

Gangaji Radio

A Conversation With Gangaji Series

Host Hillary Larson

Episode 9

LIBERATING UNWORTHINESS

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[00:05] INTRODUCTION MUSIC

[00:05] HILLARY LARSON, HOST: Some people call it a lurking sense of insecurity and others experience it as outright self-hatred. The human desire to protect ourselves from the feeling of unworthiness seems to show up in different ways. We either build ourselves up in the hope that no one will see our flaws, or we overtly tear ourselves down as proof of this unworthiness. Either way, it's still an avoidance of what we hope is not true and that is in some way we're not enough, not enough for our family, not enough for our lover, not enough for our children, our friends, our employers, not enough for ourselves and not enough for God. But within all of that is the possibility of stopping this habitual escape.

[00:52] GANGAJI: That's the point is to realize that it is hopeless to try to make this image of yourself conform to some ideal of who you think you are and when you're willing to stop that, that rat race really, then you open to whatever is here and if it's a feeling of despair that feeling can take you deeper into the truth of who you are.

[01:15] HILLARY: Sometimes in the course of a lifetime we might be lucky enough to take a moment to inspect whether or not this sense of unworthiness is actually true and if it is, maybe in reality, it doesn't even matter. I'm Hillary Larson and this is *A Conversation with Gangaji*.

[01:39] HILLARY: Gangaji, you have had several requests to talk about self-hatred as a topic so I wanted to pick that up this month and I even hesitate to use the word self-hatred because it's so sharp. So I know you've used terms like not enough or feeling inadequate, but it just seems to me that, I know for myself those feelings of not feeling like I fit in or not enough, they started when I was really young. You know, I remember when I was in grade school. I had red hair and freckles and it seemed like I was kind of a different species and, you know, oh, I'm not tan enough or something, whatever happened to be going through my mind at that time, but when you're young you're so tender and kids can be mean and that was kind of my sore spot. Can you relate to that?

[02:33] GANGAJI: Well, I think it's different for different people, but usually, even if we drift along in the clouds in our early childhood, we reach some point where we recognize we don't fit others' expectation of what the ideal is and then that, we usually internalize that. I mean I don't want to be overly psychological about it, but that does seem to be the process. When we're young, I mean at least through the teenage years, we are absorbing information about who we are from our environment, especially the people in our environment and if that's negative, if any of it is negative, we absorb the negative with whatever positive we get and most people I speak to, at least in spiritual circles, at some point have to deal with the rawness of self-hatred, and the

horror of it, that we actually hate ourselves and we may be even in spiritual circles so that we can love ourselves more or at least make ourselves better so that we become lovable and it has to be met.

[03:48] HILLARY: I know there was something that struck me, I think it was a couple of years ago. I was reading something, and I think it actually was from Sharon Salzberg, and she was saying that she had once asked the Dalai Lama about self-hatred and he turned to his translator and he was just perplexed by the question and so I wonder if part of it isn't just cultural. I mean for our conversation I don't think it matters, but it kind of surprised me, his confusion surprised me as much as he was surprised at the question.

[04:21] GANGAJI: I think a lot of it is cultural, Western culture, and I don't know when that begins, maybe with the Greeks or the Romans, but there's some way where we turn our attention in an inner sense, but we make it psychological and we don't like what we see. We see flawed individuals and we see individuals that aren't perfect and that are lacking and we don't like that because we have an ideal. So whenever idealism came into our culture, that's when the seeds of self-hatred were sewn. You know, we were just in India and India is a very broad culture and there's a lot that's right with it and there's a lot that's wrong with it, but someone made a comment to me that I thought was so apropos. She said India doesn't apologize. India is not apologetic. And I thought that's so true and when I think of our culture and maybe by our culture I'm not just saying American culture, but all of Western culture, is actually quite apologetic and I believe that the roots of that is a kind of self-hatred or a sense of not being good enough or not being what we should be.

[05:39] HILLARY: You know, we spend a lifetime, I know I spent you know, years of my life trying to avoid that self-hatred and you speak of actually the freedom that comes in facing it and that's why I appreciate this question that came in for you because it's a really raw question. This is David. He's from Adelaide, Australia and he has a little bit of a personal story. Let me just share a little bit with you. "It seems to me my despair and self-hatred are inevitable endpoints of believing I am unlovable. My pattern has been to be a people pleaser, to seek love or to withdraw socially. It's hard to have compassion for myself when my social anxiety and self-criticism is screaming at me at how unworthy I am. Developing compassion for myself seems to be helpful. What else would you suggest to help me move beyond my hopeless situation?"

[06:36] GANGAJI: Well, of course I suggest that you allow yourself to be hopeless as you take a moment and stop trying to improve a hopeless situation, because at this point, trying to develop compassion for yourself is just a layer on top of many layers of disappointment and self-hatred and proof that you're a hopeless case. So if we just stop the wheel of this improvement or this I'm good, I'm no good, just stop and experience whatever is being experienced and maybe in this moment it's a good feeling and maybe it's a bad feeling, but if we're willing to experience that directly then any feeling points us to this that is beyond measure and beyond evaluation and maybe beyond is not the right word. It's closer than what can be evaluated, so when we're speaking of evaluation and worth and lovability, in general we're speaking about a personality or looks or skin tone and those things are culturally dictated, but if we're speaking about consciousness itself, then that's much closer than gender or skin or suitability of any kind and that's the point is to realize that it is hopeless to try to make this image of yourself conform to some ideal of who you think you are and when you're willing to stop that rat race, really, then

you're open to whatever is here and if it's a feeling of despair, that feeling can take you deeper into the truth of who you are.

[08:30] HILLARY: You know, you had quite a few questions on this subject, Gangaji, so I want to get to this second one because it's related to the first one and this person says that "sometimes I get triggered by certain situations and I get stuck in a shame attack. Do you have any suggestions on how to get unstuck from that spin?"

[08:48] GANGAJI: Well Hillary, you know by now that I don't counsel people on how to get unstuck from the spin because really what that phrase means is how to make me feel better. If you're willing in the moment of this shame attack, or any kind of mind attack, shame is mind generated; I'm not good enough, I did this wrong, I'm stupid, or whatever it may be, to just open to that, to stop the discussion about that, to recognize, okay, I'm stupid, okay, I'm unlovable, okay, I'm worthless in this moment and to be that fully, directly, with no narrative about it necessary, then we're speaking of something that's not a self-help talk or it's not an improvement course. It's really about realizing the truth of who you are, not the truth of what your body is. Your body, compared to other bodies, may be worthless or ranked low on the scale, or your personality or your achievements or your behavior, all of that can be ranked and is ranked and that's part of the cultural interplay, but the consciousness that's at the root of it all, where is that? Who is that?

[10:12] HILLARY: When you're speaking, it reminds me of the subject of affirmations, because we're not having a conversation about how to fix yourself or how to improve yourself and it's not a psychological conversation, but I actually came across this clip I want to play for you right now and it's from The Heart Can Bear It All, which is a CD compilation that you've got and it's all about really just the freedom that comes with facing self-hatred, but also in this particular clip you're talking about the momentum of trying to get away from that, so if you don't mind, let's just take a listen to this really quick and see what you have to say about affirmations.

[10:55] GANGAJI: Good.

(clip)

[10:56] GANGAJI: Until that seemingly essential worthlessness is met and experienced all the way, you cannot know the absolute truth of who you are. You may have glimpses of it in moments of grace or moments in nature or in meditation. So they reveal that, but they can't be alive, a living presence in you until you are willing to tell the truth all the way down to where that simply exists as who you are, not exist as something you learned you are or hope you are, written out a hundred times you are. I am worth something, I am God's child, I am worth love, I deserve. That works for a while. It's kind of a trance. You can put yourself into trance, trance is very useful, but when we're speaking about really realizing the truth of yourself, then what has to be faced is what you think the truth of yourself is and what has to be faced before that is how you have lied to yourself to cover what you think the truth of yourself is. You follow that?

(end clip)

[12:09] HILLARY: I have to confess that, up until a few years ago I had affirmations. I had post-it notes stuck around my house and I always found like the bigger ones were better, maybe even the fluorescent ones. I also, maybe, would put a little happy face next to the affirmation that said God loves me just the way I am or I love myself just the way I am, and I don't think that's a negative thing because it's better than thinking negative thoughts, but at the same time, the days that I've felt pretty good about myself, I'd look at the affirmation and go, yeah, kind of, yeah, and then the days where I was having perhaps a bad day, I'd look at the note and go, why did I put that note up there in the first place. So it's such a normal human thing to want to fix ourselves, isn't it?

[12:59] GANGAJI: Well, let's say it's a normal Western human thing. It's certainly normal to most of the people I meet and affirmations can be very supportive in that because there's a lot that could be fixed and one of the things, the major things that can be fixed, is this negative mind stream, this negative narrative that's going on, and I really support people in recognizing that and shifting, just saying the opposite when you're filled with self-hatred you can say, no, I am love, I am light, but there's a limit to that because you're still relying on this...it appears to be internal but it's also like an external source with this mind stream. I mean, once you think it it's no longer internal. You externalize it and you're then standing outside yourself and looking back at yourself and judging so maybe you shift that judgment to one that's positive and that's very useful, but finally, there is the possibility to recognize what is unjudgeable, who are you? And perhaps you have to go through the experience of discovering that you can actually shift from a negative mind stream to a positive one and also to discover that there's something still missing in that. As you said, some days it just doesn't work and it's also not complete. It still relies on thought. It still relies on the narrative of who I am rather than the direct experience of who I am, regardless of feeling, regardless of events in a day or events in a body, regardless of phenomena of all kind.

[14:51] HILLARY: You have described that, I don't know if it was a moment Gangaji or I don't know if it was several moments where you faced, I think you call it dark, murky energy. Was that like one time all the way through or did that happen in stages for you?

[15:11] GANGAJI: I would say stages. I mean the first time I remember actually having the courage to face it I was in my late 20's, so more than 20 years before I would meet my teacher and I just somehow, because it was part of the cultural stream I was in, turned my attention inside and it was horrifying and I saw then why I had spent so much time trying to avoid self-hatred, because now, from this position, I can look at that and see I was getting a taste of what I believe or what I felt to be the essence of myself, and it was terrible. I could accept that everyone else's essence was pure and innocent, but I recognized mine was sick and murky. Of course, it wasn't my true essence. It was a covering, but it was, it felt like it was true and so it was only later then that I could take another step and recognize that that was held together by a certain narrative, that it was constructed even though there was no narrative with it directly, the judgment of it generated a narrative and that's what I identified as me, and then of course on top of that I made a persona that covered that. It was happy, it was nice, it was smiling, but that would come to haunt me when I was sick or in the middle of the night or if a relationship fell apart or if someone mirrored back negative energy to me, then I was back into that sense of myself. I wouldn't have even said it was worthless. The way I identified it, it was just really horrible, sick, it was a sick feeling, and I was sick a lot then and so there was a way where the

physical and the mental and the emotional were all reflecting the same, the same fog of being, but luckily, when I met my teacher and somewhat before that, but he really finalized it, he told me to stop all of my constructions. He didn't use the word constructions. He just said stop. And I realized that that applied to all the constructions of myself and there were, by then, many levels of construction, but when I stopped them, here was this energy field that I had identified as sick or as dark or ugly or worthless, it was hate able, and so it had to not move from that and then not moving from that, I mean to even say it disappeared makes it something that then transformed into something else. When it was met, it was realized not to be. Somehow the light of consciousness meets its deepest object, which for me was the sense of myself as horrible, and in that meeting there is only consciousness, there's only light, there's only one's self.

[18:23] HILLARY: It seems to me that that structure can only take place when there's comparison going on, because I remember, you know, we did the interview months ago on depression and I was asking you about you know, when a person has depression they wake up in the morning and it's like, oh, not this feeling again, and you had something to say about when you wake up in the morning you don't compare your state with another state and I think that's like different than 99% of the people that walk on this planet, or maybe that's just my projection.

[19:02] GANGAJI: Well, it's very useful to give up that comparison because what is appearing is appearing and if we stop the dialogue about that, the inner dialogue about that, we can then meet it as it is and it either stays and it's meaningless or it goes and it reveals what's deeper and under depression of course is something more painful can be there. I wasn't aware that this was a state of comparison when I reached this point of this dark and unlovable energy. It seemed to me that everything above that was about comparing and it was almost like covering myself, trying to figure out, is this working? Does anybody see this? Because I figured it was myself. I didn't consider it going away. My job was just to make it not visible to other people and in that sense it's self-protection, but what I was protecting was this deeply negative sense of myself and when I was willing to stop that protection, to expose that to myself finally and fully, then I recognized it's not there. It's an illusion. It was only there in the protection, so I couldn't even say when that protection started. It must have been when I was a very young age because I don't remember a time without that. I know certain people have beautiful memories of childhood where it was just the purity of being. I mean I can have images of that, but I don't have a feeling state of that and for many people I've spoken to, this very deep dismal feeling state is what they consider to be the core of themselves, but it's not. It's just, it's an illusion blocking the core.

[20:54] HILLARY: You are so clear with your words and just the way you are and I'm just always fascinated by the way your life was before you met Papaji and then what happened afterwards and I wonder if in your life today if some aspect of your personality comes up and it creates a feeling of unworthiness and then you just know it not to be true or I don't even know how that works.

[21:20] GANGAJI: Well, I know that there are lots of areas where I am completely unworthy. I mean one thing, I'm totally unworthy of this great gift that my teacher gave me, but then it's beyond worth so it's beyond price so it's not a matter of worth, and certainly I fail in quite often in expressing the depth of what I'm trying to convey, but so what? That failure itself, it may not feel pleasant but it's part of the experience of living life to the fullest, so really I'm never advising

anyone that they will lose their personality or that they will lose patterns. What I'm inviting people to discover is that deeper than any pattern, deeper than personality, deeper than success or failure, there is, deeper than worth or worthlessness, there is a radiance that is undeniable that's always present and that's the truth of who you are.

[22:28] HILLARY: I know that you walk people through that process of how they create their suffering and speaking to you feels like the opposite because I want to know how you don't create your suffering, so...

[22:42] GANGAJI: That's great that you say that because we create suffering but we cannot really create the release of that suffering. We can simply stop what we are creating in this moment, not in the future, nothing to do with the past, in this very moment, just stop.

[23:01] HILLARY: Is that a place where you live Gangaji or do you have moments where some aspect of your personality does come up and is it just so automatic that you just stop and know that that's not true?

[23:15] GANGAJI: Well, I don't even know how to answer that. It's not even that I stop. It's that what is stopped is still stopped. It's always been stopped. I don't do the stop. I simply surrender to what is stopped and I don't do that when issues of my personality come up. It's not necessary. You know, when you learn to walk, you don't need to learn to walk each time you get out of a chair. You don't have to think about it. When you learn to drive a car, you don't have to think about it. It's not, oh, now I need to put my foot on the brake, now I need to pick up my foot and put it down. It's not in that realm and this is deeper still than that. It's already who you are and the personality is just like weather, something that's passing and yes, it appears, this form, this Gangaji form, this Toni, form this human form, there's a personality associated with it and some people may like the personality and some people don't, I guarantee you, and some days I find it likeable and some days I recognize it's not likeable, it's inherently not likeable, but so what? All of that's happening, the judgment of that, all of that is happening still in the realm of personality, closer than that is the liberation, the truth, and that's here right now.

[24:44] HILLARY: I just really appreciated what you were saying about the fact that that does come up for you and I think the difference is that you don't get stuck in, let me put it this way, that you do have to slow people down and show them how they do create these thoughts that then gets them into this state of suffering.

[25:04] GANGAJI: Well, you know, when you're learning to walk someone helps you usually. You know, they encourage you, they call you to them or you use a chair or a table. We have support and that's one of my roles is an aspect of support and there is support all around and that support can be internalized, just as the support for self-hatred was internalized, the support for this willingness to simply be still in this moment. This can be received, then you walk on your own quite naturally.

[25:40] HILLARY: I think what I wanted to say is the opposite extreme of that, you know, there may be people that say, hey, you know what? I don't have any self-hatred. I don't have any self-loathing. Things in life go my way. But at the same time, there's an arrogance that can cover up...it's the flipside of the same coin is what I'm saying.

[26:02] GANGAJI: Yes, that's inflated ego, deflated ego, finally it's the same self-evaluation, self as personality or self as body or self as intellect or self as success or failure. It's still based on objects in the thinking mind and the cognitive mind rather than the experience of the subject, the internal, always present subject.

[26:30] HILLARY: You know, I hate to be redundant, but I just want to tell you that I'm so grateful for these conversations that we have. Just the willingness to look at these areas where the human mind says run, is just so invaluable. It's invaluable to me and I know it's invaluable to so many people that are listening and I thank you so much for that Gangaji.

[26:53] GANGAJI: Oh, Hillary, it's my honor. I thank you for having me here.

[26:59] HILLARY: I'm going to finish off this show for this month. I'm going to play another little clip from The Heart Can Bear It All. This is on just being willing to face the nothingness that's underneath the self-loathing or the not enough and with that, Gangaji, I really, really look forward to next time.

[27:17] GANGAJI: Oh, me too, always.

(clip)

[27:34] GANGAJI: If you are sincere in your intention to really know the truth, whatever that might be, and if that knowing of the truth gives you nothing, no fame, no recognition, no happiness, no release, no universal love, just it gives you itself. If you want the truth that badly, then you are willing actually, to fall into that abyss, to meet that abyss with your full attention, to meet the truth that you are nothing and this is a great revelation. The extraordinary report that everyone who has met that abyss, including myself, brings back to tell you is that that abyss, that nothingness that you are, is awake consciousness and love, is freedom, is self-realization, is self-recognition, everything you have been looking for in defining yourself as somebody and worth something and intending and going for it, seeking, is right here in the depth of your being, under all the lies, and has been here all along and has been what has been fled from all along. This is the full circle. This is coming home.

(end clip)

[29:31] HILLARY: I'd like to thank Gary Malkin for the music you're listening to right now. You can find more of his beautiful work at wisdomoftheworld.com. As always, I want to remind you of a few things before we go. Every month you can connect with Gangaji for a live webcast. It's called With Gangaji and you can sign up for that by going to our website, gangaji.org. There are also posts about this show and lots of other things about Gangaji on Facebook. You can find that by going to Gangaji Community. And if you'd like to send in a question for Gangaji or if there's a particular topic you'd like her to address, please write to gangajiradio@gangaji.org. That's g-a-n-g-a-j-i-radio@gangaji.org. We so much appreciate you sharing *A Conversation With Gangaji* with others and we'd also like to invite you to rate this show or leave a comment

on iTunes. That's it for us for now. We'll be back next month though with *A Conversation With Gangaji*. We'll see you then.