

Issue

**11**

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# Freedom Inside

A Course in Self-Inquiry with Gangaji

## *Before You Begin...*

... give yourself the gift of taking just a few minutes to fully be here with yourself, respecting exactly where you are in your body, in your emotions, and in your life. Take a moment to breathe and to gather yourself back home. Give yourself permission to be completely quiet and to discover the vast living presence that you are. Already at peace, already free.

### **ABOUT GANGAJI**

Gangaji offers to ordinary people leading ordinary lives the invitation to fully recognize the absolute freedom and unchanging peace that is the truth of one's being. Since 1990, she has traveled the world speaking to people of all walks of life. She is the author of *The Diamond in Your Pocket*, *Freedom & Resolve: The Living Edge of Surrender*, and *Hidden Treasure: Uncovering the Truth in Your Life Story*.



### **GF PRISON PROGRAM**

Gangaji first began speaking with prisoners in 1994 when she received a letter from a prisoner in Colorado. The Gangaji Foundation Prison Program is dedicated to supporting prisoners in their spiritual inquiry. We welcome all inquiries about our program and this course.

## Ending Our Patterns of Unnecessary Suffering

*“How is it possible to end our patterns of suffering? It is only possible if you're willing to have the power of observation activated.”*

In the last newsletter we delved into the nature of the self and the question, Who am I? We saw that when we identify ourselves as separate bodies/minds/egos, an entity we call “me,” we believe that we are an object in awareness rather than the awareness itself. This misidentification as an entity that is somehow separate from pure and present awareness leads to endless patterns of unnecessary suffering.

How is it possible to end our patterns of suffering? It is only possible if you're willing to have the power of observation activated. It gets activated by your own desire for truth, your

willingness to inquire how you suffer, and your ability to discern when that suffering is unnecessary.

This word “unnecessary” is important, because there is certainly suffering in the world. There is pain in the world for all forms of life. This personal observation is not about getting something right so that you will be free from suffering. That freedom would be conditional. The freedom I am pointing you to is the freedom that is already alive within you in this very instant, regardless of conditions. Inner freedom is not reliant on your doing anything. It is the inherent truth of who you are.

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*“Do you have the courage to be who you truly are, to die to your conditioning? This is a huge question that should only be answered with serious examination.”*

## The Drive to Survive

Our bodies, as well as all life forms, are hard-wired to survive. Our minds have the capacity to veil the truth of who we really are as vast, limitless consciousness. Part of that capacity to veil truth comes from a primary drive to survive, to keep the body alive. That is the whole point of identity. Without a body, we don't need an ego. We don't need a story of me. Yet because we have objectified ourselves as a body in space and time, a body that carries with it a storyline, the motivating force – the engine of the storyline – becomes about survival of the body.

We also know that after a certain time our bodies will die, and yet this survival drive is so strong, the power of it so convincing, that we even deny the certain ending of the body. We spend our lives worrying about that death, fearing that death, and denying that death. In that avoidance, survival itself becomes a poison to the truth of our inherent freedom.

While it's true that fear is simply part of what it means to be a living form, as human animals we can actually become conscious that our fears are finally about the fear of losing something. That feared loss may be one's life, one's identity, or the losing of a pleasure, or the losing of a love relationship. Death becomes the event to be avoided at all costs, even at the cost of our integrity.

Since your body is actually alive in this moment, you have the capacity to observe your own drive to survive and even the beauty of that drive. This drive, however, can get so out of balance that it generates a living death, a living numbness, a life of hidden terror, and this is what I mean by unnecessary suffering.

I invite you to look within your life right now, and see if you have sold your integrity for some notion of survival of the body. What are the strategies that you employ for survival? Do you desire to be rich or smart or powerful or useful so that then nobody will hurt you, so that you will fit in, and your body will have a better chance of surviving? The same can be said about wanting to be attractive or trying to be a “good person.” You desire to be these things because you think this is what gives you worth, and if you have worth, you will survive.

This is why it is also important to fully experience your own badness, your own goodness, your own beauty, and your

own ugliness. You must experience the polarities that are at the core of your conditioning. Just after the thought “I am somebody” is some variation on the thought “I am somebody *good* or I am somebody *bad*.” You know in your heart of hearts that both are lies. In this knowing, you can honestly inquire, “Without the body, without the qualities of goodness or badness, without the feelings, without the thoughts, who am I?”

You have the opportunity, in this moment, through your ability to inquire and to observe, to actually cut through the illusion of identity. That opportunity comes from your own willingness to observe for yourself where you are obsessed with avoiding loss or protecting yourself from loss; where you are fixated on keeping.

In your willingness to inquire you can drop your attention deeper than your thoughts into where fear is held in your body. With your consciousness, you have the capacity to penetrate inside that fear, leaving all the narratives behind – “If I just do enough, if I could just get enough, if I could just get more, then I would be safe.” As you sit here, alone with



yourself, be willing to be unsafe and take the inner dive into the unknown. There it is possible to discover what is free of both birth and death and so cannot be lost. What is not subject to loss is always here.

## Freedom is Facing Death

There are all kinds of deaths. There is the death of every moment. There is the death that occurs every night when you drop off into sleep, the death of a relationship ending, and the death when a child leaves home. But the death I would like you to turn your attention to now is physical death, the end of your physical life form.

Many people begin the spiritual search looking for attainment, but true spiritual attainment is revealed through the loss of everything. The spiritual path is actually a path of death, a path of loss. If you can investigate the loss of your life now, before death comes to take it, you have the possibility of dying freely, in peace, losing something very precious, yes, but gaining more in the capacity to meet the loss head on.



To meet our death while the body is still alive is counterintuitive, contrary to our conditioning as organisms designed to avoid pain and fear. We normally listen to fear because it is part of the survival mechanism of the human body. There is nothing wrong with that. But self-inquiry takes the mind deeper than what is right for survival. Once the desire arises to truly be free, the question of what survives after the body dies is more important than simply surviving.

As you are reading this, you have the privilege right now to actually consider the end of your life. You can take this time to actually reflect on what your life has been about, on what is important and what is not. You can speak honestly to yourself. In this moment, you have no reason to lie. You can put aside all physical and mental rituals and strategies that further construct your life, and meet the reality of the end of your physical form.

I invite you now, this moment, to die before your body dies, to recognize your attachment to your body, and to face its inevitable end. And in this facing, to tell the truth about who you really are. If you are willing to stop for one moment and face death, it is likely that you will have time to see what life is like when you meet the reality of the death of form. What is the experience of life when there is no “you” left? What is the experience of problems when they are not “your” problems?

Am I talking about suicide? No! To meet death is not suicide, nor is it the least bit dangerous. It only seems dangerous. What is dangerous, what is a living suicide, is to live your life in bondage to the belief that you are limited to a body. As long as you resist the fact of death and hide from death through the tricks of the mind, you will suffer. In the recognition that death is simply the cessation of all experience, you can actually invite death *now*.

The willingness to directly examine your own fear of death makes it possible for you to discover the truth of what does not die. Then, when your own physical death comes, you will have already had the experience of meeting it, and you will go into your physical death awake. Through this same discovery, you will go through your life awake, because you have been willing to meet the other side.

Who are you? Are you the body? Teachers tell you that you are radiant consciousness, that you are the light, the

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truth, but you must recognize who you are for yourself. Otherwise, whatever anyone says is just another addition to the story of who you believe yourself to be. *True, lasting recognition is not just another spiritual experience to add to a collection of experiences.*

Do you have the courage to be who you truly are, to die to your conditioning? This is a huge question that should only be answered with serious examination.

You cannot live fully until you are willing to die fully; and you cannot die fully until you are willing to meet the fear of death fully. If you really meet the fear of death, you are at peace. You recognize what cannot die. I am not speaking of reincarnation, because the hope that you will reincarnate is still rooted in a fear of death. The courage to stop and inquire into the *truth* of death reveals what has never been born, what cannot die.

I invite you to ask yourself the questions that are really the heart and core of all true self-inquiry. *What is it that dies when the body dies? Who is it that dies? Who is asking these questions?* Inquire deeply into yourself. Look closer and closer.

Experience the energy, attention, and effort that it takes to keep death away. Are you aware of the fear of being nothing, of no longer existing? Right now, let your consciousness sink into the core of that fear. Let yourself be nothing right now. All is finished. All is over. What is left? What remains when *everything* is gone? Who are you?

## LETTERS TO GANGAJI

We invite you to send us your spiritual questions and reports by mail. We won't respond directly, but some letters may be published in our monthly newsletter to support our on-going conversation in these pages.

Write to: Gangaji Foundation Prison Program, PO Box 716, Ashland, OR 97520

