

Finding Home

Episode #5

A Raging Fire

Transcript

HILLARY [00:09]: Welcome back to the continuation of Gangaji's life story. This chapter follows the unexpected aftermath of meeting her beloved teacher Papaji in April of 1990 – a meeting that would end up impacting lives well beyond her own in the years to come. As we pick up her story here in Episode 5, she had yet to experience what she refers to as a thunderclap – a complete collapse of the scaffolding of her ego. On the heels of that, she was suddenly thrown into the role of a teacher. And while it may have looked somewhat effortless from the outside, the experience for her was very much a solitary journey.

GANGAJI [00:57]: And I, even now, I really am challenged in how to speak about it. I don't experience it now, but I did for some years there, where I was just in a raging fire.

HILLARY [1:10]: It's truly a story that's hard to tell in any accurate way, but I'll do my best as we move into the second-to-last episode of *Finding Home*.

Gangaji and Eli had just returned from their time with Papaji in India. She was certain she had made a mistake by leaving. During her first night home, she experienced Maui, the place she had once thought of as paradise, as more of a hell realm.

GANGAJI [01:46]: And I was up all night, sort of thrashing around. And then there was a moment where I remembered him saying, yes, leave, yes, go, leave, and then see if you could leave. See if it's possible. And so that got my attention and sort of pulled me out of this suffering trance.

And I remembered him saying, what's truly here is always here. And so in this torture I was feeling, because I had a narrative that went with it, which is "we should have stayed, we shouldn't have left." So I just stopped that narrative, and I felt the pain in my heart of feeling like we had left, and I just opened to see: did we really leave?

Is what he said true? Is what is always here, here? And it is. And I saw that, and it just burst out, and it was like, the leaving was as important as the going. Because I had to see that it's...that without both of them you don't get to realize what is permanent, what doesn't come and go.

HILLARY [02:58]: Meeting Papaji didn't automatically result in her transformation into a teacher. It was more complex than that. The healing center that she and Eli had planned didn't end up working out. She no longer had the passion to resume her acupuncture practice. Also in the mix was Papaji's concern about the spiritual teacher Andrew Cohen, who ironically, was her first indirect connection to Papaji before she left for India. Ultimately her realization of what does not come and go did not lead to a light bulb moment when it came to her life path.

When you're in this space of...your life, whole life changed over the course of being in India with Papaji. And then you come back to this place where you had been in this state of disillusionment because of these plans that you had when you moved to Maui were gone. Is there anything particular about that period of time?

GANGAJI [03:59]: Well, I still didn't know how my life was going to be used or how I was going to make a living. I didn't know that, you know, Papaji hadn't said, "This will be your job."

He had said If someone feels something and asks you what's happening, you just share your direct experience. And he had sent me to speak to those people in California that the teaching that Andrew was giving was not his teaching. But that didn't mean that I was going to be a teacher. I just meant I had a mission for Papaji. So I wasn't holding it that way, I wasn't considering that, and I still didn't know what I would do, but I didn't need to know in that moment. I was just really trusting the unknown. But my identity was still intact. So it was me having this wonderful experience of me meeting Papaji. And even that's not exactly right. I mean, I would say that

today, but it had different meaning. “Me” was more material than fluid. And that was about to change.

HILLARY [05:13]: Less than a month after returning from India, Eli was offering one of his retreats at Esalen. As usual, Gangaji joined him, but not as a teacher. One day, they were sitting outside, taking in the view of the ocean when something happened.

GANGAJI [05:31]: Esalen is a beautiful place right on the ocean and you..you're looking, it's on the cliffs so you're looking down at the ocean; you can hear it and just the air is purified by that ocean and it was just a moment of like awake meditateness, not meditating, but just nature, in nature, and experiencing the oneness of nature and thinking of Papaji and remembering being with him and we were talking about Papaji and the great good luck at meeting him and how astounding all of the failures that we had had before meeting him, how perfect that was, or we never could have gone to India. And there was just this moment of, it's like I can't even capture it now because it really hasn't ended. It was a thunderclap – is the way I've expressed it in the past.

It was—something was just “pop,” and I was right-side up. I was not upside down searching for myself in the leaves and the litter and the roots. It was like “poof.” I was right-side up and I could see. I could see the sky and the ocean and the ground and I wasn't separate from any of it. I was seeing myself. This is only in reflection; there were no words, it was just space, and seeing that that space had always been here, that that had always been who I am, that that's what I was always looking for, even though I described it and understood it and imagined it in many different ways, maybe every different way from that. It was just self-apparent.

So it was a liberation that I wasn't held back by anything I had imagined, separate from me that could hold me back, even if I was imagining it was myself holding me back. That was all just... just a story, a tale told by an idiot, signifying nothing.

And Eli saw it. He saw it in my face. I wasn't expressing it. I was just experiencing it. But he saw it. And he caught it from me. And we were just like looking at each other with these eyes that are so big...

And, ahhh! And he immediately wanted to call Papaji, he said. And he did. We went down and found a phone and called Papaji. And he said, "She's done it, Papaji, she's done it. She's done it!" And he put me on and Papaji was there and he said, "Gangaji." And I couldn't speak. It was just, "Papaji!" It was just this overflowing – what can be said?

HILLARY [08:53]: *What happened next, to me, exemplifies the unplanned nature of your life, which probably reflects the unplanned nature of our lives.*

The next morning you go and you and Eli are going to have breakfast, where everybody else is having breakfast. And there's a woman sitting at the same table with you, but down a little bit. And she says what to you?

GANGAJI [09:18]: Well, she came over and got closer to me and she said, "Can I say something to you?"

And I said, "Sure." She said, "I just feel some burning when I'm close to you, some really, some burning and I don't know what it is. Do you know what it is?" And that was so interesting because that, Papaji had said that to me. When I had said, I don't know what to say to these people that he was sending me to speak to.

And he said, "Just speak from your own experience and wait till a question was asked, and you'll see, somebody will catch fire." You don't have to do anything, is what he was telling me. Just share your own experience. And so when she said that – Eileen – said that, I said, well, my teacher said something like this might happen, so I'm happy to share with you what I've experienced.

And we decided to meet later in the day at the big house where we were having the group meetings, and where Eli and I were staying. And so we met, just the two of us, and so we sat together for a while, and then she just asked me some questions – I don't remember the questions now, but I did what Papaji said: I just shared from my own experience. I didn't try to teach her something, and she was getting ready to make a serious commitment to this three-year meditation, solitary meditation that the Buddhists do, Tibetan Buddhists do. And I didn't want to be responsible for her not doing that, but I felt like I had to tell her my experience.

And so we did talk about Tibetan Buddhism because that had been a major experience of mine. And I talked about Papaji and what I was experiencing, and she just caught fire. She was my first student.

HILLARY [11:10]: *Student number one.*

GANGAJI [11:11]: Yeah. So she told some other people about her experience and they wanted that too, you know, they were interested. "Well, I've noticed something about Toni too. I'd like to get closer..." And so I said, "Sure this is what Papaji said – it would take care of itself." So maybe there were four or five that came the next day and they met in chairs and if they had a question, I just shared my experience, primarily of being with Papaji, and what I had just experienced at Esalen. And then the next night we did the same thing, maybe fifteen people, and then twenty people and twenty-five people, and then all of a sudden people from other groups started coming over and I just surrendered.

STUDENT [11:58]: I don't want to yearn anymore. Yearning is painful.

GANGAJI [12:00]: Yes, of course. This whole thing is about ending yearning.

STUDENT [12:04]: Well, so far so good. We've come up to leaps and abyssees and that's what I want. That whole...okay, I understand that. But that doesn't take care of the yearning.

GANGAJI [12:16]: It does if you live it.

STUDENT [12:19]: Then I have, there's a piece I don't know.

GANGAJI [12:22]: No, no, there's no piece you don't know. That's the same rap about, "there's more to know."

STUDENT [12:29]: Do you have yearning?

GANGAJI [12:30]: No.

STUDENT [12:31]: Why do I have yearning?

GANGAJI [12:34]: Well, there's a piece you aren't willing to jump into. It's not about knowing.

STUDENT [12:40]: Well, then it's about finding out what that piece is.

GANGAJI [12:43]: No, no. It's not about finding out what that piece is.

STUDENT [12:45]: It's not about finding out...

GANGAJI [12:46]: Because it's not about "what." And it's not about "why." Remember?

STUDENT [12:49]: Always, or seldom, but I understand that.

GANGAJI [12:52]: Yes. So you do understand that. So you can trust that, and actually, whether it's yearning, whether it's fear, despair, whatever it is, you dive into it and discover if it's real or not.

HILLARY [13:09]: *When you have this really profound experience that this whole structure that you had grown up thinking – your whole life was never even a question: "Oh, this is me. This is me; this is how I think, this is how I react, this is my body. This is what it does; this is how it frustrates me..." All of that. When you saw the kind of illusion of that, how, I mean – even going to breakfast the next day, how do you do that?*

GANGAJI [13:37]: How do you function? Quite easily and naturally. You don't need all of it. Somehow, in holding on to our construction of our ego or ourselves, we do it because we think we have to or we will die or we won't know how to go to breakfast across the street or have a conversation. But it's natural.

It's all just there. So it's not like my personality changed or my fixation changed, or the color of my eyes changed. It was that the burden was not there. It was an unnecessary burden on all of that. It didn't mean – it doesn't mean – that I don't have opinions and good days and bad days, and happy days and sad days. It's just that the burden of that is gone – that there's, and the burden is the identity of "this is me," and if I'm experiencing this or having this, I need to fix it right away or run away from it, or fight it or

make peace with it or understand it. It's just that it's part of the phenomenal universe, which is part of the reality of truth.

HILLARY [15:00]: It would be safe to say that just about everyone listening to this, with a few exceptions, met Gangaji as...well, Gangaji. Papaji had given her that name, but it didn't necessarily come without some reservations on her part.

GANGAJI [15:19]: My name is Ganga, and my teacher asked that I be, uh, called Gangaji. So let's just sit for a while.

HILLARY [15:30]: It wasn't like Papaji said, "Oh, I had a dream about you and your name is Gangaji," and then you went home and like "Hmm, I wonder where my students are," or "I wonder where I should, you know, talk to people." That it was so uncontrollable is notable to me.

GANGAJI [15:50]: You know, I wasn't even going to use the name Gangaji. I didn't think it was a pretty name. I didn't like Toni as a name either; I didn't know what name I would have wanted, but...and then I thought, well, I'll...I'll use it occasionally in relationship to Papaji, but I'll use Ganga. Anyway, I had that internal conversation, but it wasn't my intention to be known as Gangaji.

It was like my old life still had more of my identity than this new life as Gangaji and as someone who is really sharing her own personal awakening as well as sharing the teacher who was responsible for that.

HILLARY [16:34:] *Did you feel like the naming, in a certain way, represented the intimacy between you and Papaji?*

GANGAJI [16:43]: Well, he liked to give names to students because he thought Americans had absurd names. They had no meaning. And he couldn't remember them, so he would give people names he could remember. But he told me that morning that he gave me the name Gangaji, that he had dreamed that I was the goddess Ganga.

So he was very excited and of course, he assumed I would be very excited, and I was thrilled that he had dreamed about me. That was where my excitement was. And I remember in the moment when he said, "Have

people call you Gangaji,” and it's like, “Ooh. Oh, what, how am I going to do this?” And I just could not imagine saying, “My name is Gangaji now. Please call me Gangaji.” So I just pushed it aside. I just assumed, you know, it would be appropriate in certain circumstances. And I just wouldn't bring it up in other circumstances.

HILLARY [17:40]: *Fascinating.*

GANGAJI [17:41]: Yeah...

HILLARY [17:41]: *It's fascinating.*

GANGAJI [17:43]: Well, I'm still Toni to a lot of people. I introduce myself as Toni to people in town, and certainly my father always knew me as Toni and my brother and my sister and other people I had known in the past—if they came into meeting with me for any reason, they had already heard about Gangaji. And so they might be a little awkward with the name and ask me, “Do I have to call you Gangaji?” And I would always say, “No, of course not. You know, call me whatever you want to.” I don't identify with the name Toni either. It's like both names really are just these abstractions that finally have nothing to do with my identity.

HILLARY [18:25]: *Can we talk a little bit about the naysayers? How you have this – you're part of a crowd that's searching and doing Vipassana and studying Buddhism and all the things, and you have an extraordinary experience and then you have even a – maybe not a bigger one, but a huge one in Esalen right after Papaji. And that's extraordinary. It doesn't happen to everybody. Maybe it happens to a few people, and – did you have people that were like, “Whoa, wait a minute. She – she's Toni.”*

GANGAJI [19:01]: Yeah, for sure. There are still naysayers. And certain people were thrilled and said, “Oh, that's no surprise at all. You know, how wonderful.” “Yeah, I know her and that she was dedicated and devoted. Yeah.” And certain people said, “No way. No way that could be. Who is she?”

So that was interesting. I expected that because I sort of had that point of view. Who am I to be speaking to these people? Some of them have been serious practitioners, where I was just a sometimes-practitioner. Especially

the Buddhists because they have a hierarchy. You have to sort of prove yourself as a long-time serious meditator. And I never was that, really.

But people caught fire or they didn't. I knew that wasn't my business. The naysayers or the yeasayers. It was, if I got focused on that, what is that about? I don't know what's supposed to happen. I don't know who's supposed to get it from me or who's supposed to not get anything from me. That's not my concern.

HILLARY [20:04]: *Is there anything you want to say about the challenges of being a teacher? Well, we've talked about a few things...*

GANGAJI [20:11]: Well, the challenge for me was, none of it's personal. None of it really has anything to do with me. Even though people will want to make it personal and that's – that's their business. That's not personal either. But in those early days in this fire I was burning in, I just had to discover that I could fall off and fall off and fall off and just float and float and float. Because there was a tendency to hold on, to know something, to know what should happen in this meeting, what I should be saying, what they want me to be saying, how can I get them to wake up, and all of that just had to stop, but it was an unwinding. So, that's when I discovered vigilance.

STUDENT [20:58]: Gangaji, once the self is discovered, is there no intention anymore of any kind?

GANGAJI [21:06]: Once you fully realize there's no intention, except the intention to serve the self. And that's, and you know, that's the mind's intent. Only the mind has intentionality. So the mind's intention is to serve the self.

STUDENT [21:21]: And that's all that's left.

GANGAJI [21:24]: Well, I wrote my teacher that one desire I have left, that I love clinging to and have no plans for getting rid of, is my desire to serve my teacher. Same thing. It's serving itself.

HILLARY [21:38]: There were events that, at the time, seemed unrelated to Gangaji's life but ultimately influenced the arrival of her students. In

January of 1990, the spiritual teacher Osho died, and people began to gravitate toward Papaji and in turn discovered Gangaji. That summer of 1990, she traveled to Europe with Eli while he taught the Enneagram. She was invited to offer satsang. Interest in her continued to grow, much to her surprise.

GANGAJI [22:14]: I was a curiosity – as a normal person who says she's waked up and is giving darshan or satsang.

So people were curious and I would have been curious too if some woman had said that, just a regular woman. But I didn't think that would necessarily mean anything. I just knew I didn't know. I was surprised by the whole thing. And I didn't want to make it mean anything. And I just was...“wait and see” was one of the great teachings of Papaji. Just wait and see. So I was just waiting and seeing. Europe was huge – again, going with Eli, but by then Gangaji was invited to speak at some hall afterwards and we were both shocked. That's when I came up to the door and after most people were in and I saw all these rows and rows and rows of shoes of people taking their shoes off before they'd gone in.

And it was like, “Oh my God, there are a lot of people here now. What am I supposed to say to them?” So there was this fear and doubt. It's like, I don't have anything to say to them. And then it was just immediately this, “Yeah, you don't.” So it's not up to me. And so I knew I didn't have to know anything, that it would all just arise from the questions and the relationship and the space.

HILLARY [23:44]: *Did you ever have times at the beginning where – not even as an experiment, but just as a newer teacher, where you would think, “Okay, when I walk into the hall and I sit down and after meditation, this is what I'm going to talk about?”*

GANGAJI [23:59]: Oh, I still have ideas of what would be good to speak to people about. Inspirations are just what appears. But you know, I was shy for one thing, I didn't know what to do with all this attention. Not that I hadn't always liked attention in my life growing up, but all of a sudden there was a certain *kind* of attention put on me. I just knew I was a regular person, too, and that – and I trusted Papaji, and it was a fire.

It was a huge fire. I had to just stand in that fire. The whole stuff with Andrew, the stuff going on between Papaji and Andrew...Papaji really wanting Andrew cleared up what he had said about Papaji and I was in the middle of that. And then these people coming and projecting on me...or not liking me, whatever it was, it was just energy – this intense, not a storm, like a, maybe like a windstorm though...where you just have to stay very still. That was the only thing I could do, and that's what I did. But people have asked me, so when this happened with Papaji and your experience at Esalen, what was your integration like? And it was: my integration was very intense. And that was because I was traveling around the world, meeting hordes of people, asking me really deep questions. And that was my integration. I mean, that went on for years where it was just this – *whoosh*...

And this whole business of waking up is the desire to be free, totally: the desire to be totally awake – and that desire above all else. And that desire carries you... 'cause that's a call from yourself: that it's time to come home.

HILLARY [25:56]: Over those next few months, the ever-increasing flow of students continued in Maui. The ground beneath Gangaji seemed to be continually shifting, sometimes quite literally.

GANGAJI [26:09]: We had this little ramshackle house on this great property. And they first, three or four came, then five or six, then all of a sudden the room was full. And once I even looked out at the room and I could see that the floors were swaying. It was the second floor; there was a basement underneath, but I thought, this is dangerous; we can't do this, we have to find a bigger meeting place. We ended up building a platform meeting place on the lower part of the property and that filled up. And then there were some meeting places on Maui that people used for groups, seminars, weekends, and I started going to those, and people started traveling to Maui from the mainland. And Eli was the doorkeeper; it was really funny and he knew that I wanted to start exactly on time. I just didn't want to be one of these teachers that, you know, shows up hours later. So the doors would close right on time. And he said once he closed the doors and there were this group of people and they said, "Well, we just flew here from Oahu and we're Buddhists. We're Buddhist teachers." And he said, "I'm sorry, the doors are closed."

If you don't have the desire, you can do all sorts of techniques and it won't work. That's the ripeness – is that desire, and you may be aware of it just as a pull or as a little fire or as something, but if you fan that, if you honor it, if you listen to it, if you follow it, that's your teacher, that desire, and that will show you anything you need to see.

HILLARY [27:46]: There were other ways Gangaji's new life impacted her, but no one would know it, except for her.

HILLARY [27:53]: *You're talking about this fire. If I'm sitting there as a student, I'm just perceiving you in a particular way. And yet there's this humanity in you, behind the scenes, meaning – in your own world, you're experiencing this fire on many, many levels that maybe we weren't perceiving.*

GANGAJI [28:19]: I don't know that anyone was perceiving. As I said, I didn't even talk to Eli about it. I wouldn't know how to talk about it. And I, even now, I really am challenged in how to speak about it. I don't experience it now, but I did for some years there, where just the – I was just in a raging fire. And I, you know, I have possible explanations of that: my nervous system – it was clearly activated. I'm meeting with huge groups of people and I'm not used to that. And I could find myself being nervous before something, but that would just dissipate the minute the meeting would happen. But the fire was still there. The fire was the background for a number of years.

And I've never known how to talk about it, and it just kind of came out in some of our conversations. And maybe it was a fire of purification. Maybe that's what people call that fire. I didn't know; I didn't make any effort to ever talk to Papaji about it or research it or anything. I just knew that I had to stay very centered in that fire. And part of that was not talking about it. I couldn't leave it to talk about it.

HILLARY [29:57]: In just a few short months, the tension around Andrew, not to mention adjusting to being the center of attention – not such an easy thing for an introvert – began to take a toll on Gangaji. You would think her second trip to India to see Papaji would be joyous – a homecoming of sorts – but instead it was painful, humbling, and oh, so valuable.

You would expect: you go back in September of 1990, you had spent this intimate time with Papaji the first time you met with him with Eli, and you show up and kind of the opposite: it's not like... "Oh, Gangaji, I'm so glad you're back!" And...

GANGAJI [30:45]: Well, he did meet me like that, but I met him like: "Oh, I'm so tired.." And he was like, he was repulsed. I can now see – I say to myself, "How dare I try to bring him my troubles?" Being in the crosshairs of Andrew and Papaji, and then all the people...And I did have stresses on my body, and it was more than I had ever expected, and I am primarily an introvert. And so it was things I had to work through, but that was not the gift to bring Papaji after his prophecy had proven true.

And so he let me know it! You know, it was like, "Oh!" And he walked away, and so I was just humbled in that meeting, really profoundly in that time because he never invited me to tea even in that visit. And I got it and it, there was a perfection in that and I just, in case I thought I was somebody special who didn't have to feel certain things, it was just, proven to be wrong. He had already given me everything and he was thrilled to be coming to meet me, and what a thing that Papaji took a taxi to come meet me at the train and then I get off the train with this forlorn look. Oh, it's amazing. But, it was very useful, really useful for me to see that he's not going to fix me. He's already given me what he has to give me, and if I want more – be quiet, be still.

HILLARY [32:18]: There was another thing that happened within those first two years after meeting Papaji. In November of 1991, something happened that is an important part of this story because it added to the momentum of people coming to see her. As Gangaji arrived at a smaller satsang she was giving in Berkeley, she got word – literally as she was walking in the door – that Andrew was there. There was a tense exchange that just happened to be recorded by one of the attendees. That cassette tape would go viral long before viral was actually a thing.

GANGAJI [32:56]: I walked in the door and somebody said, "Andrew is here." And it's like, "Oh boy, this is an important meeting for Papaji." I mean, he had sent me to clear up Andrew. And so, yeah, I was attentive.

ANDREW COHEN [33:11]: Gangaji?

GANGAJI [33:12]: Yes.

ANDREW COHEN [33:13]: I came here for a couple of reasons tonight. But some of my students were here last night and they said that you encouraged everybody to be bold, that any question anybody had they should come. So...

GANGAJI [33:27]: I never would encourage you to be bold.

[students laughing]

GANGAJI [33:32]: You're a special case.

ANDREW [33:35]: When I heard that I couldn't resist.

GANGAJI [33:37]: Ahhh...Well, that's why I would never encourage you to be bold. I encourage you to resist.

GANGAJI [33:42]: It was like a razor's edge again. I wanted to really represent in a natural and clear – and coming from me, not coming from a teacher or from Papaji – really how I could respond to him, and I found him to be really rude and clipped, and – but he was like that with people, and so I was used to that, and that's the way I had seen him interact with people. And I didn't feel intimidated by him, but I knew it was a moment that...I needed to be very aware, and yet I also had to be spontaneous, I didn't, I couldn't have something I was thinking, "Oh, I should say this," or "I should say that." It just had to come. I had to trust. I had to just open and fly.

ANDREW [34:30]: It's funny: you teach just the way Poonjaji does and it's impossible to get beyond this.

GANGAJI [34:37]: Well, there you go.

ANDREW [34:38]: But what I'm trying to say is that this – this is where I began.

GANGAJI [34:42]: Yes, and what happened is that you left that beginning.

ANDREW [34:46]: I left it behind. I've moved beyond it.

GANGAJI [34:49]: You left it behind and you picked up the next creation. And this creation is: "And now I create the revolution."

HILLARY [34:55]: *This was a cassette tape. This is a recording of a cassette tape. The only way somebody in – you know, a hundred miles away, let alone in Germany, are going to get this tape is somebody pops it in the mail, listens to it. "Oh, wow. This is incredible. I think I'll make a copy." How – I mean, how that even happens is kind of mind-boggling. But this tape was significant.*

GANGAJI [35:19]: It went around the world. I mean, years later, I remember seeing somebody in Thailand who said, "Oh, I got that tape from you and it really, really helped me." The man who did the tapes really loved the meetings. He had...he was taping several teachers, whatever was happening around Berkeley that he was interested in. He would tape and give them the tape or make copies for people and he happened to be there that night. We didn't engage him to be there. There was no Gangaji Foundation at that moment. And he loved the tape. He loved the exchange. He thought it was really important. And so he took it upon himself to send it out and to ask that people send it out. So it was like a chain letter. It went out and out and out. And it had an impact on people.

HILLARY [36:10]: To the surprise of many, Andrew Cohen passed away in India at the age of 69, just a week after this segment was recorded. In 2016, he appeared in a documentary series called *How I Created a Cult*, where he spoke of the mistakes he made as a teacher. With regard to the tape and her own direct experience with Andrew, I asked Gangaji what she learned from that.

HILLARY [36:40]: *How did that help you as somebody who was, who is a teacher, people coming to you as a teacher, how did that help you as a teacher?*

GANGAJI [36:49]: It was a great teaching.

The way I've stated it before and the way I really perceive it, I recognized from his fall, what I perceived as his fall, this necessity for vigilance.

And Papaji had said vigilance is required until your last breath. So here was a concrete example of where there was a lack of vigilance. And the temptation of inflation is always there, just as we know the temptation of deflation is always there. So it's to not fall off this razor's edge in either deflation or inflation – is the task of an awake human being.

But for me personally, it was just – I could see that here are people adoring you, here are people saying, “Yes I get it, you've saved my life,” and letters, and accolades, and flowers, and you know, happiness. And this vigilance – it has nothing to do with me.

It's not me. It is this potential for everybody to be free, to wake up, at least to the degree of recognizing your – Papaji would say, your own magnificence. And to not deny that. And then what I saw from Andrew – and to not worship that, just to be that, to live that. So, yes, it has served me greatly.

I thank Andrew for his fall. I don't know if he wants to be thanked for that. And he has, as we need to acknowledge, acknowledged that he turned from his teacher and regretted that. And regretted that he didn't have an opportunity before Papaji died to acknowledge that to him. So I feel clear with him that way. It's like, okay, great, Papaji sent me out in relationship to Andrew and I attempted somewhat a relationship in Bodh Gaya – that time we were both teaching in Bodh Gaya, and he wasn't interested. And so he has been an important symbol for me of how easy it is to go off. It is a razor's edge. And we know that, you know, each of us can experience that. But there are lots of stories that can be generated and followed in both deflation and inflation.

HILLARY [39:29]: *I really love the way you worded that because there's almost an invitation to intoxication when people show up and maybe they're suffering, maybe, maybe they've been suffering for a long time or there's just a deep longing, just the longing that somehow through this person who's even sitting on a stage, elevated, is saying something that's stirring this recognition of truth. And it can almost feel like an intoxication. So the human propensity of conflating the two, of that person, I relate it to this feeling of: ahh, this is life in me that's undeniable, this flow of life. And it seems like it's coming from there.*

GANGAJI [40:19]: Well, it is in a sense, because it's mirroring you. And so, that's what I realized from my teacher and I will be forever indebted to him. So I get that. There's this profound appreciation for being mirrored back, your essential nature. So I'm not denying the love that's naturally felt for someone who sets you free or points you to your beauty or your truth.

It's what do *you* do with that? That's the issue, you know. I remember really often people would have this explosive experience and fall in love with me and, this is it and then two days later or two weeks later or two months later totally turn and return to suffering and blame me for it and tell me what's wrong with me about not doing it.

And I remember talking to Papaji about it, the heartbreak of that. You know, that I give myself fully, they receive it, they catch fire; they are fully themselves, and then over some time, maybe moments, maybe months, they return to suffering with a whole new cast of characters of who's to blame for their suffering.

And his only response to me was, yes, yes, that's true. It's a heartbreaking business. So you just let your heart break again. But that's the nature of it. So it's not about...I mean it is a projection that happens because you're sitting on a stage and you're...you've been certified and you see people look good and are happy, but it is also something that happens.

It's a linkage that happens. It's a love linkage. And then the trials come, the test, and those tests are invariably about inflation or deflation.

HILLARY [42:19]: It would be impossible not to mention the creation of the Gangaji Foundation in those early days. Almost immediately the Prison Program also came into being. Gangaji speaks of what it was like to be a witness to all of that when we get to Episode 6. This episode is very much about her inner experience as both a human and a teacher...which brings me to the letters that Gangaji and Papaji exchanged in the years following their first meeting. She describes them as a ridgepole as she was finding her footing as a new teacher.

HILLARY [42:45]: *There's something so intimate about these letters between you and Papaji. Was there a letter that, in particular, or a series or exchanges that had a certain potency?*

GANGAJI [43:09]: I would say the whole series of exchanges had enormous potency.

They were lifelines to me. They were really keeping me on this razor's edge. And they were blissful. And they were support, because I had this moment that's still present, but then I was being asked to speak to people and so that really brought up all the stimulation to dislodge that moment, you know, to: "Oh my God!"

And so there were moments of, "Oh my God," and it was like, yeah, well, here I am, what am I gonna do? I'll walk in and talk to people. So Papaji's letters coming were just reconfirmation and reaffirmation. And they were blissful for me to read, and read over and over. And I really couldn't choose one as better than the others. They were all just exquisite love letters to me, and my answers to him felt the same way.

GANGAJI [44:10]: "Very Dear Gangaji, I read your wonderful letter. My dear daughter, speak more! I live, you speak to me. As you speak, so do I hear you from my own self. This wonder....I am in love with my own self. Your Papa, Poonjaji."

HILLARY [44:39]: The last time Gangaji traveled to India to see Papaji was in 1995. By then, many had begun making the journey to Lucknow. Those early days in that quiet little room with just a handful of people had become a powerful memory. The satsang hall was now full, drawing seekers from around the world. Still, she and Eli had time alone with him. Papaji was 86, and his once robust body had weakened; their walks through the marketplace had slowed. When Gangaji left Lucknow that time around, she didn't consider she would never see Papaji again. On the evening of September 7th, 1997, just as she was beginning a retreat in Santa Fe, she got a call from Bharat Mitra, a longtime student of Papaji. He had news to share.

GANGAJI [45:39]: Bharat Mitra called me, and he really wanted to just relay what the last moments were like. And that's when he told me that over the two or three days that Papaji was in the hospital, Yamuna, who was a doctor, plus the Indian doctors, would ask him, Papaji, do you want us to keep doing interventions? Do you want us to keep trying to keep you alive, essentially? And he had said yes a couple of times, and then the last time

they asked him, he had really declined a lot. And Bharat Mitra was telling me, and we asked him, Papaji, do you want us to do more? The doctors want to know, should they do more? Should they continue? And Papaji said, "Bas." And bas in Hindi means enough. Bas. Bas. And so, they didn't do anything, and he died within hours after that.

HILLARY [46:43]: Do you remember the first satsang that you did following the news of his death?

GANGAJI [46:49]: Yeah. It was in Santa Fe and I went in that morning after hearing the news. I had heard the news in the night, and it was a regular meeting but that was the satsang: Papaji's death, and what is deathless, and how Papaji transmitted to us, everyone who's willing to listen, whether they met him in person or not, the life of truth.

HILLARY [47:23]: For some reason, that story of Papaji leaving, because it's a form of leaving, right? – in the biggest sense – reminds me of when you left Papaji the first time and you were in Maui and this, this sense of – “he's gone.” He's not, he's not right in front of me. And that's where I should be. It seems to me those two meet in some way.

GANGAJI [47:47]: They do, because death is, is right with life, always. And that's the teaching, to just open, you know, to be here, fully, with what is really here, with no story of that. And you receive the magnitude of birth, and life, and death, and the incomprehensible bliss that accompanies all of it.

HILLARY [48:15]: *It's really wonderful in an unexpected way, to feel the depth of loss. And when it comes to a person or an animal or something we love, I think about the days and even the years, or maybe even now to a certain degree, when there's no more letters and there's never going to be a new letter from Papaji, you're never going to open your mailbox again and see a letter from Papaji.*

I don't know, there's something also profound about that as well.

GANGAJI [48:47]: You know, I just didn't think of it that way. There was no nostalgia involved in it for having the things that were a way continue to be that particular way. Because he had given me everything. And he was alive. He's life itself. It's just the Papaji form, the personality, the form, the history is gone. And that was his teaching, always. What was born will die. And so when you meet that, it's not, um, I mean, there can be sadness as a part of it, but it's not a tragedy. It's not a loss of anything you've gained.

Someone asked me if I was sad over the death of Papaji and I said, "Profoundly sad. Profoundly sad." So totally sad that sadness is bliss itself. So exquisitely sad, not keeping out sadness in the least, not dissociated from sadness, not being bigger than sadness, not needing sadness, not being enlightened so there's no sadness. (laughter) Just exquisitely, profoundly, deeply sad like I've never known sad. I thought I had known sad; but what I knew was some dramatization of sad, some periphery of sadness. I didn't know ***sadness has this fullness, has this face of God*** that I had kept away because I had only seen the backside.

So I am happy to tell the world: yes, I am profoundly sad at this loss of Papaji's form, and in the midst of that, I am exquisitely joyful at the realization of what Papaji is, can never be lost, has not shifted one iota with the dissolution of form. And how is it possible that both are included? Because this is life. It's not some version of life. It's not some story of life. It's life. Everything is included here. Everything is some face of God here – everything.

HILLARY [52:11]: A day or two after Papaji died, a rumor started going around. It traveled from Lucknow to Sweden, all the way to California. Word had it that Gangaji was canceling her tour so she could travel to Rishikesh to help spread Papaji's ashes. She shared the rumor with attendees of that Santa Fe retreat. She smiled and they laughed. "Papaji's ashes are buried in his heart," she said. And then she continued with satsang. With Papaji's death, everything changed. But at the same time, everything remained the same.

In the conclusion of Gangaji's *Finding Home* series in Episode Six, the Gangaji Foundation would continue to grow, as would the Prison Program. On a personal level, Gangaji would face life circumstances that would challenge her to the depths of her being.

GANGAJI [53:29]: In the most essential ways, it didn't touch anything. Didn't feel good, was agitating, sad. It was horrifying. But it didn't touch the truth. And that gets you through everything.

HILLARY [53:45]: This last episode in this very special series about Gangaji's life might surprise you. It might also serve as confirmation that life itself is undeniable...in joy or sadness, in sickness and in health. What is still here is abundantly clear in this last stretch of Gangaji's story. I'm Hillary Larson. Thank you for joining us.

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