

David Godman – October 15, 2013

Rick: Welcome to Buddha at the Gas Pump. My name is Rick Archer and my guest this week is David Godman. David has lived in India since 1976, mostly in Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu, which listeners will realize is the place Ramana Maharishi lived most of his life. He spent his life there studying and practicing the techniques of Sri Ramana Maharishi.

His anthology of Sri Ramana Maharishi's teachings, *Be As You Are*, is probably the most widely read book on Sri Ramana's teachings. During his 14 year stay at Ramana Ashram - 1978 through '92 – he managed the ashram's library, catalogued its archives and recorded the stories and experiences of devotees who had had direct contact with Sri Ramana.

David is the authorized biographer of two devotees of Sri Ramana Maharishi, Lakshmana Swamy and Papagi, who realized the self in Ramana's presence and who later went on to become Gurus themselves. And David's bio goes on but I'll post this on my website.

I want to actually read something else David wrote, before we get rolling, which is his synopsis of what he'd like to talk about during this interview, because this is what we will talk about, and I think it would be a nice way to introduce the whole conversation.

David said, "I should like to have a long discussion with you on the power of true Gurus to attract, liberate [and] mature disciples, with specific reference to Ramana Maharishi and those who were drawn to him. I should like to speak about how the power of the self, working through the Guru, attracts and deals with people who associate with him or her."

"I would throw in a lot of case studies – stories on how particular people were attracted by the power of the Guru and eventually consumed by it. These might include devotees such as Papagi, Lakshmana Swamy, [and] Robert Adams, who went on to teach themselves and also lesser known figures such as Mastan, Muruganar, and Maurice Freedman who had spectacular and interesting stories of their own."

"I should also like to branch out into a discussion on who is and who is not qualified to play the role of the Guru. I think this is important since there is a vast and burgeoning spiritual industry nowadays that is underpinned by claims of a lineage that goes back to Ramana Maharishi."

"I have had a long and at times intimate association with some of the great Advaita masters of the late 20th century. If there is time, I can explain what they themselves thought of their roles in the liberation of those who came to see them searching for freedom. I would love to digress into a discussion on the power of Arunachala, the holy mountain that Sri Ramana claimed brought about his own liberation. It has a long history of attracting saints and seekers, some of whom claim that they have been liberated by the power of the mountain alone."

So that's what we're going to talk about. I spent considerable amount of time reading interviews you had done, couple hundred pages actually, and books you had written – as much as I can – but I've still

gotten just a tip of the iceberg because you've written a lot and also listening to quite a few audios that you have posted.

David: I gave you a very small homework assignment, you've gone overboard, you've read a lot more.

Rick: You know you're one of these people that I'd really like to read all of it because you've really exhaustively covered this stuff. But I'm going to lead out with a somewhat skeptical question to see how you handle it and to kind of segue us into the conversation.

Did you get the feeling at any time, or do you still have the feeling after all these thousands of pages you've written with biographical coverage of these great saints, that in a way you were offering a detailed description of the rind of an orange, and can't really hope to convey the taste of the orange to anyone who reads it? In other words, if we could really step inside Ramana Maharishi's body so to speak, and see the world through *his* eyes, how close could any verbal description of that state hope to do justice to the actual state? How many thousands of pages could you read and yet still not get an inkling of what it was like to experience life as he experienced it?

David: I agree entirely. I could write a million pages and it wouldn't begin to convey what it's like to be in that state. Ramana himself once said, "He alone knows me who knows me as I truly am." Reading books doesn't give you that knowledge; only having a direct experience of the Self gives you that knowledge.

So what I can do is encourage people to find out more about this tradition, I can explain what the teachings are through which one can have an experience of this tradition, but I can't explain what the ultimate experience will be, nor can I persuade people to start on it. All I can do is lay out the information and say take it or leave it.

Rick: So what you're really saying is that this whole discussion, this whole topic of spirituality is really all about experience. It's not about anything that words can do justice to; it's something that has to be a living experience?

David: I agree. We go into what Papagi said. He sent people out categorizing them as messengers. So I asked him once, "Messengers have a message. What's the message that the messengers are supposed to deliver?" And he said, "I send these people out, first of all, to tell people that suffering doesn't exist, that bondage is an illusion. Everyone needs to hear that message and everyone has my authority to tell people this is the truth. But people come here, they have experiences and everyone has my permission to go off and say, "I went off to India, I went to Lucknow, I had this experience," but no one has my permission to say, "Come to me and I will give it to you." What they should be saying is, "I had this experience there, if you want to have that experience, go there and maybe it will happen to you.""

So what he was in a sense encouraging people to tell other people was that this experience is a possibility *for* everyone, and there are certain places, certain circumstances where it's more likely to happen, and [the] primary place where these experiences are likely to happen are in the presence of someone whose currently abiding as the Self.

Rick: Well that implies a couple of things. Well first of all, Papagi died over a decade ago so going to Lucknow isn't going to do you much good now.

David: Exactly.

Rick: It's just a big noisy city. That also implies that all these students of Papagi did not or have not attained to the same degree of realization he had, and that they can only serve as, as you said, as messengers or intermediaries, and that no one should hang around them that long. If they really hope to realize the Self, they should use them just as springboards to go and find someone who has realized it more fully, which was true when Papagi was alive but what do we do now?

David: I mostly agree with what you said. Papagi himself said, "You don't find a teacher by geographical search." He himself tried that in the 1940s. He said, "I taught all over India. I had this immense passion to see God. I wanted someone who could make me see Krishna on demand." He was a visionary, a Krishna bhakta, and his whole life was geared to getting Krishna to appear to him.

So he said he went all over India and everywhere he went he said, "Can you show me God?" He was a bit of a bulldozer, he would just walk into some Guru's presence and say, "Can you show me God? If you can, I will give you anything including my own life, if you can't, stop wasting my time, I'll go somewhere else."

He said, "I tried that and it didn't really work, and then I went back to my home in the Punjab. But because I had this burning desire to see God, God himself appeared in the form of the Guru on my own doorstep in the Punjab. Ramana Maharishi knocked on my door one day – not the real Ramana Maharishi; Ramana Maharishi never left Tiruvannamalai. This saddhu appeared at my door and I asked the question I'd asked every other saddhu for the last two years: can you show me God? And this saddhu said, "No, but if you go to Tiruvannamalai there is somebody there called Ramana Maharishi and he can probably help you.""

So he wrote down – the saddhu had directions which train to catch, how to get there - and he went there a few weeks later and saw the same man sitting on the couch and was a bit annoyed. He thought this saddhu in the Punjab had tricked him but then everybody in the ashram said, "No, no, he hasn't left here for 50 years, he's never been in the Punjab."

So he realized that his passion to see God was so strong [that] it had elicited a response from this person he would eventually take to be his Guru, who actually knocked on his door and told him where to go. So he said, "My experience is, hunting around for the right man is a bit of a lottery. You might find someone, you might not. But if you want it badly enough, if you want liberation badly enough, if you want God badly enough, God will knock on your door and show you where to go."

Rick: Very interesting. Well if you want it badly enough you're likely to hunt, and so....

David: Well he did, he wanted it badly enough when he hunted but it didn't work. He said, "Just the wanting it, in the end, ultimately I was so desperate, I cared about it so much that Ramana was somehow compelled to knock on my door and show me where to go."

Rick: No it's interesting, that experience he had of Ramana showing up at his door, because I've interviewed at least maybe half-a-dozen people who had Ramana show up to them in one way or another before they even had *heard* of Ramana. Pamela Wilson, I mean she had this strong desire, she wanted to know truth, she woke up in the middle of the night and there was this Indian guy sitting on her bed. Nick Gancitano had a similar vision. Burt Harding - walking down the street in Toronto or someplace and he had this vision of Ramana. So I don't know what's going on but it would almost seem like Ramana is still functional in some way, shape, or form, or perhaps just the Divine knows to manifest in the form of Ramana so that people eventually, when they see a book or a picture of him will say, "Oh, that's the guy I saw," and they'll pursue that. It's a mysterious thing.

David: I talked to Lakshmana Swamy, he's another direct disciple of Ramana, about this and he said, "If you're ready enough, mature enough, then the Self can take the form of a Guru you will recognize. It might appear physical in your life, it might appear in a dream, but that just gives you a pointer – somewhere to go, somewhere else to look.

Rick: So there's really no sort of entity – Ramana – still hanging around on some subtle level intervening in people's lives? You're just saying that the Divine intelligence takes a form that people will recognize and connect with Ramana?

David: I would disagree with probably most Ramana devotees who would probably take the position that there is a kind of cosmic Ramana up there intervening, looking after everybody's lives. When the liberated man dies there is no name, no form that continues in any realm, in any form, whatsoever.

Rick: Oil into oil.

David: Exactly. So if you happen to have a particular predilection for Ramana's teachings or would benefit from following them, then I think the Power that organizes – let's say "the Universe" – for the greater good of the universe – might take the form of Ramana and he might say, "Go to see this man, go to Tiruvannamalai." So I think somehow the help comes in a recognizable form.

You need a form to progress in the right direction; you can't take advice from the formless. If you're still tied to form you need some recognizable form to move on to the next step.

Rick: And so if you're a Christian you might see Jesus or Mother Mary, like the children of Lourdes and things like that.

David: Exactly, exactly.

Rick: Okay. Well that in itself is a fascinating topic which maybe we'll touch back upon as we go along... just that the Divine has this intelligence to it, it's not just some flat, abstract, dead absolute, but it has this lively intelligence which can not only orchestrate an incredible universe, but orchestrate visions like that which guide the seeker toward his destiny.

David: I think it's the Bhagavad [Gita] that says, "If you take one step towards God, God takes ten steps towards you." So all you have to do is want it or take one step in the right direction and the whole mechanism kicks in and takes you in the right direction.

Rick: Is there anything one can do to intensify one's wanting? I suppose if anyone's listening to this interview they've got it to some degree... that wanting?

David: That's a very interesting topic because back to Papagi again, he said, "Desire for the Self is ultimately what liberates you. It's not any particular practice, it's not a technique, a method; it's how badly you want it."

He regarded desire for the Self as a kind of fire that you have to fan the flames of and he would say things like, "Pour kerosene on this desire, this desire for freedom."

And then people would say, "Yes, but how do I do it?" And he said that desire for the Self is kind of inside you all the time. It's always pulling you in towards itself but the intensity of that fire is veiled or diminished by your desire for everything that isn't the Self. So there's nothing positive you can do to fan this flame, this desire for the Self, except getting rid of all your other desires. To the extent that any desire for anything in the world, if you can diminish that, then you start to feel the pull of the Self inside you and that's the fire. And the more you get distracted by things that are not the Self, the less you feel this desire that's pulling you in.

Rick: That would sort of imply that people should all become recluses.

David: No, it's not being attached to things that might distract you from this inner pull. Ramana Maharishi, let's go back to him, he came from a tradition where it was quite normal and acceptable to renounce the world, go off, sit in a cave because people thought that's what you should do – you should cut down on all your distractions, your family, your job. And Ramana never once in his whole life gave anyone permission to give up their family, give up their job. People would regularly ask him if he would initiate them into sanyas and he always said, "No. Wherever you go you take your mind with you. The problem is not your circumstances; the problem is your attachment to the things in your life." And he said you have to work on this attachment not run away and hide in a cave.

Rick: Basically somebody who's raising children or running a business or something like that, they can continue doing that but they can do it in such a way that the attachment diminishes and the intensity of desire for the Self increases?

David: He told Paul Brunton, it was recorded in *A Search in Secret India*, he said, "Sitting practice is for the merest of spiritual novices." Now everybody I know sits but what Ramana expected you to do, ultimately, was to fit pure awareness of the "I" or of the Guru or of God into your life. He said to people who had household commitments, job commitments, "Don't slack on your life. Do your job to the best of your ability. Look after your family, don't abandon them. Within every single person's life there are gaps when you don't need your mind to fulfill your daily obligations. He said, "Those are the moments that you have to cherish. In those moments try to take your mind back to the Self, focus it on God." He

said, "If you use all your spare time moments being aware of the "I" thought, God, your teacher, whatever, then that creates a kind of current which will be a background hum to the rest of your life. Your life will go more smoothly, you'll have the peace during the busy times when you have to fulfill your duties." He never ever said run away; he said tackle the source of the problem which is your attachment to the things that you desire.

Rick: Well I don't mind being labeled a "mere spiritual novice" but 45 years of sitting practice has integrated nicely with an active life and has enhanced it, you know?

David: This is one bit of advice that Ramana gave and I don't know anyone who agrees with it. I talked to Annamalai Swami, he was an exceptional devotee of Ramana and Ramana kept him busy in Ramana Ashram for 12 years. And Annamalai Swami actually told me, he said, "If he ever saw me sitting meditating, he would invent a job for me to do. He'd just keep me busy, dawn till dusk, and tell me this same advice: "Be the Self. In your spare mental moments be the Self,"" – and he said, "I couldn't do it. Even though I had this great teacher, I could go and sit with him every evening, I'd go and sit with him and my mind would just be a jumble of thoughts about all the jobs he'd given me that day, what I should be doing the next day."

And he said, "It was only when Ramana said, "Okay, your work here is finished, you can go meditate,"" he said, "As soon as I went to a neighboring talacotu , a little place next to Ramana Ashram, he said, "I sat and meditated all day and suddenly it clicked."

So even the best devotees who had private, personal, one-on-one time with Ramana everyday couldn't accomplish this. So I'm not saying it's bad advice, I'm just saying that I don't know anyone who's managed to get to that state in an extremely busy working environment.

Rick: Reminds me of something Amma, the hugging saint does, and her approach is often just to work and work and work people, and she said, "If you do enough seva, enough selfless service, that then even just a little bit of meditation is going to end the job for you," but if you do that prematurely without working out, then I don't know, it could be a long road.

David: Well interesting with Annamalai Swami, Bhagavan worked him excessively. Even everyone else in the ashram was wondering why this man was the donkey of the ashram, doing all the jobs. And then suddenly one day Ramana turned to him and said, "Your karma is finished," and he repeated it three times, "Your karma is finished." Somehow he'd fulfilled all the activities he had to do - his destiny, his obligations, all the physical activity he had to do, he burned it all up and Bhagavan said, "Great, now you can go meditate, your karma is finished."

Rick: And then it clicked.

David: And then it clicked with him.

Rick: Well I read a line in one of your books, I think it was Ramana said, "Knowledge can remain unshaken only after all the vasanas are rooted out," and if karma is stored in the form of vasanas or

samskaras or something like that, then obviously all these vasanas have to be rooted out before knowledge can dawn?

David: Ummm.... He did say all the vasanas have to go.

Rick: Let's define vasanas as we go along here.

David: Vasanas are the desires to accomplish or achieve - the idea that you have to do things, accomplish things – and they come from all your past activities.

Rick: Stored impressions are they not?

David: They're stored as impressions, they're what compel you to do all the things you do in your life and some are stronger than others, and what Bhagavan is saying is they all cause you to project your attention outwards, that the things that you desire and want, at a subtle metaphysical level, they actually create the world in front of you so that you can enjoy the desires that you have lurking inside you. And he said that so long as this natural compulsion to extrovert is there, you're not going to make your sense of individuality subside and disappear. So he said, "I tell people the world is unreal simply because if you have that attitude, your mind has less and less interest in the things that are going on around you. They don't jump out, they don't get excited over things that you might do, things that you might accomplish."

So he said, "The 'I' has to be attenuated. It has to be attenuated to the point where it rests content without continually jumping out to thoughts, deceptions," and he said, "In that state where it no longer has the momentum to move out, the Self is capable of pulling it into itself and destroying it."

He said, "The Self cannot destroy an I that has a lot of energy, that's extroverting out into the world. It can only pull into itself and destroy a mind that no longer wants to look outside itself."

Rick: It sounds like that is achieved by degrees through the practice of self inquiry, as I understand it – that one begins self inquiry and one is not ultimately successful on day one, but the habit of extraversion is reversed gradually and one becomes more and more accustomed to resting in the Self.

David: Um-hm. I talk to a lot of people, I email a lot of people, and the standard complaint is, "I've done this for ... whatever ... 3 months, 3 years, 10 years and it's not working." It's a very hard process or technique to evaluate where you are. There's no magic bullet for most people; it's just a steady, continuous deconditioning of the mind over time until you reach a point where you really don't have a perpetual interest in connecting with things in the world.

Rick: Now you did a lot of self inquiry practice and probably still do it, right?

David: Yes.

Rick: At sometimes I think you said up to 8 hours a day you were doing self inquiry, as an actual sitting practice.

David: Right.

Rick: And probably you and Michael James, whom I interviewed recently, you guys are among the top 1% at least, of the people who have taken this seriously and given it your all for decades now. So what is your experience? How efficacious has it been?

David: There's a very nice quote by Arthur Osborne who was Ramana's biographer and he also edited *The Collected Works* and he said, "Self inquiry is a win-win practice: either you get peaceful and quiet or you get enlightened. What's not to like about it?" There doesn't seem to be a down side to it. It's not you know, a weird yogic practice where strange psychotic episodes might come if you're not having proper supervision. I think if you are sincere, if you work hard at it, then your life improves, your mental state improves and if you're lucky, ready and mature, then you get enlightened.

Rick: Sounds good to me. So in other words, benefits accrue from day one and they accumulate, perhaps?

David: Umm... yes and no. I think there's a standard trajectory and this is why people complain. I think when you start, then many many people say, "Oh it's so peaceful, I got these amazing, quiet, blissful states and then they wore off and if anything, my mind appeared to get busier and busier rather than quieter and quieter." And so they come to Ramana Ashram and they complain, "What am I doing wrong?" And it's not so much they're doing wrong; it's what you do when you start a practice like this is you're opening a can of worms which you've been sitting on.

There's a lovely analogy that Bhagavan gave to someone who complained that the people who'd come to Ramana Ashram didn't appear to be getting better in their behavior, it wasn't whether they're getting quieter or not, he said, "The people that come to you seem to be getting worse and worse rather than better and better, what's going on?"

And he said, "Imagine a pot with milk inside and you're boiling it. If there's a few spoonfuls in the bottom, the heat underneath will cause it to evaporate and there'll be no milk left. But imagine your pot that's half full or two-thirds full, you put the fire underneath and the first thing that happens it boils over and makes a big mess." He said, "The lucky ones who come here with very little karma, with very few desires, those desires dry up and they get the experience quickly. Everybody else needs a period of boiling over first before the level goes down."

Rick: Very good and that's true in other spiritual practices and traditions too, that principle of when you first start you, it's like... "Oh boy, I'm really getting somewhere," but then there's this sort of suppressed or sleeping storehouse of impressions and that starts getting stirred up, and necessarily so in order to clear it out.

David: I think that people tend to validate their practice by how many peaceful experiences they had - blissful experiences. I don't think that's the way; I think you validate it by how hard you try. Every time you put the effort in you're chipping away at that mountain a little bit more.

Rick: And the Gita says, "No effort is lost and no obstacle exists."

David: Exactly, exactly. Lakshmana Swamy, he had a lovely little maxim. He said, "It's the devotee's job to make the effort and it's the Guru's job to ascertain the progress. The Guru can't make the effort for you and the devotee can't ascertain his own progress." Don't expect one to do the other's job, it can't happen.

Rick: Maharishi Mahesh Yogi used to use the analogy of tip-toeing through a herd of sleeping elephants where you're ... in terms of going through the vasanas, getting down to the Self but in doing so the elephants begin to stir. You begin to wake them up and maybe you need to scurry out again.

David: What I'm really saying is that only the Guru can tell if you've made any progress. Ramana Maharishi was once asked, "Is there any obvious indication that I can latch onto that I'm making some progress?"

And he said, "To the extent that you're free from unwanted thoughts," but I think a lot of people even years into a practice still have a head full of unwanted thoughts. The only person who can really see where you really are is the Guru himself, and he's the one you should listen to about your practice and where you are and where you should be heading.

Rick: Hmm, if one is so fortunate to have a Guru.

David: If one is so fortunate. Let me just throw in this story. Papagi was doing Krishna japa for every minute of his waking life, this is back in the 1940s.

Rick: Chanting the names of Krishna...

David: He had a long mantra with Krishna's names and he said he was doing 50 thousand repetitions a day. And he said, "I would walk to work, I would chant it, whenever I wasn't talking in the office I would chant it," and he was coordinating it with his breath and he was having visions of the gods. And then he had a spectacular appearance in which the gods actually appeared in his apartment in Chennai and after that he said, "I couldn't do the practice anymore," he said, "For a quarter of a century I've been obsessed with Krishna. I've been doing various rituals, various japas to make Krishna appear," and he said, "Suddenly there's nothing in me that could even repeat his name once." He said, "I thought this was a very retrograde step. I thought I'd lost my passion. I thought I'd lost my desire for God."

He said, "I went all over Chennai and talked to famous swamis." He went to the head of the Rama Krishna Mount, he went to various well known people. So he went to all these very well respected swamis in Chennai and they all said, "Oh, it's the dark night of the soul, you must try harder. Go back, sit there, force yourself to do it."

And he said, "These were people, they were well intentioned but they didn't have a knowledge of the Self, they couldn't see where I was." So he went to Ramana Maharishi, told the whole story to him and Bhagavan said, "How did you come here today?"

And Papagi said, "Well I got on the train from Chennai."

And Bhagavan said, "Then what did you do?"

"Well I got off at the station, I got in a bullock cart."

"And then what?"

"I got off the bullock cart and came here," ... thinking what a stupid question, he knows how he got here. And Bhagavan looked at him and said, "Just as those conveyances brought you to your destination, now you're here you don't have to move anymore. In the same way, your japa took you to your destination. You have arrived, you have arrived."

So he said, "The true Guru can see where you are. He's not going to give you a standard formula and say, "Try harder."" He said Ramana Maharishi looked at him, knew that his japa had stopped to work because his mind had basically disappeared, that it was no longer necessary for him to do it.

Rick: It had served its purpose.

David: It has served its purpose and he said, "In that moment when my master," – he used to call him 'my master', "when 'my master' told me "you have arrived," I lost all my desire to see Krishna in external form."

He said, "That's the true power of the Guru. He doesn't give you a standard formula, he can see exactly where you are, and if you've reached a point where you don't need to practice anymore, he can basically tell you, "You are the Self, you have arrived," and he can do it with such compelling force and authority that you stick in that state and you never want anything else again.

Rick: Of course there are a lot of people these days who say, "I am the Self therefore there's no need for me to do any practice." I think that might sometimes be a little premature.

David: No comment. I think there's a lot of deluded people in the world. They're deluding themselves and they're deluding other people.

Rick: One analogy I liked a lot that Ramana used that you related is the bull-stable-fresh grass analogy, why don't you give it?

David: Oh yes, this goes back to what we were talking about 10 minutes ago. It's an analogy that Bhagavan used to explain how self inquiry worked, why it worked, and why techniques, particularly yogic techniques didn't work so well.

So he said, "The mind is a bit like a bull that wants to wander outside its stable and forage in other peoples' property, who of course don't like wandering bulls so they throw stones at it, they beat it. The bull gets angry."

He said, "Self inquiry entices the bull back into its stable." The stable in this particular analogy is the heart, the Self. He said, "You can't force a bull to go back into its stable and not want to go out, but you can bribe it, you can persuade it.

He said, “Self inquiry is equivalent to putting a handful of fresh grass under the bull’s nose and slowly leading it back into its stable. This has to be done again and again and again, because the vasanas of the bull aren’t going to disappear in one trip back to the stable. Half an hour later he’ll want to go out and cause some damage again.”

“So eventually,” Ramana said, “just be patient. Don’t restrain the bull, don’t force it to be in a particular place. Offer it something tasty and slowly, slowly take it back into the stable, which is the heart, and keep lots of grass in the stable.”

He said, “Sooner or later, even the most stubborn and the most aggressive bull, something will click and it will think “If I go outside people are going to throw stones at me and beat me, if I stay here there’s enough grass, then I’ll stay here and be happy.””

He said, “That’s how the process of inquiry works.” The ‘I’ is always going outside, getting into trouble, suffering, and Ramana said, “Take it back into the heart, not forcibly, just slowly, slowly persuade it to go back, let it stick there for even one or two seconds, enjoy a bit of peace, a bit of happiness and after some indeterminate point the ‘I’ will stop. It will do a cost-benefit analysis if you like, it will think, “If I go up there I’m going to suffer, I’ll get in trouble, if I stay home I’ll be happy,” and he said, “That’s the tipping point, once you’ve got to that point the ‘I’ will rest in the heart, it will enjoy the peace and happiness there. And when the Self sees that the ‘I’ no longer has any extroverting tendencies, then the power of the Self will take over and destroy it.”

Rick: Yeah, to my understanding, the fresh grass in this analogy is the blissful nature of the Self – always said traditionally to be ananda, and the mind obviously does have a natural tendency to seek greater happiness. And so if the self inquiry process can give the mind intimations of greater happiness in the inward direction, it’s naturally going to follow along and arrive at that source of happiness. But as we’ve been discussing, there’s a habit of external focus that’s built up over lifetimes, but that doesn’t mean it necessarily needs to take lifetimes to reverse the direction and move in the direction of the Self, because the happiness offered by the experience of the self is so much greater than the happiness offered by external things. So if you can just have an effective means of starting to go in that direction, it should be effortless.

David: Ah... it depends where you are when you start. It’s not a level playing field, we don’t all come to this life ... we’re not equally talented athletes on the starting line with the same distance to cover. There are people who come to this life and all they have to do is say, “Who am I?” once and they get it, and there are people who try 50 years and work really hard, they’re sincere, they try hard but they haven’t had the work done in previous lives, they’re not ready to ask that question once and get the right answer.

Like Papagi told me, he said, “If I’d asked myself “Who am I?” once when I was eight, I wouldn’t have wasted my 25 years running after Krishna.”

Rick: You think he would have realized? I guess he’s saying he would have, he would have been one of those rare people.

David: Ah ... this is very interesting in that he had a direct experience of the Self when he was very, very young – spontaneous. And he said that his mother, who was a big Krishna bhakta, brainwashed him into believing that the experience he had had was of Krishna and that somehow he had to get it back *by* worshipping Krishna. And he said, “I spent the next 25 years looking for a form of God outside myself, because when that form of God actually appeared I would have these incredibly blissful experiences.”

And he said what Bhagavan did for him, he said, “That experience never really left me,” which I found a little bit odd because he went through a period of being in the army, being what the British would call “the terrorist” – he was making bombs and trying to derail trains.

Rick: This was after his meeting with Ramana?

David: No, no, no, no, in the late 20s early 30s. He was not a Gandhian, he didn’t believe in nonviolence. He wanted to throw out the British by force so he had a period when he was in a gang that was committing quite violent acts. And then he said he joined the British army to learn how to use armaments to fight the British later on.

But he said all through this, this background experience he’d had as a boy was still there. There’s this lovely story he’d tell, he actually graduated from a military academy so he became an officer in the British army, and he said at night he used to lock himself in his room and dress up in a sari, put makeup on, put jewelry on and he’d dance to Krishna all night. He said, “I was just so ecstatic in the morning I’d come in and the commanding officer said, “Don’t serve that man any drink, he looks drunk already.”” He said, “I was so drunk on Krishna I had a silly grin on my face all day when I was in the army.”

But he said, “I was brainwashed into looking for an external God and it was Ramana Maharishi, who through the power of his own experience made me understand that there’s nothing external to the Self that I need to look for.”

He said, “The experience was there all the time but somehow I’d got this defective belief that I had to look for God outside myself, and it was the role of my Guru to tell me that there was nothing outside myself that I needed to look for.”

And interesting, I went through his diaries, his journals, which he wrote in the 1980s and he had isolated quotes from other famous Indian saints... Tukaram, Mirabai, and he said, “All those people who were obsessed with getting visions of God somehow got sidetracked by the incredible bliss.”

He said, “You can’t believe just how blissful it is, it’s an addiction. You become addicted to the bliss, you become addicted to the form of your God,” and he said, “it’s really, really hard to stop.” He said he found a verse in Tukaram when Tukaram finally renounced his addiction to the form of God, he said he’d found similar verses in Mirabai and he said, “I could relate to that. I spent decades in states of ecstasy, bliss, but they weren’t the silence, the peace of the Self, and it was my Guru who somehow expelled this passion for seeing external gods and made me be satisfied with Self.”

Rick: Ananda maya kosha – bliss can be a sheath.

David: Exactly. So as he said, “My addiction to the form of Krishna was what kept me away from the Self for a quarter of a century.” He said, “If I’d once asked myself “Who am I?”, the ‘I’ would’ve gone back to its source and disappeared.”

Rick: And yet if we regard everything as well and wisely put you know, Ramana told him your japa brought you to this state.

David: He said, “I experience words,” he said, “If I say ‘mango’ on the basis of having tasted a mango before, you get this mental image of what a mango tastes like.” He said, “If someone says mango to me, I actually taste it. It’s like the taste receptors in my brain actually kick in for mango taste.”

And he said, “If someone had said to me when I was young, “I, what is this I?”, I’m absolutely sure I would have experienced that I because that’s the way my brain worked. I had this ability to experience words.”

Rick: It’s called Rithambara Pragya, where you can actually have the thought of anything and it manifests in your experience.

David: We’re talking about the level playing field again, the starting line, he said, “I was a yogi in my last life, I was going into samadhi.” He didn’t start from the same starting point that most of the rest of us start from.

Rick: Right. As I recall in your book you mention during one of your interviews that even from a young age, people were attracted to him as some sort of Guru, they would meet him even as a child ... “There’s something about this guy,” you know?

David: Oh yes. I collected all his stories and it seemed a nice linear progression – some nice childhood experiences, what seemed to be a bit of a wayward tilt in his youth when he became a terrorist, and then back to Ramana a bit later.

Rick: Arjuna was a bit of a terrorist.

David: And he had the experience, so I asked him at one point, “When did you first start being a Guru?” thinking he would say, you know, a couple of years after leaving Ramana, and he said, “When I was 8 years old.”

For those who don’t know, when he was 8 he had a compulsion to pretend to be a Buddhist monk. He said, “Buddha was my first Guru.” He said, “I just saw a picture of the starving Buddha and I just fell in love with this man and I tried to replicate his life.”

And he said, “Replicating his life involved stealing my mother’s sari, pretending it was a Buddhist robe, going around begging for food” – this is an 8-year old kid. And then he said, “There was a public speaking platform in the local town and I used to go up there and give speeches when I was 8 years old, expounding Buddhism.”

And I said, “What did you know about Buddhism when you were 8?”

He said, “I have no idea but I was very good at it, people listened.” He said that talent had always been there for him, he always had that ability to stand up and talk to people and make them interested in spiritual matters.

He has a daughter who is still alive, very nice lady who had a great experience with Ramana - I can tell you that if you’re interested – so I contacted her and I said, “Your father says he started being a Guru when he was 8 years old, what do you make of that?”

And she said, “Well my memories of him, you know I was born in the 30s, go back to 1930s. We were moving around a lot, we had jobs in different places,” and she told me that, “wherever we were, within a day of his arriving in that place people would be banging on his door, coming to him for advice. And in some places people would be jumping in the window. We could lock our door but nothing could somehow hide the presence of this man wherever we were. Wherever we went, there was just like a magnetic field around him and people would come,” and that was even before he went to see Ramana. He did seem to have that experience but somehow he was externalizing it into a quest for Krishna.

Rick: Well that’s interesting. In the introductory notes that I read you said, “I should also like to branch out into a discussion on who is and who is not qualified to play the role of the Guru. I think this is important since there is a vast and burgeoning spiritual industry nowadays underpinned by claims of a lineage that goes back to Ramana.”

Seems like someone like Papagi was definitely cut out to be a Guru, from day one.

David: I had this discussion with him, this is something that’s always fascinated me and I’ve had the rare opportunity to talk to Gurus who have this power – how does this power work? Where does it come from? Why do some people have it and some people not?

And Papagi’s own answer was, “If you’re destined to be a teacher, the Self will give you the power and authority to say the right things and even enlighten people who come to you.”

He did accept that some people could be enlightened and that they didn’t have that power, it wasn’t their destiny to be a teacher. He said, “If that is your destiny you don’t have to do anything to get that power, that power is given to you.”

Whereas other teachers I’ve been to had different theories, different ideas on why some people have this power and some don’t.

Rick: Well, it would seem that – you use the word “qualified” – it seems that there have to be some qualifications. A person can’t just think, “Oh, I’d like to be a Guru, beats working in Wal-Mart,” and start doing it; one has to have qualifications. And I’m sure that there have been people who’ve faked it.

David: Qualification number one is you actually have to realize the Self, that's quite a high bar for the first step. I'm not willing to accept that anyone who isn't permanently abiding in that state has any qualification to be regarded as a Guru. But there are people in that state who...

Rick: Aren't Gurus.

David: Aren't Gurus, don't have a destiny to be Gurus, and don't have the power to show that state to other people and establish them in that state. They're not any less enlightened than the ones who can, they just haven't been picked out to be the vehicles for that power.

Rick: Not their dharma. There are a lot of people out there teaching these days who probably wouldn't feel comfortable with the word "Guru;" they wouldn't consider themselves Gurus, but in a sense they're "mini Gurus". Guru just means what? - darkness, light, it's someone who can take you from darkness to light and, I'm sorry go ahead.

David: Someone who dispels the darkness. Enlightenment actually does have a physical component. I talked to Papagi about this once and he said, "When people get it in front of me they can't fake it. Their subtle body explodes, you get all these light streams coming out of their head and it's an absolutely gorgeous – it's like a firework display that suddenly started on the top of their head." And he said, "Enlightenment is the perfect word for this. Their subtle body just suddenly glows, it lights up, it explodes."

So traditionally the word Guru has meant "the one who dispels darkness," so there's something that stops you being aware of this - this light, this presence – and it can all go in one moment and then the light will start.

Rick: So there are a number of people, many of whom might have been sitting in Papagi's presence and had that experience, which he witnessed. Well you know, there are a number of people out teaching now who claim to have awakened in Papagi's presence and who are now out, sort of guiding others – giving satsangs, giving retreats and so on – and a lot of people feel that they've derived tremendous inspiration and upliftment, and even awakening through these people.

So what's going on? Do you feel that these people are not really qualified to be called Gurus but they're somehow serving a similar function? And in interviewing a number of them, they've all acknowledged to me that they feel there's still greater depths and clarity to be realized but you know, they are serving a role which seems to be beneficial and not deluding people.

David: Let's walk around this topic with, should we say, informational inputs. When I first met Papagi, just out of curiosity because I like asking this sort of question I said, "How many Jnanas have you met in your life? i.e., how many fully, permanently realized?"

And he actually thought, he kind of sat and thought and he said, "Well Ramana Maharishi of course, and then there was a Sufi saint who I took to see Ramana in the 1940s, and there was a weird mahatma I met in the 1950s who basically [lived] in the jungle, and that was it. He didn't add any more to that list. That was his first list.

Now at various other times I listened to him talk he added Nisargadatta, who he met in the 1970s, he added J. Krishnamurti, he seemed to say good things about Nichinanda, but the one interesting thing that I always got out of these lists however long they were - they varied between about 3 and 6 people – was that not a single one of his own devotees ever made this list. So he at no point was prepared to go on the record and say, “Devotee X is an Jnani, devotee X is a fully enlightened sage.”

As I said, that’s level one - the prequalification before we even decide who’s got the extra shakti to be the Guru, he wasn’t willing to concede that anyone who had come to him had got this final state of liberation. He did say to many people, “You’re enlightened, you’re enlightened,” but in one very interesting, long conversation I had with him he said that enlightenment in a way is stage one, and from there you have to graduate to what his own Guru, Ramana, said was the sahaja state, the state of permanent Self abidance.

So although it seemed too many people that he was declaring a permanent enlightened state – in the people he was saying, “Great, you’re enlightened,” – if you pinned him down he would say, “Enlightenment is a sudden awareness of who you really are but the final goal is this sahaja state,” which he said his own Guru was in.

Rick: So we have a bit of a terminology issue here. Enlightenment, who we’re defining now – and you mentioned 5 minutes ago about people awakening in his presence and seeing all this light coming out, subtle body and everything – so are you now saying that he defined enlightenment as a temporary state of realization, rather than an abiding state, and that its eventual stabilization alone could be qualified as true liberation, or are you saying something different?

David: I think I’m saying what you just said but he was very, very hard to pin down on it; it was like grabbing soap in the bathtub... talking to him about this. So you have to as I say, walk around this topic and look at his lists of people he thought had truly attained liberation, and he had high standards. I mean he would sometimes say a handful of really famous people from the whole of spiritual history and say Sukadir or Kabir, and he didn’t really have a long list of fully liberated beings, so he had high standards.

So this assembly line that was going on in front of him – “You’re enlightened, you’re enlightened” – I did just about get him to commit to the fact that these were not Jnanis, these were not fully enlightened beings; that they had temporarily the full experience of the selves but it wasn’t going to last because they still had vasanas, that sooner or later were going to take over and bring them back into the realm of mind.

Rick: There’s an old Tibetan saying which I’ve said far too many times in this interview show but it’s, “Don’t mistake understanding for realization, don’t mistake realization for liberation.” It implies that there are stages of realization or stages of enlightenment.

David: No, there’s levels of mind, there’s levels of experience, there’s no stages of liberation. Every liberated being is in the same state, everybody else is in a state of mind.

Rick: Okay, I can grant you that but these states of mind you refer to, you know some of them are pretty much a far cry from the average state in which people live.

David: Oh yes.

Rick: It can be quite exalted.

David: I mean back to Ramana. Ramana said that even though Vikalpa Samadhi - that's a very, very subtle state of the 'I' - you might have the full internalized experience of the Self...

Rick: Nirvikalpa means without break, right? It's just a continuous flow of self awareness?

David: Yes but it's like an internal Samadhi. You can experience the Self, it seems to me, that an Jnani can but you're not permanently abiding in that state; it's a temporary state and you can't be in the world, you can't function normally, it's internalized Samadhi. And in that state you might have a full experience but he said, "There's a very subtle I still in there, it's not destroyed, and until that I is gone you're not going to open your eyes and be a functioning Jnani in the world," which is what Ramana said is the sahaja state.

Rick: And I would suggest there could even be states that aren't temporary but also aren't final realization. For instance, I know people who experience or maintain pure awareness, self-awareness 24-7.

I have a friend, Francis Bennett, I've interviewed him a couple of times and he had a profound awakening, and ever since then he's been awake non-stop, throughout day and night you know, he doesn't lose pure consciousness during sleep. But he recently had surgery and under anesthesia he lost it. He came out of that and said, "That was so strange, losing the Self." And yet he would be the first to tell you that he's got a good bit to travel yet, in terms of any kind of ultimate realization. He doesn't consider himself finished by any means.

David: So let's go back to this Guru business again because Lakshmana Swamy, of all the people I know, he's the strictest of... "You must have a human Guru, the human Guru is essential." And he said, "In that condition, that Guru alone can see what state you're in. You can be experiencing the Self, you can talk like a sage, you can believe that you've reached the goal, but a true Guru can see what state you're in and if you really are close to that final state, he can destroy the 'I' inside you." He said, "That's the true role of the Guru: to see what state you're in and if you're anywhere close to it, to destroy the final attenuated I so that you never lose it again."

So his own disciple, Saradamma, there's a wonderful tape recording of her talking as if she's a fully enlightened sage - she's got the lingo, she's got the perfect descriptions of it. And as we were listening to it he pressed his button, turned it off and said, "She sounds enlightened doesn't she? But she wasn't. I could see that there was still an I hiding. She wasn't mediating the world through her eyes, she wasn't mediating the experience. In that moment she was fully experiencing the Self, but I looked into her heart and I could see that the 'I' was not dead."

He said, "That's the moment you need the true Guru. The true Guru can see if that attenuated I is still there and if it is, sooner or later it's going to come out."

Rick: Yeah, well that doesn't contradict what I just said about Francis's experience and probably hundreds and hundreds of other people.

David: No, many, many people have had this experience. They're not deluding themselves, they can actually talk in the same way that the liberated sages talk. In that moment the I, I think, is in obedience and that's really why you need to go to a true teacher, a true teacher who can see that hiding I and in his presence it will disappear for good, and you never have to worry about it again.

Rick: Well that begs the question, where do you find such a true teacher?

David: By wanting it badly enough!

Rick: And you think they're out there someplace? Papagi's dead, Ramana's dead, you know?

David: I get a lot of emails, and probably one in three from complete random strangers is, "Where do I go to find the completely enlightened sage who can put me in that state?"

There's nobody I can recommend right now who to my mind is in that state and has that power to show that state to other people. I really wish there was. I'm not saying they don't exist; they don't have to come to me for permission to hang out their shingle and start their business. I have high standards as well.

I must tell you this story, in the 1980s a friend of mine used to stay with Papagi and they'd have magazines – that *Illustrated Weekly*, all those old magazines India used to have - and he used to enjoy all the tales of swamis getting caught with their pants down and the various scandals in all the ashrams all over India.

And he said, "Papagi, why are you so down on all these other swamis? I mean, can't you cut them some slack, show a bit of compassion?"

He (Papagi) said, "I sat with the Maharishi, he's the gold standard. If I ever meet anybody who convinces me he's in that same state, I will bow down and you won't hear a single negative comment from me. But because I've been with such a great being, I have a gold standard and everybody who doesn't meet it I feel entitled to criticize them."

So I'm sorry, I'm not trying to sound holier than anybody else but I've had the good fortune to be with people who just by looking at me could shut me up and I didn't have a single thought for an hour. I have high standards and I'm not going to recommend people who I feel are not in that state and don't have that power to show it to other people.

Rick: Well I would say a couple of things to that. One is, there can be transitional teachers you know? You don't have to go to somebody who is qualified to teach trigonometry in order to learn arithmetic. And so many of these people out there teaching and giving satsangs and all, maybe they're stepping

stones for people - they can take people so far then at a certain point, people are going to need to find a more powerful engine.

David: So long as you don't sit on your throne and say, "Come to me I will give you liberation," when you're not qualified to do it.

Rick: Yeah, as long as you're realistic about your qualifications.

David: This is Papagi's complaint about his messengers. The really nice analogy he said, "I sent these people out as ambassadors. Ambassadors derive their authority from the home government. Ambassadors have a particular message which they've been told to deliver to people in a foreign country, so that was the status of the people I sent out. But their egos came up and instead of being content with their ambassadorial role; they all set themselves up as kings and queens in their respective countries."

So that was his complaint, he said, "I sent these people out with a limited brief. Everyone has my permission to say, "Suffering doesn't exist," everyone has my permission to say, "I had a good experience, this is what happened," but no one has my permission to sit on a throne and say, "Come to me, I will give you enlightenment. I haven't sent anybody out with that brief."

Rick: Yeah, and you feel like some of these people are saying that?

David: If they're not saying it explicitly, the set up of their satsangs, the way they conduct their business seems to imply that the person sitting up there at the front has some special power that they can transmit to you.

Rick: Of course a lot of them will have a picture of Papagi or Ramana next to them or behind them or something, as they're doing that.

David: Well that's another beef that I have. Almost all of the more successful ones will claim that they're lineage from Ramana Maharishi, and they have a big picture of Ramana up there on the wall. And somehow they're on his coat tails, they're trying to bask in his reflective glory. To me, a lineage in the spiritual world implies that you have got permission to teach from your own teacher, and that person had permission to teach from their teacher, and so on.

There is no lineage. I don't care how many people say, "I'm in the Ramana lineage" – there isn't a lineage. Ramana Maharishi only publicly declared two people to be enlightened and in both cases it was after their deaths. So at no point did he ever declare any of his living disciples enlightened, and at no point did he ever give any of them permission to go out and teach.

Rick: Did he declare Papagi enlightened?

David: No, no living person.

Rick: But you consider Papagi to have been enlightened? So you don't necessarily need Ramana's imprimatur to have actually gotten enlightened.

David: What I'm saying is that the lineage doesn't exist simply because Ramana never gave any public announcement: "This person is enlightened," and he definitely didn't say, "This person has my permission to teach."

Rick: Right, but if you're going to sort of give gratitude to what you consider to be the source of your knowledge, even if it wasn't officially condoned, I guess you're going to say, "Well, I'm really grateful to Papagi and he's really grateful to Ramana," so there's this sort of lineage even though it wasn't officially...

David: Lineage implies authority, this is another way that people tend to persuade people that they've got the right to sit on that chair and tell you how to get enlightened. To say, "I'm in Ramana's lineage," somehow implies that you're in a special state, you've got some permission to be there, some authority to give out teachings, and possibly even some inner state that you can transmit to the people in front of you.

I think this is a fraud, to sit in front of an audience with a picture of Ramana behind you and say, "I'm in the Ramana lineage," is fraud in my opinion.

Rick: Okay, I'm still playing devil's advocate with you here because I actually don't have an axe to grind on this issue but, under a fair moon you have a fair amount of light you know, you can walk on a path, possibly even read a book if the print is large enough. But the moon doesn't derive its light from itself; it's a reflection of sunlight. So you know, all these people, they're providing some light so to speak, maybe it's reflected light by virtue of Ramana or Papagi and very often they'll acknowledge, "This isn't my light, everything I know is coming from him."

David: Excellent and I approve of that entirely. This is what Papagi told people to say, he said - "I've had this experience, if you want it, go back to the source. I can point you in the direction, I can tell you what you need to do to make it more likely to happen, I can tell you how I came into this state and where it happened. If that's useful information for you, great, go to the same place, either inside yourself or go to the physical place that I went to to get it," - but don't set yourself up as the person who can hand it out, the person who has been specially commissioned to distribute the message, to have people at the gate collecting money so you can hear this special message from the person who sits in front of the big Ramana photo, who is somehow claiming, even tacitly, to have some authority that you yourself don't have.

Rick: Okay, I think we've exhausted that point. On the point of Gurus behaving badly, you mentioned Papagi reading all these scandals in the magazines and everything. I mean Krishna was accused of all sorts of dastardly things and Papagi himself fathered a child in his 60s with a woman in her 20s and could have been accused of doing something very inappropriate, but I agree with you, there's all sorts of things of which are really making me scratch my head among teachers, even teachers whom I respect or respected.

It's a little hard to judge a book by its cover and a lot of times this kind of behavior is rationalized as crazy wisdom you know, when people do these things. So how do we sort that out?

David: I think if you are fully enlightened then you don't have any choices, you don't decide what you do, you don't decide what you don't do, you don't get tempted by desires, you don't have to fight them off. Everybody has a particular scripted destiny even the body of the Guru, it has a particular scripted destiny, and I think if you don't have anybody in there who thinks, "I am this body, I am performing this action," and everything that they do or say comes from the Source, comes from the Self, then you can't hold them to any kind of account for what they do.

This sounds like a cop out for a lot of people...

Rick: It has been used as a cop out for a lot of people.

David: And it has been used as a cop out by a lot of people who still have egos and pretend or say, "Well the Self made me do it." It's the ultimate excuse in court, you know to say, "Not me your honor, the Self made me do it."

Rick: "Great," (Rick saying what the judge would respond with) "I'll put the Self in jail, you'll be fine."

David: But I do actually fully accept that once you reach a certain state, everything you do is caused by the power of the Self – what you say, what you do - and that's the power that can enlighten other people. And if other people want to look at you and judge you on your behavior, they're missing a great opportunity.

Rick: So the tricky thing is it's hard for an external observer, especially one who is not a Jnani himself, to really evaluate whether this or that person is established in the Self and is acting...

David: This is the problem – Ramana had two criteria if you like – he said they weren't proofs, he said they were signs: the peace you feel in the person's presence and the equality you feel with all the beings around them.

He said, "If you do need some kind of symptoms to ascertain whether someone's enlightened or not, they're the best two you can use," but he said, "They're signs, they're not proofs."

When people said, "How do I find the right teacher for me, the right Guru?" He said, "Go to that place where you find peace." So that can either be taken to be a particular person who has a particular emanation or it can be inside yourself.

Rick: And perhaps a little bit of both because if you can really find that place within yourself, then you're going to be better able to find a genuine Guru and more kind of genuinely in need of finding one.

David: Right.

Rick: We haven't talked much about Nisargadatta and you had a pretty intensive association with him, so let's talk about him for a bit.

David: Right. Is there a question or do I talk?

Rick: You just talk, I'll have questions.

David: I really loved being with that man, like being with a lot of teachers. In retrospect I think he was extraordinarily focused, organized. If you wanted to meditate you can go meditate with him, if you wanted to do poogas and bhajans you could do that, if you wanted instructions on how to get enlightened there was an hour when you could go and do that.

And within that hour he had very strict rules on what you could talk about and what you couldn't you know, it's like what was admissible evidence in court. He said, "I'm not interested in what you've read, what you've heard, don't bring your opinions in here. If you come to see me and want to talk to me, talk about your own experience of yourself, talk about consciousness and we'll have a conversation."

And taking that as a starting point, he had an uncanny knack of being able to show people who they were rather than who they thought they were. He had this amazing talent of - through argument, through just being generally feisty, through emanating an incredible Shakti - just sitting in front of him almost nose to nose you could actually say, "Yes, now I actually know and directly experience who I am, and all the ideas about who I thought I was 10 minutes ago before I came in, they're not right; I've had the experience."

Rick: Yeah, I've heard you say that when new people showed up he'd sit them down and put them through this grilling process about you know...

David: Yeah yeah, you couldn't hide in that room.

Rick: ... "What have you been practicing and what do you understand?" He kind of systematically dismantled it all until you...

David: It wasn't a spectator sport being with him. He kind of sat you down 3, 4 feet in front of you and harangued you, which is excellent. He didn't let you hold on to your ideas. [If] you couldn't fit what was going on in that room into your frame of reference, he made you throw the whole frame away and get back into the state that he was in and was temporarily showing you when he talked to you.

Rick: A little bit of an off-the-topic question but one I've always been puzzled about is his addiction to cigarettes. I didn't hear you mention this in any of your writings about him. You know one would think that that would be a vasana which would have been rooted out in the process of his awakening, and yet he maintained it throughout his life and it eventually killed him. What do you make of that?

David: It was his body, that was his business by the way.

Rick: Yeah, he sold cigarettes.

David: He made them himself. I mean when I went to see him I used to smoke Ganesh beedies, which are like the bland, middle of the road, not very strong, and I thought, "I must switch to my Guru's beedies, show a little bit of brand loyalty," and I took one puff and I almost threw up. They were incredibly strong and he just chain-smoked them the whole day.

What to say? He did give them up in the last year of his life. He had the same physical withdrawal symptoms that any addict would go through – he physically couldn't sit still. So his room was about let's say 25 feet long and about, I don't know ... 12, 15 feet wide. Normally he would sit at one end and we would all sit in front, but for his detox period he made a little channel down the middle of the room and he would give satsang pacing up and down this little strip in the middle. He was just so twitchy he couldn't sit still and talk while he was giving up his beedies.

So the body became a nicotine addict, a beedie addict, but in no way did it touch his knowledge, his experience of the Self; it was just the body becoming addicted and then becoming de-addicted later. I think habits, personalities, somehow these can go on on top of your experience. The thing is you know you're not the person doing these experiences.

Rick: So somehow the vasanas, if it is vasanas which would result in cigarette smoking, weeding them out doesn't necessarily mean entirely eliminating them but it means eliminating them to the extent that one is free of their binding influence, perhaps.

David: He definitely had a body that had an addiction but if you know you're not the body, then you don't have the addiction because you're not the body.

Rick: Well we all have addictions to breathing and food and things like that, I mean, you know, we have to do them.

David: Ramana had a talk about this. He said, "There are certain things that you can't avoid - eating, breathing," he said, "those aren't desires. You can't restrain them, you can't control them, don't worry about them."

All of these teachers they had, to some extent, physical peculiarities that you might think were vasanas. I mean Ramana was an incredibly pure, saintly man but he was obsessive over waste, he could crawl across the kitchen picking up single mustard seeds and putting them back in jars. And he once admitted, "No woman could ever have married me and put up with me, she couldn't have stood my habits." So you know, he had his own particular habits.

Papaji also – he was addicted to sugar and grease -he had high blood pressure, he had diabetes, that didn't stop him tucking into his jalebis and going into diabetic commas once in a while, Nisargadatta had his beedies, but there was something else. There was an undercurrent, they were established in that substratum and though the body might have certain traits, habits, peculiarities, addictions, it didn't in any way impinge on the full awareness of the Self.

But Bhagavan had this interesting distinction when people asked. He said, "There's two kinds of vasanas: the bhoga vasanas and bandha vasanas. Bandha vasanas are the ones the unenlightened people have and they bind you. They force you to behave in a particular way and after enlightenment you've still got personality traits, habits, and they become bhoga vasanas." Bhoga means enjoyment –after enlightenment all these habits and peculiarities become things to enjoy, they no longer bind you.

Rick: Interesting. Well that was just the distinction I was trying to make and I was stating it hypothetically, because I didn't really know but it seems like there must be certain vasanas which bind and other ones, which you still have but don't bind.

David: After liberation the body still has an accumulation of likes, dislikes - certain foods you like, places you might like to visit. Like Papagi used to watch cricket, he'd cancel satsangs if India was playing Pakistan you know, he loved watching his cricket. And he had this unbelievable dislike of Pakistan, really! I mean the standard Indian BNP stuff, you know? He cancelled satsang once to go out and vote for really right winged nationalist party, he hated Pakistan, he could stay up all night to watch Pakistan lose a cricket match even if India wasn't involved.

In his youth, the Pakistan government stole all his family property. His father handed over management of the family affairs to him and Papagi spent it on buying land in the part of the Punjab that eventually Pakistan took over, so they all ended up being penniless refugees, they got no compensation.

So you might think this fanatic nationalism is some kind of vasana that's going to hold you up, but in his case it didn't. It's odd that you can have this extreme political, patriotic, nationalism, dislike other countries and still be abiding in the Self, but that seems to be the way it is.

Rick: Well I think it's good to understand that because if we assume that enlightened people by definition, are these sort of peaceful, unattached - well they are that, but you know, completely without opinions or strong feelings or political orientations, or all that other stuff, then we're never going to find one because anyone you encounter is going to have one or another tendency like this.

David: Exactly. People would walk into Nisargadatta's and...

Rick: Turn back around and walk out, right?

David: Watch him and say, "Why are you smoking?" and he'd throw them out. You go to a diamond merchant because he's got good quality diamonds; you don't go to him and evaluate the quality of his diamonds by seeing whether he kicks his dog or not. You're going there for the diamond you're not going there for ...

Rick: Yeah, except we associate enlightenment with the tendency not to kick dogs, you know? We associate it with kind of a saintly, idealic personality.

David: So let's go back to Ramana who of all the people I've talked about, he had the most grounds to say Jnanis should behave, Jnanis should be saints because that's the way he was.

Rick: Did he say that actually?

David: No, I'm just saying that of all the people I've talked about you'd think that he might be the one who could say behavior does matter, because he was such an impeccable saint himself.

Rick: He set the example.

David: But he told a story which I love, of a yogi who lived in the forest on dry leaves. The local king, Karuvurar Siddhar, a famous Tamil siddha, and the king wanted to find out if he was really as holy and as ascetic as he was making out, so he challenged, he gave a prize to anyone who could prove whether this was a true yogi or not. So some dancing girl started leaving food in the forest and slowly, slowly, to cut a long story short they ended up living together and having a baby.

And she used to go out and do her dancing performances and he had to sit home and look after the kid. And she really thought that she'd earned this prize. She'd proved he was a fake yogi because she managed to seduce him, she had the baby and had him sitting at home looking after the baby while she went out and danced.

And finally big showdown, Karuvurar Siddhar was called out on this. The woman was demanding her prize saying, "I've proved he's not enlightened." And he looked at a rock and pointed at it and he said, "If this rock doesn't split in two then I'm not a true enlightened person," – is that the right way around? Anyway, it had to split in half to prove he was enlightened and of course the rock split in half.

And Ramana's comment on that – I mean personally I think that's just a trick that anyone can do but Ramana's comment on this - "He proved his unswerving Jnana by doing this." So here's a man who was impeccably saintly, who didn't accept that that man's behavior disqualified him from being enlightened - that he'd fathered a baby with this dancing girl. Somehow he seemed to accept that this was this man's destiny to meet this girl, to have this baby, and that through it all the Jnana, his full awareness of the Self wasn't impeded.

Rick: So I guess the moral of the story is: let's not be simplistic in our understanding or judgment of enlightened people. The jury is still out and we shouldn't jump to conclusions. If we're not qualified to judge, let's not judge.

David: You're not going to a Guru for lessons on etiquette and behavior; you go to a Guru for liberation. You go to get the experience, you're allowed to test him by whatever means you think you can come to a good conclusion, but once you've decided this is the man or woman for me you should have faith that that person knows what they're talking about, that person is in that state, if I follow that person's instructions I can also get a taste or a full experience of that state.

It's not your business to decide or pass judgment on what they do. Ramakrishna had this nice comment, he said, "Even if my Guru goes to the toddy house," -toddy is native Indian alcohol – "even if my Guru goes to the toddy house everyday he is still my Guru, because his intoxication doesn't impinge on his enlightenment." So all the great Gurus are saying in effect, there is full awareness of the Self and that there can be on top of that distinct, peculiar, apparently desire-ridden personalities, but whatever the superstructure, the personality on top – it doesn't in any way impinge on that person's ability to function as a Guru.

Rick: Just to play on this just a little bit more, would you find someone who had fully realized the Self though, doing things which were actually harmful to people? Obviously these things you know, smoking a cigarette, having a little toddy, this and that, it almost seems like a matter of personal choice, but

would you find such a person sexually abusing children or robbing banks, or anything else? Or is there a certain kind of harmlessness that necessarily follows from true realization?

David: Well Papagi claimed he was enlightened when he was trying to blow up the viceroy's train, which was a hard thing to accept. I don't think they do any of those other things that you said. Jnani wants you to progress spiritually. Nisargadatta has a nice account of this, he said, "People come to me and I tell them the truth and they don't listen, they don't accept it. I'm basically saying, "Go out in the middle of the river; right now you're clinging to the sides, you've restricted yourself, you're limiting yourself," and I try to persuade people to let go of the river bank and go in the middle of the river and they make excuses, or they argue. So in the end I just stomp on their fingers and they haven't got a choice."

So yes, Gurus can apparently behave badly but in a lot of cases it's for the good of the person they're behaving badly with.

Rick: And hopefully there's some kind of line which they don't cross but I don't know.

David: None of the ones I've ever been with would do anything of the extreme order that you're talking about, but whether ...

Rick: Whether it's possible ...

David: Being obsessive about throwing away, smoking a beedie, eating jalebis, these just seem to be body habits that are accumulated from pre-enlightenment personality characteristics that continue and don't even obscure Jnana.

Rick: Yeah, and aren't morally reprehensible; they're just idiosyncrasies. Let's go back to Ramana for a bit. Most people know the story of his having his, I guess, his uncle or something die when he was a 17-year old boy and that kind of triggered an awakening that he had, which perhaps you can describe to us in a nutshell. He soon left home and went to Arunachala and spent many years there.

I guess let me formulate a question out of this which is: would you say, or did he say, that that initial awakening he had when he was still in his parents' home and lay on the floor, and as if went into as though a dead state and came out transformed, was that full enlightenment or was that an initial opening that had to mature through all those years when he was sitting on the mountain in deep silence and eventually came out into the world of activity again? Did there have to be, was there a maturation period in which somehow integration and stabilization took place?

David: Basically no, he was categoric on this and it wasn't just [that] his uncle died. His father died when he was 12 and that necessitated a bit of a shake up in the family, but the actual enlightenment experience happened when he was 16. He was in his uncle's house, the uncle hadn't died.

I've been doing some research on this recently and I wrote a long article about it – they're things that I didn't really know till quite recently. He said that he had this previous life inclination to do self inquiry. There's a Tamil word called "vitakuri." Vitakuri means work that you've done a lot of in the past and

which compels you to a particular course of action in your next birth - and he said it was self inquiry that he had done in the past, and that somehow he hadn't quite completed it and he had to complete it in one more birth, so he was clearly in a very, very advanced state.

This again is not part of the biographical record that I can prove. He had this fear of death when he was 16 and having talked to other teachers, I think the fear was dissipated by his I, his sense of individuality actually beginning to subside into the heart. When you get very close to the heart there's a little bit of panic and fear that kicks in, so I think Ramana was actually in a state where his I spontaneously, without any effort or practice was beginning to sink into its source, and it got so close that the 'I' itself suddenly thought "I'm about to die."

Now in an immature person what would happen is the 'I' would jump out again and the panic would stop, but Ramana was so pure, so mature, that he was able to watch it disappear. There is a standard account of Bhagavan's life which appeared in the first English biography, and the man who wrote it put a footnote in there saying he'd seriously embellished it and that he had put a lot of personal pronouns in there because the account he was given by Ramana was a bit impersonal. But Ramana told the same story to his Telugu biographer and it was recorded a lot more accurately, and it wasn't something that Ramana *did*, which is the way it sounds in English; it was something that happened to him.

So in the Telugu version the experience starts as he was lying on the floor and the fear came, and there's an impersonal use of the verbs - "The body lay on the floor, the limbs stretched themselves out." At no point does he say, "I did this then I did this then I asked myself, who am I?" So I think some process took him over.

At some point during the process he did ask himself, "Who am I?" and as a result of asking that question once, he got the right answer, the 'I' went right back to its source and it died. And from that moment on he was in a permanent state of liberation, he never had to do anything again.

He did go through a period of being totally out of it - for want of a better word. He was sitting unconscious in samadhi but that wasn't in any sense a maturing of the experience; I think that was just something his body had to go through. He said, "The experience has not changed in any way whatsoever since that moment in 1896 when the 'I' died." He said, "The body might have changed but inside, the experience never did."

Rick: I would surmise, and feel free to contradict me, that although the experience itself hadn't changed one iota, what he did in the ensuing years was something the body had to go through - you know, insects gnawing at his legs and all the stuff that he did ... again, "did" is the wrong way of putting it but that the body went through all those years - was perhaps a preparation of the body for being able to function in his later years as the Guru that he became - interacting with other people, running an ashram and all that. But somehow there must have been a physiological transformation taking place, perhaps for the body to "catch up" with the experience that had dawned subjectively. Does that make any sense or did he comment on that in any way?

David: He had a school friend called Rangan and they used to wrestle at school, so they had one-on-one body contact. And he came to see Bhagavan in Scandashram and he was massaging his legs and he said, "Bhagavan, your legs used to be so rough when we wrestled, it was easy to get the good grip on you because your body was so rough, now it's all smooth and silky. What happened?"

And Ramana said, "Oh the old body, it was burned by Jnana agni - the fire of Jnana. This is a totally new body." So interestingly he did concede that the power of the Self had completely transformed, at possibly a cellular level, what was going on his body. I don't think that necessarily made him more capable of teaching, it definitely didn't increase or change in any way his experience of the Self; it was just a side effect of the Self working on that body over several years.

Rick: That's kind of what I was trying to say, that it seemed that the awakening of Jnana necessitated, demanded, or resulted in a physiological transformation that required his withdrawal from activity for a certain number of years while that transformation took place, even on a cellular level as you say, and then when it was complete, he resumed a more active life.

David: Again, I say this with no authority; just a small sample size, it seems to me that if you've done a lot of spiritual practice very intensely and you suddenly get enlightened, you slip into it quite easily, it's not a big shock to your body. If like Ramana you suddenly get immersed in it, it's quite a shock to your system and it closes down for a bit and it takes a while to function normally. That's my observation on a small sample of people, I don't know if it's valid or not.

Rick: Yeah, I have the same sense from things I've read and heard. So let's talk about Arunachala a little bit. So he left home, went a 100 kilometers or whatever it was to Arunachala and spent the rest of his life there. He regarded Arunachala as Shiva incarnate.

Obviously a superficial observer would come and see a big rock, a mountain, and all this would sound like nonsense. But what is it actually about Arunachala that you feel is going on on a subtle level, that attracted him and so many others to it, and do to this day?

David: He always told people who said, "I've come to see you, some power made me come and see you," he said, "It's not my power that's making you come and see me. The power of Arunachala brought me here, that same power is bringing you here, you're misattributing it to me."

So he accepted that Arunachala had a magnetic power in the sense that it attracted right souls to itself and ultimately had the power to absorb them in itself. It's really not something rational or logical. I've attempted to talk to other people, like Lakshmana Swamy for example, he is, in the time I was with him, absolutely mesmerized by the mountain. He said, "When I look at that mountain I feel I'm in the presence of Jnana. I know that this mountain is emanating the same power, the same grace that I feel after leaving Guru."

So I would say, "Well where did it come from? This is crazy. You can't have one lump of rock in the middle of nowhere you know, emanating this; it must have had a cause." So I was playing ... asking leading questions. I'd say, "Well was there some great being who died here and the power is still here?"

“No.”

One by one I'd offer all the solutions, all the practical, sensible solutions, and he'd say, “No, that's not it. No, that's not it. I can't understand it, I don't know why but I can't deny it. I look at that mountain and I know I'm in the presence of radiating Jnana.”

So Jnana Sambandha, he is a 6th century Tamil saint and he came to Tiruvannamalai and he looked at the mountain and he had this very nice phrase called “Jnana tirra” - Jnana tirra in Tamil means distilled Jnana - he looked at it and he just had exactly the same experience that Lakshmana Swamy did, that Ramana did - they just look at it and they know they're in the presence of Jnana.

The first verse of Arunachala Ashtakam, one of Ramana's poems says, “Look, there it stands like an insentient lump of rock, mysterious is the way it works, beyond all human understanding.” That's as far as anyone's got. The ones who have the faculty, the perception to know what it really is – see Jnana – but not a single one of them has ever come up with an explanation for it.

Rick: There are parallels to this, I mean New Age people talk about “power spots” around the world, like Sedona, Arizona and various places, and I think Native Americans and other cultures recognize this sort of thing, and even the Hindus – I mean Mount Kailash in the Himalayas is said to be an abode of Shiva.

And since we're talking about Shiva and Arunachala is supposed to be Shiva incarnate or an abode of Shiva, what ...

David: Oh no, no, Ramana would pick you up if you said that to him. He said, “Kailash is the abode of Shiva, Arunachala is Shiva himself.” He really said, “There is no distinction between the Mountain and Shiva.”

Rick: Meaning like the mountain is Shiva's body in some sense.

David: The Mountain is Shiva; it's not a place where he lives or hangs out or was once – he said, “This Mountain is Shiva himself.”

Rick: And what is Shiva?

David: This again depends on your perspective. It's how Bhagavan personified the Absolute. He came from a Shaiva tradition, his early influences were Shaiva, he read the Paripurna – this is the one book that moved him before he got enlightened, it's the lives of the 63 founding saints, if you like, of Shaivism. He just had this incredible surge of devotion, he was crying over the stories, that was about six or seven months before he finally got enlightened. It came and it went but it was a kind of precursor of the experience.

So I think he had a very strong Shaiva background, if you go through the books containing his stories he's often telling stories of all the great Shaiva saints of history – he knew all their poetry, he knew their

stories and he could barely get through them without crying. He had this really immense Shaiva bhakti streak in him.

Rick: So we've all seen the pictures of Shiva with a snake around his neck and the Ganges coming out of his hair and a blue throat and all that, but what actually does that represent? For Ramana, from his orientation, Shiva is not the guy in the poster, what's the real Shiva?

David: No, Tamil has a nice distinction between Shiva and Shivam, with an "m" on the end. Shiva is the personal God – with the snakes, and Shivam is the impersonal absolute who has no form but he's the true Shiva. It's the difference in say, Western terminology, between God and the Godhead.

So Bhagavan would talk a lot about Shivam and for those who were theistically inclined he'd tell stories of Shiva. But for him the true Shiva was Shivam, that's the impersonal consciousness of Shiva.

Rick: And so Arunachala was that impersonal consciousness in an embodied form.

David: Right. Mm-humm.

Rick: In a very mysterious way.

David: Exactly, so he never really explained it. He accepted there was a certain irrationality to it all, but he would say, "It's something you feel, something you perceive, you can't deny it once you're here, if you've got that faculty."

Rick: There was something very interesting in one of your books or one of your interviews, let me see if I can find it here. Yeah, "The Jnani's mind functions in the subtle Vijnanamaya kosha, the sheath of knowledge through which he keeps contact with the world" – that kind of jumped out at me.

David: Isn't that a quote from S.S. Cohen or he's quoting someone else to Bhagavan?

Rick: Maybe, maybe I was mixed up as to whose book I was reading, but vijnanamaya kosha, the sheath of knowledge – sheath usually means something which kind of occludes or hides you know, like we were talking about anandamaya kosha earlier? So is this sheath of knowledge something which could actually hide, or is it sort of an inner mediating mechanism or faculty?

David: I know this quote and I have problems relating it to Bhagavan's teachings on the mind. But Bhagavan would talk a different game, if you like, to people who had a different background. He could talk Shaivism to the Shaivas and be very theistic, he could talk Advaita to the Advaitas and be non-dualistic. So I think this idea comes from a tradition that he was willing to explain but didn't necessarily ascribe to himself.

So Bhagavan was quite clear that mind does not exist in the state of liberation, it doesn't function through any particular kosha or faculty. He had this term "manonasha", which means destroyed mind, he said, "Destroyed mind is the state of a Jnani."

You as a person who has a mind might look at a Jnani and you might see him appearing to deliberate, choose, make choices, act in a normal way, and you might think he has a mind, but that's just your projection of how your mind works onto how he is functioning. In truth, there's no mind in there making these decisions, making those choices.

Rick: And how did Ramana define the mind? What is the mind?

David: Mind is ... he had lots of synonyms, he said it's the I-thought, it's your individuality. See the problem with mind is it's not a Hindu term. In English it has particular connotations for example, you know you have the intellect – the manas and vinyana; in Hinduism we don't really have those distinctions, in English we just call them mind.

So when Bhagavan said, "Mind has to go," he's not talking about thoughts, which is interesting. What he's talking about is the thinker of the thoughts, the maker of the decisions, the chooser of your courses of actions.

He said, "What has to go is this whole idea that there is somebody in there who makes decisions and then carries them out." He said, "When that chooser, when that decider has gone, mind is gone." But Bhagavan would often sit there and somebody would walk in and he'd say, "Oh, I was thinking about you and you showed up." Thoughts were still there, what wasn't in there was somebody organizing those thoughts into a personality or an entity that was bounded by the body.

Rick: And he read the newspaper and he listened to the radio, and he probably thought about the things he was reading and listening to? So but you're just saying one can have thoughts without a mind because mind means a sense of ego or individuality?

David: Yeah, mind for him is the mechanism that coordinated all your thoughts, decided it was a person inside the body and saw a world outside itself. He said, "That whole superstructure is a creation. It's a badly running, badly functioning program in your brain," if you like, "this whole idea that there's someone in there who sees something out there, and that the person in there has to choose how to decide and interact with what's out there," he said, "that's mind."

He said, "When mind goes there's nobody left who thinks, chooses, decides, but thoughts can still be there."

Rick: And the world can still be there, or no?

David: That's another interesting one. He said, "The world as an external entity ceases." So the Sanskrit loka and the Tamil eleka, they're basically the same word: that which is seen, so it's an interesting subtle distinction between how we say world. So that which is seen, according to Ramana, is created by that which sees it.

He only ever wrote two lines about his own enlightenment. Lots and lots of people have tried to write down his version but he just wrote a couple of sentences that said, "Inquiring within, "Who is the one

who sees?" I saw that seer disappear leaving that alone which stands forever. No thought arose to say, "I saw," how then could the thought arise to say, "I did not see?"

So his sutra-like summary of that experience was that by inquiring into the nature of the one who saw, that I went back to its source and disappeared, after which there was no one who saw and nothing that was seen. He said, "This dichotomy between seer and seen is actually the 'I' inside you that creates it.

Rick: I once heard a lecture on the concept of *Laisha Vidhya* or faint remains of ignorance, and it was argued that even the most enlightened person needs a *faint* remains of ignorance in order to function in the world otherwise they won't be functional. In other words, obviously, ultimately, even from the standpoint of modern physics there is no world, there is no manifestation, it's all just sort of "nothing-ever-happened" – to use the title of your book about Papagi. But if one is to eat and breathe and interact with people and all, then food has to be recognized as food and you don't want to pick up a piece of dirt and put it in your mouth.

David: I think these are postulations by unenlightened people who can't understand what Jnana is and how it allows you to function. I think they're little stories you invent to make sense of how Jnanis behave. You talk to these people and they say, "Everything I do, everything I say is direct prompting from the Self," that they don't need a peg to hang my world of interactions on.

Rick: But when you walked in the room, let's say in Lucknow, Papagi said, "Oh, David is here," he didn't say, "Who's that woman." He was able to make relative distinctions in an apparent world, the world didn't disappear so completely that one couldn't function or interact.

David: This takes us into a rather illogical, bizarre realm of metaphysics in that Ramana, Papagi, and all similar Advaitic teachers would say that everything you see is a projection of your own mind. So the Papagi who said "Welcome David," is the creation, the form of Papagi who sat on his little bench and said, "Hello David," is my projection.

Bhagavan had this analogy: the Guru is like the lion who appears in your dream, if you're an elephant. So the elephant has a lion-dream, the lion roars and the elephant wakes up. So the appearance of a form of something in your dream is sufficient to get you out of the dream. So the Bhagavan who sat on the sofa, the Papagi who sat on his little bench and said, "Welcome David" and appeared to recognize you, is part of your projection.

There aren't separate individual jivas all inhabiting a common universe; you create all the jivas out there and you designate one of them to be enlightened and say, "Please help me."

Rick: I got into this with Michael James and we won't necessarily do it exhaustively, but just that there seems an objectivity to the world which doesn't hinge upon individual perspective. You know I use the analogy of when we dream at night, all 7 billion of us on the planet we all dream different things and we can't really participate in each others' dreams, but when we wake up we can all look up and say, "Oh, there's the moon," so there's a certain kind of consistency or stability to the relative creation. And

if one of us dies, the world disappears for that person but the same moon and everything is there for the other people. This might seem kind of metaphysical but...

David: This is the common sense view. There are two strands ... I haven't seen Michael's interview, I mean to watch it. There's drishti srishti and srishti drishti, did he go into this?

Rick: No, not in those words.

David: The sristi drishti idea of creation is that there's a permanently existing external world into which we're born which is full of other similar jivas, and we go through it and we die and the world continues to exist. He said, "That's common sense, that's what science tells you," but what Ramana is saying is, "Sorry, that's a misperception, a misprojection. There is only you and you are creating a dream world in the same way that you make a dream world at night, and that there's a possibility of waking up from this dream world to a reality in which you know that there is no external world, and there are no external jivas in it."

Rick: That makes sense if you take the you to be the true you, the cosmic mind so to speak, the cosmic jiva creating a sort of a dream world out of itself and we're characters in that dream, but when you hinge the whole thing on one individual perspective then people have trouble with it.

David: If they have trouble with it then let them have trouble with it. You can't rationally argue this perspective but the people who reach this state do have a common thread in saying, "This is your deluded projection and when your deluded projection ends then you abide as the Self and you know this to be truth."

It's not something you can argue towards and come to a proper rational conclusion because the basis of it is such an opposition to all rational processes, all logic, all common sense. You can't reach that conclusion and come to a valid mental idea that this is true.

Rick: Okay, I'm not going to belabor that one because I'm not qualified but it's just an interesting thing. There's one other interesting thing I found and you mentioned it at one point that Nisargadatta was very clear and explicit about the reality of reincarnation then later on he said, "There's no such thing," and presumably he was an enlightened man in both instances, and yet he completely changed his perspective on a very fundamental phenomenon of life, so how do you reconcile that?

David: I think he just preferred to give out a different message, let's put it that way. When I went to see him there was an edition of *I Am That*, on the cover of which was a conversation in which Nisargadatta gave detailed explanation of the mechanism of reincarnation, and it's still in the book but in those days it was the cover quotation on the book. But in the years I was there, which is '78 to '81, I never heard anyone get any explanation from him that supported this statement. It was in his book, I think possibly that was an explanation he gave to someone who wanted that kind of mechanism, whether he believed it or not I don't know.

What Ramana would say is that, "Once you know that you are the Self, you know that birth and death never happened, you know that there's no reincarnation, you know there's no creation. But," he said, "if

you are an embodied jiva, if you live in a body then a whole different set of apparent illusory rules come into existence which govern the functioning of that body.”

He said, “Ishvara, the personal god is created, Ishvara hands out karma to you, you reincarnate. Ishvara has a kind of judging process between lives and this whole reincarnation business goes on. Samsara continues indefinitely because of your idea that you’re a body.”

He said, “As soon as that idea is definitively ended you know that there’s no reincarnation, there’s no ‘I am the body’ idea,” so it’s two completely different perspectives. One, the true experience of the Jnani is that nothing ever happened, no world ever came into existence, nobody ever got enlightened, nobody ever got reincarnated, but you can’t say that until you’re in that state, or say it with direct experience, knowledge and authority.

For everybody else there’s karma, there’s reincarnation and it doesn’t end until you get liberation and destroy this I.

Rick: I think that’s an important point because there’s a lot of people who do what you just said without having actually experientially realized the ultimate reality. They appropriate the understanding of that reality and try to apply it to their relative life, and they’ll go around saying things like, “There is no reincarnation,” or “There is no karma,” or “There are no consequences,” or “There is no doer,” and yet that’s not what they’re actually living.

David: Exactly, I agree. So long as you think you’re a body functioning in the world, you’re going to accumulate karma and you’re going to reincarnate. Ramana was quite clear about that but he said, “That’s the whole edifice, is a deluded perspective. Once that deluded perspective ends there is no karma, there’s only Self.”

Rick: Personally I find physics very helpful in understanding that, not that I’m a physicist, but I’ve heard lectures by physicists saying that, you know, there’s levels of creation at which none of the forces and fields have manifested creation yet, and there is no gravity, there is no electromagnetic force or any of these other things, there are no material objects, and that ultimately is the truth of the matter.

David: I don’t think science has yet reached the point where it’s willing to accept that everything you see is your own creation; they still see it as an external reality. They may differ over the content and quality of that external reality but I don’t think science is willing to accept that you project that external reality out of your pre-existing desires.

Rick: In fact I’m going to this conference in a couple of weeks, the Science & Nonduality conference, and there’ll be physicists there saying that ultimately it’s all consciousness, and then analyzing how within itself, consciousness somehow appears to give rise to all the degrees of manifestation, but that ultimately it does so without converting itself into something different.

David: But they’re seeing the universe as an object that has a set of rules which combine into creation or unmanifest parts of the universe. They’re not somehow taking that step backwards that there’s a perceiver of the universe and that perceiver of the universe is the one who created it. That really is the

extreme position of most the Advaitic sages, that everything you see is your own creation, there isn't an external reality out there.

Rick: I'll tell you what I'm going to do David when I go to this Science & Nonduality conference in about a week, I'm going to try to formulate a question. In fact, if you feel like typing it up and sending it to me, I'll express it in your words and I'll ask one of these physicists who talk about physics and consciousness and we'll see what kind of answer they give and I'll post it.

David: I got invited to that myself and decided not to go. You can't argue this kind of perspective with scientists; we just don't have enough common ground to do it.

Rick: Well you'd be surprised. I'll send you a couple of videos to watch and see what you think. Basically it's not a debate between spiritual people and scientists; it's more like a collaboration and people have their own presentations in which they just say what they want to say and the audience attends this, that, or the other presentation. So I just think you'd be a very popular guest if you were ever to attend.

David: I just remembered, somebody was pestering Ramana about the irrationality of all this once and he said, "This isn't scientific, this isn't scientific!" And Ramana came up with this wonderful line that said, "Eschewing unreality until only reality is left is the essence of science." I think that that's a really good compromise.

What Ramana is saying is that you have to hold on to this sense of I, that's your hypothesis – if we're back in the scientific world. He's saying, "My hypothesis which I'm giving you to test is that there's an I which creates and manifests the world in front of you, and that if you hold on to this I to the exclusion of all other thoughts, it will go back to its source and you'll surprise yourself by discovering that not only does the 'I' disappear, the world that you projected also disappears."

So that's the hypothesis I'm giving you to test. We can't argue about it because we can't come to a conclusion. You can only prove or disprove that hypothesis by holding on to that I, watching it disappear, and then if you do it properly you will discover there's no world out there in front of you.

Rick: Very well put and ultimately, as we started this interview by saying that ultimately this is an experiment that each person has to conduct for themselves, you can't take somebody else's word for it.

David: Exactly, nobody else can validate your world because they're a creation within your world, that's what Ramana is saying. It's a bit solipsistic but what he's saying, unlike solipsism which says that everything is only your mind, what Advaita says is that there's a substratum behind the mind, out of which mind manifests and appears as you, as the world, and he says, "If you take the right approach, grab hold of the right thing and study it, then mind will disappear, I will disappear, the world will disappear and you yourself can validate what I'm telling you. But you can't do it any other way, we can't argue it out, you have to follow this experiment, prove this hypothesis for yourself and you'll end up in that state."

Rick: Yep, very well put. Well I hope I've done justice to your whole ... life! ... in this interview. It's such an interesting life you've lived, you've done such great work with writing all these books, and I'm sure you'll have a very humble response to that but you know, a lot of people really appreciate all the work you've done ...

David: And can I bring in something totally inconsequential?

Rick: Sure.

David: On your site you've got a quote from Incredible String Band: "Whatever you think, it's more than that."

Rick: Right.

David: I was a String Band fan back in the '70s and I think the first spiritual song I ever heard was "... Maya, maya, all this world is but a play, be thou the joyful player," so that was my starting point, Incredible String Band, way back when.

Rick: Yeah, and that particular quote of, "Whatever you think, it's more than that," is from the song *Job's Tears*, in case you want to listen to it.

David: No, I know them all. They were all kind of running around my head for years in the '70s. It's just nice to see a little quote coming back from my past.

Rick: Yeah I love them, I still listen to them from time to time.

Cool, so let me make a few wrap up points. I've been speaking with David Godman who has written numerous books about Ramana Maharishi, Papagi. Did you also write a biographical one about Nisargadatta?

David: No, only that interview you read, nothing in book form.

Rick: Okay, yeah, but you've written probably at least a dozen books or so and I'll be linking to them all from your page on BATGAP.com.

David: Thank you.

Rick: And also to your website or sites, I guess you have a blog and a website. You know people can get in touch with you, I suppose, through those things if they wish. They can read your books and I hope we can have another conversation sometime because I feel we've barely scratched the surface.

David: So do I, I'll come back. The only problem is I have a poor connection in India, maybe I can find a good one there.

Rick: Or sometime when you're back in the States, you know a year from now or something like that.

David: You've caught me on a good day; I've got a super connection right now.

Rick: Yeah, so for the sake of those listening or watching, this is one in an ongoing series of interviews. There are nearly 200 of them now and they are all archived at BATGAP.com, B-A-T-G-A-P, and listed both chronologically and alphabetically. They exist both as YouTube videos if you want to sit in front of your computer and watch videos, or as audio podcasts if you want to subscribe to the iTunes podcast, and there's a link on BATGAP for doing that.

There's also a discussion group that crops up around each interview and each interview has its own sort of dedicated discussion area in the forums, so I'll be setting that up for David. There's a tab there which you can click on to be notified by email each time a new interview is posted, there's a 'Donate' button which I appreciate people clicking and donating if they have the means.

David: You have a day job? Is this your day job?

Rick: I *do* have a day job, yes.

David: What do you do?

Rick: I do search engine optimization, which means getting more traffic to people's websites. And you know, I'd like over time to have this interview thing morph into my fulltime gig, but it's taking time. You know, it's a little bit tricky to monetize because you don't want to exclude people by saying, "You can't watch this unless you pay X number of dollars," that would drastically cut the viewership and you don't want to necessarily be selling tea cups and t-shirts.

There are donations and the donations have enabled me to cut back slightly on my day job hours, and hopefully over time as the show grows in popularity, maybe enable me to do it full time.

David: Nice to talk to you, I hope to come back. We had a good talk.

Rick: Yeah, thank you and we'll talk to you again sometime.

David: Okay, thanks.

Rick: Okay, bye bye.

David: Bye.

BATGAP theme music plays.