

Gangaji Podcast
Being Yourself
Episode 58
Host Barbara Denempont
Recognizing the Subtleties of Ego
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GANGAJI: We have been trained to seek enlightenment, but if you stop that seeking and discover who you are, enlightenment finds that, follows that, seeks that, because that is irresistible.

BARBARA DENEMPONT, HOST: Hello and welcome to *Being Yourself, Self-Inquiry with Gangaji*. My name is Barbara Denempont. This month I have a wonderful exchange to share with you. I love it because it is so relatable for all of us. The starting point of this very full conversation is self-consciousness and by that, I mean the self-consciousness that can make us feel awkward or uncomfortable. That begins a powerful inquiry into what I want to call a deconstruction of identification: identification with the body or sensations or thoughts and the images we have of ourselves – everything that makes up who we think we are. It is brilliant that it begins with the simple desire to be spontaneous but where this conversation ends up is, is wow. So, I encourage you to follow on with this inquiry with Gangaji and this man who bravely sat in the hot seat for all of us.

(Excerpted from Santa Barbara, CA, Satsang with Gangaji, February 3, 2001)

PARTICIPANT: I can't handle chocolate anyway, so...

GANGAJI: It is too good, huh? Too sweet.

PARTICIPANT: I can't believe my hand just went up in the air, and that I am actually here.

GANGAJI: Isn't that beautiful that there is some force that is not pre-thought, that actually got you here. Whatever you are telling yourself about how or why you got here, there is some force that got us all here. That is expressing Itself through each of us. The invitation is to consciously with your mind surrender into that expression, and your hand going up, and somehow this voice saying "yes", is just the play of that. Whatever nervousness, whatever anticipation is part of the beauty of that, the mystery of that.

PARTICIPANT: Plus the invitation to fail was too inviting to pass up.

GANGAJI: Uh-oh, do you fail well?

PARTICIPANT: The worse you fail the better if failure is the goal.

GANGAJI: Unless failure is for you a success, because there is a group of people who are inverted that way. Where to succeed is to fail, do you understand? It is a kind of like a just a plant, you know, that grows down into the ground rather than up. You recognize yourselves if I am speaking to you, then your assignment is to succeed at being who you are, not your stories of failure.

PARTICIPANT: I have seen you a number times before, and I always have gone like this, you know. And I keep saying, "Well, next time I see her, I will be a little more enlightened, and I will be more comfortable."

GANGAJI: Yes, I am happy you didn't wait

PARTICIPANT: I realize...

GANGAJI: Truly, this is the major strategy of mind. "Well, I need to accumulate a little more, I need to get rid a little more." That is the future, that is the supreme strategy, in the future, "When I will be ready." You are here now, and who knows if we will ever meet again. We don't know that. That is not knowable, but it is possible for this meeting to reveal what is closer to you than your own enlightenment. That your enlightenment will follow. We have been trained to seek enlightenment, but if you stop that seeking and discover who you are, enlightenment finds that, follows that, seeks that, because that is irresistible. So hello. It is easy, isn't it? Being here. I mean, getting here maybe is not easy.

PARTICIPANT: Getting here is the hard part.

GANGAJI: But you got here, so if you are still re-playing the getting here, just stop. You are here. You will get to leave soon enough, just be here. Then you see how easy, and in that there is a deeper truth that can be revealed effortlessly, causelessly, naturally.

PARTICIPANT: The seeming obstacle is self-consciousness.

GANGAJI: What does that mean, self-consciousness? Consciousness of what?

PARTICIPANT: The apparent self.

GANGAJI: What is that?

PARTICIPANT: Well, it is a concept.

GANGAJI: Yes, and what is the concept, what goes into that concept that we call "myself"? What are its components? Because there is a different concept from the chair, the table, the rug, "Myself, whoah." Some charge here, so let's see what is it composed of?

PARTICIPANT: Just a thought.

GANGAJI: A thought, isn't there an image with it also?

PARTICIPANT: I suppose

GANGAJI: Well, check it out. You don't, do you have an image of yourself? Do you remember looking into a mirror and seeing a body and saying, "That is me."

PARTICIPANT: Yes, but it is the psychological image.

GANGAJI: Yes, but let's get, let's start at the very basis, because that can get jumped over into the more complicated realms. If we start at the very basis and question the validity of that, there might not be no psychological realms to deal with. So you walk by a shop window, you see an image, and you say, "That is me." Right? You remember from seeing previous images, "That's me." And when you think of who you are, isn't that image there?

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

GANGAJI: Yes. Very good to see that, very important. I don't want you to do anything with that, that is not the problem. And with that image there is an attached history. Right?

PARTICIPANT: Yes, and a concern about how it is projected, how it is perceived.

GANGAJI: A future, that is right. So let's say a past, and a present, and a future, some negative, some positive, some good, some bad, some human, some transcendent. Right, a big mix. And where is the problem now, self-consciousness is...

PARTICIPANT: There is no problem, really.

GANGAJI: But don't say that if there really is a problem. So if you have learned there is no problem, that does not count.

PARTICIPANT: The problem is only when I let the self-consciousness stop me from acting spontaneously.

GANGAJI: And who is the "you" that acts spontaneously?

PARTICIPANT: It is just spontaneous action.

GANGAJI: Is there an image with that?

PARTICIPANT: I call it the spiritual ego.

GANGAJI: Yes, so I am not interested in feeding your spiritual ego.

PARTICIPANT: Right, but I recognize that too. When there is some kind of glimpse of something and then the story that gets developed around that.

GANGAJI: Exactly, it is still an off-shoot of this thought/image/sensation of who I am. Right? Does this relate to you? Does this make sense to you? Is this too abstract? Can you find it in your own mind? This who you think you are, which has to do with a face or a body remembered. Has to do with sensations, and history, and evaluations, these are the reference points to who I think I am. And the awareness of all of that, where does that fit in?

PARTICIPANT: The awareness is outside of that.

GANGAJI: Yes, and do you find awareness inside this body?

PARTICIPANT: The body is a locus of some kind.

GANGAJI: There is awareness in your body, isn't there?

PARTICIPANT: Yes, yes.

GANGAJI: And there is awareness outside the body, that which is aware of the body. That inside which is aware: sensations, or the light, the radiance, the longing. So inside and outside then, I would say, is the obstruction, that is all. Inside and outside.

PARTICIPANT: That is where all of the suffering arises from.

GANGAJI: So where is the boundary between inside and outside?

PARTICIPANT: Well, it's...

GANGAJI: I am asking you, where is the boundary between inside and outside.

PARTICIPANT: It is the reflex, reflexive thought of "me", thought of a self, a separate self.

GANGAJI: Where is that occurring? Inside Awareness or outside Awareness?

PARTICIPANT: Inside Awareness.

GANGAJI: And there is awareness inside that is aware? The awareness of that thought, is that outside that thought?

PARTICIPANT: No.

GANGAJI: Excellent, that is the truth. This battle between thought and awareness, between God and humans, between Atman and Brahman, has to stop, because it is this battle that is replayed in every family, in every tribe, in every nation all over this planet. At least in the human species, probably most animal species. This battle is based on the supposed reality of inside and outside based on, I would say, flesh, this body. Because that is an experience of the body, that it is separate from other bodies, that it is separate from other things that have body. There is nothing wrong with that experience, that experience is actually quite delightful. But when it is assumed to be the absolute truth, it is terrifying, horrifying. Spiritual search is usually about escaping from myself. This invitation is to have no escape, to not escape into spiritual knowledge, to not escape into worldly knowledge, to not escape outside, to not escape inside. This invitation has to do with inquiry. Such as, where is inside? What is the boundary, really, between inside and outside? You see awareness here, you see awareness there. You see awareness from here, you see awareness from there. Do you follow this? If you tell the truth about reality of boundaries, you will see, as you are telling, that there is appearance of boundaries, there is experience of boundaries, but when investigated, awareness, Itself, has no boundary. When awareness investigates Itself, when subject investigates subject without making subject/object, then there is no subject/object. Then there is just Awareness meeting Itself, like this, here. Do you follow this?

PARTICIPANT: My practice has been to not oppose anything, to allow, to accept. I fail at that often.

GANGAJI: Yes, because you make it a practice, and then that practice is someone not opposing some thing. You see? And you cannot practice this twenty-four hours a day. And so you fail, you are exhausted. But if you take it out of the realm of practice and just investigate once, completely what is reality, what is really opposing what? What is really in opposition to what? Really. Not what I think, although it is very important to see what you think. Not what I experience, although it is important to tell the truth about what you experience. But what is the underlying reality? So if you never have an opportunity to practice this again, then this is a moment of no escape. Right?

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

GANGAJI: You will somehow be cursed or blessed in never being able to do this practice again. Then what is this moment worth?

PARTICIPANT: It is not a question of worth.

GANGAJI: What is it a question of?

PARTICIPANT: Well, the senses, the bottom drops out.

GANGAJI: Right now the bottom has dropped out?

PARTICIPANT: Well, there is the sense when you let go of the practice.

GANGAJI: Right now. Right now.

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

GANGAJI: I am not interested in speculation, but right now, has the bottom dropped out?

PARTICIPANT: Well it is kind of trippy being up here in front of so many people.

GANGAJI: Trippy, that is a good word for it. Kind of trippy, that is why we used to love to trip, right? Because the bottom would drop out, and pretty soon you are like this, you know, "If I can just get the bottom to drop out one more time, one more time." Or, "If I could practice the bottom dropping out in my straight life, then that would be it." But this like this maintenance that just won't happen. Yes, so what we call "trippy" referring to when the, what we had thought was real is seen to be unreal. What we thought was solid is seen to be fluid. What we thought were boundaries are seen to be just experiences and sensations. So I am not interested in your having a trippy experience, you will or you won't it doesn't matter. But what those trippy experiences point to is how the mind constructs reality. Which is what the first gentleman was speaking of, how the mind creates reality. And in that creates time, and reconstructs reality. Really, that is what it is. How the mind reconstructs reality, and in that there is time, there is falsehood, there is a wobble, there is a lie. That is called "reincarnation". Because it is believed to be reality and it comes up short, there is a desire to construct reality better. That is called "reincarnation". I am not speaking about the Eastern view of reincarnation, I am speaking about what happens to you in a twenty-four-hour period, or a six-hour period, or an hour. "Reincarnate, reincarnate, this time I will get.... Oh, I regressed back to reptilian. Oh, I have to really work to get harder, harder, better, better."

All of that is a sophisticated strategy to avoid simply stopping creation, right now. Not making a better creation, simply stopping the activity of creating. Nothing wrong with the activity of creating, it is supremely entertaining for a while, for a while. The best theater, if it is the same theater with just change of costumes, and change of locale is after thousands of years, millions of years, just doesn't do it for you. And this is where you are now. You are somehow tired of your creation. It may even be a good creation, but it is just not full of life. It is just not it, yet. And most of you in this room have learned how to create better, have learned how to be more efficient, have learned what works and what doesn't work. It doesn't work to be bad, to be evil, there is only suffering in that. It doesn't work to hate, there is only suffering in that. And you have learned that to one degree or another, even though there are certainly remnants of that creation continuing.

So I am acknowledging that that has already occurred, and that for some mystery in this lifetime, appearing in this particular creation, of this particular reincarnation, there is an invitation to stop. To not create who you are. To simply be, with no idea or memory of who or what that is. To be Yourself. Not to be in opposition to who you think you are, that is just a rebellious version. You have obviously tried that, that is a very useful tempering device. Just to be. Then to see how vast this "just" is. Then to see how full this emptiness really is. Then to see, for yourself, if who you are has a beginning. For that the mind must begin the exploration. This is not to get rid of the mind, this is to give the mind some worthy work. That the mind is very skilled at recreating the same old soap opera. But tell the truth, you are bored with it. Even though you hope, maybe, if there is some new players brought in, it wouldn't be so boring. Maybe if you could just rewrite this part of it, you would be excited. Well rewrite it. See! You will see that that rewriting is based on past moments that are believed to be who you are and what your life is. That is very complex. That is the psychological realm that is very complex, and beautiful in its own right. Deeper than that, before that, here, right now, that that is in, and that is in that, is the absolute simplicity of peace, of what we call "love". A fulfillment needing no title or outcome for its fulfillment. Resolution of millions of years. Without those millions of years even existing.

You are welcome. People who have practiced a lot, I always just want to tickle a little bit. Aha, that's good. Because some people get their practice so together, they lose the ability to

be tickled, but this is good. There is hope then. We have made this spiritual search such serious business. Business. Serious business, and it is serious. It is the upmost seriousness, but it is light, and free, and joyous, and open in its seriousness.

BARBARA: This conversation reminds me of the immediacy of self-inquiry. What a gift that we don't have to postpone being ourselves, thank God. That is the gift of self-inquiry.

Now, before I go, I want to mention that we will be reaching out to the community this month to ask for your support of our prison program. It is growing every month. We had twenty-eight prisoners enroll just in the first two weeks of May. That makes it well over seven hundred in Gangaji's course for prisoners and we are passionate about responding to every request. So we would love for more members of the community like you to become monthly donors so we can faithfully respond to every request that comes from the so-called inside.

I'm going to put a link in the notes that will introduce you to some of the participants and their corresponders and allow you to know more about this program and the impact you can have on the lives of prisoners. You have a simple way to shine a light in one of the darkest places you can find. So I hope you will consider that. And, if you want to find out more about Gangaji and the programs, or maybe you are ready to donate to the prison program, just visit Gangaji.org that's Gangaji.org.

As always, I am profoundly grateful that you are listening and I look forward to the next time.