

## About ENLIGHTENMENT

John David talks to Madukar Thompson June 1994 - Lucknow, India.

At this time John David had been in the Sangha of Papaji for two years after his Awakening. He continued to be part of the Sangha for almost a further three years, without any question arising. He hosted a guest house for visitors and made the Abstract paintings that are exhibited on this website. He conducted the interviews for his book "Amazing Grace", and wrote the Love Stories (see website-Writing). The Nowhere Poems were made during this particularly creative period.

**From your own experience, what would you call Enlightenment?**

I would say that enlightenment starts where all words finish. So there is no word, there is no way of defining it. Even from my own experience, I cannot find words. The word enlightenment itself is but a pointer to that which is beyond words. Perhaps it is necessary to have a word because the word attracts people.

I've come close to enlightenment now. By coming close, the word doesn't have any meaning any more. It's not a word that I am very much aware of. It's something that I can't define. In a sense it's all human experience, which is beyond words. So for example it contains an early morning walk into some beautiful countryside. Suddenly along that walk you are totally touched by something and your mind stops. It could be the sun rising suddenly from behind some trees, and that touches something inside and you become totally present. That state is perhaps what is meant by the word enlightenment. What we call peace, contentment, happiness. These words do describe that state. But the depth and nature of that state when fully revealed is beyond words.

To answer the question what is enlightenment I would just sit silently, looking at the camera and something would appear on my face and that would be the best I could do.

**Okay. perhaps we should make things a bit more specific. What is your life like today, on the third of June 1994, in comparison to two years ago?**

It's an interesting question. On the outside if someone were following me, they would probably find that my life didn't appear so different. I would be doing the same things, I would be eating, sleeping, reading, talking and relating with people. Whatever I was doing, it would look, from

the outside, quite similar, but from the inside something has shifted in these two years. I feel very different. On the inside I feel much the same whatever I am doing. I am amazed that right now I am sitting here with this camera in front of me and I,m relaxed and peaceful.

Whatever I do, the feeling inside is one of greater peace and contentment than two years ago. Everything that I do also feels in some way removed from myself, from something that's inside me and doesn,t change. On the inside there is a space that has become very friendly and close to me. That space doesn't seem to change, whatever happens, even when there are strong emotions. For example, I may be unhappy or have gone much in the mind. The mind is freaking out a bit, or more than a bit, for whatever reasons nobody is living in my guesthouse and I don't have any income and how am I going to live, and now I am going to starve! Just the usual where the mind extrapolates to all sorts of ridiculous consequences. I can still easily go in my mind like that, and get emotionally involved in it, and have a little freak out for a few hours. But even when that is happening, there is still the sense that it is all a joke. Something will turn up because it always does, and I always have food, everything is always all right, and usually it's more than all right. There is a trust, even though sometimes that trust initially gets broken. Even when I go into the emotional part of the mind, there is a deep knowingness that it can't grab me. It can throw me temporarily, but it doesn't have the same hold it used to.

There is a deep sense that I have come to terms with death. I feel I could die simply, at any moment, and that whatever the experience of death is, I can relax into it. That is very different from how I felt two-years ago. Even two years ago the feeling of fear and reaction to the possibility of death was less strong than ten-years before. Something has shifted. Basically, it is the tangible sense of myself. I mention death because the fear of death is strongly behind almost everything we do.

My sexuality is another thing that has changed a great deal in the last two years. The change happened very suddenly. I used to have a strong sex drive. I was fairly driven and sexually active. For twenty years I was that way, and I enjoyed my sexual nature. My sex drive seemed almost always present. There was something inside me pushing me towards women and sex. It was beyond mind, thought or my control. About two years ago, that something stopped. It dropped away, almost from one day to the next. It just left me. That change affected many aspects of my life. The focus of my life was no longer on a partner for sexual activity. Much more I could simply be with myself. I found that women were still present in my life. But my relation with women became more of a play. The energy between man and woman is delightful. On the inside there is no longer the weight of sexual desire; it doesn't touch any more. The way I meet a woman now is through the heart. The sex defuses through the whole body. It's a totally different

sensation than it was before. That is the most dramatic change physically in these two years.

On another level life is just rather simple. I do not have any ambition. I am surprised that I am still in Lucknow. But nothing is taking me somewhere else.

**Are you waiting for something else to happen with Papaji?**

No, I don't feel I am waiting for something else to happen here. In fact, recently I felt reluctant to go to Satsang. I didn't really want to go. There was a period of a month when Papaji didn't come to Satsang because he was travelling. In that month I had a wonderful time. There was never a moment of boredom. It was almost a better time because I was more in my own energy. Sometimes I feel that Satsang sabotages my own creativity or my creative energy. There is a slight reluctance to go, to be there.

**So, would you call your state a state of Enlightenment?**

(Laughing) I have no idea at all. I am no longer attached to my mind in the way that I was before. There are long periods when the mind is minimally active. I feel I may be close to enlightenment, but the closer I feel to it, the less I have any idea of what it means. It's like you are standing at the base camp and looking up at a high mountain. You see the summit and the summit looks very distinct and clear. Then you start walking up the mountain and you are always aiming at the top. On the last day when you are near the top, you are in the final camp, you wake up in the morning, you look out of the tent and suddenly there is no more this sharp point. There may be a flat bit of mountain to climb. So the thing that pulled you all the way up almost to the summit is no longer so clear. You're in a way merged with the summit. That analogy is what I feel with myself, so I can't answer your question more specifically. I have no idea really.

**Which question would you ask Papaji if he were here right now?**

I spent twenty minutes with Papaji yesterday because I wanted to discuss a book project with him. But there was no question. For the first time I was able to be relaxed with him because I didn't want something.

**If you had a last chance to meet him and ask about enlightenment, would you ask him something?**

No. I have sat now for about two years without asking a question. (He stayed a further three

years without another question) I could have asked a question any time, and there has never been a question.

### **What then is the reason to go the Satsang?**

I don't know. In a sense there isn't a reason. Many times in the morning getting on the scooter, I wonder why I am going that day. Then I will have some wonderful moment during Satsang. I am thinking, "That is why I came"! Not to know is great. I am simply here. I have nowhere else to go. Part of why I go to Satsang is that there is a group of people who sit together every day. I enjoy that very much.

Recently I allowed my mind and my emotions to get quite involved with the idea that I have been here for a very long time and it is time to go. Where do I go? This went on for a few days. I was feeling insecure about being here and feeling as if I should leave. The result is that I am still here and I have no plans to go anywhere.

### **Maybe the "Bliss Thing" is what keeps you here?**

Perhaps. It's not always blissful. Sometimes I am simply touched. I am touched by some jokes or by Papaji's incredible ability to see people. I am in wonder at how he, within seconds, can see right into people. They don't get the answer they were expecting or wanting, but they get absolutely the right thing. Often, I feel a sort of communion with how it's right and he has got them exactly and beautifully. That always touches me. I am very touched by the love. I love this man, the way he jokes, the way he comes every day, the way he is so compassionate and patient and is just enjoying his life. His life is to give Satsang and that's beautiful. He's available whether people come or not. It's not important if many people come or just a few come. If anything, he probably prefers fewer people.

At one time it was almost as if we had to be enlightened here. We would have an experience publicly in front of everyone and then it made you kind of part of what happens here. It meant you got a stamp. Then you had to keep it up. For me at least, I felt I had to keep it up.

### **When you say keep it up, you assume there is a kind of audience of people?**

No, towards Papaji, the pressure not to come up with doubts, something like that.

I don't feel like that. I think if a burning question were to come up, then I would ask it. Why not?

For example, last year I went down to Bombay for a week, and rather by chance just before I left, somebody gave me the phone number of Ramesh Balsekar. I phoned and went to see him. I spent one hour with him. It was very beautiful, but I didn't need to ask something. Here was a man whose life was focused on consciousness and there was the opportunity to go into this adventure together and have a discussion together.

When I first came to Lucknow I had a very strong tangible, "I want to get something". It had been there for years and years. It was as if just in front of me there was a carrot I couldn't quite get. Now that feeling is gone.

At that time, and for the many years previously along the path, finding the truth was tremendously important to me. I gave up the trappings of being a professional person, making money or having a normal life with a family and so on. I could let all those things go easily because the focus on truth was so strong. This focus on truth was always very important for me. Now I feel myself close to truth, and I find that truth is a joke. Truth is nothing. In a way, there is no such thing. All I can say is as you get very close to it, you kind of merge into it, and there is no more any focus or direction, or somewhere to go, you're just sort of it. (Silence) I am it now. Just sitting here with you, the camera, it feels a bit funny, and then I listen to what I am saying and then I wonder, "Well it's probably all nonsense anyway." (Laughter) In a way it does not matter if it is. We are shooting this little video we both agreed to do and it's fine. It is fun. If it touches someone that is great and if it doesn't, that is also great.

**Do you have anything to say to society?**

I say that it has been all worth it. Whatever I have done in my life even though society might say I am out of step and have made a lot of sacrifices, still I know without a doubt that everything has been worth it.

**Just the way you feel your body and mind, it does not matter.**

I think there isn't so much difference between your body and my body. Right now, for example, if somebody offered me to be a woman for the rest of my life, I would say yes, it would be great. I mean, I wouldn't go for a sex change operation (Laughter). But if somebody could wave a wand and turn me into a woman, then I would say yes, I'm up for it. It would be great fun. My life is about fun. It's about play. Although I am not always playful, it feels as if life is play now. I could even return to what I was doing originally, being an architect designing buildings. I could do that. It would be fine, because this attitude of fun influences everything. I said that at the time I

did not fit in. But it was really I did not fit in with myself. Now there is this sense of self and daily life just bubbles forth. There is something about being natural. When I look back on my past and connect with how John David was when he was twenty, he was unnatural. I was not connected with the wavelengths of nature or the cosmos; I was not touching the earth. I was not a natural human being at all. I was really rigid and conditioned and uptight, in my mind with all sorts of ideas and beliefs. In that state I wonder if existence can come through and have the natural flow that it does now.

When I was younger and I would think of death, there was tremendous fear and resistance. But death is absolutely a natural part of our life. Just like being born is a natural part. But if you come to the event tight and totally fearful, you cannot participate in this process that nature is imposing with such certainty. Of course, you are going to die anyway, because there is the physical breakdown of the body, but are you going to go through that experience with grace and ease and surrender? No, not if you are tight and contracted.

### **Do you think it matters?**

It matters to me. If I was sitting there and if I had become connected with existence and relaxed enough that I could just accept what was happening to me, then I would say that John David's consciousness has led him to be in that state. That I have used my consciousness, the consciousness that is available to everybody, to come into that state. I've dedicated my whole life to that. I have exercised my choice for having this consciousness available, to lead me to that moment, where I can let go and be in this great event of death.

### **Well, you're being able to let go or not let go, makes no difference except?**

I am not talking about better or worse in some ultimate sense, but rather that there would be a great difference between death with resistance and a death in naturalness. There would be an important practical difference. As simple as suffering and ecstasy. If you resist a great force you suffer in direct proportion to your resistance. If you let go, then the moment can be ecstatic. It seems that death, being such a great event, has the corresponding possibility of great ecstasy. We are talking about death because it is such a final moment, at least in this particular body-mind. However, everything we do in our daily lives is the same event. Do we contract or do we surrender? So, I am talking about my own life, daily life, moment to moment, just as I am talking about my death. Whatever happens seems to be fine. For me to even say that and feel it inside as my truth is incredibly different to from how I used to be.

## **Of cause different, but maybe you are not enlightened at this moment.**

I feel I am somewhere up around the summit, this hill that I was trying to climb. If I am, that's great, but if I'm not, that's great. You know, it could be that near the summit a gale appears and blows off you completely. You slide all the way down the mountain until suddenly you are back at the base camp. You didn't quite make it! But I sense it is not that way. There is something about Source. There is some power that is drawing all things to the Self. And near the summit I think the sun shines with a special brilliance and there is fruition of Grace, which moves you intimately and easily to itself. That is my sense of things. I am somewhere at the last camp, and there is a strong feeling of contentment. There has been deep contentment for a long time. In contentment magical things happen. Sometimes they blow my mind. Like a recent example: Four months ago, I walked out of my house one night and instead of turning left which I normally do to go to the countryside, I turned right and I ended up outside a big house in Gomti Nagar, a very grand house. It was so grand that I'd thought that it might be used as a Satsang hall. A year later, I am standing outside the gate of this house one evening. The lights were all on and for some reason I walked in. Inside I find the owner; for the whole year it has been empty. That night the owner was there with some workers. They were finishing polishing the marble floors. We had a long chat and he showed me the whole house. At the end of the chat he said to me, "Why don't you come and live in this house? My kids are young and I'm living on the other side of Lucknow near their school and I don't really want to shift here for a year or two." I said, "No, no, you must be joking, I have a house, I am exhausted from running my guest house, the last thing I need is another house I want to go to the beach." Within two weeks I was living in that house! I didn't have money for the house. It was a huge joke. I had no idea why I was living in that house. It was a beautiful house. The owner had hand-picked all the marble, all the wood work was very beautiful and it was a joy to be there as an architect and someone who enjoys beauty. I had a great time for three months, until one day I realized I didn't have the money to continue. "This is ridiculous. This has gone beyond a joke and now I have to stop it." So in three days I packed everything in the house onto three rickshaws and shifted back to my guest house.

I never knew why I went there and I don't know why I left. It was a great Leela during the three months I was there. I started worshipping God for the first time in my life. There was a beautiful shrine in the house and this became dedicated to Krishna. The house demanded to be called Krishna House. On the first day, I went out to buy some buckets and stuff for the house for the bathrooms and came back with an expensive brass statue of Krishna and Radha and put it in the shrine. A few days later, a Hindu man came along and offered to make a puja in the shrine room. For three months he was continuously making wonderful pujas in the house, singing bhajans, ringing bells and making all kinds of funny things. I loved it. I never had this thing in my life

before, and in fact, I was always resistant to anything like that. I felt it was nonsense for people to pray to God and here I was doing it, and inviting other friends for bhajans. We had wonderful times singing. It was like a divine madness and I don't have any idea why I did that and I don't do it any more, now that I have shifted back to the other house.

It happened in that house for those few months, it was wonderful. It was a great Leela without any sense about it at all. I'm sure everybody would have advised me that it was crazy. So, anyway I did it. I am in enough of a let go with myself that I can do it. I feel that is great. Before in my life I would have a list, the first thing I would have done is to make a list. Should I go into that house one? Should I not go into the house? Then I would have endlessly gone back and forth in my mind. Now these things happen differently and I like the Leela of them.