

An interview with John David (formerly John David) made for the film "Flowers of Nirvana". June 2005

The first thing I would say is that there are not any enlightened people. This word **enlightenment** is a wrong word. It is like sex or love or god. It is like some idea far away in the future. Maybe it has a value because it can bring people to find themselves, just as the peak of Mount Everest brings people to climb mountains. In this way this word **enlightenment** is useful, but in fact it is a wrong use when you say **enlightened people**. It is not possible to be an enlightened person. That is a wrong idea about how things are.

You can say that everybody is an enlightened person but I wouldn't use that word, I would say that everybody is in fact God, everybody is the Self, everybody is the Source of all this thing we call the world. Most people never experience that in their whole life, or only for a few moments. Probably most people have had a moment at a beautiful sunrise, for example, when their mind stopped and inside they felt something like indescribable beauty. This is a taste of what it is to live without your own drama called **My Life**. Most people are so busy with this drama going on inside their minds, as if they are watching a video, that they simply miss their life. When you are not attached to that drama, **My Life**, then your life simply unfolds moment by moment in a very simple way and there is no question of an enlightened person.

Our very source is always there, given, and the thing that prevents us from knowing it and being it is simply that we have become attached to a wrong idea. At least ninety-nine percent of the population of the planet have this wrong idea. There are very few people who ever get the right idea and so it seems like the ninety-nine percent must be right. Three hundred years ago the whole planet thought the world was flat but actually it was not. In the same way you can say that the idea that most people have, that they are the miserable little drama **My Life**, their soap opera, that goes on twenty-four hours a day, that is not their life!

Why are there only these few people that are natural, that are really living? You could say that all the people who are identified with their own drama are not really enjoying life as fully as they could.

Absolutely! This is the tragic thing! Most of those people are very unhappy, because when you live inside your story then you always try to be happy and that means you are also unhappy. Most people spend most of the time being unhappy and they hope occasionally to be happy. They are totally in desire trying to get something or somebody so that they can be happy, and it never really works very well! The most unhappy people are the very rich people or the very successful people. They have everything they could possibly want so actually they ought to be very happy, but they are not because it doesn't work like that. This is a completely wrong idea about how life works. A few people for some reasons become open enough to start investigating who they are, and those very few people, if they have enough courage and enough focus, will find out who they are. It is not so difficult to find out who you are!

I read a quote a few days ago that was saying it seems like nowadays it is not so difficult to get enlightened but to stay enlightened!

I would not use the word **enlightenment**, I would use the word awakening which gives a very nice picture. You wake up from the movie, you wake up from the dream, from the dream of **My Life**. So people wake up and then it is quite possible, indeed likely, that they fall asleep again! The reason for this is that there is so much in the world where we become attached. We assume that this world is real, and in one way it is real, and in other ways it is not real. When you really understand, when you really become awakened, you know that this whole world that appears so solid is not real. Of course, this is very shocking for most people.

It is like going to a film in the cinema. When you come into the cinema you sit down with your popcorn and the film starts. In the beginning you know this is a film. It is just light through plastic, you know that, and you are eating your popcorn. But after five minutes you are completely lost in the movie and you become identified with some of the characters. If it is a sad thing, you feel sad, and if it is a comedy you are laughing. Until the end of the film! And suddenly the film stops, then what? This is a bit like awakening!

But it seems like the last bit of getting out of the movie is really not up to a certain person. As you said, there is this urge, this courage to really go until the end and really discover who we are. We can go on inquiring into who we are. But my impression is that the very last bit is not up to us. Ok, actually nothing is up to us. Everything is already part of the game.

What do you mean when you say 'us', you see? This is the whole point. Because most people totally identify with me. Me and you. So when you believe in this me, you also believe in you! Right? There are two. But when you awaken you do not believe anymore in me and you.

My own experience is that I can be awakened let's say most of the time during the day but still this feeling of no separation is not clear in me. This separation is still present.

Oh probably you are not awakened then!

This is what I am saying. It feels like that for an awakened person there is no moving anymore between being awake and being asleep. It is something total. It is all the time there.

Maybe not all the time. For example in my own case, I had an awakening that happened in 1992, fourteen years ago. For the first period, maybe one month, it was very hot, dramatic, and there was no John David. There was just a wonderful space, very open, and many wonderful things happened. Unexpected things happened. But then gradually it got more cool, more ordinary if you like and then some of John David's old patterns and structures came again. But there was a big difference now because now there was nobody believing that that was me. For example, I have had a very strong pattern, I am not good enough. I might be walking in the park, or I might have just got the gold medal at the Olympics but still I have this idea, I am not good enough. This is an irrational thought pattern which comes up in the mind, and in the old days I would simply believe that. I would know I am not good enough. But once I had the awakening I did not believe that anymore. Maybe the pattern was there but it was not attached to by John David, it was just like a cloud passing by. That was a very big, dramatic change and my own experience is that over the last ten years those clouds passing by have become less and less. Not because I really did anything, but they just ran out of energy because I wasn't giving anymore energy to them. Those clouds just disappeared in the blue sky.

I am happy that you could share this experience because this is one of the misunderstandings. For some people this event of awakening seems to be a very specific moment in which clearly something dissolves, like this metaphor of the drop dissolving in the ocean. For other people it is more like a process and they slowly, completely disappear but they cannot point out a specific moment.

I would say it is both things. I would not call awakening a process. I would say awakening happens within one second. It is a very sudden break if you like, when you suddenly wake up. In that moment you see without any doubt that you are not the story. That is a very dramatic and clear change in your life.

How would you define awakening?

Awakening means that in a sudden moment you see that the old story of **My Life**, me, in fact was never true. That is quite shocking for most people. If I would go in the street now and suggest this to someone I would just meet, they would think I was crazy. But when this awakening happens you see the reality so clearly that there is no doubt.

Do you have any advice or recommendations to people who are experiencing awakening but they are not yet at this very clear moment?

There are actually some things, like meditation and other spiritual practices, that are very useful to acquire a quiet mind. They are all good but they are not in fact offering any awakening.

Awakening is a moment of clear seeing or understanding. So in one way you can say nothing can help you, for this is a kind of destiny, a kind of grace that just happens when it would happen. However, you can help grace a bit (laughs). The problem is that we are completely attached to the world and included in the world are all the people, including ourselves, me. We need some way to see the illusion. This is very, very difficult. In one way it is simple but in another way it's almost impossible because the illusion is complete, and so there is no way to see through a window, to see through a gap. There is no gap; we just completely believe this illusion is real.

The thing that can help is called self enquiry. This is an ancient wisdom which is there in all the esoteric religions of the world. If you go to Delphi in Greece, above the gate it says 'Know thyself'. This is what self inquiry is: to know yourself. How it works is that as you go along in your day, sitting, driving a car, washing the dishes, walking, eating, all the things that you think of as normal, you ask who is eating? Who is driving? Who is thinking? The answer is always me. I am the star of the movie so me is always the answer. Then you ask, who is this me? There isn't any real answer to that. The real answer to that question is the source of the world, the source of everything and I am the source of everything. I am not separate from that source. So by asking these two questions in an intensive way it is possible to keep reminding myself that I am not the person who is walking in the park, I am the source of the person who is walking in the park. It may sound a bit funny when I am saying it in words, but if you really do it you keep finding yourself coming back to a still point, a point where there is no movement, where everything is silent, everything is peaceful and a point where there is no desire to move. It is without desire. This is a point of presence, just being here now. It is very simple but very difficult at the same time.

When you start to experience that, then it becomes very simple and actually the other way, with contraction and suffering, becomes very difficult. But how to get this first glimpse, this first taste? For me it was a process that kept growing and growing.

I think it happens in different ways. When somebody gets a big shock, for example their wife leaves, they lose their job, they suddenly get cancer, this shock can be enough that the mind stops, and if the mind stops it is very likely that you get a glimpse of who you really are. It is the busyness of the mind that prevents you seeing who you are.

This can be a bit strange. You have a big crisis and in this crisis you see something very beautiful. You lose your wife and then feel better than you have ever felt before. Of course this is nothing to do with the wife, but is something to do with you. At this point it is very important to know somebody who understands this, like a spiritual teacher. If you don't know somebody like a spiritual teacher then maybe your best friend will tell you: well it's not very nice to feel so happy that your wife has left! Then you might throw that away. If you are unlucky you might even end up in a mental hospital. But if you meet a teacher he would be able to tell you that what is happening is that you met yourself, you met your true nature. That is very exciting.

So who gets awakened?

Nobody. That is what I was saying in the beginning. That is why to use this idea of an enlightened person is a wrong idea. There is no enlightened person. Awakening is awakening from the illusion. That is all. You are already the source. Everybody, even the mass murderer, is the source. Everybody is the source.

Then it is just a game to get out of? Then to go on playing!

Life anyway is a game to be played. What is the point of life? There is no point! We come here for maybe 80 years and we can play the game. Through this game we can know ourselves, so you could say that everything that happens in your life is an opportunity to know who you are.

Because everyone's destiny is to really realize in the end who they are, my feeling is that we can enjoy everything, but the really 'important' thing is to realize who we are.

Yes! Because when you know who you are then every single moment of your life has a different quality and just ordinary things become super ordinary or extremely beautiful. Before, I might have been drinking some wine, some red wine, of course Italian (laughs), and then suddenly I have the idea: oh, what a pity I am not drinking champagne. That would be much better than this red wine. So we always want something different from what we actually have. We are never really there. When you awaken it is not like that anymore. There is no mind telling you it would be better to drink champagne. If it is red wine, you enjoy red wine and maybe tomorrow someone will give you champagne. Everything becomes a little bit different. I know a number of awakened people as my friends and actually they are very ordinary people. They are not saints. Saints are something else. Awakened people are just very ordinary people because they take delight in everything. A bit like kids. I would say that an awakened person would be most like a typical, healthy, happy four year old.

Can you be jealous?

Yes! But not me! Because there is no me! Jealousy can happen, sadness can happen, any emotion can happen. But there is no attachment to that. For example, just now I tried to call my organizer and the mobile phone was switched off. This morning I particularly asked her to please leave her phone on. So then I immediately felt angry, but only for a flash, for a second. I am not angry with her and I am not angry with me, there is just anger. And then it goes one second later.

Your second satsang here has a title: 'Relationship: the Ultimate Illusion'. When I read it there was something strong in the 'ultimate illusion'. What do you mean by that?

People are very, very attached to finding a boyfriend or a girlfriend. This is because they have an idea that that person is going to bring them love. The whole world is rushing around trying to get love so they can be more happy, and the way they get this love is to find a boyfriend or a girlfriend who is going to love them. Right? This is most people's idea. This is a completely ridiculous idea! The reality is that everybody is love, what I call authentic love, and they never had to do anything for that. It is just given.

So this thing that I am talking about as the self, or God, or nothing or emptiness, the source, that is love. That is authentic love and it just is. I don't have to do anything. In fact the only way I can access this love is to do absolutely nothing. I am this love, that's me. Running around the world looking for somebody to give me love is rather tragic because I am already this love. But most people are running around believing they need somebody to give them love, so I call it the ultimate illusion. You can go to a park and be touched by the beauty of the park, but for most people the strongest attraction is a man or a woman.

They come together then start to have a relationship. At the beginning it works very nicely because each one has a lot of hope for the other. There is maximum hope that this person will bring you all the delights you ever wanted. This is a great beginning. There is a honeymoon period during which everything works very well and nobody really says very much. Everybody is really hoping that this is the one, this is the one person who is going to bring me everything. But then after sometime, it could be some hours, a few days, a few weeks, maybe a few years, it starts to change and then the relationship gets a bit complicated. Because then you have my story, her story and our story, three stories! In the beginning I could not manage my one story and now suddenly I have to deal with three stories, right? Basically nobody can manage that, so almost for sure people who come into relationship have no chance to wake up, because they are trying to wake up from three stories. Before they were trying to wake up from one story.

One of the ideas of this documentary is to share it with people who are far away from this spiritual environment. If someone already wanted to find a spiritual teacher it looks like he is already on his own way. But there are a lot of people who are extremely sceptical. As you said, if you would just go outside in the street and say the same things that you said to me, many people would just think you were

crazy. What would you share, if anything, with someone who is not interested in truth or finding out who he is?

If you are a Roman Catholic then you are always going out and trying to get more people to become Roman Catholics. But if you wake up you know that there are not any people and you know it is all an illusion, so actually nothing really matters. There is no real feeling to change the world because the world is absolutely perfect as it is. So in that way I can say that I do not have anything to say, but in another way, if you ask the question, I think the problem is that most people are living in fear. They are locked into a prison of fear and so the first thing I would try to do is to take away the reasons why they feel so much fear. Then if they do not feel so afraid maybe they can open up to the possibility of something new.

What are they afraid of?

Everything. They are afraid they do not have enough money and then they would not be able to eat, they would not be able to pay their rent.

But also when people hear the words spiritual teacher or Guru they freak out.

This is something that they just do not understand. The word Guru is simply a Hindu word that means 'the person who brings light'. That is not very scary actually.

Speaking with other people, there is this feeling that if someone does something for you, he wants something in return. There is this idea of being manipulated by someone else. They cannot imagine a person doing this without getting any advantage.

I can understand that, because in the game of me and you, you want something from me, basically love, and I want something from you, basically love, and so I try to get what I want from you and you try to get what you want from me. So it is difficult for these people to understand that a person who knows there are not any persons, there is not any world and there is also nothing to get, does not want anything from anybody or anything. He knows that he is whole and complete, so it is a completely different relationship to the world.

I see that you have a ring. Yesterday we were talking with another awakened teacher and we were discussing why a person who already has everything should get married, do this kind of bureaucratic thing. Are you married?

Yes, I am married but I could also not be married. Marriage does not mean the same to everybody. In my case I met a woman when I was living in Australia . Then I went to India and she met me there later. She was going back to Australia and I was planning to come to Europe and we didn't know how long it would be before we could meet again, because at that time we both didn't really have any money. There was a very beautiful eighty-nine year old Indian man who was our friend and somehow we had the idea: why don't we get married? So we bought two rings and this man made a little ceremony with blessings and a little speech about marriage and we put the rings on. So for us it was a symbol we shared with each other , just like that.

You see, everybody is carrying all kind of stories in their minds: stories about marriage, stories about spiritual teachers, stories about Gurus. Stories about everything, and when you touch these stories, out they come. People are actually living as robots, simply telling their stories when you press the button. If you meet an awakened person they don't act like that. If you ask them something they will respond in this moment. Maybe tomorrow they will tell you the opposite! So somehow awakened people are very particular, individual people. Maybe they appear a little bit different but in fact they are very ordinary people. They always have time, even when they are completely busy, because actually they have no sense of time. They live always in this moment. So in this moment I can say yes, forgetting that I have already said yes to three other things for the same moment! If you are living in your mind you make a plan. Awakened people do not live in any plan.

One other thing I would say, an awakening is not the end, but is a beginning, it is like a new beginning, rebirth. This beginning is like a plant which has just come out of the seed. It needs

water, sun, care, protection, support and gradually it grows into a big tree. I have now a community of people living together and we have some newly awakened people, some recently unawakened people and some people who have not awakened.

By awakened you mean that they know who they are?

In our community we are 17 people and last year I can say that roughly half were awakened and now this year I can say probably less than half of those are still awakened. Maybe none of them are awakened. It is not quite clear. But basically several of them got lost back into their old patterns again so they were probably never really awakened. You do not know if somebody is awakened or not awakened in this first period and if this little plant starts to grow and suddenly meets a girlfriend, maybe it is gone. It is quite easy to be reconnected to your old patterns again if the thing is not really grounded.

This is the confusion for me because both teachers I have been more close with always emphasized this moment. They did have of course many periods of awakening before this thing happened but they could really point out a moment in which everything was completely washed out. As you were saying there was no 'John David' anymore and this thing never came back, ever. I never even thought about being awakened because I know that this thing keeps coming back. So I can say that I am having a lot of glimpses, and they are growing and growing and growing, but it is as if there is something in me still waiting for a moment when also this coming back will disappear. It is what we spoke about before, about this grace. You can do the path ninety-nine point nine percent but then the very last bit is not up to you. This is my impression of what has been said to me until now.

Yes, I think that this is true.

And in this sense I say that there is a difference between us, although there is not, or between you and any other person that comes to you. This is why you are sharing the truth and I cannot share it.

People try to make a spiritual teacher who is awakened into a special person. But the special person does not feel special. The special person feels incredibly ordinary. I see all the people who live in my community, all the people who come to my meetings, just as friends who are interested in the same thing that I am interested in, which is awakening. Not everybody, but most people, want to create John David into somebody, somebody who is a bit more special than them. What happens then is that you create the master into something that is not really attainable. He is so saintly, he has such a wonderful smile, how could I ever be like that? Of course, one is never like that, so you have created this new kind of spiritual bondage. I don't see myself as a spiritual teacher, I just see myself as somebody talking about life, ordinary everyday life.

In the end it is just about love! This is something which is a little difficult to talk about because if I use the word **love**, people immediately think about their favourite Hollywood love story. They think about chocolate and flowers. But what it is really about is coming to the place inside you where there is just piles of love. It is just like a spring on the mountainside. The water endlessly comes out of the mountainside and maybe somebody comes to drink, and maybe nobody comes to drink. Maybe a car passes by. You know, love is really just like that. And every single human being is this love. It is very beautiful.

For example, we have been sitting here together for sometime and in the beginning I probably was aware that you are a woman, because you are rather a nice woman. But now after some time I do not really see whether you are a woman or a man or what you are, because that is not really the point. I am just aware that between us, or here between us, is a lot of love. It's just love. There is nothing to say really. It's just like that and it's very beautiful. It's not that I love you, it's just love. This is possible for everybody. It's not even difficult. So this is a kind of strange situation where everybody is pulling along their boyfriend or their girlfriend on their shoulder. Why not just walk through your life alone and just love everybody who comes? It can be a dog, a man, an old man, a young man. Everybody. You can just be available in that moment to share love. It's very simple, and probably the whole point of life is really like that.

It is quite impossible to share this in words. It is clear that at a certain point when I am with you I feel myself full of something, and I feel like starting to cry. It is clear, there are no words.

Yes. This is very beautiful and very, very simple. One of the things that can help people to come to this love is just looking in each other eyes. Looking in somebody's eyes is the most direct contact. It is even more direct than passionate lovemaking. So just to look in somebody's eyes brings you naturally into close contact with that person and then there is a very good chance that thoughts will start to become less. If you carry on for a longer time the thoughts will just stop and then you are just left with nothing. Then suddenly in this nothing you feel tremendous love. It is completely impersonal, completely impersonal love! If you look at the normal connection between people, they almost never look in each other eyes. They avoid that. You see these tears that you have right now, people might think that you are unhappy (laughs) because you are crying, and crying means unhappy. They do not know that the language of love, the language of the self, the language of truth is tears. But it is not tears of sadness, it is tears of joy.

Yes!

So we had a good time (laughs)!

Yes (laughs)!! Thank you!