

**THE DIAMOND APPROACH
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE
TEACHINGS OF A. H. ALMAAS**

John Davis

**WITH
SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITING OF
A. H. Almaas**

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1999

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CHAPTER ONE

THE ORIENTATION OF THE DIAMOND APPROACH

The aim of the Diamond Approach is to live fully and deeply. It offers the understanding and the practices to support a life without unnecessary struggle and difficulty, a life characterized by fulfillment and contentment. As with most spiritual systems, the Diamond Approach invites us to live in a way that both reflects and develops wisdom, love, joy, vitality, power, peace, authenticity, passion, curiosity, appreciation, stillness, pleasure, trust, gratitude, and an unrelenting engagement with what is. Furthermore, the Diamond Approach is grounded in the knowledge that these qualities are characteristic of our true and fundamental nature. They are our inherent and undying birthright.

If we let ourselves be open to our feelings in this moment, we begin to recognize a longing for such a way of being. For some of us, the longing feels like an ache or sadness just below the surface of our usual awareness and concerns, a background so common that we fail to take notice. For others of us, it may feel like a gripping desire to gain and hold on to these qualities, an intense drive in which we set our sights on some distant spiritual paradise. Still others of us may adopt a frustrated resignation in which we devalue these qualities as an impossible or even undesirable fiction. Perhaps the most common response of all is a kind of numbness in which we sleep-walk through our days, not even considering our deeper thirst. We then delude

ourselves into believing that crude counterfeits of fulfillment, love, joy, and wisdom are the real thing.

When we are cut off from our natural strength, our energy and passion are less available. The sense of expansive vitality escapes us, and we feel weak. To make up for this, we push too hard or strain to capture that passion. We try to convince the world and ourselves that we are not as weak as we feel. Bitterness or hostility flavor our activities and relationships. We then mistake this fake strength for the real thing, and we are caught on a merry-go-round of proving ourselves. The harder we try to prove our strength, the more we reinforce our weakness.

Instead of an open-hearted compassion, curiosity, and willingness to engage suffering without running away, we find a compulsive need to criticize, and then fix, ourselves and others in order to take away their pain and protect ourselves. We mistake false compassion for genuine compassion and wonder why we never feel really healed and whole. And so it goes; we dream of relief and fulfillment but settle for shallow and unsatisfying substitutes for real life.

When we allow ourselves the gift of seeing our deeper nature as one having vitality, aliveness, peace, and trust, we also become aware of the difficulties, blocks, and obstacles to these qualities. Even when we do experience them, it is only rarely and briefly.

For example, you may feel a sense of unconditional compassion for all existence. That is until someone hurts your feelings. Then compassion is out the window, replaced by your desire to hurt the other. Or, you may experience your intrinsic value as an inseparable part of the sacred mystery. That is as long as you feel seen and loved.

Otherwise your shame and guilt overwhelm you, and you get busy proving yourself or hiding.

I think we all have had strong and deep experiences of some aspects of our spiritual nature, only to lose the experience. We fail to grasp what those aspects mean and what our relationship to them really is. Although we long for a rich, fulfilling life and believe (or at least hope) that this is possible, it usually feels outside our reach. Our daily affairs are colored by mistrust and difficulty, and the barriers to our potential seem so much more real than that potential.

Rather than suggesting we fight against these obstacles to find fulfillment and contentment, the Diamond Approach invites us to understand them from a radically different perspective. In this view, they are not merely barriers; they are doorways, too. Hurt is not simply a block to genuine compassion. It is also the access to compassion. Anger or the desire to inflict hurt is not just a shallow and frustrating substitute for authentic strength. Experienced and understood deeply, it is the key to unlocking the treasure of expansion, capacity, and vitality that is our birthright. Our misunderstandings, reactions, and wounds open the doors to a life that is real. The Diamond Approach shows us the precise relationship between these counterfeit qualities, their attendant difficulties, and the more real aspects of our nature and our potential.

Even with a precise understanding of the connection between psychological issues and the qualities of our intrinsic nature, the work of self-realization takes commitment, courage, and love for the truth. Our beliefs about ourselves and the world constrict our

experience and become solidified into fixed (and fixated) patterns of feelings and reactions. These patterns give our lives a defensive or compulsive texture. Even our understanding of self-realization becomes a projection of these images, beliefs, and patterns. Our usual attempts to free ourselves, based on these patterns, only bind us tighter. Given our identification with the obstacles and difficulties, we can scarcely imagine what real wisdom, joy, and contentment might be. The Diamond Approach shows us not only how, but *why* the work of fully experiencing our lives is so difficult.

The Diamond Approach brings about a transformation beyond these images, beliefs, and fixated patterns toward our deeper nature. It means penetrating the false images and patterns and grounding our lives in an unrelenting love for our lives as they are: painful, ecstatic, or fulfilled. Spiritual realization is not merely a linear projection of a life based from the past to the future. It requires a new foundation which is grounded in the present. The Diamond Approach provides not only an understanding of this foundation, but ways to move toward it that are appropriate and powerful.

Encountering our lives in this moment, as they are, we begin to respond from the perspective of truth, openness, and trust. We relax into difficulties and unavoidable struggles, with an experiential knowledge that we can live our lives fully. We discover we do not need to avoid or fall asleep to our situations. We become present and awake.

Each moment that we are able to experience our lives more fully and with less censorship, we become more open, spontaneous, natural, fluid, and responsive. Our distress unfolds into a confidence and appreciation which is without judgment or hesitation. There is a joyful

curiosity and a generous, unassuming calm at our center. We discover our capacities to be strong as well as still, tender as well as clear, accepting as well as persevering, relaxed as well as fully awake to this moment and its movement. And through it all, we come to abide in a basic trust in the compassionate intelligence of the unfolding of our lives.

Everyday life becomes the arena for this work. The defensive, constricting patterns are the both the locks and the keys to the qualities of our true nature. The present moment is revealed as both the path and the fulfillment. The orientation of the Diamond Approach, then, is toward presence and the expression of fundamental truths in the present moment. This presence offers remarkably complete and effective answers to the fundamental human questions. The questions are, what is the fullest realization of our true nature, and how can we go about realizing it? The answer is presence.

The Diamond Approach as a Spiritual Path

The Diamond Approach offers a psychologically-sophisticated spiritual system. This system includes both an understanding and a path for full realization which draws on both ancient spiritual wisdom and modern psychological insights. It is both a description of the full potential of human experience and a method for the realization of that potential. Its insights are fundamentally consistent with other approaches to spiritual truth, although it does not attempt to explain other approaches or reduce them to its own terms.

In this view, psychological growth is an aspect of spiritual growth, inseparable from it. Whereas other spiritual paths might focus primarily on physical disciplines such as yoga or martial arts,

devotional practices, prayer, or contemplation, the primary method in the Diamond Approach is exploring and understanding immediate experience. If this exploration is deep enough and sincere enough, it will lead to spiritual awakening, development, and eventually, liberation.

Along the way, we come to a greater understanding, and we work through the blocks to our true nature or Essence. We develop and refine higher capacities. When we experience a block deeply, it leads to that which the block was covering. This brings a painful experience of deficient emptiness, followed by a sense of presence and the direct experience of Essence. These psychological issues stimulate our growth in a way similar to the grain of sand which serves as the seed for a pearl.

Psychological issues are present throughout the spiritual search. We move through our initial fears, frustrations, and even hopes about what a spiritual search will mean, to the subtle attachments and resistances present in the most sublime spiritual states. These issues, fears, and hopes have long been recognized as contrary to our deeper nature and obstacles to deeper self-realization. However, these issues are not only barriers; they also guide us toward the truths underlying them. The Diamond Approach provides us with a precise means of understanding and resolving such issues, revealing them as both obstacles and doorways to self-realization.

The goal of the Diamond Approach is the full development and realization of Being expressing itself in and through an individual human life. It posits no particular end-state or experience. Its goal is not necessarily love, wisdom, power, will, action, bliss, peace, or

emptiness. All of these are intrinsic to human potential and do arise as part of the path of the Diamond Approach. However, none is a specific aim of the Diamond Approach, so we do not stop there. The journey of understanding and truth continues without preconceptions or prejudice. The result is the free unfoldment of a living reality without constrictions or distortions.

The Methods of the Diamond Approach

The Diamond Approach uses a broad range of methods. In private sessions with a teacher and in small groups, students of the Diamond Approach explore their feelings, thoughts, and actions. It integrates emotional, cognitive, and intuitive processes, breathwork, and subtle energies all within a spiritual framework. (The several case studies presented in this book are examples of this way of working).

There are also a variety of formats for pursuing this path. Students of the Diamond Approach generally do this work in individual sessions with teachers trained and certified by Hameed Ali, who developed the Diamond Approach. Students also meet in small, ongoing groups led by a teacher. Large group meetings are used to teach, using a combination of lectures, experiential exercises, and meditation, and other practices. Ali and other Diamond Approach teachers also conduct longer teaching retreats. Finally, students of the Diamond Approach engage in their own study and application of this material through meditation, reading, and other specific practices.

These methods and formats for learning the Diamond Approach have evolved in response to the needs of students and of the Diamond Approach itself. The variety of forms which the Diamond Approach takes will likely continue to expand.

The Diamond Approach and Other Spiritual and Psychological Systems

Enduring spiritual truth arises in different times and places. The Diamond Approach expresses such truth, making it accessible to us in a form suitable to our time and place. Because it has come out of our specific cultural, intellectual, and psychological context, it communicates spiritual wisdom in a way that is uniquely suited to us.

Two aspects of the present time are especially important to this form. First, there is much more communication across cultures and between different spiritual systems. Because we can have first-hand knowledge of many different spiritual traditions, new understandings are possible. Second, we also have available to us new knowledge that was not available before, especially knowledge about psychological development, suffering, and healing. For the first time, psychological and spiritual wisdom are available together. The Diamond Approach incorporates the findings of psychology with integrations of the wisdom of a variety of spiritual traditions.

However, Ali does not merely restate or translate others' spiritual wisdom or combine together psychology and spirituality. The Diamond Approach is neither a combination nor a revision of these systems. It is its own system, arising from the needs and opportunities of this particular time and place and through Ali's particular expression.

The Diamond Approach is consistent with a number of psychological and spiritual systems. It is congruent with aspects of the Gurdjieff work, Sufism, Vajrayana and Zen Buddhism, and modern psychodynamic theory. It is consistent with many insights and practices from these spiritual wisdom traditions which are now more widely available. At the

same time, it draws from Ego Psychology, Object Relations Theory, and other psychological systems. I believe the perspective of the Diamond Approach is unique among spiritual systems in its integration of the psychological and spiritual aspects of full human development.

The Diamond Approach extends the earlier spiritual disciplines by providing a more thorough understanding of psychological issues, barriers, and obstacles as they occur throughout the spiritual search. And, although it is not a psychology, it has much to offer to the deeper goals of psychology. The case can be made that throughout its history, psychology has been moving toward a perspective such as this. Psychology has aimed to provide an experientially and intellectually satisfying understanding of being human and to provide a means of realizing human potential. The Diamond Approach moves us a step closer to fulfilling the promise of psychology, especially the transpersonal psychologies, by making psychological knowledge useful in spiritual work.

Being, Essence, Soul, and True Nature

It might help to give a brief map of the Diamond Approach and introduce its basic concepts here in the first chapter. Most of these terms are described later in the book and in thorough detail in Ali's writings. In the Diamond Approach, the true nature of existence is referred to as *Being*. Being is the fundamental nature of all manifestation; it is the ground and the expression of the exquisite diversity of all that is. Being reveals itself as both diversity and unity. From this ground of Being arise awareness, presence, flow, and emptiness.

The *soul* is the individual consciousness or medium of experience. It is not a fixed or entity (as the concept is sometimes understood), but a pattern flow of consciousness. The soul is shaped and influenced by all experience, and it may be structured by the conditioning of the ego (or personality) or by its true nature, Being. In a sense, it is the soul which makes the journey of awakening from conditioned and constricted patterns to the realization of its true nature. The true nature of a person, as it arises in the soul, is referred to as *Essence*.

Essence is the pure, unconditioned nature of who we are. As the foundation for our everyday experiences as well as our sublime spiritual high points, it is always present, though usually hidden from our consciousness. Essence can be experienced in many different aspects and dimensions. It is not just one big, generic "spirit," but a whole world of qualities which can be discriminated in a precise way. When we first awaken to it, we may be struck or touched by a sense of presence, like what we experience is real in a way that is beyond our minds. Essence is the truth within the forms and experiences of our lives

The work of the soul is to open, clarify, and purify itself in order to experience Essence more directly, more completely, and with fewer obscurations or blocks. Essence is then experienced as open, clear, and pure. When this same true nature is recognized as the true nature of everything, it is referred to as Being.

Without direct experience of these phenomena, descriptions of them are merely beliefs or will not make sense at all. A fundamental premise of the Diamond Approach is that these admittedly cryptic descriptions can, in fact, be experientially understood and validated.

The point of the Diamond Approach is to help make Being understandable as a lived reality and to deepen and refine our soul's openness to Essence. When there is direct contact with presence, awareness, emptiness, Essence, and Being, these phenomena are no more mysterious than any other. In fact, that direct contact will be even more clear than our ordinary experience. We realize in our everyday existence, consciousness, actions, and relationships, that our true nature is Being.

Personal Dimensions of Being

The Diamond Approach provides a systematic description of the various forms of Being, their particular qualities, their dynamics, and their associated psychological issues. In the personal realm, Being manifests as the ego and Essence. These are personal in the sense that they are experienced as being your own and you can identify with them. It makes sense to say, "This is *my* ego or *my* Essence."

Diamond Dimensions

In another realm, which Ali calls the Diamond Dimensions, Being is revealed through its universal qualities. The seven Diamond Dimensions are Objective Understanding, Pleasure, Conscience or Action, Knowledge, Love, Will, and Humanness. The attributes and qualities of Being which can be experienced in a personal way are here experienced as universal qualities. Furthermore, they are experienced in an objective and undistorted way. A knowing and understanding arises with the Essential quality, and this understanding is not separate from the experience of Being. Here, I am using "objective" in the sense of something being known in a non-subjective, unbiased, and unfiltered way, rather than in the sense of making Essence into an object. Our

personal histories and concepts of Essence fade into the background in this realm, and the qualities of Being are experienced in a more pure way as more vivid, alive, and real. There is, at the same time, a more objective knowing of these qualities.

For example, in the personal realm, the experience of Essential Love is deeper and more authentic than the usual experience of love based on mental constructs and emotional needs. In the universal realm or Diamond Dimensions, love feels present in an unconditional way, pure and clear. The heart feels universal. Furthermore, we not only feel authentic love, we know it in a clear, insightful, and objective way, we find pleasure in it, and we discover that it brings with it the necessary support to manifest it.

Boundless Dimensions

Ali calls a third realm the Boundless dimensions. The five Boundless dimensions have identifiable qualities but are not experienced from the perspective of the individual. In the Boundless Dimensions, there is no experiencer separate from the experience, only the unconditional experience of Divine Love, the fullness of presence, clear awareness, the dynamic unfolding of existence, and the absolute mystery of Being. There is no sense of a boundary within or around these dimensions.

It may help to remember that all these dimensions of Being (personal, universal, and Boundless) are always present, although they are rarely experienced directly. The Diamond Approach offers means for experiencing directly these dimensions of Being as the foundation and source of our lives.

The Unfoldment of Being

Being unfolds and manifests in an orderly way from the absolute mystery beyond human experience into the multitude of forms and objects of the phenomenal world. As it unfolds, it flows through these various dimensions in a progression from those closer to the mystery to those closer to the phenomenal world. Depending on the level from which you are perceiving, reality has very different characteristics. From some dimensions, reality is seen as a unity; from others, it is divided. Duality appears in some dimensions and not others. Consciousness can move through the various levels of Being if it is free and unconstrained. The more consciousness is free, the more it will respond to the call of Being. Being will manifest precisely in the ways that the situation calls for.

As Being flows from the Absolute to its personal and physical dimensions, it becomes expressed or manifest, first as the Boundless Dimensions, then by the Diamond Dimensions, and then in an individual and personal way. When Being is expressed on this personal level, it is the most accessible and most easily recognized. (And we should remember that all of these dimensions are present at once and that this linear outline of unfoldment is more metaphoric than literal. This is just a general pattern; our experience is much more fluid.) All dimensions, including the physical, the personal aspects of Essence, and the Boundless dimensions, reflect and express Being. They are not merely barriers to or constrictions of Being. Neither are they constructed through mental concepts or social agreements.

Personality or ego structures, on the other hand, do consist of structures which are extrinsic, mechanical, restrictive, and constructed through our interactions with the world. Yet even these

conditioned personality structures are seen by the Diamond Approach to be expressions of presence, love, knowledge, will, fullness, flow, awareness, emptiness, and the absolute mystery, however limited or distorted they are. The understanding that all manifestations, even personality, are manifestations of Being is central to the Diamond Approach. This understanding leads to Ali's insights on the role of the personality in spiritual work and self-realization, and it allows for a much deeper and effective means of spiritual discovery and development. Placing the personality in the context of Being is an important contribution of the Diamond Approach.

Most people start their personal work by working on personality issues, reactions, and blocks. They also have some fleeting experiences of Essence. The path of the Diamond Approach is most often a systematic movement and a deepening of Essence from the realm of personality and personal dimensions of Essence through the Diamond Dimensions to the Boundless, egoless, nondual dimensions. From the point of view of the soul, our experience is one of movement, recovery, discovery, and development. From the point of view of Being, it is always complete and perfect.

In order to help make these ideas clearer, I am including lengthy excerpts from the writing of Hameed Ali (written under the pen-name, A. H. Almaas). These excerpts are drawn from different book by him and may offer different flavors of the Diamond Approach. Most of all, these excerpts offer this path in Ali's own voice.

In the first passage here, Ali introduces the Diamond Approach to a group of students who have been working with him for some time. They

have been using the practices of the Diamond Approach to explore their everyday lives, concerns, and experiences. This exploration has led them to some degree of release from their issues and to various experiences of Essence, their authentic and unconditional nature. However, until this point there had been little emphasis on the system, method, and understanding of the Diamond Approach. They were, so to speak, eating a wonderful meal without much knowledge about what the cooks were doing back in the kitchen. Here, Ali steps back from these explorations to provide a glimpse into the kitchen.

The second passage is from the Epilogue to his book, *Essence*. Here he emphasizes the importance of trusting and following your own experience in doing the work of self-realization.

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THE DIAMOND APPROACH TO THE WORK

From Diamond Heart Book One:

Elements of the Real in Man

(Chapter Three, pages 35-56)

A. H. Almaas

We call our approach to the Work we do here, the Diamond Approach. What do we mean by this? Let's take it word by word. Why do I call it "Diamond"? There are two levels to the meaning of the "Diamond Approach." One of them is the literal meaning, the other metaphorical. The literal meaning is the most difficult to grasp, because understanding it requires an experience of it.

So for now I will talk about the metaphorical meaning. "Diamond Approach" means the method that uses the qualities of the diamond, what I call the diamond perception. The diamond has a kind of precision, and it can cut through hard materials without being destroyed. The approach we use here is focused and precise, like laser surgery. Also, like the diamond, our approach is durable, valuable, precious.

Now, what does "the Work" mean? Understanding what I mean by "the Work" will allow us to understand more exactly what we are doing here.

As far as we know, human beings have always been different from animals in that people suffer a specific kind of pain that other creatures don't. All forms of life suffer sickness, accidents, death. But humans experience, in addition to these things, emotional and mental suffering and anguish. We know that throughout recorded history, human beings have experienced emotional pain, dissatisfaction, a lack of contentment, a lack of peace. What you are experiencing now is nothing new. It has always existed. These days, maybe this kind of suffering is greater or deeper than it was thousands of years ago, but it is still generally the same.

Also, there have always existed a few people with the knowledge that most of this suffering is due to our alienation from ourselves. Most of our dissatisfaction comes not from sickness or material problems, but from not being ourselves. Not much can be done about the suffering caused by sickness or aging. Some people have seen, however, that the emotional suffering is not inevitable in the same way. It is due to not knowing who we are, to not knowing our being, our true nature, not being free to be ourselves. It is this alienation which leaves us with a sense of emptiness, of deep suffering.

Along with this knowledge of the cause of our suffering, there has also existed the knowledge of how to lead a person back to himself, if he or she wants and is able to do it. So "the Work" means any way, or school, or method, which recognizes the fact of suffering and the cause of unnecessary suffering, and works to lead us back to our true nature and thus eliminate the unnecessary suffering which is caused by the split in us.

The purpose of the Work, however, is not primarily to eliminate suffering. The desire to return to one's true nature is an innate impulse, which is there in the presence or even in the absence of suffering. The more we are in touch with ourselves, the more we feel this innate desire to know and to be who we really are. We want the freedom to live as we're supposed to live, to fulfill all our potential. When we don't, we suffer, but that suffering, rather than being a problem that the Work aims to solve, is simply a hunger for our true selves to live, to be free; it is a signal that we want to return to our true nature.

So, the purpose of many schools and methods throughout history has been to bring people back to themselves. This impulse to return to one's true nature has also inspired religions and spiritual movements all over the world.

As you know, these words fail, as words do, to communicate the reality of the glimpses of the Work's value that some of you have had. The Work, we see, is very old; it has existed as long as humanity.

So what, more specifically now, is our approach, the Diamond Approach to the Work? To come closer to an understanding of the Diamond Approach, we can look at the question of the difficulty of the Work.

It has always been assumed by those who are in the Work or who have established schools for the Work, that it is very difficult to actually do the Work and get back to who we are. It has always been assumed too, that very few people, only a small part of humanity, will attempt to take the path of returning, and that fewer still will get anywhere, and that even fewer still actually complete the path. We have all heard stories about the barriers and the perils of the Work. The path has been perilous, and because of this, very few have attempted it and very, very few have completed it.

It has always been assumed that it is in the nature of the Work that it is difficult. What we are now learning, however, is that, contrary to the assumptions of the past, it is not in the nature of the Work to be so difficult. The reason it has seemed so up to now is due, amongst other things, to the lack of a certain kind of knowledge, what we call psychological knowledge.

It has been assumed, for instance, that a person needs tremendous will and determination to be able to do the Work.

The task does need tremendous will and determination, and in the past, the failure to use sufficient will has been blamed on the student. The teacher says that the student is not committed enough, not determined enough, doesn't use his or her will enough. And this is true. It has always been and is still the case in the Work. So the teachers push the students, do all kinds of things to get them through—tempt them, push them—whatever will succeed in getting them to use their will, their determination, in order to continue working.

But now we understand that we cannot use our will if the will is being blocked and repressed. And we know that the will gets blocked and

repressed for certain specific reasons. Our work in this group has shown us that one of the many causes of the repression of the will is the fear of feeling castrated. This unconscious fear is well known and commonly documented in the psychoanalytic literature, though its connection with the will is generally not seen.

So, the moment we try to use our will, we begin to experience a terrible fear, the fear of castration, be it sexual castration, or the castration of one's self, one's energy, one's will. We don't even know this fear is there. We only know that this will is not available, that we cannot act with determination, cannot do difficult things.

Now, regardless of how you push a person, how are we going to find this will if we feel something terrible is going to happen to us if we get close to it? No matter how convincing the teacher is, we cannot get close to these fears. It's not that we don't want to use our will, it's that we don't know how to, we can't. It's not available to us, due to repression. It has been cut off because of certain specific unconscious fears; and because these fears are unconscious, the conscious mind has no control over them, so when you push against them, they get stronger. It's like rubber—when you push against it, it doesn't give in but pushes back at you.

Or a teacher may tell you to "surrender," and you know that yes, it's the best thing to surrender, but you don't know how to. You're terrified—"What do you mean, surrender?" To the unconscious, surrender means loss, giving up part of yourself, disintegration—terrible things.

It is the developments in psychology which have occurred mainly in the present century that allow us to see how people are stuck in, and controlled by, conditioning from infancy and childhood. The

approach of psychology and psychotherapy, which has arisen in the West, is a new approach to the problem of the emotional suffering of humankind. Since the time of Freud, much knowledge has accumulated about the unconscious and about the personality. Psychology, the science of the mind, provides a lot of understanding that has been lacking in the Work. But those people who have developed the knowledge and practice of psychology are not, in general, those who are in the Work. They do recognize the suffering in human nature and work to alleviate it by trying to resolve the conflicts in a person on an emotional level.

As a rule, Essence is not recognized in psychology and psychotherapy. So the alienation from Essence is not seen. It is seen that people are not in touch with their emotions and their sensations. It is seen that people are controlled by complex structures of unconscious beliefs, fears, defenses. But that extra dimension, the existence of the true being, is not generally seen or taken into consideration in psychological theory.

From the perspective of the Work, it is clear that these approaches cannot be completely successful in eliminating the suffering if they don't take into consideration the fact of Essence and of our alienation from it. The most basic cause of our suffering is not emotional conflict. We have emotional conflict because we don't have the knowledge of our true nature.

In psychology, emotional conflicts are seen as the cause of suffering. What is generally not seen is that these conflicts in childhood have the effect of, or take the form of, alienation from the

essential parts of ourselves, which are the source of our happiness and joy and fulfillment.

To summarize so far, we see that the effectiveness of [spiritual] Work schools has been limited by a lack of knowledge of the specific unconscious barriers which prevent us from experiencing the corresponding Essential states which make up our true nature. The effectiveness of psychotherapy has been limited by its ignorance of Essential states, so that resolutions occur on the levels of ego and emotions, which are not the levels on which we are ultimately satisfied.

In the past decade, some people have begun to integrate these two approaches, and have had some degree of success, depending on their experience and knowledge. But this is not yet the Diamond Approach to the Work. So far, the attempts at integrating the Work with the knowledge of conditioning and the structure of the unconscious, have been very general. It has been effective for some people, but still perpetuates an unnecessary split between students who are still largely identified with their false personality and those students' experience of Essence. So far, the pattern is that the psychological work is expected to take students from point A to point B. Then the Work takes them from point B to point C. Psychological work is undertaken to dissolve the false personality, and only then the possibility for Essential development exists.

The Diamond Approach is different from these approaches in that it works on the perception and dissolution of the false personality simultaneously with the perception and development of Essential states.

So you see, although in the course of doing this Work using the Diamond Approach, we accomplish the tasks of psychotherapy, my interest here is not in psychotherapy. My interest is in the Work. Without actually doing the work on Essence, there is no resolution to our suffering, and no opportunity to realize our true nature.

There is no need for us to work just on problems and symptoms here, and there is no need for us to isolate ourselves from the world in a monastery in order to work on Essence. In fact, we need to do this work while we are in the world; it is while we are in relationships, while we're working at our jobs or having trouble with our cars, dealing with money troubles, that we have just the material we need to work with. As we see, using the psychological techniques along with Work methods allows us to accomplish the aim of the Work in an easier, more efficient way than has often been possible in the past. It is necessary to see that our search for understanding and truth is the most important thing here, for these things will eventually lead us to the possibility of experiencing and developing all the aspects of our Essence.

We are learning that it doesn't work to try to develop one aspect of Essence without the others. We're not trying, for instance, to develop love alone. Love is just one of the aspects of Essence. We don't want you just to be loving. If you have love but you have no will, your love will not even be real. Or if you have will but no love, you will be powerful and strong, but without any idea of real humanity, enjoyment or love. If you have love and will, but no objective consciousness, then your love and your will may be directed toward the wrong things. Your actions will not be exact or appropriate. Only the

development of all the qualities will enable us to become full, true human beings.

The Work we do here does require commitment, dedication, and sincerity. We don't require these things absolutely, because we understand that there are barriers to them which must be worked through. Similarly, I don't ask people for absolute obedience or absolute trust. I just ask them to try to understand themselves. Through your own experience, you will discover whether our approach is trustworthy or not, and in time you will see your barriers to trust. There is no need for blind trust; there is no need for blind love; there is no need for anything blind. The Diamond Approach is the seeing, is the understanding itself. So in the beginning, the student needs only sincerity, and the understanding that the barriers to your fulfillment are inside you, and so is the fulfillment itself. What is required from me by the Diamond Approach is the same thing that is required of you. In addition, what is needed from the teacher is the ability to embody the Essential qualities, and therefore to be able to perceive them in you. It is required that I perceive your Essence and know what it is I am seeing. But then, the only way you can know about it is tasting it, experiencing it within yourself.

These things are the same as have always been required in the Work. Now we have added the new knowledge of this century, the tremendous knowledge of psychology. I think we're putting it to good use, actually using it the way it is meant to be used. I feel thankful, grateful to the people who have developed this knowledge.

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THE CALL, THE PATH, AND THE REALIZATION

From Essence:

The Diamond Approach to Inner Realization

(Epilogue, pages 181-182)

A. H. Almaas

The desire for freedom, liberation, enlightenment, self-realization, inner development, or whatever it is called is not a response to a call from outside you. It is not that you hear of enlightenment, and then you want to be enlightened. It is not embarking on the journey because others, people you know, are on it. It is not a fad.

It is not a desire for self-improvement. It is not an attempt to be some kind of an ideal model you have in your mind. It is not doing something according to some beliefs and opinions you have picked up someplace, recently or in the far past.

The search is a very personal concern, an intimately personal interest in your situation. It is a response to a call deep within you. The call at the beginning is a vague, almost imperceptible and mysterious flame. It shows itself as a questioning of the disharmony you live in. It is your disharmony, as you experience it. It is your own questioning. And it is your personal yearning.

If you want to be enlightened or realized like somebody else, who you heard was able to attain, then the search is not yours yet. It is somebody else's, Buddha's or Mohammed's.

The stirring must come from you, from your depths. The questioning must be of your situation, your mind, not of some system

that somebody else has set up. You can use the system to help you, but ultimately it is your life, your mind, your quest.

Enlightenment cannot be according to any system. It has to resolve and clarify your own situation. The realization must satisfy and fulfill your heart, not the standards of some system. The liberation must be of you, you personally.

The path is you, your mind and your heart. The call is your call, relevant to your life, and it speaks intimately to you.

The call, the path, and the realization are all a very intimately personal concern. Everything else is not yours, and you cannot use it for yourself or for others. But the complete resolution of your personal situation is yours, and that you can use for others too.

The quest does not bring about improvement or perfection. It brings about a maturity, a humanity, and a wisdom.