

Gangaji Podcast
Being Yourself
Episode 38
Host Barbara Denempont
Is Understanding Enough?
Released October 20, 2021
www.gangaji.org

GANGAJI: We may feel really good about our understanding because it is great understanding and we may and must really honor the moment of understanding. But the real possibility is to live a life that is turned toward realization before understanding.

BARBARA DENEMPONT, HOST: Hello and welcome to *Being Yourself, Self-Inquiry with Gangaji*. My name is Barbara Denempont. The human desire for understanding is very powerful. It's a way that we can place ourselves in some context and that can be deeply settling and helpful in many situations, but is understanding what we truly want, especially on the spiritual path? While it can be very satisfying, is it truly fulfilling? That's the question Gangaji really speaks to in this monologue that was recorded at Naropa university in 2009.

This is about the essential difference between realization and understanding:

(Excerpted from Boulder, CO, A Meeting with Gangaji, Naropa University, April 17, 2009)

GANGAJI: Hello everyone. It is great to see you especially on a beautiful night like tonight. It is beautiful.

I was talking to someone this afternoon, someone who brought me here the first time seventeen years ago. I was telling her about an interview I had recently with a, it was a phone interview so I could not see him but he seemed like he was a kid, kid relative to me anyway. You can be forty and be a kid to me. Seventeen, eighteen, twenty. His questions were so good. He already had within him the understanding that seventeen years ago or twenty years ago was not in the broad culture. Like the word "satsang" was foreign and "inquiry". I mean maybe we had seen Ramana and heard of Ramana but really through Papaji's grace so many people have spoken directly of realizing oneself and now without postponement, that it is really part of the mainstream or at least the counterculture mainstream vocabulary or vernacular. And it was thrilling to me to see that. However what I would really like for us to consider tonight in particular and in our lives in general is the very essential difference in understanding and realization.

Understanding is important because we have minds that are inquisitive and they seek to understand and so they grasp knowledge and digest it and come up with new knowledge, synthesis. And that is beautiful. It is the way it should be. But at a certain point it is not enough. However much you may understand. However many great, truly enlightened sages you may have read. Until you have realized it you are unfulfilled. And so in a way all the understanding that has come before your direct realization is just a platform for you to then

leap off of, because in a certain sense, in real sense, understanding is about control. If we can understand something then we can get a grip on it, we can control it and that can get us to the next stage. We can see what is working in our lives, what is not working. What is right action, what is wrong action and we have understanding of that. But realization is really about surrender. It is about gathering all of the control and then surrendering it. It is leaping off the platform of all our understanding.

I have studied some of the traditions and the ones I have studied – the Buddhist ones in particular, Christian ones too, really point to that same moment of surrender, of all is given. Really all is given and from that then the promise is in the Christian vocabulary of redemption, the Buddhist it maybe enlightenment. For Papaji, for my teacher it was realizing yourself and he told me that the only people who would be drawn to hear what I have to say are people who are ready for that. So that is you whatever you may be thinking. Especially tonight is proof that it is you because there was some inconvenience in getting here tonight and that is a good thing. Often in the West it is too easy. There is a whole parade of teachers and teachings that come through and offerings and promises and we have it in our laps. But to actually have some inconvenience and to gather with a group of like-minded people to hear that it is your time, simply because you are here, to surrender, to realize yourself fully and completely and to reap the benefits of a fulfilled life without knowing what that fulfilled life is. I am not offering a visualization or a law of attraction or a list of outcomes. Without having any idea what fulfillment looks like or feels like or acts like or talks like, just the fulfillment that comes from surrendering the struggle to find out who you are.

This is exactly the stage I was in when I met my teacher and he told me to stop. For me that is a holy word. Stop. It is not a word that can actually be understood. We can understand it but if we understand it, it is at a very elementary level. If you really let that word in it is radical and profound and it is present daily. And it is really stop struggling. Stop your struggle with reality in this moment. Stop your bargaining with reality. Stop your conditioning with reality. Stop your deal making. Stop your futurizing. Stop your past-izing. Be still. And in that instant there is no struggle. And when you are still and consciously still, you recognize what is always present, what is unaffected and untouched by any struggle, by any idea of enlightenment or un-enlightenment, redemption or doom. What is free? If you inquire deeply into that without moving towards it or away from it you discover it to be your own Self. That all the struggle has just been a whirlwind of an active mind, a powerful mind, a destructive mind, a creative mind, a positive mind, a negative mind. Just a whirlwind of that around a core of absolute purity and silence and fulfillment and that is who you are. It is actually quite simple to realize. It happens in an instant of being willing to stop. The challenge comes after that instant because we have these human minds that are so quick and they understand and “I got it” is often one of the first insights that arises. “I got it. That is it. It was so simple,” and that is true and that is true. But if we begin to rely on the memory of that moment of absolutely surrendering then we are once again in understanding rather than in realization.

So realization is not located any place or any time. It does not begin or end. It is not located in that spectrum. That is where understanding is. At first you did not understand and then you do understand and then that moment of understanding, pure understanding, what you understand is what has always been here, the perfection at the core. But then if we try to understand that we understand that, it is dead again. We may feel really good about our

understanding because it is great understanding and we may and must really honor the moment of understanding.

But the real possibility is to live a life that is turned toward realization before understanding. And in that the willingness to give up all understanding everything that has been previously understood, however true, however legitimate, however untrue, however illegitimate. To give it up. To be fresh in this moment. So no attainments, no victories, no progress, no place you got. Just here inquiring – Who am I? What is always here?

So my role in your life in particular this evening is to support you in that discovery because it is a discovery. It is always new even though what you discover is always the same. In the discovery it is absolutely fresh. And that is how you know if you are hanging out in understanding is that it loses the freshness. “Yes but we are all one. But I know we are all one. I know you are myself.” But that is understanding and it is so what? You are miserable. You are making war. Just stop. It does not mean that your human mind does not then immediately claim the freshness of that realization. It will. That is what it is made for. But you as consciousness have the opportunity to recognize that and without making that wrong, it is not wrong, it is just what the mind does. But to open again so that the mind itself can become a vehicle just to opening which is surrender. Not in not knowing as stupid but not knowing as pure intelligence. Not needing understanding, not needing a bottom to jump.

BARBARA: It makes me very happy to share these recordings with you. It truly is a message of peace being broadcast to all parts of the world. You may not know that you joined over 13,000 other listeners that tune in to Gangaji's podcasts each month and, of course, this podcast is made possible through the contributions from the community. If this podcast moves you or touches your life or inspires you, I invite you to support it. I invite you to make a donation to Gangaji Foundation at: gangaji.org, that's gangaji.org and if you have already made a donation, thank you. Your contribution is truly needed and welcome.

My name is Barbara Denempont. Until next time.