

Freedom Inside

A Course in Self-Inquiry with Gangaji

You Are Freedom Inside

As 2021 comes to a close, we would like to once again share some of the extraordinary reports we have received from *Freedom Inside* participants across the country. There have been so many beautiful responses to the worksheets, more than we could possibly include. Enclosed are just a few...

You are the living example of Freedom Inside; the proof of what is possible when there is a true desire for real and lasting freedom and the honest willingness for direct inquiry.

May the power of your earnest hearts ring in the New Year!

With love and gratitude,

Gangaji,
Foundation Staff
& Volunteers



“This is your resting place, your watering hole. Find what supports you, what includes you, and drink it in. Be nourished. Be enlivened. And when you feel thirsty again, drink some more.” —Gangaji

Inquiries on the Inside

Many participants of Freedom Inside report spiritual, emotional, and psychological growth that they feel would never have occurred without the experience of incarceration. As you reflect upon your own time in prison, what have you realized?

When I got arrested, I was 18 years old. I thought I knew all about who I was and what my life would become. I knew nothing. When I came to prison, I had this feeling of superiority. I thought I was better, I'm not a criminal, I just made a mistake. That was in 2014. Now, in 2021, after seven years locked up, I've come to see that most of the people in here also just made a mistake. People mess up both in here

and out there. Through the people I've met, and the experiences I've had, it has helped me to understand that we all want... something. To be “better,” to be “accepted,” to be “free.” Some want all of that and more. I now understand that everything is relative and the only thing you can be is you. But being you is not all, because no one is only themselves. Not really. We are all connected. We are all one. When you realize that, the hatred fades, the ideal of “better” fades, the wish to be “accepted” fades. Now I know that when you stop searching for things, that's when you're free. I'm not saying don't try to improve yourself; but understand that where you are right now is right where you

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need to be. We are all somewhere, just trust that you are that place. You are the better you have been trying to be, you are the acceptance you have been trying to find, you are that freedom. —AD

When I was arrested, I had been living in a personal hell for years. My life was controlled by fear; I was depressed, anxious, abandoned, addicted, alone, and hopeless. Divine intervention is the only way I can describe the events that led to my arrest. I accidentally set fire to my apartment building, and that was the beginning of the end to my suffering. The irony and metaphors are not lost on me; the fire marking my awareness of the hell I was creating in my life. But this was just the beginning. I had to walk through that fire to truly end my suffering.

Sitting with myself, being quiet and still, I was able to acknowledge the fear in my life and how it controlled my every move. Being born with a cleft lip, I had a fear of being “less than” unworthy. Being abandoned by my father at a young age, and then by my mother due to her alcohol use, I developed a fear of being unsafe and unloved. These fears were creating anxiety, depression, isolation, and addiction. Once I realized all my suffering was caused by fears that developed from pain in the past, I set out to heal that pain. Spiritual books started jumping into my hands. I let go of resentments and blame, I forgave myself and others, and I found faith.

With faith and awareness of my true self, I know I am always loved, always safe, always worthy, and always being guided. Instead of being controlled by fear and selfishly seeking ways to run from my pain, I now live my life with love at the center, selflessly giving and expanding my understanding and awareness. I walked through my hell, my old self died in the fire, and I found heaven where my true self has always been. I am so grateful for the pain and the peace. How blessed I am, how grateful I am, to be where I am. Sending love, —CA



It is amazing for me to learn that I still have so much to learn! My belief that I am a nonjudgmental person changed when I came to prison. I have realized that you truly cannot and should not judge another soul. No one person's experiences are more painful or less painful, they are just their experiences, necessary to achieve their own journey. I have also learned to be more mindful in all situations. If we all become more mindful, I strongly feel we would make better choices and therefore not only hurt other people less, but also hurt ourselves less. —LF

Well, I can honestly say that I was absolutely lost out in them streets before I got locked up. I knew though that I needed guidance, a guru, but I just did not know where to look. I've been locked up for 15 years now, and though I've been studying yoga/philosophy/Buddhism, I had so many criminal programs in me. Like I would crave spiritual awakening and later I would crave money, women, the streets, capers, alcohol, and such—for the first ten years. It took ten years

of all the stress, madness, in and out of jail, violence, having no money, no one here for me, no visits, no letters, phone calls, packages, NOTHING, to get me to where I can honestly feel like I don't ever want to commit another crime again! Doing any kind of wrong against people, I never get away with it, because karmically, it's all gonna come back on me, so I'm just hurting myself. Also, I don't want to do anyone any harm, I want to be of service to people, to all living things. I “want” to do good. That is growth for me.

Now, I am at the level of stilling my mind, or at least attempting to. Attempting to STOP. I haven't experienced the actual “STOP” that seems so mystical in Gangaji's explanation of it, but intuitively I know that if I stick around long enough, I'll get my turn.

Thank you so much for your service and helping me in my quest to “Stop.” It means so much to me. Namaste, —JH

All of the growth I've experienced in this incarceration since being involved with The Gangaji Foundation has been very enlightening. Being involved with the program for over one year now, doing both workbooks, and reading Gangaji's books, I've had the opportunity to reevaluate myself as a whole SELF! I am forever grateful for Babaji [Papaji] because without him this whole Foundation might not have come to fruition.

I don't mean that as a bad thing nor good, just stating the truth. Which is what I believe is the key point for us to discover thru these monthly issues of "Freedom Inside" and the Gangaji Foundation. My emotional level has increased in enabling me to express my feelings more openly. My mental level has grown to help me focus more on my meditations. And I've since become more athletic and get a lot more physical exercise in the outdoors than I used to.

The most important life experience I have had though was in my spirituality. I am much closer to my True Self, and I have opened up a door into the wondrous world of the Universal. To be as One with the All is so amazing and gives me the power to continue on the journey that never ends. The only part of reality that is real is this Truth; that all is One!

I truly want to thank everyone at The Gangaji Foundation and the Prison Program staff for all of the hard work you do for us less fortunate ones on our path towards freedom... With the utmost love and my absolute humblest respect to you all! Always and wholeheartedly, —LS

At the start of my incarceration, I was broken. I lost everything and everyone. Having nothing and no one, I sank to the depths of despair. Yet, deep within I felt a sense of peace that although my freedom had been taken, and all was lost, I still had release knowing that after all, acceptance in surrender was what I yearned for—something to heal me. I found the remedy in my practice and became fascinated by all aspects of spirituality. Reflecting on some truth that is in all teachings, philosophies, and religions. Observing my practice as a way to come into contact with that Source, I've come to understand profound wisdom in moments of stillness without know how I comprehend seeing things as they are. I accepted letting go and surrendering in forgiveness and adhering to nature's law of will and destiny. I know nothing can change what is, was, or will be. The moment is all there is. Every moment in time

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SHANTI*

Opening and softening

Of the heart

Warming the smile

And upward palm

A feather's drift

A breeze's kiss

Grace's gift

A righteous path

Creative nature

A mirror

A reflection

A prayer

Om shanti, shanti om

Atma ki prashanti

Peacefulness of the self

Stillful

Blissful

Present

Strengthful

Willful

Magic

Is it simple enough yet?

—ATC

*shanti: (noun). Sanskrit word meaning peace, inner calm.

Inquiries on the Inside

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leads to that final destination which we come nearer to or delay such in our actions. Doing hard time has caused me to digress, regress, and become numb. Yet, I am confident that my life can take a turn, and my life upon release can be positive in the good I do to lead to the ultimate goal. Observing in silence, intuitively knowing to set appropriate goals to achieve desired results, yet content when outcomes are unwarranted. Knowledge has helped me overcome issues, setbacks, habits, negative characteristics, and behaviors. The wisdom I've gained has matured me and that is where I've grown most. Finally, in the ides of my life, I've come to understand what it is to be a good man. —KM

Intimacy can be experienced with anything in creation. List here any instances or situations—people, places, pets—for which you felt an intimate, nonsexual connection:

The grass/clovers on the yard. I walk barefoot on the grass and just tune in to the earth. Just totally being there with it. I'm learning to become intimate with my own mind, by just being there with it, no judgment, nor identification, nor harboring any pessimistic thoughts. I really dig this intimacy. When I can, I sit in the sun and just be there with it. To me, it's intimacy with the sun. I find nothing outside myself. It's all in me. When I go deep and peel the layers back like an onion, I find nothing there but just "thereness." —JH

I have experienced intimacy with rivers, mountains, forests, and the sea. With wild animals who crossed my path and stopped briefly to acknowledge me. I have experienced bonding with a dog in a shelter sometimes instantly. I don't know where to find the muse but when it finds me it's like a reverie infused with reverence for humanity, for life, for love of all, great and small. When the muse finds me, it's a passionate thing; it makes me write or draw or paint or sing. It makes me wonder if inspiration is the greatest love of all. Intimacy is everywhere. Sexual intimacy is incredible but really quite rare. One of my teachers told me finding someone you can be completely honest with is a precious form of intimacy. It seems noteworthy that the word intimate can be defined as being very close or making something known indirectly; perhaps both at the same time. —GS

When I'm totally present honest, vulnerable, and transparent, I feel an intimate connection with that moment or situation, no matter where I'm at or what's going on around me. It's much deeper than any sexual experience; it's the intimacy that I am that enhances all other experiences. The feeling of intimacy does not come from outside of myself. It's the total connection to Self, "My true Self," in this moment, that creates the opportunity to experience intimacy. My longing has always been for love, true love, and I was going about it the wrong way. I was looking outside of myself for something to give me a sense of love and completeness, never finding any lasting results. I discovered the true Source of that completeness when I embraced Self. It was there that I became the love I sought. As my perspective changed, I went from lacking to having love in abundance. —WF

The grass and trees as I touched them with my fingertips. The flowers taken in with my eyes in full appreciation, like drinking water from a spring. A stranger who I let talk to me as I listened to them tell me about their life as they cried to me. My own thoughts being witnessed by myself, memories and imaginings in reverence to God, with prayer, art, music, song, and dance. Feelings of intimacy arise from within me, like a fountain, gently spouting up and out pure reflective water in all directions around me. Protecting me like a cloak yet bright and receptive; an internal fount of love water from my chest and crown, hands and feet. —TM

The desire to realize the deepest truth is not your ordinary kind of desire. It is a yearning for true and lasting freedom untouched by circumstance, experience, or state of mind. What do you think you need to do or accomplish to realize this freedom?

Through the alluring pull of life's play and the hands of fate bringing loss and pain, I've sought that which does not fade. Feelings of being in but a moment of stillness, glimpsing the infinite, I experience wisdom and realize truth in an instant. Devotedly looking upon the essence of such as the One Beloved, I rest surrendered in constant immersion of the ecstasy felt in true love. All that is needed to feel this "freedom" is to constantly adore, admire, and give all of oneself to this inner feeling and look upon such as the lover. I am the lover. The love. The Beloved. That which is searching is already present, finding itself again and again in the depths of devotion. This is the true Bhakti. The easiest path. Nothing is needed. It just is. Eternal. Living in love. Dying in love. Because of love, to love, as love. My heart, my soul, my essence. —KM