

David Godman -- 2nd BATGAP Interview – June 28, 2016

Rick: Welcome to Buddha At The Gas Pump. My name is Rick Archer. Buddha At The Gas Pump is an ongoing series of interviews with spiritually awakening people. There have been about 350 of them now. If you would like to check out previous ones, go to Batgap.com and look under the past interviews menu where you will see them all categorized in various ways. This program is made possible by the support of appreciative listeners and viewers. So if you appreciate it and feel like supporting it, there is a donate button on the site. And I really appreciate those who have helped to support it.

Speaking of past interviews, my guest today is David Godman. I did one with him a couple of years ago which I just listened to this past week. I thought it was really quite good. We really covered a lot of ground and had all kinds of interesting conversations. So if you like this one, you might also want to go back and check out the other one.

David, in case you don't know, has lived in India since 1976, mostly in Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu. He spent his time there studying and practicing the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi. His anthology of Ramana Maharshi's teachings, *Be As You Are*, is probably the most widely-read book on Sri Ramana's teachings. During his fourteen-year stay at Ramanasramam (1978-92) 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 Maharshi – Lakshmana Swamy and Papaji – who realized the Self in Sri Ramana's presence and who later went on to become gurus themselves. He has written and published several other books that contain first-person accounts of devotees who moved closely with Sri Ramana Maharshi and who were transformed by his power and presence.

Let's see – David's bio goes on here for quite a bit but I am going to ...

David: You can skip the rest.

Rick: I will be publishing all this on the BATGAP website, so people can read that to get more background on you.

So, today David and I are going to be talking about a number of things. We are going to be talking about several of Ramana's disciples – Maurice Frydman, Muruganar and Mastan – whom David wanted to speak about. And there are some questions that people have sent in. Perhaps they will send in more and we will be covering a lot of different topics. We will see where the conversation goes.

So thanks for doing this, David. Appreciate it.

David: Thank you for inviting.

Rick: David is in Colorado at the moment on his annual pilgrimage to the United States.

David: To cold places...

Rick: Yeah. So you escape the heat? Is that what you are doing over here?

David: Yes.

Rick: Good idea. So where shall we start? Where would you like to start?

David: Well, you ask me and I'll reply if I can.

Rick: Ok. So let's start by talking about these people you wanted to talk about. I was thinking as I was reading about them, and listening to you say things about them, that as we do this we want to make this relevant to peoples' current lives. So it is interesting to talk about people who were around Ramana and what their experiences were like. But whenever we can, let's try to extract from that points which would be pertinent to contemporary seekers. I think we won't have any trouble doing that. So why don't we start with Maurice Frydman. Who is he?

David: Maurice Frydman is one of the most extraordinary people I have ever come across and virtually nothing is known about him. Because of his connection with Ramana Maharshi, Krishnamurti, Gandhi, Nisargadatta, the Dalai Lama, I kind of view him in my own mind as the Forrest Gump of 20th century spirituality. He was in all the right places in all the right times to get the maximum benefit from interactions with some of the greats of Indian spirituality, and at the end of his career he was just about the only person that Nisargadatta certified as a *jnani*.

So in between all these trips to India's major gurus, he was a Gandhian; he worked for the uplift of the poor in India; he worked with Tibetan refugees; he edited extraordinary books. *I am That* is probably one of the all-time spiritual classics. This man for me is, how shall we say, a shining beacon of how devotees could and should be with their teachers. He was just an absolutely extraordinary man. Oh, and he went out of his way to cover his tracks, to hide what he had actually accomplished in his life.

So I have enjoyed the detective work of looking in obscure places and digging out stuff that he personally tried to hide, not because it was embarrassing, but because he didn't like to take credit for what he had done. So I see this as an opportunity to wave the Maurice flag and say, 'Look, this is one of the greatest devotees, *sadhaks*, seekers from the west who has been to India in the last 100 years and I think more people should know about him.'

Rick: Yeah. I remember. Well, there were so many stories I read in the thing that you wrote about him. He was from Poland originally and he emigrated to France to run a factory and discovered Krishnamurti there, and he saw Gandhi in Paris.

David: I saw one of his letters. He discovered Krishnamurti when he was a teenager at Warsaw and he spent his entire allowance for the week on a second-hand French copy of a Krishnamurti book he found on the sidewalk. He started extraordinarily early and never looked back.

Rick: Yeah, and then he was recruited by an official in Mysore to run a factory in Bangalore, came to India. He eventually became a *sadhu* in his own right, although he was a *sadhu* who perhaps never quite renounced women – there was somebody he wanted to marry.

David: (laughs)

Rick: He was also extremely inventive. When he met Gandhi he watched Gandhi spinning on his spinning wheel and he thought, 'Well, I can invent a better one than this.' And he actually came up with a better spinning wheel and presented it to Gandhi.

David: Yeah, he met Gandhi – this is one of the Forrest Gump stories. He was running his electrical factory in Paris. He was walking down the street and he saw a bit of a crowd at one of the train stations and wandered over to see what it was. And there was Mahatma Gandhi on the platform in Paris, of all places, changing trains. In those days if you wanted to go from London – he had just been to a conference in London – back to India, the quickest way was to get a train across Europe and then get a boat in Greece. But for that he had to change trains in Paris, and Maurice just happened to be on the platform for the two minutes that Gandhi spent in Paris to watch him change trains.

He said, 'I looked at this man. I fell in love with him immediately. I fell in love with the idea of India and I just knew I had to go.'

So the first chance he got... the Chief Minister of Mysore state, which was an independent country in those days, came to his office to head hunt him to run a big factory in Bangalore and when Maurice agreed, the Chief Minister said, 'When can you come?' He said, 'I will get my coat. I am coming with you now'.

That was it. He went off to India.

Rick: Just with his coat basically.

David: Yes, just with his coat.

Rick: That's amazing. And he spent many years living as a *sadhu*, living under trees, sleeping on the ground. I think I also recall that when he was running this factory, he would not take a salary. He put all of his salary into a trust fund or a bank account.

David: The Chief Minister wanted him to be the modernizing front of Mysore state. So he was very upset when his western factory manager turned up for work in orange robes. (laughs). And not only did he turn up for work in orange robes, he went out to beg his food in the evening from the workers he was attempting to oversee during the day.

The Chief Minister said, 'We can't have this. It is bad for discipline for you to be dependent on your own workers to feed you in the evening, because you've got to boss them around the next day.' (laughs).

He (the Chief Minister) said, 'Contractually I am obliged to pay you. I will put your salary in an escrow, in an account. It's yours whenever you want it.'

Maurice never touched it. He lived off the food he begged. The deal was that whenever some VIP came to see what a great modern state Mysore State was, Maurice had to put on a suit and tie. But when no VIPs were coming, he was allowed to run the place in his orange robes and go out and beg for food on the side.

Rick: And when he finally left the factory, he distributed his salary which he had accumulated to all the workers. He didn't take...

David: Yeah, he didn't touch it. He cashed it all in and gave equal shares to all the workers in the factory and took off to live under a tree in Maharashtra.

Rick: Interesting. At what stage did he interact with Ramana?

David: Bangalore is quite close to Tiruvannamalai. The main junction to get a train to Bangalore is called Katpadi. It is about two and half hours north of Tiruvannamalai.

He said, 'I was standing on the Katpadi platform waiting for my Bangalore train, which wasn't coming.' And then, on the next track, he heard some Indian railway official shout, 'Tiruvannamalai! Tiruvannamalai!' and something in his head remembered that he had read this book about a famous swami in Tiruvannamalai, and he thought, 'Why not? It is close.' So he called over and said, 'When is the train leaving?' The man said, 'Five minutes'.

So he just got on it and went to Tiruvannamalai. And at that point he realized he had forgotten the name of the swami in Tiruvannamalai. (laughs) He just remembered the town. He got in a bullock cart and said, 'Any famous swamis in this town? If there are, take me to see him'.

And of course in those days, Ramana was number one. Everybody knew him. So he arrived at Ramanashram. And like many foreigners of his era he tried to clump in in his boots and he got turfed out. He had to take his shoes off and came in again.

And he said, 'I had read a book about him. I had read a biography. It didn't impress me. I didn't like his teachings. I didn't like the descriptions. I didn't like the way the book was written. And even when I went to the ashram I was in a slightly negative mood. But, he said, 'The moment I sat down in that hall, my mind stopped for the first time in my life.'

He said, 'The needle on my mindometer went back to zero and it stayed there.' And he said, 'I don't care what else is going on here. I don't care what this man teaches. I don't care about the rituals, all the stuff I don't like. This is the place I need to be.'

So from that moment on he came every weekend.

Rick: Interesting. For the viewers and listeners, David has created a whole series of videos about Ramana and about the people who hung around him, and about the various important places in Tiruvannamalai where Ramana lived. And I have listened to a whole lot of these over the last week or so. I just want to mention that. I will be linking to that series from the website. But it really gives you a flavor of what life was like around him (Ramana), and so many interesting anecdotes. You created that fairly recently, didn't you?

David: I did the talks in the beginning of 2014 and then I ended up having to edit them myself. And I did most of that last year.

Rick: It's really fascinating. If one has never lived around a guru... there are so many aspects of life living around a guru that are unconventional and that break your boundaries in different ways, and I think you did a good job of conveying a lot of that.

David: Thank you.

Rick: And giving a flavor for some of the characters, you know, and the extreme devotion that a lot of people felt. That's an interesting theme, which is not often talked about too much in contemporary spirituality. Devotion. But a lot of the people that contemporary seekers admire and say they are following, such as Ramana and Papaji, and so on, were extremely devotional people.

David: There is a saying in Tamil Nadu that your guru is mother, father, guru and God. He is everything. Your guru is all the relationships you have with all those normally discrete entities in your life. They all get rolled into one. Ideally you surrender yourself completely to that figure. Historically, in Tamil Nadu, you read poems by the famous ancient saints who are ecstatic that they have put themselves in slavery to God. The idea of being in bondage, servitude to God, is a desirable trait amongst many of the religious traditions in South India. And if you actually make it to the point where you become God's slave and you have no will of your own, then you have actually made it. That's a very popular, accepted goal.

Rick: I remember just the other day listening to your description of Papaji and someone asked him what his greatest regret was. And he said, 'I regret that my health is such that I can no longer prostrate myself fully at the feet of my guru, at the photo of Sri Ramana. When I get up in the morning, I can't even put my pants on any more because I am too feeble, but I really miss being able to do that.'

David: I love that. I asked him, I said, 'Have you got any regrets in your life?' Because his basic line was that, if you are in this state (realized) then you don't choose what you do next. Somehow the Self compels you to say and do the things you do. So the whole concept of regret would imply making a bad choice. So I was just playing devil's advocate a bit, saying, 'Anything that you've done that you regret?'

And of course he said, 'No! No! Of course not!' taking this *advaita* line that if you don't make choices, you can't have regrets. Then about five minutes later he looked across the room and he said, 'One big regret. I can't even put my pants on by myself any more. I can't prostrate on the floor. When I could move properly, every morning I would get up, lie full length on the floor in front of my guru's picture. That's how I started every day.'

Rick: Let's get back to Maurice Frydman. But let's dwell on that point a little bit more. What do you feel like the role or significance or importance of that kind of attitude is for a spiritual seeker?

David: Maurice for me exemplified...

Rick: I mean, that attitude of prostration and surrender...

David: Maurice, I don't think had this. Maurice was a karma yogi. I think of all the people who went to India that I know about, many of them, they had some devotion. They wanted to do enquiry, get enlightened. Maurice genuinely felt that the world was in a bad place and that he had the talent to do a lot about it. And he was always... I would not say on the lookout, but every opportunity he got to improve the lot of poor working people in India, he took it. He wasn't a contemplative navel gazer. This was an extraordinary man of action who throughout his life was always looking to use his talents, his skills, to make life better for other people.

Rick: That brings up a point itself. Some people are karma yogis by nature and some people are more *bhaktas*. They are going to have a more devotional bent, and so on. So, one size does not fit all. What was Maurice's relationship with Ramana that's significant that you would like to tell us? Did he get enlightened with Ramana?

David: Maurice came to India around 1933, started his factory and showed up at Ramanashram in 1934. He had a very very strong urge to become a *sannyasi*. He asked Bhagavan for formal initiation. Bhagavan never initiated anybody. His permanent, unflinching advice was whatever circumstances you are in, make the best of them. If you have a job, if you have a family, do your work in that context. He never ever gave anyone permission to renounce the world. Like several other people, Maurice wouldn't give up. He went off to see Swami Ramdas. And Swami Ramdas – that's the Kerala man – he initiated him. And he (Maurice) took *sannyasa* under the name Bharatananda, 'the bliss of India'. (laughs) Always, I think, there was this strong desire.

He came and he saw the poverty, the poor conditions in India, and he just knew he had the talent to do something. The way he looked at Gandhi's wheel and said, 'Mr Gandhi, I can make you a better wheel,' and went out and did it on the spot. This is pure Maurice. Maurice was a do-it-now bulldozer. Wherever he went, if he saw a problem, he addressed it and fixed it. That's one of the things I like. No dithering. No committees. No consultations. He just went out and brought a better wheel back in.

Gandhi tried it, and said, 'This is better. Thank you very much. This will be my personal wheel from now on. Go and see my people and make this the standard model for everybody in India, and I will keep this one for myself.'

That was just one of the extraordinary things he did, off the cuff, in an afternoon. That was the theme of his life.

Rick: Another thing he did off the cuff is while he was on his death bed...

David: (laughs) This story, yes.

Rick: You tell the story rather than me.

David: So, I had been poking around looking for Maurice stories. Everybody has a really extraordinary Maurice story. Nobody has a lot. He was very careful about talking about himself, or letting things slip. I had a letter from his final secretary. Maurice fell and had a bad accident. He fractured his hip, and the doctors came and said, 'He is not going to make it more than a few days. All his organs are failing one by one. Give him some painkillers, palliative care. We can't operate, he is in too feeble a state.'

One of his organs that failed was his kidney or his bladder, and he needed to have a catheter. I don't know if you have had a catheter. I know my dad had a catheter and when I went to see him in hospital, he said, 'Don't make any jokes. Laughing hurts too much.' It's not a very nice thing, even with an anesthetic. I have watched friends have this in India. It is a bit brutal and often inserted without an anesthetic.

Maurice, of course, had a fractured hip. You have to keep still when these pipes are going in. When his bladder had been emptied, he said, 'Is that what people have to put up with having a

catheter? This is terrible. Bring me my Stanley knife. Bring me some plastic tubes. I am going to make a better catheter before I die.' (laughs)

So his last few days on planet earth, he's lying on a bed with a fractured hip that no one wants to operate on. His organs are failing one by one, and the last thing he wants to do is make a better catheter so that other people won't have to suffer the way he did. Whether he did or not (make a better catheter) I don't know. But that is just so Maurice.

Rick: So, I think I gathered from reading your stuff that Ramana acknowledged Maurice as being Self-realized.

David: No, no. I have to back track on this. He went off to see Swami Ramdas in Kerala to get the initiation and Ramdas took one look at him and said, 'This is your final birth,' which was quite a bold prediction. This was a western man in a business suit who had just walked in on his first day. Maurice came back to Ramanashram and everybody there laughed at him because all they could see was the man in the business suit. But Ramana could see there was something different and special about this man. He said that Maurice had been in India before. That was something that Ramana was quite careful in saying. He said, 'He is one of us. He has been here before.' But he didn't say he was enlightened.

His relationship with Ramana was a bit rocky. I said that Maurice was a bit of a bulldozer. Wherever he went he thought he knew best, and what people should do, and Ramana was one of the few people he couldn't bulldoze. He was trying to give him a better diet, trying to make people look after him better. Ramana was basically saying, 'Mind your own business. That's not what you are here for.'

One thing I must say, though. I know a woman who was with Maurice in the 1970s and I had a discussion with her. I said, 'I have read some summaries that Maurice gave of Krishnamurti talks that he attended in the 1950s in Madras, as it was then.' He gave summaries to post out to all of the people all over the world who couldn't come.

I said, 'You know, Maurice summaries are actually more interesting, more comprehensible and I get more from them than reading Krishnamurti books. These are such excellent summaries. I wish they had been published.'

She said, 'He always had that talent. He had an ability to go to a teacher, listen to what that teacher was saying, summarize it and explain it often in a better, more concise, more accessible way than the teacher themselves.'

And then she absolutely astounded me. She said, 'Maurice told me that after he had been going to Ramanashram for a year, Ramana himself said (to him), "You can explain my teachings to people who come, who don't know Tamil."'

Maurice was actually designated to give summaries of certain aspects of the teachings. I don't know anybody else in the entire history of Ramanashram who got the job, while Ramana was still there, of explaining the teachings in Bhagavan's presence. This is an extraordinary endorsement of his state and his ability to give very good, very concise accounts of what the teacher was saying.

I think the same thing happened when he went to see Nisargadatta. Ganesan, Ramana's grandnephew told me this, that Maurice had told him, 'I heard about this man (Nisargadatta) so I went to see him and I was taking notes outside his *beedi* store in Bombay, writing things down, and after a few days Maharaj (Nisargadatta) called me over and said, "What are you writing?"'

Maurice showed him what he was writing and Maharaj was so happy with the quality of his understanding, his summaries and his notes that he invited him in. And he became, in a way, the official disciple, recorder, editor, and compiler. And the fruits of his work was *I am That*, which is an all-time classic. So he did have this ability to absorb teachings and, I wouldn't say regurgitate them, but disseminate them in a way that everyone went, 'Wow, that's the perfect explanation'.

Even though it might not have been the original words, they were so good, people said, 'That is even better than the original teacher'.

Rick: Did he speak ... What Indian languages did he speak?

David: He worked in Indian villages. I am guessing... Well he definitely knew Hindi. I have seen an article about his publisher in Bombay when Maurice went there with the first draft of *I am That*, saying, 'Stop everything, stop everything'. This is very Maurice. 'Cancel all your other projects. We must do this book'. The publisher was called Dikshit.

He said, 'Maurice you don't know Marathi. How are you going to do it?'

Maurice said, 'Don't worry. Don't worry. Minor detail. Minor detail.' (laughs) Marathi is the local vernacular language of Bombay but everybody there speaks Hindi. I think Maurice was hacking his way through conversations in Hindi, but I am not sure he ever learned good enough Marathi to have deep conversations. But between the two of them they got the point across.

Rick: What was Nisargadatta speaking?

David: He was speaking Marathi. He was a very uneducated man. He hardly ever went to school. He had a very rough, coarse village accent and village humor. I saw educated Marathis come in to talk to him and they could not understand a word he was saying because he was 80 years old, had a thick village accent, and wouldn't put his false teeth in. (laughs) It was quite a task to actually get sense out of him in the final years. The people who were the regular translators, I think, they were tuned in to his accent and his lack of teeth, and they got it.

Rick: So what else would you like to tell us about Maurice before we go on to anyone else?

David: Can I tell you the story of how he went to do his project in Aundh?

Rick: Sure.

David: I must tell you about the Dalai Lama also. Do we have time for all this?

Rick: We have plenty of time? We have a couple of hours.

David: Ok. So after he left his factory... The reason he left was that the son of a raja in a state that was close to Bombay came to ask for advice on how his father's state could be improved. And Maurice went off (to investigate).

At this point in time, the Gandhian idea, the political idea, was that villages should be self-governing. They shouldn't have higher hierarchies of people telling them what to do. Middle and higher management was out. Gandhi had a notion of this thing called Panchayat Raj. The Panchayats were the village councils and 'raj' means 'rule'. He (Gandhi) wanted India to be a confederation of self-governing villages with no higher management sucking out taxes and spending it on wasteful projects higher than the village level. So Maurice went off, and this is a typical Maurice story again. He walked in to see the raja.

The raja said, 'Mr Frydman, we hired you as a consultant. How can we improve my kingdom?'

Maurice said, 'The only thing you can usefully do is abdicate. You are a parasite. (laughs) You are sucking up all the revenue from your villages. You live in a big palace. Your villagers are poor. You don't help them. You just collect their taxes and live a high life. What you need to do is to abdicate, but not in favor of your son or anybody else. Abdicate in favor of the village councils of your realm.'

Amazingly – Maurice was a very persuasive man – he actually persuaded this raja to abdicate. So far as I know, it is the only instance in Indian history where a ruler has abdicated in favor of his people rather than a general or a son or anybody else.

Because this was a Gandhian project, Maurice wanted Gandhi himself to endorse it and co-sign the constitution with the raja. Maurice went off to see Gandhi in his ashram. He explained what was going on. The prince was there.

Gandhi said, 'It is a very nice idea but you can't cut people loose like this. If you want my endorsement of this project, you both have to agree to live there for a number of years. You have to teach these people how to be independent, how to look after themselves.'

And then he jabbed his finger at the raja's son. He said, 'You, you can't live in a palace. You are going there to try and convince these village people that village life is a good, viable way of living. They are not going to respect you if you rock up every day in a big car from the palace. Build yourself a mud hut in one of these villages, live there for ten years and demonstrate to your people that this kind of life can be a rewarding, productive way of life.'

And so Maurice and Apa Pant, as he was called, looked at each other and said ok. Gandhi signed. Maurice and Apa Pant went back to their state.

Maurice said, 'The first night I slept under a tree. I didn't even have a house to live in'.

Slowly, slowly they taught these people the basics of self-governance. Maurice was very practical. He taught them carpentry, plumbing, engineering, all the things they needed to know.

The one part of this project that really impresses me was that when the Central Government was dissolved, they said, 'What to do with the people in the Central Government prisons?'

Nobody wanted them.

Maurice said, 'Parole them all out to me. Put them on personal probation parole to me. I will be responsible for them.'

He went off and built a village with the aid of these prisoners. He taught them how to build houses, he taught them agriculture; he taught them all the skills they needed to live independent lives and the recidivism rate was zero. Not a single one of these people ever needed to go back to jail. I have seen interviews with these people. Filmed interviews (of them) in their 90s. They were old men, and they were crying.

They just said, 'Maurice saved us'.

This was such a famous project that in the 1960s they made a Bollywood film about it and Maurice was hired as the technical advisor. So he went down to the set and made sure that everything was properly recorded.

The director said, 'Thank you very much. I will give you a credit at the end as "technical advisor".'

Maurice said, 'No thanks, don't put my name on it'.

This is very Maurice.

And the director said, 'Of course I am putting your name on it. This is your project; you are the technical advisor. Of course your name is going on.'

And Maurice said, 'Well, in that case, I am going to the Bombay High Court to take out an injunction against you (laughs) forbidding you to put my name on this project.'

This is the way Maurice was. He went through his whole life doing absolutely extraordinary things and then when he had done them, he covered his tracks, pretending later that they had nothing to do with him.

Rick: That's pretty neat.

David: He is a man who just didn't want people to know all the good things he has done. That's another thing I admire about him.

Rick: Yeah. You know some people might wonder, you know, 'What's the spiritual significance of all this?' But I think, 'By their fruits you shall know them'.

David: Maurice had whole orchards of fruits. This is a man about whom it could be said that any one of about twenty things he did would be the number one item on most other people's CVs. He just had so many things that were just unbelievable – the things that he did and accomplished. May I talk about the Dalai Lama briefly?

Rick: Anything. You don't need to ask.

David: Right. I'm on a roll about Maurice.

Rick: Keep going.

David: Maurice is one of my heroes. Go Maurice!

In the late 1950s the Chinese were slowly annexing Tibet and it was quite clear that at some point they would take over. The Dalai Lama was making noises about moving to India.

Rick: He was in Boulder the other day. Did you see him?

David: I went there two days ago. I stood in line to ask a question about Maurice. I have been trying to talk to the Dalai Lama about Maurice for years but his committee won't let me in. So I was standing in the public line. He answered four questions from four people. I was number ten in line, so I didn't get to talk to him. (laughs)

Anyway, Maurice was personal friends with the Prime Minister of India; and Nehru, the Prime Minister, didn't want to provoke a war with China. He thought there might be one but he didn't want to be the person who made a big gesture which the Chinese would react badly to.

Nehru said, 'Sorry, I can't let this man in. It is too provocative. The Chinese will regard it as tantamount to harboring an enemy. I can't do it.'

Maurice pestered and pestered and pestered, and in the end he got Nehru to sign off on a deal that the Dalai Lama could come to India on condition that he didn't come as a political leader. He was allowed to be the spiritual leader of the Tibetans in exile. He could do pastoral work in India but he wasn't allowed to make any political speeches. If he wanted to do that, he had to go somewhere else. Maurice said, 'That's ok.'

You remember I told you about the prince, the son of the raja who abdicated. (Apa Pant)

Rick: Hmm... yeah.

David: He joined the diplomatic service after Independence, and he became the Indian government's representative in Sikkim. Maurice thought that as a final fig leaf to pretend that he (Dalai Lama) is not fleeing to India, we will arrange for the Dalai Lama to cross Tibet and go into Sikkim. He was welcomed there by Apa Pant, one of Maurice's friends, and put in one of the local monasteries. Maurice also sent one of his Polish friends, Uma Devi, to look after him. She became the Dalai Lama's cook and looked after him for several years.

After the Dalai Lama did come to India, Maurice ran all over India arm twisting his rich friends, getting money, land to establish all the Tibetan colonies in India, and Uma Devi, his friend, ended up running many of the refugee camps in and around Dharamsala.

I saw an old YouTube film of the Dalai Lama in Poland giving a speech there, and he (Dalai Lama) stood up and said, 'I want to talk to you today about the two greatest Polish people I have ever met.' And he talked about Maurice and Uma Devi; and everyone looked around as if: Who is he? We have never heard of him. And so that was Maurice. Maurice has no recognition anywhere in the world despite these extraordinary things. No one knows anything about him.

Sorry, I've got to tell one more story.

Rick: Yeah, keep going.

David: Apa Pant's daughter... I called her up. I said, 'Maurice came to see you and your dad. Did he tell you any good stories?' This is what you do. You just keep calling and bit by bit all these amazing stories come in. She said, 'Oh we were just young girls. Our job was to just to serve the tea and coffee. This was men's business. We weren't allowed to sit and listen to high politics in those days.' And I said, 'Come on, they were speaking English, and you were in the room. You must have heard some good stuff.'

And finally, reluctantly, she said, 'I remember my father once asked Maurice how his recent trip to Russia was.' And this was the first time I discovered he'd gone to Russia. I think he was on an economic delegation. He was a member of the Congress party and he probably spoke Russian, so he was a good person to send along. I said, 'What did he say about Russia?' She said, 'He went to the Kremlin to meet Khrushchev, and he wagged his finger under Khrushchev's nose and said, "Mr. Khrushchev, you are not a real communist. You are a fake. You are living off the fat of the land. You are not a real communist."'

So, the same lecture he gave to the raja in India, he just walked into the Kremlin and wagged his finger at Khrushchev. He was probably lucky not to be sent off to the Gulag. That was Maurice. Maurice had no filters. If he thought that you were not a useful member of society you would find out very quickly. (laughs)

Rick: Very bold man.

David: Right.

Rick: I took a bunch notes when I was reading your stuff. What was this about orange juice with Maurice?

David: (laughs) This was Maurice being his typical bulldozery self. He walked in to Ramana and thought, this man is not eating properly. I will put him on a better diet. So he went off, bought a couple of oranges, hand squeezed them, brought them in, put them on a tray and said, 'You need more vitamins. Drink this.' And Bhagavan of course never consumed anything that he couldn't share equally with everybody in the hall. So he waved his hand around saying, 'What about these 200 people here?', as a way of saying, 'No, thank you.'

But to Maurice, that was just a challenge. He went to town and bought every single orange he could find and hand squeezed 200 glasses of orange juice. (laughs) He had them all paraded in on a big tray and gave everybody, the 200 people, a glass each; and then he gave Bhagavan his glass and said, 'Now you can't refuse. Everybody else has had a glass first.' And Bhagavan said, 'Ok, you have made your point. I will take it. But don't do this again. It is not necessary.'

That's just the way he was. He was just a man who saw things, thought they needed to be changed, and took action and got them done.

Rick: I suppose the significance of our talking about him is that he is an excellent example of a karma yogi. Somebody who puts his money where his mouth is.

David: Exactly. He had a dual strand. While all this was going on, he had an intense relationship with Ramana, with Krishnamurti, with Nisargadatta; and I think he got it finally with Nisargadatta. I am not saying his karma yoga got him enlightened. That was an unquenchable

thirst he had to make the world a better place. But as a kind of parallel internal practice, a strand of his life, he was going to see all the big name *Advaita* gurus in India, sitting with them, getting their *darshans*, listening to their teachings; and he got it. He definitely got it with Nisargadatta.

Rick: Hmm... yeah.

David: Can I tell you about how I asked Nisargadatta about this?

Rick: Sure.

David: He (Nisargadatta) was cranky, feisty. He was always complaining what terrible people we were. 'Oh! Why do I waste my time talking to you people? Nobody listens to me.' No, sorry. The first question was... I said, 'In all the years you have been teaching, how many people have actually got enlightened.' And he said, 'What business is that of yours?' (laughs) And I said, 'It is a bit like a lottery. If you know there are a hundred winning tickets out of a thousand, you think, "That's not bad," but if it is one in a million then you are a bit discouraged. So I just want to know what the success rate is here.' And he said, 'None of your business. How will that fact help you any way whatsoever?' And I said, OK.

And a few days later, he was saying, 'Why do I waste my time talking to you people? Nobody listens. Nobody understands.'

So I thought, OK, let's try again. 'In all the years you have been teaching, how many people have actually understood what you were saying and experienced it?' And he said, 'One. Maurice Frydman,' and that was the only public certification I ever heard him make.

Except that, every morning he did a very elaborate puja to his guru and all the other gurus in his lineage. In his puja room he had photos of all the big-name saints that weren't in his lineage; Ramana was there, Ramakrishna was there. So first he would put a blob of *kumkum* on his guru's head and then all the people in his lineage. Then he would go around the room and put a blob of *kumkum* on all the people he thought were worthy of *kumkum*, because they were enlightened even though they weren't in his lineage. Maurice had two photos in that room. I think he was the only person who managed to get two photos, and every morning both of Maurice's photos got the *kumkum* treatment.

Rick: Hmm.

David: So, Maurice was the one person he was satisfied with in his life.

Rick: Interesting. Here is something you sent to me. (Rick reads a note.) 'If you want an entertaining digression here I would be happy to talk about Gandhi's attempts to meet with Sri Ramana and how one of his leading followers prevented it from happening. If we take this side trip I shall also like to talk about Gandhi's spiritual status with reference to Papaji, Ramana and Lakshmana Swamy, all of whom had a high regard for him. He is primarily known in the west as a politician, freedom fighter and social reformer. His elevated spiritual state tends to be ignored.'

But did I shift gears too quickly? I didn't mean to suddenly abandon Maurice.

David: We can abandon Maurice. We might get back to him. We might not. But that's something again that's not really well-known and there's some fascinating stories. I think a good starting point is the 1983 Oscar winning movie 'Gandhi', which is a great movie except that when he gets shot he goes, 'Oh my God' or 'GOD, GOD' like this, and that completely misrepresents Gandhi.

Rick: He said Ram, didn't he?

David: He said 'Ram, Ram'. Ram-Ram-Ram was Gandhi's mantra. 'Oh God', means, 'Oh, What a surprise. Oh! What a shock! I have just been shot.' Whereas if somebody shoots you fatally and you have got two seconds to live and the first thing that stirs out of you is repeating the name of God, then you are fairly well established in that state of the mantra or the japa. It is an acquiescence, a state of surrender. In his final moment he repeated the name of his God, became one with his God and passed away. So the 'God, God' story is really the one thing in that movie that really annoys me every time I watch it. So, one thing before we go to Gandhi at Ramanashram...

Rick: Maybe just an aside, I was helping to teach the course in which Deepak Chopra learnt to meditate right around that time – early 80s – before he (Deepak Chopra) was famous and everything, and he made that same comment: that the movie really blew it because they missed the whole point there when he (Gandhi) was shot.

David: So, Papaji didn't like Gandhi's politics in the 1920s. He wasn't a Gandhian; he was trying to throw the British out by force. But he had a great respect for him, for his spiritual state, and in 1947, after partition was agreed (Gandhi was absolutely against partition), he said, 'It's like splitting my body in half. I don't want it'.

He was side-lined in the Congress party, and he was conducting prayer meetings in Madras, as it was then. And Papaji was working in Chennai and so he went along to the prayer meetings, and somehow he ended up being Gandhi's minder or attendant, which is an interesting connection.

And he said, 'One day I was sitting there with Gandhi. We were just by ourselves. Gandhi was spinning his thread as usual, and I heard the sound of Ram-Ram-Ram-Ram-Ram. I looked around. Nobody else was there. The radio wasn't on. So I fine-tuned my antenna a little bit.' And he said, 'I was astonished to discover that Gandhi's body was actually vibrating with the sound of Ram but at a very subtle level.'

Rick: Huh.

David: He said, 'That's an absolutely extraordinary elevated state of spirituality'. He called it ajapa; spontaneous japa where the japa has so permeated your being, your body, that when you are engaged in a task the 'Rams' in your body are stored up and are spontaneously chanting themselves and radiating off at a subtle level from your body.

Rick: Interesting. Gandhi is another example of 'You shall know them by their fruits'.

David: Exactly.

Rick: Someone with that degree of determination and dedication and commitment and absolute – he changed the whole destiny of a nation in this very very simple way; and that kind of thing is symptomatic of a very significant inner state.

David: Exactly. Ramana often read things that Gandhi had written. He (Gandhi) was a prolific writer of articles and they got published; and once or twice he (Ramana) would read out something that Gandhi had said with absolute unwavering approval. He would say, 'Yes, this is the true state. This is the state of the Self'.

So he had an extraordinary high regard for Gandhi's spiritual state. And when Congress people came to Bhagavan saying, 'How can we help the struggle for independence?' he said, 'Whatever you desire to work towards means that you have the "I am the body" identification. Be like Gandhi. Have no expectations, no desire to accomplish anything. Be in that inner state where you get moved by the grace within rather than your desire for a personal goal. Even if it is a laudable one, even if it is something that should happen, don't go into this work with the idea that 'I must accomplish this or this needs to be done.' He said, 'Do the work without any desire, any feeling that this must happen' and he said that is the right attitude.

So that was his attitude to social work. He said, 'Don't think that you are in a position to help other people. That creates a dualistic dichotomy.' In fact, he said once, 'Any teacher who thinks that they can help somebody else isn't a *jnani*. The *jnani's* unwavering position is that there are no others and there is nobody else to help.' And by abiding in that state, you generate a kind of force field around yourself – he called it the *sannidhi* – and he said that the *sannidhi* will do your work for you. It will help everyone. It is the best benefit that anyone can receive. But as soon as you get to the idea that this must happen or I must accomplish this, then that is not the *jnani's* position. Abide in the Self, be the Self and all these things will unfold automatically.

Rick: You have control over action alone and never over its fruits. (quoting Bhagavad Gita)

David: Exactly.

Rick: But, of course, it is paradoxical because Maurice and Gandhi and others have had tremendous influence in helping others, and it may appear that that was their primary motivation. But if they weren't attached to the fruits of action then there was some much more profound inner orientation going on.

David: I think Gandhi and Maurice were quite similar in that they had a very strong uplift streak. They could see all the poor conditions that Indians were living in. They had different ways of changing that. They had lots of arguments about process, but the basic, 'We need to help' strand was there in both of them. And on the side, almost secretly, they both had this incredible passion for God, for liberation, for getting to the point of individual transcendence. I think they both attained this. Gandhi, of course, was far more famous because of his political adventures, but they both had these parallel lives of being outwardly devoted to social uplift and inwardly devoted to transcendence.

Can I get back to Ramanashram?

Rick: Yeah, please.

David: So, Gandhi came on a trip to Tiruvannamalai and everybody was very excited. They thought he might come in to Ramanashram; and he was going to give a political speech about a five-minute walk from Ramana's ashram and he had to drive past the main gate. Annamalai Swami told me this story. He said, 'We all went. Bhagavan didn't come down. He didn't care about any of this. He sat on his sofa. We all went down to the gate. We could see Gandhi's car slowing down as it came to the gate.' And he said, 'I put my palms over my head to greet Gandhi, and Gandhi did the same back to me. I got my little *pranaam* from Gandhi.' And the man who was organizing the trip was a big Congress politician called Rajagopalachari, and he waved the driver on. He said, 'Don't stop. Speed up. Speed up'.

Rick: Oh!

David: So Gandhi saw that was one chance missed, and he was scheduled to give a 10-minute speech. So Gandhi's next plan was to give only a 5-minute speech and then rush in through the back gate of Ramanashram and have a quick *darshan* and then go off to his next meeting. And when Rajagopalachari saw what was happening, he physically prevented him. He stopped and argued saying, 'We haven't got time, we haven't got time'. That argument went on for five minutes.

Rick: Oh!

David: And so in the end there wasn't any time.

Rick: What a shame!

David: And so Annamalai Swami came back. Everyone was very disappointed. Everyone was looking forward to this great meeting between Gandhi and Bhagavan. And Annamalai Swami said, 'Bhagavan, why wouldn't they let him in? What's the problem?' And Bhagavan laughed and said, 'They are probably afraid he will go into *samadhi* and forget all about politics and stay.'

Rick: (laughs)

David: (laughs) Which may have happened. They (Congressmen) wanted their talisman active. They didn't want him sitting in a hall, blissing out in front of Ramana. They wanted an active frontman for their organization.

Rick: Although, he did a bunch of sitting when he was doing all that fasting.

David: Yes. You know, whether it was a joke or not I don't know, but Bhagavan just laughed and said, 'They are afraid he will give up politics if he comes here'.

Rick: We are jumping around a bit. Kamakshi from Minnesota asks: 'Did Maurice learn any Tamil or other south Indian languages?'

David: Not that I know of. If you managed a factory in Bangalore nowadays then you have to know Tamil because Tamil is a very significant proportion of the population there. I am not quite sure how it worked in his day, but I would guess he knew enough to do basic interchanges with his workers.

There is a lot of myth making going on about Maurice. One of the things I have been doing is trying to find facts rather than myths. There was this story that he was a brilliant scholar, learned lots of languages, and got 'A' grades on all his courses. And I actually sent someone down into the basement of Warsaw University to check his transcripts (laughs), and he wasn't a very good student at all, and he got really bad grades in his foreign languages, English and French.

Rick: Hmm.

David: So, I am not quite sure how stories like this came up. I think he got to where he did by dogged perseverance rather than any individual talent or brilliance. He worked very hard at mastering the things he had to master.

Rick: Here is a little story about Maurice. Apparently when he was on his deathbed, he was sick, some nurse showed up, and the nurse had been told that there had been some mistake. She was about to leave when she spotted a photo on the wall and she said, 'He, Ramana, is the man who told me to come here.'

That's so interesting. We talked about this in our last interview, but there are so many stories where Ramana shows up for somebody while they are in their bedroom, or while they're walking down the street or something, and we kind of played with the notion that some actual entity representing Ramana is still hanging around doing things; or whether it is just the divine that somehow knows to manifest using Ramana's appearance in order to direct people to do this and that.

David: Again, I remember that last interview. I came down on the side that there wasn't somebody up there supervising all the devotees' activities and intervening as and when needed. I think when a need is there then somehow the Self produces a form that looks like Ramana. In this particular case it told the nurse to knock on that door because there was an old devotee of his who needed palliative care for a few days.

Nisargadatta was there on his (Maurice's) final day and somebody said, 'Maharaj, what's happening?' And Maharaj said, 'Nothing is happening. Nobody is dying'. The implication of that was he was long since dead. A body was about to disintegrate but nothing was happening to Maurice because Maurice was already home.

Rick: I find it so interesting that the Self, we anthropomorphize it by saying the Self decides to do 'this' or the Self manifests 'that'. Whereas we usually think of the Self as a sort of pure, flat oceanic consciousness but when we say things like that we attribute almost individual intentions, as it were, to that oceanic intelligence or oceanic consciousness. So, either you, or people you can quote, such as Ramana or Papaji, could comment on that idea.

David: Bhagavan was very insistent that – they are called *sankalpas* in India, intentions to accomplish something – he said God, the Self, is absolutely without *sankalpa* whatsoever. He said in the presence of the sun, one flower might bloom and another might not. It's not because the sun has chosen one and not the other. It's about the state of readiness. He said the Self is present, it is permeating, it is shining on all; and for those who need a particular

manifestation, it will happen at the right moment. But not through any desire or intention on the part of the sun. And he said the Self is like that.

Rick: And yet it seems that the Self is actually orchestrating things in a very intelligent way. Like showing a picture of Ramana to that nurse and telling the nurse to come; or showing up in Pamela Wilson's bedroom when she asked for help. Many, many stories like that. So it's kind of more than some completely passive, inactive flat thing. It seems to be more engaged in our world in certain ways.

David: A point may be reached in your life when the one thing you need is the presence of someone like Ramana or a pointer in the right direction. He might come. I think the Self picks the form that you will later recognize to be him, because It knows that's where your destiny is. If you are destined to – I don't know – be a Christian monk, the Pope might come. Who knows?

Rick: Or Jesus...

David: Yeah, something relevant will come. There isn't a preexisting form that slots in and out of these stories. There is the potential to manifest in any form according to your maturity and according to what your past, your destiny is.

Rick: Yeah. Sort of like the Self is some kind of divine clay that can mould itself into different forms as needed. But there again, we say, quoting your words, 'The Self picks a form because it knows'. And that sounds like such a God-like role that the Self is playing, where it is intervening in human affairs and manifesting just the right form to have just the right effect here and there. So it just contradicts the notion that the Self is ...

David: Can I retract my grammar then? (laughs)

Rick: (laughs) Sure.

David: There is no intention. There is no picking and choosing. A particular person will have a passion, a predilection, a level of maturity, and that itself will condense as the form it needs in that moment. There isn't somebody up there saying, 'Time to go and see Rick. Time to go and see David'.

Rick: Well, there is a quote from the Gita, you know. Krishna says, 'As men approach me so do I favor them'. So, maybe, it is as you approach you elicit a response from that field of all possibilities that is appropriate to your situation.

David: Exactly. Can I digress even more?

Rick: Sure, no problem. We are actually on precisely the right trajectory here.

David: So, it's a relevant story. I lived in a house in India about 12 years ago, and I ended up buying a piece of land where I live now, and the person who owned it had been having visions of Bhagavan in the late 1990s. He was at that time an economics student at Harvard University. A very straight laced kind of place to be; not the sort of place you want to admit to having visions. So, he thought, 'I am keeping quiet about this. I don't want a trip to then mental

hospital'. He was smart enough to find out from his visions who the person was. But didn't really pursue it one way or the other. He just knew it was Ramana.

He was good enough to win a prize for the best thesis of his year. Part of the prize consisted of a cash award to his course supervisor, who of course had done nothing. My friend had written his thesis and the professor had just signed off, and so the professor was very happy and said, 'Great! Come out to dinner. Let's celebrate.' So he went out to the professor's house. It was outside Cambridge. He couldn't work out which was the back and the front of the house, and he knocked on the back door, kitchen door by mistake, and no answer.

So he went in, and on the fridge in front of him was a picture of me and my ex-wife on a magnet on the fridge; and at that point his professor came in and my friend said, 'What's David Godman's picture doing on your fridge?' And he said, 'Well, he is married to my daughter! They live in Tiruvannamalai.' (laughs)

Rick: (laughs)

David: So, that's how that connection was made. So, Dad was an atheist Marxist, so it was a bit of a shock to him that his star student who had just won an award for the best thesis of the year had been having visions of this man in India. And so Steve (Dad) put him in touch with me, and David (student) came over and fell in love with Tiruvannamalai.

I eventually bought him a big piece of land and now we share this property in India; and it's all because Bhagavan appeared to him in visions when he was doing his undergraduate work and he kept quiet about it until he saw my picture on the fridge of his professor in his professor's kitchen. (laughs)

Rick: Amazing. Such things are not random coincidence.

David: No. Somehow he was destined... or we were destined to meet. He was destined to come and buy this land; and at some point the easiest way of doing it was for Ramana to pop into his dreams, his visions, for him to win the prize, to go and see his professor, to see the picture, and that's why we are now neighbors.

Rick: Interesting. Let's switch on to Muruganar.

David: Muruganar, ok.

Rick: If I am pronouncing that correctly... You want me to read a little bit about what you wrote about him here as an introduction?

David: Anything you like.

Rick: (Rick reads.) Muruganar was a poet saint who was a key figure in the last 27 years of Ramana Maharishi's life. He assembled the most reliable record of his Guru's spoken teachings: *Guru Vachaka Kovai*. Pronounce it, please.

David: *Guru Vachaka Kovai*.

Rick: He (Ramana) persuaded him to write down his teachings in *Ulladu Narpadu*... I should just let you go and ahead and say this. Why don't you go ahead and talk about him rather than me reading this stuff.

David: Ok. So, any aspect of that you want elaborating on, or shall I start at the beginning?

Rick: Start at the beginning and tell us why you think that Muruganar was so significant, that he is one of the three people you really wanted to talk about.

David: Ok, so Muruganar was an outstanding Tamil scholar. This is before he met Bhagavan. He was, in fact, on the committee that was compiling the definitive Tamil dictionary. He was a very erudite, much sought after Tamil scholar. But he was also looking for a guru, and his template for the guru-disciple model was the one that had occurred between an old Tamil saint called Manikkavachagar and Shiva a thousand years before.

Manikkavachagar was the prime minister of an old Indian kingdom, and he was desperate for a guru. His desperation -- this is back to what we were talking about before -- caused Shiva to appear before him and become his guru, and he got the enlightenment experience with Shiva. As a result of that, and in gratitude for what Shiva had done for him, he toured all over Tamil Nadu singing songs in praise of Shiva, and those songs were collected and compiled in a work called *Tiruvachakam*, which is one of the all-time classic texts of Tamil devotional literature.

So, Muruganar saw that as his model. He had a father-in-law who was a prominent devotee at Ramanashram. The father-in-law came and showed him one of Ramana's poems. Muruganar thought, 'This might be the man for me'. So he came, composed some verses on the way, went to see Bhagavan and, to cut a long story short, Bhagavan completely captured his heart and in a very very short period of time he got the liberation he had been seeking. But Bhagavan could see that his secret desire wasn't just for a guru. He wanted to serve that guru or manifest his gratitude towards that guru by composing Tamil poetry. So Bhagavan said, 'Can you write like Manikkavachagar?' This is on their second meeting.

Rick: Hmm...

David: And Muruganar, of course, thought that was a tall order. This is one of the all-time great saint poets of Tamil history, but he took that as at least a sign that he should proceed. So, over the next few years he actually composed a work praising Bhagavan that paralleled the *Tiruvachakam*, and Bhagavan loved it. He encouraged it. He read out all the poems when they were published.

So he (Muruganar) got that relationship he was longing for; he got the contact; he got the experience, and he got the muse, if you like. The poetic muse was Bhagavan inspiring him to compose and write this poetry so that his desires to have that kind of relationship could be fulfilled. Bhagavan had an interesting ability with certain close, advanced people that if you composed poetry in his presence, somehow it came very easy, very spontaneous, and they actually felt that what came out of your pen was him writing. Ganapati Muni had this experience; Muruganar had this experience. So they both felt that somehow his shakti, his presence got into them, and without any effort on their behalf, poetry would spontaneously come out of their fingertips.

This was something that was switched on in Muruganar's brain. For all of his life, he had an ability – not even an ability. Poems spontaneously appeared inside him almost readymade, and he would speak them out or he would write them down. He was a bit scatter brained. He wasn't a good organizer so other people would collect them and write them down. If he dictated, they would write them, and in late years he had a slate handy – he was very old school – chalk and slate. And he would write them down and if the next one came before anyone had visited, then he wouldn't copy it. He would just wipe it out and that one would be lost forever. (laughs)

He probably wrote about 25,000 verses in his lifetime; or rather they came out of him spontaneously, unasked, inspired by the same experience that he had got with Bhagavan. That same power created this poetry inside him and made it flow.

I have translated some of these poems with pandit translator friends. They are absolutely gorgeous. They are praising Bhagavan; they are talking about his own experience of the Self, which Bhagavan absolutely endorsed by the way. Although he never gave a public certificate to Muruganar, there was absolutely no doubt that Bhagavan approved of the poetry that said, 'Thank you for giving me the grace to realize the Self'.

I will just give you one example of how definite this was. Muruganar was sitting in Bhagavan's presence thinking about what to write next. He had started a long poem. It was in a single verse format. He had written 200 lines. He thought he would go for a walk and think about it and come back; and when he got back Bhagavan had picked up his manuscript and written 300 more lines. (laughs) He must have gone for a very long walk.

And the first verse that Bhagavan wrote was as if he was Muruganar praising Bhagavan saying, 'Thank you for giving me the Grace to realize the Self.' So, Bhagavan himself was imitating Muruganar's style, and the first verse he wrote down was, 'Thank you. Thank you, Guru. You have done this for me.'

So that's about as strong an endorsement as you can get without handing out a certificate. So there was no doubt in Bhagavan's mind that this was a liberated soul sitting in front of him. So, that was his devotional side.

But parallel to this he was writing down Bhagavan's teachings. It may sound very odd – to me it still sounds odd – but in those days people didn't write down what Bhagavan said in Tamil, which was the language he spoke. They would tend to write it down in English, or occasionally Telugu. So there are a very few records of what he said in his own language.

Rick: So they kind of translate on the fly...

David: For example, the man who compiled 'Talks'; he was the interpreter and the transcriber, and so he just tended to translate, write down what the translation he was giving out to the visitors was, rather than what Bhagavan said in Tamil. Muruganar was different. Muruganar wrote down what Bhagavan said; and the same day he would show it to Bhagavan and Bhagavan would say, 'Yes, very good,' or he might say, 'Change this. Add this. Not quite right'. And by 1939, about 800 of these statements had been compiled.

Bhagavan knew that Muruganar didn't have the inclination to organize thematically, so he gave these 800 verses to someone else and said, 'Sort them out by topics. Let's have a book,' and that man wrote an introduction. We will come to that in a minute. It was sent off to the press. A proof copy came back from the press. Bhagavan went through it. This proof copy still exists, and every single verse was checked by Bhagavan. You can see his handwriting in the margin. You can see all the stuff he changed. He changed the order of the verses. He changed what was in the verses. He added new verses of his own.

So this is the most thorough copy editing you can imagine. And then, he (Bhagavan) went back to the introduction, which the editor had written himself, and there was a line in that introduction that said, 'This book contains the teachings of Ramana Maharishi in a pristine form.' And Bhagavan took out his pen, put a little caret on the end of one word and added one syllable; and that one syllable can mean, 'This book alone contains the teachings of Ramana Maharishi in a pristine form,' meaning: I give my imprimatur on this in a way that I have not given my imprimatur on any other collection of teachings, any other book. This is the one that accurately reflects my teachings.

I think we owe an extraordinary debt to Muruganar, not because of his vast devotional poetic output but because he took the trouble to write down what his Guru was saying, got it checked on the same day, and got Bhagavan – through I think the power of his surrender – 'Please look at my work, please change it, I accept all your changes'.

So what came out is, in my opinion, the most authoritative collection of Bhagavan's spoken teachings in existence, simply because Muruganar did it in Tamil and took the trouble to have everything checked and edited.

Rick: It is significant actually. I mean, you now think how different things would be if someone had done that around Christ or around Buddha, and so on. Usually it is a couple of hundred years later and somebody starts writing things down. So, it's important.

David: Yeah. There was something about Muruganar. I think I have talked to teachers about this. If you have a strong devotion and a desire for your guru to do something, the guru tunes into your devotion and has to do what you want. So the level or intensity of your devotion compels the guru to act in the way you desire.

Rick: Yeah, I was listening to a couple of your recordings in which you mentioned two devotees whom Ramana said he was afraid of...

David: Exactly.

Rick: Meaning, they were so devoted to him that whatever they wanted he had to do.

David: Exactly. Muruganar had this level of devotion, on top of which – the icing on the cake – was this strong desire to have Ramana record his teachings properly. So these 40 verses, *Ulladu Napadu*... he persuaded Bhagavan to compose them. He wrote another poem towards the end of which he wanted Shiva to give a speech giving out his basic lessons and thought, 'Shiva is sitting in front of me. We will get Ramana Shiva to do this'.

So, simply because he had the intensity of his devotion, if he put in a request like this, whatever Bhagavan might have been feeling, he had no capacity to say no. So, through the strength of that devotion Bhagavan responded by giving out written teachings, which are still today the core, most-authoritative written statements he ever made.

Rick: I just want to interject a point here. You mentioned earlier that Maurice, for instance, didn't so much like the scene around the ashram when he first showed up, and he had objections to this and objections to that. But sitting in Ramana's presence his mind stopped. There are so many stories like that around Ramana and around some other saints.

I just want to make the point to listeners that if you ever had the experience of – or never had, either – the experience of being in the presence of a great enlightened being like that, it's definitely worth seeking out if you can find such a person. Because all the words in the world don't really do justice to the experience you have when you are in the immediate vicinity of someone of that magnitude. It has a profound and deeply moving effect on your consciousness. You just shift, sometimes very radically, just being in the mere proximity of such a person.

David: I agree entirely. My first proper experience of this was with Lakshmana Swamy in probably 1978. In the previous two years I had been meditating all day. I was in my sadhu mode, sitting crossed legged with my *dhoti* and my beard thinking, 'I am a great sadhu; I am almost enlightened,' (laughs) like you do when you start. And somebody said, 'Go and see this man. He got liberation with Bhagavan in 1940s; he has got a great presence.'

And I thought, why not? No harm in it. Five minute walk. I went and sat there, and he just turned his head slowly and looked at me, and in 3 or 4 seconds I got more peaceful, more quiet, more everything you can think of than I had got from sitting every day for two years. He just looked at me once and I realized that I thought that I'd made this much progress and there was this far to go; and when he looked at me I realized *that* was how far or *that* was how much I had done and *that* was how far there was to go. And the free lunch, if you like... the best way to get those extra big distances was to hang out with these people and spend as much time with them as possible.

And so that was a big change in my life. I thought, this is the way to go. Seek out these people. Get their blessing, sit with them and then you've got the wind behind you.

Rick: Interesting. Which you went ahead and did for many, many years. It's kind of interesting lesson to be packed into 3 to 5 seconds of attention from someone.

David: Well, somebody can tell you something. You might agree or you might disagree. Somebody can actually show you in one look, and that's incontrovertible. You can't argue with it.

Rick: Yeah. There were some tidbits of notes I took down when I was reading. Some of it's from Muruganar. I just want to cover these little tidbits, because they caught my attention. Thought I would discuss this with David. One is, you said somewhere in something I was reading that 'a Self-realized person has no motivation or ambition', and I heard that and was thinking, well

what about Maurice? He is Self-realized and he seems to have the full motivations and ambitions.

David: I think Maurice got it quite late on in life with Nisargadatta. You know the story of Vivekananda and Ramakrishna? He got the experience. He went into *samadhi* and then Ramakrishna took him out; and then Vivekananda went all around the world, did his teaching, his preaching and wrote all his books; came back to India, and then he got the final experience from Ramakrishna again. And that's the chronology that seems to be accepted.

Somebody talked to Bhagavan about this and said, 'If he had got it immediately, if Ramakrishna had made him stay in that state, or maybe he wasn't ready, but if he had stayed in that state he wouldn't have had that residual "I must go around the world and spread the teachings."' I think his guru wanted him to do that but he couldn't do that from the state of no desire, no ambition. And so I think he gave him the power, gave him the initiation to go around the world; and when he came back, job done, his guru put him in that final state and his missionary zeal was over. Bhagavan himself said, had he had that experience first time around he would not have run around the world doing all these things.

So, I think with Maurice, possibly Gandhi, for what I know, Lakshmana Swamy told me – and Papaji also – that Gandhi got the final experience late in life, but there was all this intense energy, this desire to change things, to improve things, make things better, which animated them for several decades. And finally, through that and through the parallel track of a hunger for transcendence, they got the final state soon before they ended their lives. This is what people are telling me.

Rick: Yeah, we'll play with this a bit more. One way of reading this verse is that a self-realized person has no 'personal' motivation or ambition, but they may be a representative of divine motivation or ambition.

You know, there are some great sages such as *Ma Amrtananda Mayi whom I saw last week, and you almost came down to see, who is involved in all sorts of projects and things to help people, who seems to be full of motivation and ambition and yet it still doesn't seem to be personal, like, 'I've got to do this'. It's more like she is serving as a conduit or a representative of divine will.

David: I can't comment on her. All I know is what Ramana said about Vivekananda; that, in his case, if he had the final experience he would not have been motivated to go off. And so his guru knew that this was his destiny, or knew that this was something he wanted to do. So he somehow withheld the final experience till he got back.

The one thing you can't do is to say that everybody should be like this. All teachers have to exhibit this trait, and if they exhibit this other trait, they can't be enlightened, I'm not going that route -- because I have learned they come in every conceivable shape and size, and the most odd, bizarre characters seem to have it and the ones who look pure and holy quite often don't. There is no 'one size fits all'. Everyone has a destiny, a physical destiny to fulfill in this life; and some of them do it through the enlightened perspective and most don't. For example,

Bhagavan would quote... he would list famous *jnani*s in history and he would always add King Janaka.

Rick: I was just going to mention King Janaka.

David: King Janaka was a busy man. He was an exemplary king. He ran his kingdom but he did it all from the state of *jnana*. He (Bhagavan) said, 'Some people go mad, some people keep quiet and some people go out and teach. Some people run kingdoms. You can't predict what's going to happen when this experience comes to you.'

Rick: Yeah. You can't judge a book by its cover necessarily, and people have an individual destiny. Not individual... each form or each human expression has its destiny, its dharma or karma, or whatever, which is somewhat irrespective of the inner condition. Enlightened people don't necessarily all become recluses. I mean, even Ramana in his own way had certain idiosyncrasies and motivations and peculiarities. Like you mentioned he was really frugal and he would crawl around the kitchen floor picking up stray mustard seeds, putting them back in the jar, and things like that.

David: There are two Sanskrit words – *kartrutva* and *kartavya* – which I like. *Kartrutva* is the idea that you are the one doing something: 'I am the doer. I must accomplish this.' But there is a more abstract, passive one and that is the *kartavya*. It's the feeling that something must be done. It's not, 'I have to do it' but it's this general feeling that there is something that needs to change, something that needs to improve.

Bhagavan said that even *kartavya* has to go. If you are a true *jnani* you know that everything is perfect. Everything is the way it ought to be and that neither you nor anybody else has to intervene to change the unfolding of the divine plan.

Robert Adams – I think there was a question about Robert Adams coming up –his little maxim or proverb was, 'All is well.' Whenever he was asked about anything in the world he said, 'All is well.' Everything is exactly the way it needs to be. If you are the *jnani* you don't think anything needs to be changed. Your presence itself might be the catalyst for change. You yourself don't change but through your presence things might change. But at no point is there any feeling in you that things should change.

Rick: And yet, you don't become a pushover. You don't necessarily become passive. For example, someone would try to get Ramana to do something and he would say, 'No, I am not going to do that' or 'I'm not going to do that until such and such happens.'

David: You could catch him through your devotion. Remember, we talked about this. If you have got so much devotion, the guru has to do whatever you ask. I talked to Saradamma, Lakshmana Swamy's disciple about this. She said, 'Swamy... he absolutely loathes meat. He'd get sick and sick if he even smelt meat being cooked. But if you had the right level of devotion and you came in with a big Mac, he would be compelled to eat it.' You can actually compel people to go against their violent dislikes, their violent distastes, by having enough devotion on your side that they are compelled to do it. But if you just barge in and say, 'You must do this, you must do that,' out of your personal interest or your personal desire, with no devotion in it, they are not going to play ball with you.

Rick: Ok, here is something kind of philosophical that I picked out from reading Muruganar's text and I guess there was some commentary intermixed with that. There are a couple little bits here.

God, the world and the jivas (individual souls) arise and subsist together but they are not, according to Bhagavan, fundamentally real entities since they are not permanent.

So, he was saying that even God is not a fundamentally real entity, or an eternal entity, since God himself, or Itself or whatever, emerges and is absorbed back.

David: So, when we talk about God here, we are talking about what the Indians call *Ishwara*, the personal god who might take a form for you as Rama, Krishna or anybody else. So he is saying, within the Self there arises an 'I' who projects the world it sees in front of it, and along with it a God who makes the rules for that particular world and organizes the consequences for actions. So it's a projected world from the formless Self that contains you, an apparently external, visible world and *Ishwara*, who is up there deciding what the consequences are going to be for all the things you do. But, he said, that's not real, because his definition of reality is something that has to be there all the time. Anything that appears and disappears is not the truth. It is just an appearance.

The classic Advaita Vedanta definition of reality is that:

- 1) It must be there all the time. It can never be absent at any point.
- 2) It cannot be mediated through anything. So, anything that needs a person to see it... you can't say a tree is real because you see it, because you need a mediating agent and that mediating agent is not permanent.
- 3) And it must shine by its own light. It cannot exist through reflected light.

So these are the three definitions you have to conform to be accepted as real in Indian philosophy, and according to Bhagavan and all the other Advaita sages, only the formless Self meets this definition. Out of this formless Self, individuality arises. It creates a world in front of itself. It creates *Ishwara*, the personal God, who runs the show, makes the rules, and hands out rewards and punishments. But when the 'I' that projects the world is finally extinguished in the Self, then you, the world and *Ishwara* go. And, he said once to Paul Brunton, 'Ishwara is the last of the unreal forms to go'. As everything kind of goes down the toilet – you, the world, *Ishwara* is the last one to go down around the bend – then you are left as formless Self.

So you can see that as a distinction between God and the Godhead in Western terminology. The Godhead would be the Self out of which the God who runs the world, the God who organizes appears, but he's not a permanent entity. He comes and goes with you and with the world you create.

Rick: One thing that I always puzzle about with that kind of point is that there seems to be a sort of inner subjectivity, or something, where the world may disappear for you but it doesn't disappear for others. We talked about this in the previous interview. You get enlightened, or you die for that matter, but others still see the same moon up there. We all agree upon, 'The moon is there or the sun is there'. There is a sort of an inner subjective agreement that doesn't dissolve as individual jivas dissolve in and out of existence.

So it would seem that there are gods or entities or, you know, expressions of intelligence governing the whole show whose existence doesn't hinge upon our particular enlightenment or ignorance. You know what I mean?

David: I know exactly what you mean.

Rick: (laughs)

David: People used to pester Bhagavan about this endlessly and he would never back down. This is the common sense point of view. But he didn't do common sense on this topic. He was way off in left field. He said all the people that you see in your world, you think that they are like you. You think they are people inside a body but they are not. They are all your projections, and when you get liberated, all your projections go with it. There is a lovely story I read. You know about the Bodhisattva vow?

Rick: Yeah, you come back for the sake of the...

David: The idea that you are not going to get liberation until everybody else has attained liberation first. So, somebody mentioned this to Bhagavan. He actually roared with laughter. He thought it was one of the funniest things he had ever heard. He said, 'That's like saying I am not going to wake up in the morning till everybody else in my dream has woken up first.' (laughs)

Rick: (laughs) Good example.

Here is a related point that I picked up from your notes: If you see the world, the Self will not be visible. If you see the Self, the world will not be visible.

This is another one which doesn't make sense, at least from an ordinary perspective, because the Self was obviously visible to Ramana, not as an object but, you know, he was Self-realized; and yet he interacted with apparent people. Of course, we could argue that he didn't see them as real or as having any ultimate existence. They were just sort of parts of some sort of dream. But he was able to walk through doorways and swim and pick up mustard seeds and do all sorts of things that acknowledge at least the conditional acceptance of diversity.

David: So, again we were back in 1935 and there you are. There are so many conversations that start with your premise and he would dig his heels in, and the conversation could go in any one of several directions. He might take the solipsistic point of view and say that, 'All of these things take place in your world; they don't take place in mine. Don't project onto me your projection and assume that I am in your projection. I am not.'

But then he would say that in the state of the Self, all the world is Brahman, meaning the world doesn't wink out in this state. You know it, see it, as an indivisible appearance within your own Self. So you no longer look at a tree and see a tree as something outside of yourself. There is a knowledge of being the Self and within that knowledge creation appears and disappears in an uncaused way.

So, he said you can say that there is no world, which is true, but you can also say the world is the Self but not as an aggregation of discrete names and forms. It's there present as your own Self, but you no longer see it. What disappears is the superimposed notion of a seer and a seen.

He said that's what disappears in the moment of liberation. The idea that I occupy a body – this is my body, this is my character in the drama; everything else is apart from me, separate from me. So he said, once you cease to identify with a particular form and know that you are not that body then you know that you are equally the substratum of all the forms that appear, and that's how you live in the world.

Rick: So it sort of harkens back to Shankara's three-part saying: The world is an illusion; Brahman alone is real; the world is Brahman. So it's like you are still seeing the world so to speak...

David: No no no. You don't see it.

Rick: But it's Brahman.

David: So, we are conditioned to register the world through senses as 'other'. So, what Bhagavan says disappears is this idea of otherness, that is seen as separate.

Rick: Right.

David: He said you actually know yourself to be the tree in front of you – you don't see it in front of you. So it's very hard to get the grammar right on this. For example, people were trying to give him extra food and Bhagavan would say, 'I am eating through every mouth in this dining room'.

Rick: Hmm.

David: 'I am not this form you see in front of me. Every time someone swallows a mouthful of rice over there, that's me eating. It's all the same. Stop force feeding me.' There is a level where once you get out of this identification with specific forms then you start to experience input that all the other things are registering.

So he would get upset if people were beating a tree outside with a stick to get the leaves or a mango. He'd actually feel the pain on his body. So he *was* the tree – he wasn't seeing the tree – he had somehow become the substratum of that tree, and when people in his neighborhood were bashing it he would kind of go 'Ouch!'; he would feel the pain.

So it's a very different way of registering what he would call the world. It wasn't something that he saw, interacted with as anything separate. He was the substratum in which all those things came and left but without ever losing the notion that they were coming and going. In him they weren't separate.

Rick: Good. Nicely put. Let's talk about Mastan for a bit.

David: Ah, he's a good one

Rick: So, here's a little blurb. Mastan was a Muslim weaver who heard about Ramana Maharishi through a devotee who lived in his village. He came to see Ramana in the first decade of the last century during the Virupaksha Cave period; and even before he had met Sri Ramana he went into a paralyzing *samadhi* that lasted about eight hours. (It's an amusing story.) Sri Ramana is on record saying that of all the people who came to him, Mastan was in

the most advanced state on the day he first arrived. So he just showed up, touched the gate at the cave and then went into *samadhi* for about eight hours.

David: Right. When I was researching Mastan I went to Ganesan, who is a repository of devotee stories. He made it his life's mission to go around and talk to all the old devotees and collect information. So he was one of my ports of call, and at that point I only had about half a page of information about Mastan.

So I was scrambling around, looking for people who might know something about him and he (Ganesan) said, 'Oh didn't I tell you that story about what Bhagavan told me about Mastan?' I said, 'No you haven't published anything. You haven't told me.' And he said he talked to a man called Viswanatha Swami, who was the son of his cousin and also a devotee at Ramanashram; and he (Ramana) had said that when a *jnani* manifests on earth then all kinds of beings are attracted to his presence. He said the gods might come down from the heavens – this is very unlike Ramana to talk about things like this – he said the gods might come down and have *darshan*; Bramha-Rishis (the great enlightened rishis) might come and have *darshan*. He said enlightened siddhas might come and they might take the form of animals. They might come into the *jnani's* presence to have *darshan* in animal form, and he said advanced devotees from all over would just feel that call and come.

Rick: Hmm.

David: And then, having given that list of gods, rishis, siddhas and advanced devotees, as an addendum to the story, he said, 'Of all the people who came to see me, the one who arrived in the most advanced state was Mastan'. Ramana wasn't someone who complimented people a lot. That is a ringing endorsement of Mastan's state.

Before we go ahead let me digress. This whole business of siddhas coming to see Bhagavan, this was also a bit odd. He, with a totally straight face, might just say, 'That sparrow who just flew in and perched on the beam – that was a siddha who took the form of a sparrow's body and came in to say hello.' And he just seemed to think that there were these beings in and around Arunachala who had this ability to occupy an animal body and come and say hello to him and have *darshan* and go away again.

Rick: I imagine some also came in their subtle body – didn't have to take a physical flesh and blood body.

David: Yeah, exactly. At one point there was a woman, kind of *devata*, who was apparently... he thought she was a bit of a nuisance. She was following him around. Nobody could see her except Ramana, and somebody else spotted her one day, and he said, 'I am glad you can see her. No one else can see her. She follows me around all over the hill trying to serve me and give me food, and I keep telling her, "I don't need your service. Go and serve somebody else."'

Rick: She was just there in her subtle body?

David: She was just there in her subtle body trying to help out. But he (Ramana) made a point of going to the ashram gate on his birthday every year and personally supervising the feeding of all the *sadhus* who came.

Rick: This is Mastan you are talking about.

David: No, this is Ramana.

Rick: Oh, Ramana. Okay.

David: Ramana said, 'Great beings come. They want to pay their respect on my birthday. I am not going to tell you who they are. They are coming incognito, but out of respect I am going to make sure they get properly served.' So he would stand and make sure that everybody in the line got a proper respectful bowlful of food. But he never would said who they were and they went away for another year.

All of these extraordinary beings would be attracted to him. There is a Mastan connection. In Skandashram, on a festival day a golden mongoose showed up, and it came to Virupaksha Cave. It wasn't the usual gray color. It was a gold color. People assumed it was a pet because it was very friendly. It was quite inquisitive. It would run in and out of rooms, check them out.

Bhagavan's old attendant Palaniswami was still alive, so it went to see Palaniswami. Then it came up the hill, and the only person at Skandashram was Mastan, and Bhagavan; and Bhagavan told Mastan. 'This is a sage of Arunachala. He has come to have darshan. He has come to see us in this form of a mongoose.' So, that was an interesting encounter between Mastan and Bhagavan.

So it's hard to keep a straight face when you hear these stories. But Bhagavan didn't joke about these things. He actually saw all these great beings coming to see him, coming to have his *darshan* in strange forms.

Rick: This kind of thing is rather routine in a lot of Indian scriptures, where some great being such as Rama or somebody takes birth, and a horde of other beings say, 'Hey, he's gonna take birth. Let's go'.

David: Exactly.

Rick: They all come around in various forms.

David: Can I digress a little bit about a wonderful man that I know? His name is Sharad Tiwari, and he was a big engineer for the Madhya Pradesh government. He was responsible for signing off all the plans for the Narmada River dams. This was a big, big dam project in central India. Lots and lots of big dams were being built.

He came to see Papaji very early in his life. Got an experience that turned him into a kind of ecstatic bhakta, if you like, but with the undercurrent of Self-knowledge. When I saw him, he was utterly incapable of holding down any kind of job. I saw him in Papaji's house, and quite literally you had to hold a bowl in front of him with a spoon and you had to say, 'Open your mouth, Sharad. Close! Chew! Swallow'. And at nighttime you had to lie him down and put his sheet over him so that he would go to sleep. And I thought, this man is not the right person to be in charge of safety of big dams in India. This man can't even put a spoon full of food into his mouth.

So I said, 'How do you manage at work, Sharad? Do you read technical books? Do you keep up on engineering?' He said, 'The day after I met Papaji I never read a technical book again'. So I said, 'How do you do your job? How do you satisfy yourself that these dams aren't going to fall down?' He said, 'Papaji does all that for me'. And I said, 'How?' He said, 'I go to the office every morning and there is always some folder on the desk. And I sit down, and I see my hand open it like this and my eyes look at the page.' He said, 'I haven't a clue what's on there. It's all technical mumbo jumbo. But then I see my hand reaching out to the pen, and it picks it up and it says, "Ok" or "Not ok. Please change."' And, he said, 'At the end of the day I have cleared everything off my desk. I take nothing home in my head. I take home no papers. And whatever that pen has written has always turned out to be correct. Papaji guides my hand to write the right things on the right reports, and none of my dams have ever fallen down, and every few years I get a promotion.'

Rick: Wow.

David: So, I thought, this is a really good advertisement for enlightenment. Like you don't have to think. You don't have to have headaches over complicated jobs. Just surrender to God and God makes you write the right thing on your forms. So then I said to him, I said, 'Sharad, lots of people had this experience with Papaji and it lasted hours, days, weeks. You seem to have got it 30 years ago. How did you manage to keep it and why do you think all these other people lost it?' And he said, 'If you have the absolute conviction when you sit with him that you are sitting in the presence of God himself, then the experience won't ever be lost.' And I'd never heard Papaji say this, so I said, 'That's interesting. So how do you get that conviction?' And he said, 'I don't get it. I sit there in front of him and I see all the gods from the heavens come into his living room and I see them dancing around his head. I see them prostrate to him in mid-air and I think, if all these gods in the heavens are prostrating to this man in front of me then this must be the supreme God. So I have had that conviction all my life and the experience never left me.'

Rick: Interesting.

David: Sorry. I mean that we can't all be like that. We don't have his visionary proclivities. But he just said, 'I know because I have seen them come in, I have seen them bow. Nothing has ever dented my conviction that this is the Supreme Being, and the fact that these Gods come in and bow to him just endorses it.'

Rick: Some people have that kind of perception. It's reminiscent of a story I read that you wrote about Papaji himself where he was walking in Rishikesh with somebody and he suddenly turned in some direction and the guy said, 'Where are you going?' and he said, 'I don't know'. And he said, 'How far is it gonna be?' and he said, 'I don't know'. 'When are we going to get there?' 'We will know when we get there'. 'Why are we going?' 'I really don't know'. So they finally got there and they found some remote place where there was some *sadhu* or something that was just ripe for Self-realization and Papaji just blessed him and he had that experience and went on his way.

David: Papaji said, 'I have lived in the silence all my life and I have learnt to trust everything it makes me do. There is nobody in there thinking I must do this, I should do that.' On that

particular day, the person told me, we were walking to town to have a cup of tea and read the free newspaper at a Café. He was a bit of a miser and he wouldn't buy his newspaper. He wanted a free one every morning. So they walked down the river to have a cup of tea and read the paper. But halfway there he just veered off, and he said, 'I have lived in that silence and if that silence suddenly makes my body take a 90 degree turn I don't think, what about my cup of tea, what about my newspaper? I accept that I am being propelled somewhere. I just go to that somewhere.' And he said, 'When I find out the reason for that diversion something inside me recognizes that was the reason I didn't end up with my cup of tea and my newspaper. And I recognize that that business is finished and then I can go back to my normal route of going for my cup of tea.' But he said, 'I don't wonder why I am being suddenly shot off at 90 degrees. I don't think there must be somebody at the end waiting for me. The Self just says right turn, step-step-step, and then suddenly I see someone and I think, Ah, that's the reason; and we have the transaction, he has the experience and I go back to my normal life again.'

Rick: Interesting way to live.

David: Papaji always wanted transactions. He didn't want relationships. He said, 'You go to the Guru. You tell him your story. You tell him what you want. Ideally your business is finished. It is a one stop shop. Don't sit there, don't decide you are going to be there and meditate all your life. That's postponement. Just go there, tell him your business. The guru, if he is competent, can show you who you are, and then you walk off and you never see each other again.'

When I started writing Papaji's biography I got permission to take all the addresses from his address book. He used to write down people's addresses endlessly, but he wouldn't give his own address. Most people didn't know his name; he would never give his name. He wouldn't say where he lived. Most people didn't even know he was from Lucknow. So he had hundreds and hundreds of addresses. I sent a form letter saying, 'Why is your address in Papaji's address book? What's your connection? What's your story?' And lots and lots of people wrote back, saying, 'Thank you for this. I met him 30 years ago. I didn't even know his name, I didn't know who he was. He wouldn't let me follow him. He would not tell me where he lived. Please thank him for what he did for me because I have never seen him again. We met once 30 years ago.'

Of all the replies I got, the one that impressed me the most was just a postcard that I got from Venezuela. He was there in the 70s. And all it said is, 'Dear Mr. Godman, please tell Mr. Poonja he did not waste his time in Venezuela. The day I met him I became happy and I have been happy every day since. Tell him thank you.'

Rick: Interesting. I just want to mention again the series of videos that you made. You have written a whole three-volume book about Papaji, which is full of fascinating stuff. But even in these videos you made, there's some very interesting ones about Papaji with some interesting anecdotes that give you a flavor of the man – you know, how remarkable he was. He even goes into talking about his past lives and various things he went through in this life. Like, for instance, when he was in the British military for a while, after having previously been a terrorist building bombs to blow up trains. He was such a Krishna bhakta that he used to dress up in a sari at night and put on makeup and dance around ecstatically to Krishna all night before changing back into his uniform and getting out for the day's activity. So, all sorts of really off-the-wall sorts of things.

David: It's very *puranic*. You read about these stories in the Ramayana or Mahabharata and you think, 'Fertile imagination, or this happened 5000 years ago.' It's quite extraordinary to bump into someone who does that in the 20th century. And there are quite serious corroborative reports also. I know people who saw Krishna when he saw them and they went into... they all had kind of fainting fits. The shock was too much for them. But he wasn't making it up. The gods did come and dance for him.

Rick: Yeah.

David: (laughs)

Rick: All right, I am going to ask you a bunch a questions that people have sent in.

David: Okay.

Rick: Here is someone named Gabe from San Francisco. He asks, 'What did you make of Ramesh Balsekar as a teacher and, in particular, his teaching of having no free will. Why did you not study with him, if you didn't, though you were with Papaji and Nisargadatta?'

David: I liked Ramesh Balsekar when he was with Nisargadatta because he was far and away the best translator there. Unfortunately, there was a seniority process and the devotees who had been there the longest got first go at translation, and Balsekar came quite late. So people who wanted to have good conversations would often pass on the invitation to have questions and wait. Wait for interpreters one, two, three and four to be absent so we would all go through Balsekar. He would listen to your question. For a lot of people English wasn't their native language. A question might be a rambling statement, and he would listen. He would register everything and give a very very precise summary of what you said. Pass it on and bring it back. And so he had a good capacity to understand the western mind. He was an ex-chief executive of a bank. He was a very smart man. His English was excellent. Maharaj himself said that he had a really good understanding of the teachings. But he wasn't imposing anything. He had a capacity to extract the essence of what you were saying, pass it on and give a very reliable reply in return.

So, we all loved him as a translator. I never went to him as a teacher. I didn't really feel inclined at that point. I was with other teachers. Apropos the free will, did you read that?

Rick: Yeah, someone asked about that.

David: Balsekar was at the extreme end of the 'no free will' spectrum of Indian teachers, basically saying there is absolutely nothing you can do. Everything is predestined. Bhagavan would say that all your actions are part of a predestined script but we always have the freedom not to associate with the person who is performing the actions. He said that is your one true freedom in life. You cannot choose what the body is going to do but you can choose to do self-inquiry; to find out who this 'I' is who you think is performing the actions. And then, when that 'I' disappears you will know who you really are. The body will continue with its predestined script, but it will be nothing to do with you because you don't identify with it anymore.

Although this was the answer he generally gave to people, there is a very interesting reply he gave in a book called *Upadesa Manjari*, Spiritual Instruction. He said, 'Destiny only affects the

extroverted mind. The more you introvert your mind, the more you transcend your destiny.' So, there was a cop-out clause with Ramana. But on the whole, he would say that actions are destined, but he did say that intense meditation and intense introversion gives you the capacity to change your destiny in some way.

Rick: Yeah, and it would seem that if you are going to do intense meditation or intense introversion then that might actually be a choice that you might freely make. You might hear that advice from him and say, 'All right, sounds like good advice. I think I will buckle down and do it.'

David: I have had this conversation with all kinds of people. Everybody wants to know about this because it's such an odd thing for anyone to say. And the one thing that Bhagavan never clarified directly is: Are your thoughts predestined as well as your body's actions? Indirectly, I would say his attitude would be 'No', because if you have the choice to say who just picked up that cup, and you have the choice either to go into that or not go into it, then your thoughts are not predestined. But there is no actual record of him saying explicitly, one way or the other, whether thoughts are predestined or not.

Rick: I don't know... who am I to say? But it seems to me that if you... you know, there is that whole verse in the Gita about not taking on the dharma of another. The dharma of another brings danger.

David: Hmm.

Rick: But it would seem to me that if you perceive yourself as having free will, then exercise it wisely. Don't use it as a cop out: Oh, there's no free will and I am going to do whatever.

David: Exactly. This was Bhagavan's advice. He said make good choices. Live well. Don't assume that you are in the transcendent state when you are not.

Rick: Very good.

David: Or, 'I can do whatever I like.' The notions of free will and predetermination only exist along with body identification. The notions themselves are entirely absent in the Self. But so long as you have a body, you have to know that the things that the body is going to do are scripted. But he also said to make good choices. It may all sound paradoxical and contradictory, but he never excused bad behavior from people saying, 'I was destined to kick that dog'.

Rick: Yeah.

David: He would expect you to behave properly, to interact responsibly, to live civil, polite lives with each other and to help those around them who needed help.

Rick: I think one way of resolving the paradox is to say that knowledge is different in different states of consciousness.

David: Right.

Rick: And if you are in Ramana's state of consciousness then it is one thing; and if you are not, then different laws apply to you. And so, you can't take Ramana's state and try to apply it to your state and live by that.

David: Right. Exactly.

Rick: Here is another question from the same fellow Gabe. 'Can you discuss more about Robert Adams? Since your video regarding Adams has been released there seems to be some increasing interest in Adams' work.'

David: Shall we assume people know who he is, or shall we start from scratch?

Rick: Why don't you introduce him briefly.

David: Robert Adams was definitely at the mature end of the spectrum of spiritual seekers. He was a boy in America in the 1940s who had an extraordinary talent that whatever he thought about would manifest in front of him. So, he could be outside the candy store and he said – it's like the Candyman movie. You say, 'Candy, candy, candy' and a candy would come into his hand. Instead of a monster coming, he'd get the candy in his hand.

Rick: It would just manifest?

David: Yeah. It would just manifest. Yeah yeah. He said it was a perfect siddhi for a kid to have.

Rick: Yeah. Wow.

David: Sometimes he said he would say, 'God, God, God.' He came from a Christian background. He thought he had to make a divine appeal to get things, but he said it worked just as well if he just said 'Ice cream, ice cream'. So, he went through life... Only, he said, 'When I was a child this strange man in a diaper used to sit on my bed at night...'

Rick: There you go.

David: ...and talk nonsense. So here we are back to the Ramana appearing. So he never elaborated on whether the nonsense was because it was in Tamil or because it was abstract philosophy. He just said he talked nonsense at the end of my bed. 'As I grew up he stopped coming. But for a long time he'd come and sit on the end of my bed every night and talk nonsense.'

So in his early teens he had a test at school – a maths test – and hadn't done his homework. He didn't need to with this siddhi. So he just said, 'God, God, God.' waiting for the answer to his quadratic equation or whatever, and, he said, 'Instead of getting the answer, I got the experience of God – that somehow, calling on God for help, God actually came and gave me the experience.' He said, 'That was it. I was in that state and I remained in that state'. So he wasn't anyone who did a long complicated practice.

And he went off... Of course, this is 1940s America. It is not a very congenial environment to get any kind of context to this. So, he first went off to Joel Goldsmith who was a Christian mystic who, interestingly enough, had very similar ideas to Bhagavan on 'I' and 'I am'. He was telling his Christian flock in the 1940s to focus on 'I Am', to realize God through 'I Am'.

Then he gravitated to Yogananda who was probably in California at that time. He wanted to adopt Yogananda as his guru. Yogananda said, 'No No, your guru is Ramana Maharishi in India.' Yogananda could see that. So, at a very young age and by himself – 17 or 18 – he got on an old prop plane, which must have taken half a week to get to India, showed up at Ramanashram, and stayed there for the last three years of Bhagavan's life.

Again, he is one of the people who for decades went completely below the radar. He didn't really surface in anyone's consciousness until about 1990 when he appeared in L.A. giving satsangs to people there. And then slowly, slowly his back-story came out. But you don't find him mentioned in any ashram book. You don't find any record of him at Ramanashram.

So when my interest in him was piqued I started asking around and the only person who could remember him was Arthur Osborne's daughter, and she remembered him because she was very annoyed that her dad gave Robert Adams the family car; gave it away as a gift. I mean, can you imagine this? A car is a rarity in the 40s – big status symbol – and Arthur Osborne was so impressed with this young teenager from America that he just gave him the car and said, 'Get off on your pilgrimage'. And they never saw that car again. So she still remembered that. (laughs)

When I say Ramana was impressed, he personally gave him a room at Ramanashram – this is the late 1940s when the crowds were almost overwhelming – and then brought food to his room and personally served him in his room. To me that is... somebody scored a big hit with Ramana. But they never really had any big dialogues, big conversations. He just sat there. He absorbed the presence.

I think, if you want to run all the way around the world in search of a guru, something is still missing. You still need to have some authoritative confirmation of your state. He said, 'I got the state at fourteen'. But he never quite says what Bhagavan did for him in his life, but I think he (Bhagavan) established him in that state so he no longer needed to run around looking for gurus anymore. But he did it in a casual, O won't say touristy way. He spent the 1950s, 60s hopping around India. He saw all the big names: Anandamayi Ma and Nisargadatta, Swami Ramdas. You don't get many stories. But he seemed to have been a peripatetic Indian pilgrim for decades. Got married. He still has a widow still alive, a daughter somewhere; and then just lived a completely obscure life in America.

Around the 1990s somebody put an advertisement in whatever the equivalent of Craigslist was in those days, saying, 'I am a Ramana devotee. I am looking for devotees to have a Ramana satsang. Anybody like to join me?' And who should turn up but Robert. And this man realized within five minutes that this wasn't a casual walk-in off the street; this was somebody special. He just said, 'You are a *jnani*, aren't you?' Somehow Robert has that aura about him, that 'somebody who knows'.

Robert's early teachings were recorded in a manuscript that was entitled *Silence of the Heart*. This manuscript came to Lucknow when I was there and it was shown to Papaji, and Papaji said, 'I like this man's teachings. I am going to read these out in satsang every day.' This was the only living teacher I ever saw him praise, endorse and take his teachings to satsang and read them out. He really really did like the teachings. They were so purely Ramana.

Remember I told you about Maurice being able to summarize Ramana's teachings even better? Robert had an ability to explain exactly what Bhagavan was teaching without using any technical terms, any Sanskrit, any Tamil, any philosophy. I can go through the whole of this book and I can't find a single word or comment that Ramana wouldn't sign off on. And he does it ad lib. It's not book knowledge. It's all from experience.

He's talking about enquiry. He's talking about the nature of the self. He's talking about the role of the guru. And you just read this and you think, this is a man who knows. This is a man teaching from experience. He doesn't need big words. He doesn't need to cite from books or give anyone else's opinion. He's just talking from the heart about the Self, which he got confirmed in Bhagavan's presence in the 1940s.

Rick: One interesting point that is implicit here and has actually come up several times in our conversation is that there is such a thing as degrees of spiritual maturity that we come into this life with and that we advance in this life. And I know you don't want to talk about neo-Advaita and neither do I, but, yeah, this whole notion that, 'There are no levels, there are no degrees, you are all already enlightened, nothing you need to do,' and all that stuff doesn't really jive with reality in my opinion.

David: Ok, I agree. So the traditional...

Rick: Although it is true on some level.

David: Yeah. The Vedanta or Vedantic tradition that Bhagavan was associated with... he said some people get it by hearing the truth once from a guru. The guru might say, 'You are Brahman' and you think, 'Yes, that's true. I am Brahman' and you get it. Then there are people who have to do a little work, and there are people who have to slog away in the trenches for lifetimes to get it. I think it is a mistake to think you are anywhere near categories one and two. I think categories one and two are quite rare categories and that people think or delude themselves into believing that they are almost enlightened: they just need to have one quick satsang or go and see this guru and they will get it.

Rick: I was going to save this question till the end but actually it is appropriate now. Oh I am sorry, go ahead.

David: There is a *Saiva* idea that I really like. *Saiva* is the south Indian Shiva tradition and they have three categories. The most mature devotees can get liberation directly from the Self. That would be somebody like Bhagavan. The next category... you can get it if God appears in front of you. God himself can come down and you can have a relationship with God. That would be like... remember, I told you about Manikkavachagar who wanted a guru and Shiva appeared and fulfilled that role. So he was ready enough not to have the necessity of a human being, although Shiva did appear in human form. And then there's everybody else who's just so enmeshed in *samsara* that they actually need that physical guru to get them out, and that's the vast majority of people. These could parallel the three states of hearing: the people who listen, who do a bit of practice, and everybody else.

Rick: Hmm. Related to this, I was going to save this till the end but Subba Ray from Kolkotta, India asks, 'After so many years of dedicated seeking how does David approach his own self-

enquiry now? What did he discover about it, if anything? Has anything changed in his application and his feelings about it?’

David: Remember, I told you in the beginning I was the gung-ho sadhu who thought, ‘I can do this by myself; I can sit here. I can, like the Buddha. ‘Be a light unto yourself.’ Do everything through your own efforts. Get your own results. I have – how shall we say... I wouldn’t say matured – developed. Now I know that my progress is contingent on the power that I know comes off my teachers. I feel more and more a feeling of love, veneration, respect, devotion to all these people. And days like this, I just love sitting down and talking about my teachers because if I sit here and tell weird stories, I just feel that inner glow inside me. I just feel... it’s a kind of rippling happiness that spreads out from inside. Just the thought of my teachers, looking at their picture – that gives me the peace, the joy, the happiness.

So I am not thinking I must sit down, close my eyes, do enquiry. I can do this all by myself. I have begun to feel the expansiveness of the joy I feel from the presence of my teachers. It’s a bit like – sorry I can’t have direct experience of this, but the mother who looks at her baby and you just know there is that bond of love. Your face lights up. I look at my gurus’ pictures. I read their words. I tell their stories, and inside me something lights up and I know that by thinking of them I get the grace, I get the power, and that for me is what moves the enquiry along.

So it’s no longer me in my solitary little trench, beating myself into submission. I know that I am doing it... how shall we say? It’s very... I won’t say arrogant, but I know somehow I have the power of my teachers, my lineage, and gods on my side. That sounds very morally righteous and kind of right-wingy. (laughs) You know what I mean?

Rick: I totally know what you mean. You are in your dharma.

David: I feel such love from my teachers, to my teachers that that greases and lubricates the wheels of my enquiry, my meditation. And it is so much easier now – feeling the expansion of that joy inside me from the knowledge of just thinking about them – that it all goes very smoothly, very easily.

There’s a lovely... I don’t know why this appeals to me. Tamil has a passive way of saying ‘I am happy’. You say, ‘*Ennaku santosham.*’ ‘For me there is happiness’. It’s not anything to do with me. It’s not something I did. It’s not something I accomplished. It’s just there. It’s just kind of this bubbly stable state. You are in your car and you see your fuel gauge go down to a quarter and you think, ‘Got to top up,’ and all I do is I look at the mountain. I look at my Ramana picture and it goes up to full again. It’s just there as my inner fuel, and every time I turn to it, my tank fills up.

I still do the enquiry, but it’s done with such... I would say lack of ambition. Is that right? I do it because I enjoy it. I do it because it quiets me down. I don’t sit down and think, ‘I must realize the Self. I want this so badly.’ You know, I do it in co-operation with the love, the joy I feel towards my teachers, and that somehow makes everything go a lot more easily. There’s nothing I really want. I have no desire to run around and look for a teacher. I have no desire to read a book. I haven’t read a book now – a new book that I didn’t have to read because of

research – for a couple of years now. I have stopped reading. I have my own inner fuel and when I want to be happy I just plug into it and it is there all the time.

Rick: That's sounds like a much more surrendered state, with much less sort of individual manipulation or effort going on, and just more of a 'Thy Will be done' kind of situation.

David: I think all the teachers say you need a good mix of bhakti and *jnana*: the two wings you need to fly. You can't go anywhere with one. You just flap around in circles. You need a bit of both. So, I find I love to do the inquiry. When I feel states of stillness come upon me then I really go into them. That's like my treat for the day. And if I am busy... my house... I have Arunachala out my front window. I have got Ramana pictures; everywhere I turn I see one. Or, if I am working on my computer screen, up comes Ramana's teachings and there they are. They just put me in that state.

Did I tell you? I don't think I told you this last time. Everywhere I went for years, people kept saying, 'Write a book'. Teachers like Nisargadatta told me to write. Lakshmana Swamy told me to write. And when I went up to Lucknow to be with Papaji, he basically commissioned me to write. And I said, 'You know, thank you very much for the offer. I came here to be quiet. I came here to get rid of my mind, not to engage my intellect on another project. Is it good for me to do all this written work? I know I am not going to say no to you, and I didn't say no to any of the other teachers who commissioned me. But is this a productive way to spend my time in the presence of a *jnani*? Should I be quiet or is it ok to spend all day on a computer processing your words and your stories?'

And he said, 'Any association with the Guru is a blessing'. He said, 'Your luck, your blessing in this life is to have all these opportunities to look at and process the words of *janis*.' He said, 'There's a power in those words; that by looking at them, focusing on them, editing them, arranging them properly, you are actually accessing the power in those words. You are not using your intellect and keeping yourself away from the Self. You are accessing the Guru and the Guru's power through the words of the Guru. That's your niche in life. Don't think you've been given a bum deal because everybody else can sit quietly in satsang. You're accessing Bhagavan's blessings by processing these words.'

Rick: Plus, you got a lot more interaction and personal contact with some of these people than you otherwise would have.

David: Well, exactly. If I think, 'What are the happiest times I ever had in my life?' it's sitting down with these people one on one and having carte blanche to talk to them about their lives, their stories. Lakshmana Swamy, I sat down for weeks and weeks every morning with him. He never ever talked to anyone else about his past. Somehow, it was wonderful.

Rick: I can kind of relate. I mean, I am not interviewing a Papaji every week but I get to talk to some really interesting person every week. It's great.

So I have quite a few more questions I want to ask you that people have sent in, but we have to sort of do relatively short answers so we don't go too long. Let me just fire some at you. Give me the essence of your answer and we will go onto the next one.

Here's several from Gul Nara from Kazakhstan. He says, 'Does Sri Saradamma have any message for modern spiritual seekers?'

David: Good. That is a good segue from the last story. Saradamma was the devotee of Lakshmana Swamy who realized the Self through devotion to his form. And when people tell me, 'I am on the bhakti path' and they think they are getting somewhere, it's not like I deliberately bring them down, but I always wangle the conversation around to Saradamma. She ended up absolutely falling in love with this man, doing japa of his name 20 hours a day, and in the four hours she was sleeping she would dream about him for the other four. And he (Lakshmana Swamy) told me that the strength of her devotion was so strong, he didn't sleep for three years. He said at 3:00 in the morning I'd be in there and there would be a jolt and I could just feel her love and her devotion pouring into me. And I would go out and say, 'Can you please turn it off for the night. I need to get some sleep.' And she said, 'Swami, I can't. It's there. It's continuous; it's 24 hours a day.'

But she told me later, she said, 'Don't do a deal with God'. (This man is asking for a message.) She said, 'Don't be devoted to God because you want his grace or you want enlightenment. You have to do it for its own sake. I fell unconditionally in love with this great guru. I didn't want anything from him. I didn't want liberation. All I wanted was to hold onto his name, hold onto his form. That was the bottom line. Permanent attention on him all the time.' And she said, 'That's what got me there'. She said, 'Everything else is a business transaction. If you go to the guru for a method to attain enlightenment, you are doing a transaction with him. Don't do transactions with the guru. Just love them unconditionally.'

So, that's the message. Her message is: don't go to God, don't go to a guru thinking he's going to help you get something. You will never get it that way. Go there and love him unconditionally and if you've got enough strength in your devotion you will get it.

Rick: Good. Here's another one. Does Sri Lakshmana Swamy have any message for modern spiritual seekers that he could probably pass on through Sri Saradamma?

David: He has a very simple unvarying message. I have sat in on his *darshans* innumerable times and he says the same thing every day. He is not someone who feels that he has to say something different every day. He says, 'You must do self-inquiry. You must take the mind back to its source. Your job is to stop the mind being interested in anything it wants to enjoy or experience. You must teach it to abide in what he calls 'the effortless, thought-free state.' He said, 'That's a state -- it's still a mind state -- when nothing arises to make you look outside of yourself to get something, enjoy something or experience something.' He said, 'That's your job. You have to do it by yourself'. And once you attain that effortless thought-free state, he said the power of the Self, through a guru, is compelled to take that residual mind back into itself and destroy it. He said, 'It's not a matter of the guru's choice. It won't be anybody's decision. Once you reach that state through your own effort, then the guru, through the formless Self or through a form, will be compelled to finish the work for you.'

Rick: Good. Next one. As we know, Sri Lakshmana Swamy and Sri Mathru Sarada do not meet with people.' Are they still alive? 'Also, there is information that this is because they regard

modern spiritual seekers' minds to be of poor condition. The question is: Is this true? And if it is, would it be possible to dwell upon the point?

David: I have never met a guru who didn't have a low opinion of most of his devotees. (laughs) I told you the story about Maharaj: 'Oh, why do I waste my time with you people?' I think they have got to where they are, through extreme effort, extreme dedication, and if they are not seeing that level of commitment in other people, then they are fully entitled to say that you are not trying hard enough, not wanting it.

Lakshmana Swamy was a recluse. He hardly met with anyone. I was lucky. I just happened to bump into him in the two or three year window of his life when he was seeing people regularly, but he didn't before and hasn't since. I told you this girl Saradamma came to see him, and he said, 'She compelled me by the force of her devotion to channel the force of the Self to grant her liberation. I had no choice. Her devotion was so overwhelming that I couldn't have said yes or no. It had to happen.' He said, 'If I meet anybody else in that same state, I will invite them into my room. I will lock the door, and I won't let them out till they get it.' So it's simply a question of high standards. He said if people come in the same state she was in then great, welcome. Everybody else, please try harder.

Rick: Hmm. I guess maybe part of the reason gurus are not really overly impressed or at least express... basically say, 'You are all a bunch of idiots,' is it helps keep people humble. Otherwise people might think, 'Hey, I am pretty cool. I am sitting with this guru. I am really up there,' and so on and so forth. Reminds them of some of the reality of the situation.

David: Can I say, Kunju Swami told a lovely story. He said we never got any compliments from Bhagavan. He was there 30 years. He said, 'You never heard him say anything nice about you until you died, and by then it was too late; you weren't around.' (laughs) But when anybody died, when somebody died they would all go to the Hall and he'd start dwelling on your good points and what a nice person you were. But it was Catch 22. You never got to hear the speech because you were dead. He only told it to other people. (laughs)

Rick: Maybe if you were one of those subtle beings hanging around at that point... (laughs)

David: Sorry. This is another guru story. After I wrote *No mind, I am the Self* I typed it out. I gave it to Lakshmana Swamy to read. He never complimented anybody. I mean, really strict. Really stern, kind of classic old-school master. And he really enjoyed it. I could see him struggling with making a compliment. Suddenly everybody looked at me. And I am thinking 'Why are they looking at me?' And when the *darshan* was over, they said, 'Wasn't that great what he said about you?' And I said, 'He didn't say anything'. 'Yes he did. He said he really enjoyed it. What a great book. Thank you very much.'

So, somehow, something in him didn't want me to hear the complement. The one complement he has given me in my entire life was turning in a good manuscript. I didn't even see his lips move. Everybody else who was there heard it and told me afterwards. So, the one time he complimented me he just blanked it out in my perception so I didn't hear it. (laughs)

Rick: Interesting.

This next question reminds me of something I wanted to mention when we were talking about Robert Adams -- is that, in addition to *Silence of the Heart*, there is a whole treasure trove of audio recordings of his satsangs that you can download if you search for them.

This question is from Rodrigo in Lisbon, Portugal, who asks firstly: are there any audio recordings of Ramana?

David: This was one of his interesting quirks. He never said no to a camera and he never said yes to a microphone. There are lots and lots of home movies, hundreds and thousands of photos; but every time someone suggested an audio recording he always vetoed it. On occasions he said, 'My teaching is silence. How are you going to record that?'

Rick: That's interesting. And you can kind of get the silence from the videos.

David: He had, to me, odd... I wouldn't say habits, just things that are just inexplicable. He refused ever to sign his name. He just put a line and people would witness it; and that caused bureaucratic, legal problems. For example, somebody wanted to collect his mail at the post office. It would have been very simple for him to sign a letter. 'Ramana Maharshi. Please give all my letters to my brother'. And he wouldn't. He just put a line at the bottom and somebody witnessed it, and the postmaster said, 'I will accept that if he was illiterate, but he is not. He writes poetry. So tell him no one else can collect his mail unless he writes his own name at the bottom.' And he refused. I mean, he could have made life so much simpler if he had written 'Ramana' at the bottom of that letter.

So, there were problems of him not signing, which to me is just an oddity. Generally he would take an easy solution: he wouldn't cause any friction, sign the name and be done with it. And the same with the audio recording. I don't know why, if you are so welcoming to everybody who turns up with a camera, why you can't say a few words into a microphone. But that was his way.

Rick: Huh. He was very self-effacing, and very egalitarian, from what I gather from your stories. Like, you know, if they tried to put him up on a higher couch so that people could see him easier, he would sit down on the actual floor instead. Didn't want any special cushions or anything else that everybody else didn't have.

Here's another question from Rodrigo. When will your books – David's books – come in digital form, like Kindle?

David: Oh, this is a personal embarrassment. I am still stuck in the 20th century. I have such a backlog of work. I am actually in Boulder and working on that, or one aspect of it. I have discovered that FedEx, which is Kinko's as well – they can do massive scans. You can give them thousands of pages and they can just riff through them in a few minutes. A lot of my books are so old, I don't even have computer files for them – the stuff I did in the 1980s. If I want to reprint I go to my store room and I get out these big giant perspex sheets which you wrap around a roller and print the way you did in the 1980s. I don't have digital files. So I have got to scan a lot of my books, get digital files, get something in Indesign so that I can make hard copies and e-books. But it's a big job. I have got a few thousand pages out there. I've got other things going on. It's just hard work to keep up sometimes.

Rick: Sounds like you are working on it though. Here is a question from Elizabeth in the United States. She asks, 'What is Ramana's teaching on the emergence of siddhis? Are they a natural aspect of spiritual deepening? When are they useful and when are they a distraction from the goal of non-dual realization?'

David: That's a good question. He persistently discouraged anyone from looking for siddhis. Thought they were always a distraction but, he said, 'If you realize the Self, siddhis might come and then you can play with them. They are not going to cause you bondage.' But, he said, 'If you have a desire for them, they will always lead you astray'. I think a lot of his devotees were a little bit interested in that, and he always put his foot down on that. He said, 'Don't go there. Don't have anything to do with them'. He said, 'The whole idea – I have done this, I have accomplished this – is your problem. And if you get siddhis, that's going to get worse. If you can turn from man to Superman because you can do something miraculous, then you are not going to let go of the "I" who did things.'

So miracles would happen around him. He said the true *jnani* never thinks, 'I have done this, I have accomplished this'. He knows that whatever happens around him has happened spontaneously. He never takes credit for it. He never said, 'I did this'.

Rick: Did he himself display siddhis?

David: Miraculous things happened around him but he never ever said, 'I did this, I was responsible'. All kinds of people would come in and say, 'Oh, my grandmother was sick,' or 'My baby was dying,' or 'My brother needed a promotion,' and we all prayed to you and it happened. And he would say, 'Oh really, is that so?' He wouldn't even admit that the message had got through, much less that he had done anything about it. He did tend to downplay miraculous things that happened to him. Some spectacular things did happen, and his retellings of the stories tended to downplay the miraculous elements. So he didn't encourage siddhis). He said, if they come after liberation, fine. They will be used in the right way. But don't go there before you get enlightened.

Rick: Here's an interesting question. Laura from Monmouth, Oregon asks:

Remember a while ago you were talking about how if someone was hitting a mango tree Ramana would feel it? So she is asking, 'Western "awakened" people don't feel themselves as the mango tree when it gets hit with a stick. So what's the difference between no-self in them and in Ramana? Are there levels of awakening or just unfinished awakenings?'

David: I think, up to the moment of liberation there is always a tie to a physical form. This 'I am the body' feeling is what stops you from knowing what Self is and stops you from experiencing it. And when that tether to the body goes, then your awareness expands to all the things around you and you start feeling what is going on around you. It could possibly happen in states prior to realization. I am not going to say one thing or the other.

Can I just tell you a Saradamma story? I was with her a long time ago and she said, 'I am not going for my walk today,' and I said, 'Why not?' She said, 'Yesterday I went out of the ashram gate and there was a husband quarrelling with his wife, and he got very angry and he hit her. I

felt the anger and it was so painful and I felt the blow when he hit his wife. I am not walking past their house until they have resolved their differences.’ (laughs)

So this just does seem to be a common aspect of people in this state. Once you’ve let go of identification with a body that has sensations that only terminate at your skin, then if you expand your sense of who you are to everything, then the blows that come to everything else around you, you feel them.

Rick: Yeah. You see all beings in the Self and the Self in all beings. (quoting Gita)

David: Exactly.

Rick: Interesting. I think I have asked all the questions that people sent in. Do you have anything more that you would like to say that we haven’t covered?

David: Loved talking to you. I feel very happy, very quiet. Whenever I talk about my teachers I get this massive inner glow. You remember you told the story about Papaji turning up for breakfast with a grin that was from ear to ear and his commanding officer said, ‘Don’t serve him anymore drink. He’s drunk’. The more I talk about my teachers, the more drunk I get, so I have loved it. Thank you.

Rick: Thank you, David. Appreciate the opportunity and I really appreciate all the questions people have sent in. It’s nice to have that interaction. This one has set a record in terms of people online.

David: Oh really.

Rick: It’s about a hundred and sixty people watching live.

David: We’re going live, are we?

Rick: Oh yes. Live. So let me just make some concluding remarks. You have been listening to an interview with David Godman, as you know. And, as you also probably know, this is an ongoing series of interviews. So, if you enjoy these you may want to sign up for the e-mail, to be notified once a week whenever a new one is posted. You will find that on Batgap.com. You will find an archives or indices of all the past interviews organized in different ways. There is an audio podcast of this. You can subscribe on itunes; there is a link to that. iTunes, Stitcher, Google Play, and all the different things... donate button, as I mentioned in the beginning, and some other things. Explore the menus and you will find some interesting little tidbits.

So, thanks for listening or watching. We will see you next week. Next week I will be speaking... Oh, I always announce this kind of thing and then things change and it is not what I announce. We are planning to interview a fellow named Will Brennon over in Ireland next week who sounds like an interesting fellow. So stay tuned for that. And, thank you again, David.

David: Thank you. Good talk, again. Thank you.

Rick: It’s been enjoyable stirring up the bliss in you.

David: Right.

Rick: Giving you an opportunity to become intoxicated.

David: Right.