

Gangaji Podcast
Being Yourself
Episode 98
Host Barbara Denempont
Meeting the Enemy: Finding Peace in the Midst of War
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GANGAJI: I don't see any problem in the way you are relating. I don't see any problem in playing fully, in being fully committed, to correcting what you see as injustice and horror. **And** being willing to sit down to dinner with the enemy. To be willing to see the enemy as no other than your own Self.

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

It is often said that it's best not to mix spirituality and politics but that is exactly what I want to do today. Because in my experience, when we take a closer look at the heart of every political issue, is a spiritual issue, a spiritual dilemma. And the good news is that in any dilemma we face, regardless of how challenging it might be, emotionally or mentally, it can be met and it can be investigated when we have an open mind and we have the willingness to tell the truth.

So the clip I want to share with you today (well, maybe it's not for the faint of heart), it is challenging but it's also beautiful and instructive. Recorded in Crestone, high up in those gorgeous Colorado mountains in 1997 during a retreat, this man shares the resolution and the revelation that came through his meeting with the enemy.

(Excerpted from: A Retreat with Gangaji, Crestone, CO, August 31, 1997)

GANGAJI: Okay, please come up here. I believe it's very important what you bring up. It's actually one of my favorite subjects. This political dilemma. How is it possible to realize that in truth, nothing exists, all is love and yet, still in this experience of incarnation, deal with the horrors and injustice of the world? What a challenge. It is usually met by either, or... by either dismissing the whole show of horror and injustice as nonexistent, therefore, not to be paid any attention to. Or, as leaving the spiritual understanding and paying total attention to that as a means to defeat it. Wouldn't you say that's the dilemma?

PARTICIPANT: Exactly.

GANGAJI: So I just like to read your letter out loud because it speaks of your point of view with this which is very beautiful:

(Gangaji Reads):

I have become less and less identified with the political stories that have kept me chained to the pillars of the US war machine. Just before the last Boulder Satsang series, I received a call from a former college roommate who was in town and wanted to get together with me and meet my wife, Joy. It had been thirty years since I had last seen Ken. As dinner got started, Ken began his story about how he had gotten drafted and to avoid becoming a ground soldier, signed up to be a pilot. And how he simply kept making what seemed to be his best choices that took him to the center of the Special Forces Operations in the South East Asian Theater. Ken flew these guys to where ever they need to go. I had studied these activities extensively and had believed them to be among the most heinous violations of international law and human rights that I had ever come across. Suffice it to say these secret black operations involve not only the training of indigenous people as soldiers, but the delivery of massive amounts of weaponry and the exchange of bulk quantities of heroin to be traded or sold as a way to fund further black operations. It was the same cast of characters who later initiated what came to be known as the Iran Contra Scandal. My friend, Ken, had retired prior to this however. So there I was, sharing a meal and my life with a man I would have a day earlier defined to be a hated, evil person. Like the woman from Israel who could not judge Hitler, I found that I could not judge Ken, my freshman college roommate who had carried me home the only time I have ever gotten too drunk to walk. (Audience laughter) Rather, I could only feel brotherhood and love for him. I had met the enemy and he was, indeed, my intimate Self.

GANGAJI: This is the crux of it right there, of course. The enemy was no longer abstract, a statistic, a "them".

(Gangaji continues to read):

Somehow it feels like this war must finally end. Still I am currently, deeply involved with peace, justice, and human rights issues in Central America and its ghastly predicament. I find I cannot just drop it. I have a Nicaraguan bother-in-law who is also my own Self. His people are facing famine conditions. Just as my country attempted to bomb Vietnam and Iraq back to the stone age, Nicaragua must bear the scars of a similar Neanderthal fate. Like other stories, this one too must be seen to be a lie. Still, as a in Nicaragua, there is a continuing nightmare at hand. I want to honor the Truth always. I have heard your response to others to be present to the Truth of this moment, and the rest will follow. But I still seem to need that little confirmation that can allow me to finally let go of the stuff. Political activity does not seem to be any too popular a Satsang topic.

GANGAJI: But it's very popular with me. So how to relate to this? This is the question. How to relate to this? Just as how you are relating. I don't see any problem in the way you are relating. I don't see any problem in playing fully, in being fully committed, to correcting what you see as injustice and horror. **And** being willing to sit down to dinner with the enemy. To be willing to see the enemy as no other than your own Self. I salute you for it. It is a play of one's life on the very edge where there is no escape into spiritual platitudes and there is no escape into the hate that

generates war against the enemy. So in fighting for justice, you are fighting for peace. And to fight for peace you must welcome your enemy to your table, as you have done.

PARTICIPANT: I had an image. I don't know if any of us have been to Costa Rica, but Costa Rica it can be a beautiful day, and you can be driving along and you see one of the volcanoes. And at the top of the volcano there is always cloud. And I saw this about myself. That I had pulled together this incredible argument to support what I do. And it's kind of built me up to a place so high that, like that storm this afternoon just an hour and a half ago. The clouds just went ripping right towards the mountains, and when they got to the mountains they just hung right there. And I found when I wrote this letter, and then for the day afterwards, the clamor, the thunder of all that stuff hangs over me. I kind of long to, just kind of, be eased on to see it from another perspective.

GANGAJI: Yes, well you can see it from another perspective. Because you are, at this point, identifying yourself as a volcano. But I identify you as the sky. And I don't know that the sky has any particular problem with any cloud passing by.

(Audience Laughter)

PARTICIPANT: That's very good.

GANGAJI: So the way that the spiritual life gets interrupted is often, often, most likely, most often is a passage way to escape from the issues of a life. So the issues in this life are clear to you.

PARTICIPANT: Overwhelming.

GANGAJI: Yes, this is the Sadhana, this is your Satguru's teaching. How to find peace in war? How to find justice in the midst of injustice, love in the midst of hate? You have found it. You spoke of it. So you have the direct experience. You can trust that. This is a true warrior for peace. I know that it's not too popular in the political circles though. I have some small experience in political circles. And my experience was that there is a using the "other" and the horror that other does, as a fuel for the energy to go after other.

PARTICIPANT: Oh yes.

GANGAJI: Yes. And the, because of the righteousness it's like HHHHHHAAAAA (hitting the chest with fists). It's time, I mean you know, it's an ancient practice. (Laughter) HHHHHAAAAAA.. Always, of course, being in the right. So, this is what you're speaking of, is radical. And the support is found, and the confirmation is found, in your willingness to discover **what is free**? What is at peace? And to discover this everywhere. I don't know what will happen politically. I don't know that those who make war for the joy of making war, will see the horror it has caused. I really don't know that. But what's the alternative? I don't know what the outcome will be. But a life lived true to its Satguru's instructions is a free life. There was someone else I spoke to in the Boulder Sangha, I think it was the Boulder Sangha, it could have been the Bay Area. But is a brother with you in this understanding, this

dilemma, this weariness, with the way war has been waged, and the way peace has been waged.

PARTICIPANT: I work with a lot of people of faith, in the ministry, and I find even with this group of people, there is a tendency, in the peace movement, to want to kind of demonize.

GANGAJI: Kind of. You're very kind

PARTICIPANT: Some body, or some thing...

GANGAJI: Yes the devil, they're fighting the devil. And he's over there.

PARTICIPANT: And we are over against that.

GANGAJI: That's right. This is... That's the... That's the reincarnation of war.

PARTICIPANT: So, more and more, I am finding my activity is, more than against the war machine is within the peace community trying to keep them, keep their fires down.

GANGAJI: Yes. Yes. So what an invitation you have in your very being, in your examination of what is true, in your examination of what perpetuates, what it is that is being fought. Yes. I wish you well in this.

PARTICIPANT: Thank you.

GANGAJI: It's sort of like Satsang in hell. (Audience laughter) Except that they're the angels who have gone to hell, you know, so they are self-righteously in hell. So it's a double edge. In my experience in any movement, either side, because always this is a component of either side of this war, is, "I'm right!" and that "I'm right!" is a closing to the possibility of conversation or investigation. So it doesn't mean you give up your commitment, or your position, or even your judgement, but you're willing to see what's deeper. The reconciling force. You're willing to see your enemy as your friend.

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

GANGAJI: No choice in the matter, right. To just simply, "Well so."

PARTICIPANT: Thank you so much

GANGAJI: Ah, I thank you so much. You let me know how it goes. You write me or just let me know.

PARTICIPANT: That will be my pleasure.

GANGAJI: Great.

BARBARA:

I remember reading a book by Stephen Levine in which he shared a Haiku that stopped me in my tracks and it was this: *sipping a cup of tea, I stopped the war*. There are so many wars in the world that you and I cannot stop and that is a source of great pain and angst all over the world. But there is a war we can end and that is any war we might begin internally or externally in our lives. We can stop going to war for the peace that is always present and that is a gift to the world, which is why I am here, why Gangaji is here, why I hope you are listening.

And of course, we are here to support your inquiry and, to that end, I invite you to explore all the resources available at gangaji.org that's g-a-n-g-a-j-i dot o-r-g. Gangaji's new self-guided inquiry Let Yourself Be Found is now available. It's free on the website. And this October 21-25 Gangaji will offer a five-day silent retreat in Ashland, Oregon. The Fall is always so beautiful here and we are so grateful for the opportunity to gather together in silence in such beauty. We would love to welcome you here.

I thank you for listening. I am Barbara Denempont.

Until next time.