

Gangaji Podcast
Being Yourself
Episode 55
Host Barbara Denempont
A Freedom Story
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GANGAJI: Kenny doesn't have a certificate of realization. He just knows without a shadow of a doubt that his heart has exploded and he has discovered that what he had thought to be true was only a thought.

BARBARA DENEMPONT, HOST: Hello and welcome to *Being Yourself, Self-Inquiry with Gangaji*. My name is Barbara Denempont. As I mentioned last month, 2023 is the Gangaji Foundation's thirtieth anniversary. As always, I want to bring you the very best from the archives and also this year, I want to celebrate our thirtieth anniversary. The way I want to do that is to highlight what the global community has been up to all these years and today I am going to feature the prison program – a program that began with a prisoner's letter asking Gangaji to offer Satsang behind bars. Currently there are six hundred and seventy men and women enrolled in Gangaji's monthly course by mail for prisoners called "Freedom Inside". This community has sustained and grown this program for prisoners recognizing that there is a true, shared benefit and this recording from 1997 really points to what is possible for all of us whether we are on the so-called inside or outside.

(Excerpted from Marin County, CA, Satsang with Gangaji, November 16, 1997)

GANGAJI: Welcome to Satsang. I got a fax this morning from Kenny. I know many of you know who Kenny is because throughout the years since I met him, I have spoken of him often and read his letters. And he showed up in Satsang in Boulder recently and spoke to the group. Kenny was with the first group of prisoners that I met with in Colorado. He spent a total of, I think, seventeen years of his life in prison. He is from the streets of Kansas City. And somehow, he was ready to hear what was said, was ready to receive at least to the level of checking it out and seeing, "Is this real, is this true?" And he checked it out and he found it to be real. And in that his heart exploded. And his journey through the last couple of years of prison, being transferred to several other prisons, and in his presence prisoners and guards being floored by the radiance that was emanating from him. It is quite exquisite and how beautiful it has been to share his letters with all of you in this privileged life that we lead, to receive Satsang from someone who has been in some of the worst situations imaginable in our time. He had said to me that prison was horrible and the challenges in prison were many. But he really felt like the biggest challenges for him would be once he hit the streets again. All the temptations of easy money would be there. When he came to Boulder, he shared how that the streets were no problem. And that his parole officer was calling him guru.

So, I want to read this fax to you. And really this fax is a tribute to Papaji because whatever wonderful things people can say about the powers of certain people, the majesty, the shakti, the clarity, the depth of realization, the humility, whatever can be said. The most precious that can be said is that person was able to pass what they had realized on, and on, and on. So this is how it has appeared in the form of Kenny.

Dearest Gangaji,

Where does Satsang begin? Where does Satsang end? Who is ready for Satsang? Who isn't ready for Satsang? It was about 10:30 A.M., November 11th, I was walking through my mother's room and the phone rang. Usually I allow it to ring because it is never for me. This morning it was. A school teacher of my niece's called and was very frustrated with my niece, Kara. It seems as if Kara goes to school ill prepared to study and when confronted by a teacher, she becomes indignant and rolls her eyes at them. Usually I just refer the party to my sister and go about my business. But as I said earlier, this call was for me. So I asked the teacher to send Kara to the principal's office. Gangaji, I had no idea as to what would transpire, but I just went to the school and picked her up. When she saw me, she was confused and fearful. She was expecting me to do as her Mom does. And that is to hurl threats and screams at her. It was increasingly clear that Satsang would be held today.

As we were riding along, I told her that all my troubles started at the very same school. I also let her know that she was understood by me, and that she was looking for love in all the wrong places. She would not find it in her mom, her boyfriend, her music, or with her friends in the mall. "What you are looking for Kara, is always in you and has always been there." We go to MacDonald's and have lunch. While eating I ask her to do an experiment for me. She agrees!! (And he has two explanation points). This is the opening. She agrees. That means she agrees to at least investigate. I says, "Kara look within your mind and locate a thought for me. Once you find one thought that has significance, release it. Let it go. Then tell me what remains." After some time she says, "Nothing." And then a smile appears. We spent some more time exploring this nothing and the awareness and the happiness that goes with it.

Satsang doesn't have to be held at church. Satsang doesn't need a large hall. Satsang can be held at MacDonald's amidst CNN news, amidst babies crying, amidst people having discussions about who knows what.

May all blessings be with you Gangaji. May all blessings be with the Sangha.

P.S. In the midst of me making a Simmons Beauty Rest mattress I had to stop and write this letter. My job is making mattresses for ten hours a night. Oh well, much love.

This is a sutra from the streets. From the streets of Kansas City to the streets of Marin County, of all places. Making mattresses for ten hours a day. And attending *Satsang* at MacDonald's. This is a sublime tribute to Papaji. Kenny doesn't have a certificate of realization. He just knows without a shadow of a doubt that his heart has exploded and he has discovered that what he thought to be true was only a thought, that who he believed himself to be was only a thought. And when he had the willingness to investigate that thought, to let it go, and to realize no-thing at all, he realized what is free. He doesn't have the vocabulary of Sanskrit, or *Advaita Vedanta*, or advanced psychological understanding. He just has his willingness to speak the truth. Wherever that might be. He has spoken it to very hard-core people in very hard-core situations. And he has spoken it now to a young person right at the point of choosing what her life will be.

I salute him in his willingness to investigate first of all, because he is not speaking from theory. He doesn't even know the theory of it. He is not speaking from belief. He is not speaking from some ancient text. He is speaking from the direct experience of himself. This is available for all who will investigate, for all who will see. And this is what Ramana and Papaji promised. That if you will investigate, if you will see for yourself, nothing can stop you

from seeing who you are. Destiny can't stop you, karma can't stop you, dharma can't stop you, genes can't stop you, environment can't stop you. Nothing. This is the power of investigation. Ramana's life was a guarantee of that. Papaji's life was a guarantee of that to the very end with his last breath. And your life also has the full potential to be a guarantee of that. For many others or for one other, it doesn't matter. Your life can be a guarantee of that. That's why you are here. You are not here to get any more teachings. You have plenty of teachings. Some are very valuable and some are worthless. Ultimately everything is worthless until you know the truth of who you are. When you know the truth, when you have directly experienced the truth of who you are, everything is worthwhile. Everybody is worthwhile. Every situation is worthwhile, every emotion, every thought, every mistake, every victory, every defeat.

I am happy to celebrate with you this truth that ultimately will not be denied. How lucky we are. For so long this precious truth was reserved for those who had extraordinary intelligence, or extraordinary life situations, or extraordinary power. Buddha, Christ, Ramana, people unknown, saints and sages from all religions from all areas. So they did the work. Now people like you and me, okay intelligence. You know, some peaks, some valleys. But basically ordinary. It is available. This extraordinary truth of who one is, is available to ordinary hearts and minds. What luck. What luck.

BARBARA: Yes, what luck and such beauty and generosity. I am so moved by this community for sustaining this program for the last thirty years. So many lives have been touched both on the inside and the outside.

You might be interested to know that Kenny, now seventy-four years old, continues his service to love. His particular passion right now is teaching yoga to at-risk kids, especially young men. I have put his contact information in the program notes for you. And if you would like to learn more about the prison program and how you can help sustain it for the next thirty years just visit the Gangaji Foundation's website at Gangaji.org that's Gangaji.org.

Thank you for listening. I am Barbara Denempont. Until next time.