

Gangaji Podcast
Being Yourself
Episode 16
Host Barbara Denempont
Meeting the Inner Critic without Judgment
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[00:00] MUSIC

[00:05] SATSANG PARTICIPANT: Well, what I wanted to hear is it's, it's sort of an exposure and a, a personal request for encouragement and support, and that's what you've been doing. But, I've always had a very critical mind.

GANGAJI: I - I never heard of a critical mind. (laughter)

[00:36] BARBARA DENEMPONT, HOST: Hello and welcome to *Being Yourself, Self-Inquiry with Gangaji*. My name is Barbara Denempont. Last month we all took a moment together to stop putting our attention on what is wrong, and instead give it to the simple wonder of existence. This month I thought I'd follow that up with a closer look at the habit of seeing what is wrong. We all have this inner critic in our head that, for some of us actually, listening to it can be a lifestyle. So how do we address this inner critic without just creating more critique, more judgment? Well Gangaji is a master at responding to this particular question, and this is a wonderful exchange that was recorded in Portland in 2011.

Let's take a listen.

(Excerpted from Portland, OR Meeting with Gangaji, March 19, 2011, "The Heart Can Bear It All")

[01:30] SATSANG PARTICIPANT: It's very good to see you.

GANGAJI: Likewise, it's been awhile.

PARTICIPANT: Well, what I wanted to hear is it's, it's sort of an exposure and a, a personal request for encouragement and support, and that's what you've been doing. But, I've always had a very critical mind.

GANGAJI: I - I never heard of a critical mind. (laughter)

PARTICIPANT: Very critical. Critical of self, critical of others, critical of the world - that's a big one. And I don't go around expressing that for the most part but I carry that. And, and so then I think "well you must be an awful person to be so critical!"

GANGAJI: Who's saying that?

PARTICIPANT: I - critical mind!

GANGAJI: So that's not news is it? And what's, what's the response to that? Where is the help in that?

PARTICIPANT: Well, what, what that gives me, that, that thought, you know "you're just awful, there's just something really wrong with you" there's a, a loathing and a, a revulsion of self and the world, you know "it's a wretched place, you know, it's –"

GANGAJI: So what's the help for that?

PARTICIPANT: When I try to open –

GANGAJI: Why would you try to open? What's the, what's the agenda for opening? What will opening give you? Possibly. If you do it right.

PARTICIPANT: Lack of fear, peace.

GANGAJI: Uh huh. Well, that's not opening.

PARTICIPANT: Oh?

GANGAJI: That's "I've got lack of fear and peace out here and if I open I can get to them". That's getting somewhere.

PARTICIPANT: Yeah?

GANGAJI: That's going.

PARTICIPANT: Yeah?

GANGAJI: Opening is stopping. What if you, in this moment, be wretched? You stop the conversation in your head about how wretched you are and you say "Okay, I'm wretched". "You're right, mind. I'm wretched. So?" What then?

PARTICIPANT: When I, when I – all these feelings have become, they're very – dense –

GANGAJI: But are you answering my question now?

PARTICIPANT: I'm sorry, what was the question?

GANGAJI: What was the question?

PARTICIPANT: Sorry!

GANGAJI: Did you just want to come up and tell, tell the saga of a critical mind or do you really want to ...

PARTICIPANT: I do really want to –

GANGAJI: Because you asked me for help and encouragement.

PARTICIPANT: Okay. Okay.

GANGAJI: My encouragement in this moment is to be this wretched creature that you fear you are and that you keep telling yourself you are.

PARTICIPANT: Okay.

GANGAJI: You stop warring with it. You see – it's a question of ego and superego in a battle. And ego is the voice of God and superego is either in rebellion to that voice or in submission to that voice. Right? So you say, "Okay, I'm wretched. Big deal."

PARTICIPANT: Okay.

GANGAJI: Then what do you experience?

PARTICIPANT: A lot of pain.

GANGAJI: So if you open to that pain -

PARTICIPANT: And that's the fear.

GANGAJI: Then you open to that fear. It's not that pain is not supposed to be there or fear is not supposed to be there. It's just – whatever is there. It's just right. It's what's being avoided in this loop.

PARTICIPANT: I guess I fear I can't manage that, I can't do that.

GANGAJI: Yeah you can't. It's true. (laughter) It's true. So what if you can't manage it? What does that mean? What's the result of not managing?

PARTICIPANT: It'll overtake me, it'll overtake. And it'll just –

GANGAJI: So in this moment be overtaken. What's the news from being overtaken? Open your eyes up. Is this thinking or is it experiencing?

PARTICIPANT: I'm here, can you, I can –

GANGAJI: You're here. Are you managing anything? If you are, stop.

PARTICIPANT: Trying not to.

GANGAJI: Really the management is only going on in your thought process. Isn't it? I mean, what have you managed? You know we can manage bodily functions to a degree, for a period of time. But the slightest little push and we can't even do that. We can manage driving a car, or locking a house up at the night, at night, shopping for groceries, doing a job, some very complicated jobs. But in the face of the enormity of life itself. Of, of birth and death. Can that be managed?

PARTICIPANT: No.

GANGAJI: That's just the truth, isn't it?

PARTICIPANT: Right.

GANGAJI: So if you stop *trying* to manage it, what's the result? You don't, one thing, you don't need this conversation about you managing it well, or you managing it poorly.

PARTICIPANT: Yeah. It just is, I'm –

GANGAJI: And what is it? What's the experience?

PARTICIPANT: Well there's still, there's still pain.

GANGAJI: So maybe it is pain. See when you say "There's still pain" it's as if this exercise is about there being no pain. But I've never said that.

PARTICIPANT: Right. I'm trying to get rid of it because I think I'm doing something wrong if there's all this pain.

GANGAJI: So that's what I'm saying: be wrong. If I confirm you are in fact doing something wrong, which you are doing something wrong actually. (laughter) So, that's right. You got that right! (laughter) So you've been called out: wrong. That's good feedback isn't it? Stop doing something wrong. Stop doing anything. Allow that to, to sink in: "I have done it wrong." We are so defensive because it hurts. We don't want to hurt. But it's, hey, we do a lot wrong. We need to know what we do wrong. And this is central aspect of our lives that we continue to do wrong. Out of the avoidance of the pain of being wrong. So if you just undercut right away to being wrong because you are, anyway. Be wrong! All the way. That's the key. You know we get a little wrong, we, rip across the gut, and then there's "well that's enough, I was wrong today". But all the way! So that it's just – it's out. You rip your guts out. And what's left is space. It's not right or wrong. And that discussion, for an instant at least, stops. And you taste the spaciousness of your Self.

PARTICIPANT: And in that spaciousness there's everything, even the pain, it can be there.

GANGAJI: Yeah. Maybe, maybe. What if you don't know what's in that spaciousness and you don't know what's *supposed* to be in that spaciousness? You throw your spiritual books in the river, off the cliff. You don't know what's supposed to be here. Whatever is here is here. And that's the point of inquiry. It's about growing up. And it's time. But it's not about whatever you think growing up is. Or whatever you think you *should* feel. Or whatever you think will be there when you *do* feel. It's about being willing to experience whatever you are feeling. And our imitation of that is a drama, or a dramatization of that, or indulgence of that. And our hiding from that is a repression or a dissociation. But opening to that is really all the way. Just as that young woman showed going into fear. Just exploration. Inquiry.

PARTICIPANT: And you know Gangaji, even with all that, even with all that, I mean I'm not, I mean, I have movements of joy and well feeling, well-being, and –

GANGAJI: But we're not really talking about that, that's good. I know you're a good person. (laughter) You're a good person. You've gotten to this grade, it's fine! I'm not questioning that. I'm just, you know, you asked me for encouragement and help and, and finally encouragement and help is just being booted off the cliff. (laughter). It has nothing to do with how well you've jogged to get to the cliff, or what shape you're in. Just - oh my God, this is a new domain of existence. And nothing I have done in the past has anything to do with it. None of my strategies work, and all of the strategies come in. And that's the moment of choice. So when you hear this voice, this familiar voice, because some minds are more critical than others, although the nature of mind, in terms of supporting the organism, is critical. It's - what's wrong, how can we fix that? And so that's, that's part of the nature of it, and in that it serves. Some criticalness is right. You need to know where you are wrong so you can correct the course. But at the point of that cliff there is no course, there's no map. Okay?

PARTICIPANT: Okay. Thank you. Yes. Okay.

GANGAJI: It's not for the faint of heart of course. But I recognize, you know, you, you keep coming around, we keep having a conversation and I can honestly say each time the conversation gets deeper. Yes you want to come up? So that's, that's it, you know? It's that willingness to see it. And then normally what happens is we incorporate whatever depth was there back into the familiar conversation. "Oh, I should have done it better up there" or "Oh I missed my chance" or "Oh I can keep it" or whatever, just - you have the facility for overhearing yourself. When you overhear yourself it doesn't mean you get into this argument. It just means you stop. And see what's here. That's being yourself. Very simple.

[14:13] BARBARA: What I love about offering you these exchanges is that I know any of us could be sitting in that chair having that conversation with Gangaji. I hope you found this podcast today supportive. And if you haven't had a chance yet to check out Gangaji's new website, I hope you will. There's a lot of wonderful resources there for you. Go to gangaji.org, that's gangaji.org. And if you have any topic suggestions for me, just please write to me, Barb at info@gangaji.org.

As always, I thank you for listening. Until next time.