

Finding Spiritual Truth in Everyday Life: The Diamond Approach

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Who does not wish for an approach to spiritual development that recognizes the spiritual potential in the occurrences of everyday life? This is central to the teaching of

A.H. Almaas, originator of the Ridhwan School. Every spiritual tradition has its particular strengths. Christianity leads through faith, Judaism with the observances oriented to sanctifying the everyday, Islam with its submission to something larger, Hinduism with devotion and concentration, Buddhism with mindfulness and insight. Almaas' contribution relates to the particular mix of modern psychological understanding and spiritual vision that he has developed. Drawing from modern understanding of the way emotions develop and operate, and from, classical traditions of Sufism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Kabbalah, and his own spiritually synthetic revelations, Almaas offers a system that makes use of the ordinary emotional events of everyday life as an entrée into much deeper reaches of our true nature. In this way, he provides a path that is uniquely suited for individuals who wish to learn more about their deepest dimensions in the context of everyday life, and a system that complements and catalyzes the work of many other major religious/spiritual tradition by artful techniques particularly resonant to our modern North American psychological situation.

Inquiry. The approach taught in the Ridhwan School is one of “open ended inquiry.” The simple central instruction is to inquire or look deeply and without

judgment into the nature of one's immediate experience. The rich depths of "open ended inquiry" can hardly be overestimated. Anyone of us who has explored via meditation or psychotherapy realize that inquiry into what is present involves encountering layers of habit, defense, and occlusion as we move into awareness of what simply is there. Individuals practiced in simple self-observation see that no theory can adequately describe our reality. Such open-ended inquiry is a looking not for a predetermined something, but a looking that provides the context for unmediated fresh experience to emerge.

Part of what informs Almaas' inquiry is the insights of modern psychology on understanding how past developmental issues inform our current situations. However, his articulation of the picture does not leave it in the mere psychological sphere, but rather he contextualizes his understanding with a vision of how ordinary psychological functioning both reveals and obscures deeper spiritual truths. His mode of inquiry goes beyond traditional system of meditation which do not have a systematic way of working with the emotions that makes use of modern psychological insights. It goes beyond ordinary therapy in that it contextualizes inquiry in a way that allows for a spiritual form of experience and understanding to emerge that are neglected in most modern therapeutic arenas.

There is no way that justice can be done here to the richness of Almaas' spiritual vision, however what follows is a skeletal overview of the key elements to the way it is actually taught that relate to both the psychological and spiritual spheres.

Ongoing Education: While there are many helpful books now available to describe various aspects of Almaas' work, it is a form of teaching that is best conveyed from a live teacher and done in the context of an ongoing spiritual work group. Deborah Ussery and Morton Letofsky are two of Almaas' senior teachers who come to Houston four to five times a year with teachers they have in turn trained to instruct students on the various elements of this psycho-spiritual path of development.

A Holding Environment: This Diamond Approach is done in the context of a spiritual community where the students are working with one another under the teachers' guidance in an ongoing manner. The teachers and eventually the students all contribute to an energetic environment that supports pursuit of the truth in an open and curious manner. Through the group meetings and follow up meetings that occur monthly, an orientation is developed that can be carried into daily life.

Meditation Practices: This approach includes a diverse number of meditations, visualizations, and chants that are meant to evoke particular aspects of one's true nature and clarify them.

The Gulf Coast Regional Diamond Approach is currently in an open enrollment period. There will be an introductory retreat that presents some elements of this work beginning the evening of January 31 and continuing through February 4, 2007. There will be a structure of events offered to support people who may be interested in finding out more about the Diamond Approach prior to

attending a retreat. These events will be available in Houston, Austin, and Dallas. The writings of A.H. Almaas are available on Amazon.com. If you wish to receive more information about the Diamond Heart retreat or the waiting list and events planned between now and January, 2007, please contact Annette Anderson annettero@aol.com or call 214-823-5777.

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The Diamond Approach

An Introductory Retreat: January 31 – February 4, 2007

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