: What place?

PARTICIPANT: in my heart.

GANGAJI: Okay, forget your heart!

PARTICIPANT: Okay.

(laughter)

GANGAJI: Who is it that goes into that place? Let's deal with that. So she goes in and she leaves, right?

PARTICIPANT: Right.

GANGAJI: She forgets and she remembers. Let's concentrate on her.

PARTICIPANT: Okay. there are times when I can..

GANGAJI: Oh no, no let's. Well, you can get back to it, but let me have my way here please.

PARTICIPANT: Okay. Alright.

(laughter)

GANGAJI: What about her, what about you? You that go into a place, and you that remember and you that have these times and you that then don't have the times. And what about you? Where are you? When you turn your attention back to yourself, what's, what's there in this moment?

PARTICIPANT: Quiet, peace, joy, looking out and knowing that everything, everything is as it should be.

GANGAJI: So, is that a place or is that you?

PARTICIPANT: That's me.

GANGAJI: Okay!

(laughter)

GANGAJI: So, you then you, you have to develop ... part of vigilance is developing the skill to overhear yourself. So, when you overhear yourself saying, "I go into this place and then I forget it," there's this "I" and "This place." And then there's this memory that comes from this place that is located in this I-ness. Just forget about all of that and return to "I" and what's there?

PARTICIPANT: Peace and joy.

GANGAJI: You see because you followed me then. We went to a place and forgot. That's a story. Stories are wonderful. That's how we communicate as human beings. There's a story of this evening. This building has a story. Plants have a story. We all have stories, and as human beings we relate to each other through stories and we relate internally to our story. "I went into this place of beauty and peace and, and then something horrible happened and I forgot it and how do I stay there?" Just stop telling the story! Just return to the subject! You just, you reel attention in then. Your attention is reeled in from the characters that you play in

your story, from the victims, from the victors, from the places you visit, from the places you can't remember. You just return Home, and that's how long it takes.
(laughter)

PARTICIPANT: Yeah

GANGAJI: But of course, since we are so attuned to stories and since we are entertained by stories - our internal stories and our external stories – that's a big force to pull us seemingly away from Home. So there has to be this willingness to stay at Home no matter what story comes. Not forever, but the willingness for it to be forever. I love a good story. I read books. I go to movies. I listen to your story. I tell my story. But I know I'm hearing that at Home. I can be terrified by a story. I can cry in a story. I can be angry in a story. But it's all happening at Home. It's not some other place. I don't leave myself. I don't imagine that I leave myself. And for that to happen for me, I'll tell you my story in case it's helpful for you, is my teacher told me to stop. He said: "Don't touch a thought!" And since I recognized him as my teacher and I knew this was my chance, I paid really close attention. He said, "Don't touch a thought!" Then I wasn't going to touch a thought and I didn't. And I discovered how easy it is, actually, to not touch a thought. The first thought that came up was: "I'll never be able to do thi"
(laughter) because I read it's impossible. I'd heard, you can't do that. He said, "Don't touch that thought!" I didn't touch it.

PARTICIPANT: So, what is it which reacts?

GANGAJI: Don't touch this thought!

PARTICIPANT: Ah!

GANGAJI: Ah, it's like that

PARTICIPANT. Just like that.

GANGAJI: That's right.

PARTICIPANT: Wow.

GANGAJI: Wow is right. There's nothing wrong with thoughts. This is just a way of cutting the addiction to thoughts.

PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

GANGAJI: Yeah.

PARTICIPANT: I'm addicted.

GANGAJI: Yes, of course we are because it's one of our greatest powers, and we tend to get addicted to our powers. So, in a way it's surrendering this power for an evening, for an evening, for a weekend, as long as you like – but long enough that you know for certain that you are not a thought. You know that, no matter what thought comes. You know who you are

and that's, then you, your thoughts themselves benefit from that. This is beautiful. Can you feel this? Can you see this? You show them because it's catchable. That's really what we have to give each other, this capacity to, to discover, to not rely on what we've been taught is possible or impossible – to actually inquire.

PARTICIPANT: Thank you so much.

GANGAJI: I am so happy. This is the thanks really, really.

PARTICIPANT: Thank you.

GANGAJI: It's no small matter, you know. I mean we can joke and laugh, and we must joke and laugh, but's huge because we're thinking creatures and so we've been doing this for a long, long time. And we inherited it so we have the genes for it. So, it's part of the way we are made. So, this is a huge deal. It takes overriding this huge power that we have. And there's always a thought that says, "You shouldn't do that.!" And so that's why it's so precious to be in a space like this, to have this evening where you can actually experiment for yourself. You're not required to do this. You're not required to never think again. You can if you'd like, but you are invited into investigate how easy it is to simply stop and when you stop, to discover what is simply, limitlessly Here.

BARBARA: Now let's listen to Jeffrey's letter – a member of our Freedom Inside program for prisoners.

GANGAJI: Dear Gangaji, finishing book one was the greatest awakening I have ever had and without drowning you in details, you helped me to take back my life one eternity at a time. There's a space between the ticks of the second hand on a clock, in the time it takes our eyes to blink, from switching our breath from in to out, is a small window of time and space and quiet. Focus on these has helped me show my spirit. But changing the labels I put on things and how I view my story of pain, loss, hurt and anger has given my heart a grip on love and peace. Surrender has been my mountain I climbed. But this too shall pass. All is vapor, all is fleeting. Everything is impermanent. All our constructs will collapse eventually. Love, hope, peace, reducing the pain body of individual and collective is my goal and I am filled with happiness to do my part. I'm finished now after eight months with book one. I was hoping for course lesson book two. The book 'Hidden Treasure' I have read two times and passed around to numerous others to hopefully help them also. If there is another book I can read, I would love that too. Bless you all and your efforts to help those in need. Love in thoughts, Jeffrey.

BARBARA: Well, I really wanted to share Jeffrey, this beautiful soul, with everyone and your reading his letter brings it home.

GANGAJI: There it is. In case we wondered, is any one being affected by the newsletters, the books, the connection, the correspondence, here is it. And, of course, this is not the only letter we get but it's just so, so here in this letter, so present.

BARBARA: Well, you've been speaking to this particular community of men and women living behind bars for maybe thirty years now, at least close to thirty years and they've been such a central part of the Gangaji Foundation and their contribution to all awakening and I recently read a piece where a young man wrote to us and said, 'I know I can make a difference in the world.' And this just, it just so touches my heart, you know to know that even in prison, this invitation is alive.

GANGAJI: Well, it's such a teaching for those of us not in prison that we are privileged to not be in prison because if we had a different government or if we had different rules, most of us would be – most of the people who come to *Satsang* are independent thinkers and have already chosen to live a life that's free of what was designed for them. So, we're lucky we're not in jail at this point in time and sometimes with that luck, we make assumptions about those people who are in jail, that they are somehow less than us – less intelligent. Certainly they are less lucky and they have made, many of them, very bad choices. But, very early on in going into the prisons in Colorado, I recognized these people who are responding to this, just as people respond outside of prison, really have something to teach those of us outside and that is that we are all one Self and the capacity of our minds, of our brains to recognize that is present everywhere, under the worst of circumstances.

When I would speak to people in Bolder, the meetings that were happening in Bolder then, the group – and there were hundreds of people in those big meetings - would just light up. They received so much transmission from the prisoners. So, yes, we were going into the prisons and we were bringing the good thoughts of all those people in to the prisoners and certainly the transmission from Papaji and Ramana, but the prisoner's response was then a great gift to those on the outside, and it was also a challenge that we can find how to imprison ourselves very easily with our day-to-day troubles or just the tedium that might be present in living. But when you are really in prison and you really make that choice to be free, to investigate, to inquire 'Who am I', then that just brings it home. What do you want? What is important to you? How are you living your life? So, it's definitely been a two-way exchange – in and out.

BARBARA: Inside and outside.

GANGAJI: Yes.

BARBARA: Well, I'm also just so grateful to this community for sustaining and working with all of us here at the Foundation and making it possible and for you making it possible and just that we can take care of each other in this way. It's, it's so, it's just so moving to get the requests you know and to see, you know, on a map of 800 prisons and, and maybe somebody would consider that small, but to me it's huge.

GANGAJI: It is huge.

BARBARA: And it just represents the heart and that it's everywhere and this invitation finds its way, mysteriously.

GANGAJI: It was huge when it was one prison. (Barb laughs). You know, you know, it was. It was outstanding that it was one prison for a while and then it began to grow and many

prisons and then in the prison politics that can change any moment we can be shut out of prisons because it's not as if it's just what the people in prison want. It's the prison officials and making some kind of relationship there, proving that we're not a detriment to the prisoners. So, we've always had that balance of the relationship of how do we stay in with these people, men and women? How can we support them? And then their support for us is just a natural overflow of that. So, yeah, I'm so grateful for this program. It's, it's really moving to me and, in some sense, it's the very heart of the Foundation because it is how are we offering what we have discovered – to whatever degree we have discovered it – to any who are interested. And that's what we do. We simply put the invitation out to subscribe to the newsletter and we give the books free to the prisoners and then we see who responds. And as we know from people who have been released from prison and then have become a part of the community, it, it's life-changing and it gives them a fresh opportunity, just as it gives each of us a fresh opportunity to discover what is true. What is this life for?

BARBARA: Yeah, I think what I find so powerful in this letter is when he says, 'changing the labels I put on things and how I view my story of pain, loss, hurt and anger has given my heart a grip on love and peace.' The simplicity of that.

GANGAJI: Yes, and it's also beautiful in that it doesn't say how I get rid of my story of pain. It's, it's what my perspective is. Because stories of pain and pain itself will arise. But what's the perspective and you can see from his letter, the transmission in his letter, his perspective has been set free: 'A grip on love and peace', 'Surrender has been my mountain that I climb.' That's a beautiful poetic statement because it, it is a mountain. It's interesting that it's the opposite, you know, of going down into yourself. It's this mountain to climb because it's such a challenge to open, to surrender, to really inquire. He took the challenge and we never know who will accept the challenge. We never know what their circumstances will be, where they've been living, what their past is, what their karma is, what their meditation is. Just to hear the invitation and, as Jeffrey has shown us, to respond. It's fantastic. I don't know if he's saying he took eight months with book one. Maybe. 'I'm finished now after eight months with book one.' If so, that's really beautiful. That's really living with something.

BARBARA: Yes. Well, it is rich. I mean the material is quite rich in those books and it's thrilling to, you know, just mail the packages out, you know, these are the simple things and you know there's somebody receiving it at the other end. Somebody who's asked for that. And so, I know that we can all relate to that – that something fell into our lives or into our lap that said, wait a minute, stop.

GANAGJI: Yes.

BARBARA: So, you know, what a joy to serve this and be served by it – that's how I experience it and thank you Jeffrey, thank you Jeffrey. We'll be sure to write him back and let him know we were talking about you.

GANGAJI: Yes. What good use already. This is the grip on love and peace his life now is. Yes, thank you Jeffrey and thank you all supporters of the prison program and volunteers. As you just said, it couldn't happen without you.

BARBARA: Well thanks for taking this moment and sharing this letter with the world.

GANGAJI: Well, what joy!

BARBARA: If you were as moved as I was by Jeffrey's letter, I wanted to let you know that you can read more prisoner's letters on Gangaji's website: gangaji.org, that's gangaji.org.

You can read more of their revelations and discoveries while living behind bars and you'll discover they're just like yours. So, visit the prison program section of the site and you can also find on the website many more podcasts, articles and Gangaji's calendar of events.

Thank you so much listening today. I'm Barbara Denempont. Until next time.