

Gangaji Podcast
Being Yourself
Episode 41
Host Barbara Denempont
The Fire of the Living Prayer
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BARBARA DENEMPONT, HOST: Hello my name is Barbara Denempont, the host of Gangaji's podcast *Being Yourself*. On January 2 at 11 am Pacific Time, Gangaji is going to hold an online public meeting. We would love for you to join us for this New Year's gathering. All are welcome and you can learn more and register for the event at [gangaji.org](http://www.gangaji.org), that's [gangaji.org](http://www.gangaji.org).

In the New Year we often reflect on what it is we truly want, especially on the spiritual journey we are on. What is a real prayer? Let's take a listen to this archival recording from Gangaji that speaks to our prayers and the source of those prayers.

(Excerpted from Lake Tahoe, CA, Retreat with Gangaji, July 22, 2001)

GANGAJI: When I was a little girl, I used to pray a lot. Actually, I still pray a lot. But the prayer was really simple and it was taught to me. You know, it's the, "Now you lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." It's a sweet little prayer. It's a child's prayer. It's really a prayer about staying alive and if you die that you go to heaven. Then, God bless Mama, God bless Daddy, God bless aunt so and so, uncle so and so.

So, I don't know if you all of you were taught to pray, but you are praying. A wish is a prayer. A desire is a prayer, only we call desires worldly and make them bad, if we're spiritual. If we're worldly we make prayers absurd, but they're the same. Whatever you are wishing for, whatever you're desiring, you are praying for. You want it and you're focusing your attention and your energy on getting it either from God or from your focus. But it's a power, it's a huge power, the power of desire and it's in every thing alive, but as human beings we can be quite aware of that desire power and where it leads our lives.

So, as I grew older my prayers changed, you know. I mean I might say now, "Let you lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep (spoken very fast). Okay God, please give me the right boyfriend. Please help me pass this test. Please let me get in this school. Let me get in the sorority. Please make me a good person. Please help me to be a good person. Please let so and so like me." Right? Yes, tell the truth now. (Laughter) If you weren't actually saying that in a prayer, you were wishing it, hoping it, praying it to, before bedtime.

So, it's very useful right now in this stage of your life which is really an extraordinary stage where your attention is turned to liberation, freedom, truth, to really see what it is you are praying for, what it is you are desiring, to be able to tell the truth to yourself about that. And even more important then is to, to examine what it is that which you are praying for will do for you? Because not all prayers are answered, even though I say often your prayer will be answered. If your prayer is really down to the essence of what it is your lifetime or your lifeline wants, it will be answered. That's for sure. I guarantee it. But if it's up in some tangent of that, so when I was sixteen, I was praying that a certain boy would like me and maybe he would and maybe he wouldn't, but what I was really praying for is that I would feel love. And when I, I can recall a major prayer I had that never got answered. I used to pray that my mother would stop drinking. Pray, I mean really pray, really put everything in it. But she had

a much stronger prayer (laughter): this kid leave me alone. But really what I was praying for, what I was hoping for, what I was desiring is to feel her love. And so, once I was an adult and could realize that that was, that she was not going to stop drinking, unless she chooses to, that my prayer is not strong enough for that, I could tell the truth about what it was I wanted there and what I wanted was her love. It's like, oh, it's much more simple. It's at the root of what the desired behavior would give me and then if I want her love? Well, what's stopping me from her love? No-thing. Though, it was then not up to her to do anything, it was totally up to me to open to her love as it appeared: drunk. Drunk. Oh, yes, there's love there also.

So that was a major revelation and it perhaps opened the gates of my mind so that when I could finally pray for a teaching or a teacher that would truly either reveal to me that my search was just a pipedream (Gangaji and others laugh), or that Truth is true and it's available, that I could actually realize what that prayer, where it is was coming from. Now it took meeting my teacher which I was praying for to point me back to the source of that prayer and the source of that prayer was and is the first glimpse, the first inkling, the first experience of oneself as larger than the body or the thoughts or the circumstances. My first inkling that I can recall was horrible. It was a terrible experience. It was an experience of my body disappearing. But in that experience, there is the truth. My body disappeared but I am and so the rest of my life was spent searching for something, I didn't know what, but something to reflect the truth or the falsity of that truth, that experience. And I, like you, wasted an enormous amount of time: so many avenues, going down so many dead ends, so many repeats. But through it all, like you, there is some force that is seeking itself, that desires itself, that is praying for itself. And whatever is thrown to that force by the mind: images of the self or a better self or an enlightened self or a happy self or a drunk-free mother self or a popular self or A-student self, whatever. It's not satisfied. They are just thrown back out, thrown back out. Not that, not that, not that. That's a *Neti Neti*: Not that, not that. Until there's a willingness to, to just open oneself to the ego of truth and say, "Come and take whatever you want," that whatever I have been praying for, whatever I have been wishing as object, has not satisfied this longing, this force, this true desire. And I would say that that has occurred for everyone here, or is occurring or is about to occur (laughter), because you are here.

This invitation from my teacher and his teacher to stop is an invitation to stop, not necessarily praying, but for praying for something. It's not to stop the desire, but to stop trying to feed the desire with something so the desire itself can rage in a fire that reveals the living prayer that consumes itself.

So, I meet you in that. I invite you into that and I bow to you in that. This is not a, it may be formulated as a prayer for escape but escape is a thing. It's a concept, a getting away from, leaving behind, getting to peace or quiet or enlightenment or love. The praying itself is the fire of no escape, is the ego that will come in and bring your heart out.

We serve each other by gathering together, by our individual and collective willingness, by our courage in letting go of all dogma and maybe especially the *Advaita Vedanta* dogma so there can be a moment of raw and naked exposure to oneself, of what is truly prayed for, what is truly desired, finally. If no-thing is received, if everything is received, what is still prayed for?

BARBARA: Thank you for listening and I hope you'll join Gangaji in the New Year for her online gathering on January 2. Again, visit gangaji.org to register. From all of us here at the Gangaji Foundation, we share our prayer: may all being awaken to itself.