

Gangaji Podcast
Being Yourself
Episode 84
Host Barbara Denempont
The Choice to Suffer (or not)
Released July 17, 2025
www.gangaji.org

GANGAJI: Being a good student is essential until you make being a good student your form of suffering.

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

GANGAJI: Then you have to be willing to recognize you are the worst student.

PARTICIPANT: I am the worst student. [group laughter].

BARBARA DENEMPONT, HOST: Hello and welcome to *Being Yourself, Self-Inquiry with Gangaji*. My name is Barbara Denempont.

A few days ago, Gangaji held her monthly online meeting and there were some great exchanges, and those conversations inspired me today to choose this piece from the archives. It was recorded in Marin back in 2015 and it's really about how do we suffer? The how? How do we pick it up? How do we put it down? How is it actually possible to stop suffering? I think the beauty of a piece like this is that we can see ourselves—not in a judgmental way—but in a way that really supports us in putting down the story, and the story about the story.

(Excerpted from: Fallen Leaf Lake Retreat, El Dorado County, CA, June 1, 2015.

PARTICIPANT: So the story has become lighter. That's the good news. I may have learned to detach a little bit. Not that it has changed on the surface—things still happen. But they don't seem to be so . . .

GANGAJI: Dramatic.

PARTICIPANT: ...so pertinent anymore.

GANGAJI: Yes. Good.

PARTICIPANT: I learned to not mind so much.

GANGAJI: How did you learn that?

PARTICIPANT: By Grace. I cannot explain it otherwise.

GANGAJI: That's good.

PARTICIPANT: I puzzle why I struggled for so long.

GANGAJI: Yes, it's puzzling, isn't it? [laughs] Yes, it's a mystery too.

PARTICIPANT: Yes, and I have to actually forgive myself every time I puzzle, because it feels like I wasted so much time being so engrossed, you know, in all the dramas.

GANGAJI: Yes, and you don't want to waste another moment being engrossed about being engrossed.

PARTICIPANT: Yes, yes. [group laughter] [Gangaji laughs] So, but a few things are happening to in order to tell the truth, so I want to continue with what the gentleman from Israel has mentioned, which is so if you're noticing that there is still some search for some kind of completeness . . . and now it's not so much into grasping from others—although some of that may still be there—it's maybe from enlightenment from within yourself, so in a way there is still some kind of battlefield going on—not so much on the outside, but more inside my own head.

GANGAJI: It's good to tell the truth, definitely. That's resolve is to tell the truth.

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

GANGAJI: So what do you want?

PARTICIPANT: I want peace.

GANGAJI: And if you got peace, what would that give you?

PARTICIPANT: Just peace. Peace would be its own reward. There's an agitation, a tension, a constant tension to grasp for peace. [laughs]

GANGAJI: For peace as this object.

PARTICIPANT: Yes, or for. . .

GANGAJI: Therefore, if you stop:

PARTICIPANT: [overtalking] "Who am I? Who am I? Who am I?" There is this madness going on in my own head.

GANGAJI: Yes. Do you want to be sane? But sane doesn't necessarily mean peaceful all the time.

PARTICIPANT: No, no.

GANGAJI: So, what will you do for this?

PARTICIPANT: [Laughs] What will I do?

GANGAJI: To get what you want? We know what we do to get what we want in different realms.

PARTICIPANT: It's like I'm digging a lot inside now.

GANGAJI: Digging, yes.

PARTICIPANT: It feels like I'm constantly digging . . .

GANGAJI: Yes, yes.

PARTICIPANT: ... just trying to be a good student.

GANGAJI: Why don't you stop that? Yes, you have been a good student. It's true. And now that you're the best student, put it all aside.

PARTICIPANT: Well, there is the other thought that says, "You have to let it go. Let it go." Same, it's the same madness. "Oh, you've got to let it all go."

GANGAJI: That thought, "You've got to let it go," is still based on being a good student.

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

GANGAJI: So let's go to the good student. In being a good student, what's that covering?

PARTICIPANT: Not knowing anything.

GANGAJI: If you're a bad student. If you know the wrong things, if you fail . . .

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

GANGAJI: What does that evoke?

PARTICIPANT: I don't know anything. All I'm left with then, then I don't know anything.

GANGAJI: But there is some emotional component that has to be seen.

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

GANGAJI: It's covering something.

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

GANGAJI: What is that?

PARTICIPANT: "I don't know anything," means "Then what worth are you if you if you...?"

GANGAJI: What worth are you? Is this familiar? This is the disease, this is the human disease. It comes from conditioning, and trying to be something that somebody tells us we should be.

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

GANGAJI: The greatest teachers, trying to be what they tell us . . . or at least trying to be our idea of what they are telling us.

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

GANGAJI: It's covering . . . why not just be worthless? Since you are worthless. Just be it immediately. That's called success in failure. [group laughter] Is it possible in this moment, to really embody . . . ?

PARTICIPANT: There is a resistance to it.

GANGAJI: Yes.

PARTICIPANT: As if, "No, I can't accept that because I've been told I'm not worthless . . . ?"

GANGAJI: You've been told you're worthless, and you're not worthless. You've been told it all.

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

GANGAJI: That's right.

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

GANGAJI: You know we like to be of worth . . .

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

GANGAJI: And that's what good students get, they get worth. Gold stars, and proof that they have worth. And I'm a good student too. I think being a good student is essential, until you make being a good student your form of suffering.

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

GANGAJI: Then you have to be willing to recognize you're the worst student.

PARTICIPANT: I am the worst student. [group laughter]

GANGAJI: And what is . . . how is that? How is it to be the worst student? It looks pretty good, actually.

PARTICIPANT: It's not that bad. There's an acceptance here now.

GANGAJI: Then where is this judgment of good student, bad student? Where is it when you are willing to be what you don't want to be? What you're trying not to be? Where is it? Do you find it? Is it just with me in this moment, or is it non-existent? Is that the illusion?

PARTICIPANT: I pick it up. I'll pick it up.

GANGAJI: But you're picking up an illusion. And you don't want to waste any more time picking up illusions.

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

GANGAJI: So the way you can discover directly that it's an illusion is try it on as if it were real. And that's what we just did here. So be the worst student. And you were

and you were laughing. It's not so bad, because it has no power. It's a... the magic trick is exposed in that moment.

PARTICIPANT: So if I'm not trying to be anything . . .

GANGAJI: Yes. Then what?

PARTICIPANT: Then everything collapses somehow.

GANGAJI: Yes, and you let it collapse in this moment. It's a good place to let everything collapse.

PARTICIPANT: All I feel is love.

GANGAJI: [Both laugh] And it's not because I said "If you let it all collapse, you will feel love." You discovered for yourself.

PARTICIPANT: It's less scary now.

GANGAJI: Yes, it was scary to let it all collapse. Yes.

PARTICIPANT: I'm not crying. It's not bad crying.

GANGAJI: I know. It's good, it's beautiful. Tears of love?

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

GANGAJI: So was it worth it being willing to be a bad student, to feel this love? Who would expect the bad student would win? [Group laughter] in this battle, in this personal drama. Who would expect that? The last place we think to look. What's happening now?

PARTICIPANT: I'll pick it up again . . .

GANGAJI: I don't say that.

PARTICIPANT:... the moment I sit down.

GANGAJI: I don't say that.

PARTICIPANT: The moment I move away.

GANGAJI: Why would you do that?

PARTICIPANT: I'm already doing it.

GANGAJI: Then stop.

[laughs]

GANGAJI: So you're telling the truth, the resolve, you tell the truth, and then you have a choice. Pick it up, if you like. See what it gives you. Maybe you can find something good in it, or drop it.

PARTICIPANT: It's a sense of perpetuation, something gets perpetuated.

GANGAJI: We pulled the plug on it, you and I up here.

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

GANGAJI: So in order for it to be perpetuated, you have to like lug it back in. And so that's the addiction.

PARTICIPANT: The addiction, yeah.

GANGAJI: The addiction to suffering.

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

GANGAJI: And so we just uncovered your particular way. Some people have that way, and some people have versions of that, a little different. But with any addiction, it feels like you just have to do it, you are compelled. But you saw up here . . .

PARTICIPANT: It doesn't feel like an addiction to suffering, it feels like an addiction to 'me-ness' . . .

GANGAJI: That's suffering.

PARTICIPANT: ...'I-ness.'

GANGAJI: [Both laugh] And it's the same, isn't it? [group laughter] Because there you are, "I'm good me. I'm bad me."

PARTICIPANT: Yes, yes. But I guess something veils that.

GANGAJI: Yes.

PARTICIPANT: At times I see that with the 'I' and the 'me' and the whole . . .

GANGAJI: Here's a simpler thing. You just can tell the truth. "Am I suffering?" "Oh, I'm suffering." And you said "That's maybe because I'm still looking for something. . .

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

GANGAJI: Hum. "And what will I be if I get what I'm looking for?" And it got uncovered as something good. "I'll be at peace, I'll be at peace because I will be . . . I will have made it, I will have done it."

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

GANGAJI: Yes. So I am saying that hasn't worked. It works to a certain point, but it won't work for full freedom, because full freedom is not an object that you can acquire, like a gold star. It's really free, and you discovered that in being willing to be the opposite of what you idealize yourself to be, to get what you want.

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

GANGAJI: Is that clear enough now?

PARTICIPANT: Yes, of course.

GANGAJI: So you just tell the truth. "Ha. I'm suffering. I didn't know that. I wonder when that happened. I wonder when that plug got plugged in?" Okay. And I'm not saying you psychologize it, or you process it, or you fix it. Just tell the truth, and then you can see, if you're suffering, it's your ... perhaps very subtly the addiction has been picked up. "You have touched it and it has bit you." As Papaji would say, he always used to say, "If you touch it, the story, it will bite you. Wait and see. Touch it, see. Discover for yourself." Then you know this, but you still trust that you are compelled to touch it. I trust that you aren't compelled to touch it. That you have proof that you, you don't have to touch it. So I'm arguing your case, and you're arguing against yourself. Why don't you join my side? [group laughter]

PARTICIPANT: Yes. So, it comes back to stopping the search. Because for me . . .

GANGAJI: Yes.

PARTICIPANT: ...the search is the suffering. No matter how in the past was searching for the family, and the kids, and the mini-van, and the jewelries, and now it's the search for something . . .

GANGAJI: It's bigger, yes.

PARTICIPANT: It's a bigger search. So every time I search, I suffer.

GANGAJI: And so you're searching . . . the search actually begins after the suffering is already in place.

PARTICIPANT: Yes. Yes.

GANGAJI: Because we don't want to suffer, and you've tasted the clarity of not suffering. But that is how you can see it, "Ah, I'm suffering." So then you can say "How did I betray myself?" "What triggered me?" "What did . . ." But you don't . . .

that's fine, if you like, but first recognize that you're doing, you're searching for something rather than stopping everything, letting everything collapse.

PARTICIPANT: And what if there's fear about ...?

GANGAJI: That's fine.

PARTICIPANT:... the after, the rest?

GANGAJI: Let's assume—as skillful means—there will be fear, and then fear is a confirming sign. It's not the demon. [Both laugh] It's good news. It's like “Whoa, I'm terrified. That's really good news,” rather than “Oh, I'm terrified, I've got to start searching again.” [participant laughs] Right? That's, that's then the unraveling.

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

GANGAJI: I'm really pleased to speak to you and to see you like this. I remember our last conversation really well.

PARTICIPANT: Yes, it's been a year. I feel bad about it being a year. Still, still searching after a year.

GANGAJI: Yeah, that's a mystery too, but really do you look back—and this is how your report started. Look at how you have, how so much . . . [Inaudible: They talked on top of each other here. 0:16:05] So much entangled you. So much. So it's trusting that lightness, rather than trusting your habit of addiction. Because you know addiction is extremely challenging. Everything you are saying, you have to plug it in or . . . in fact you started by saying “I will plug it in.” That's already trusting the addiction.

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

GANGAJI: Yeah. You're very bright.

PARTICIPANT: Thank you.

GANGAJI: Isn't this useful when people are willing to come up and speak, and you hear yourself up here. I mean, isn't this the way each and every mind works? We simplified it. And we, this kind of allegiance that we have, that was given to us, to our suffering—which is our conditioning—this is what's killing the planet. Not to mention our lives, our individual lives, but our collective life as a species, and our home.

BARBARA:

Wow, what a powerful way to end this exchange. What a potent reminder of what it truly means for our lives and others when we are willing to end our story of suffering, and when we are not.

So, I am so ,happy to bring you these materials from the archives and I was mentioning the webcast earlier, and I want to invite you to join us in that monthly gathering with Gangaji, and with a community from over forty-four plus countries. We gather online, there's a forum and there's a media library that you can just dive into. There's a lot of rich resources there. We are adding new content there all the time, including: we just added the Episode Three of *Finding Home* to the media library. It's this six-part series about Gangaji's life and Episode Three is, this time in Gangaji's life that is the lead-up to her meeting with Papaji. It's called *Glimpsing Reality*.

So, I invite you to come and take advantage of all of that for your spiritual inquiry, as well as everything that is available too you on the website: gangaji.org, that's g-a-n-g-a-j-i dot o-r-g.

Thank you for listening today. My name is Barbara Denempont. Until next time.