



Suffering as a Portal to Spiritual Realisation

Guest: A H Almaas

Alex Howard: So welcome everyone to this session where I am really excited to be talking with Hameed Ali. Well, we're going to be coming at trauma from a slightly different perspective.

We're going to look at it from the perspective of spiritual developments and that much of the suffering and the difficulties that we experience, are at least in part related to disconnection from our true self, from our essence, from our true nature. So that's a frame that's really important in understanding suffering and experiencing really some of the deeper traumas that can happen for us in our lives.

Just to give people Hameed's background, some of you will be very familiar with Hameed's work, some may be new to it. A Hameed Ali who writes under the pen name A H Almaas is founder of 'The Diamond Approach to Self-realization', a contemporary teaching that developed within the context of both ancient spiritual teachings and modern depth psychology theories. Hameed has authored 18 books about spiritual realization, including the Diamond Heart Series, The Pearl Beyond Price, The Void, and The Alchemy of Freedom. He's the founder of the Ridhwan School for Spiritual Developments, an inner work school developed to the realization of true nature. The orientation of the school is directed toward guiding students to realize their true nature to the fullest realization and further still, to endless enlightenment.

Hameed, thank you so much for joining me today.

A H Almaas: Well, good to be with you Alex.

Alex Howard: So perhaps a good place to open this up a little bit, is that many of us live our lives in a state of somewhat disconnection or lack of, I guess, connection to our essence, to our true nature. And that can be a real source of suffering. Perhaps you could say a little bit about that piece, but also how that relates to the foundations of the teachings of your work.

A H Almaas: That's actually a view of all spiritual teachings. That's the primary source of suffering, apart from physical and all of that, is not being in touch with one's spiritual depth or one's spiritual dimension. And in fact, most people don't even know they're not in touch with their spiritual lives. They don't even know they have a spiritual dimension, they think their spirit is someone else from heaven or something like that or a story. But spiritual teaching means practices and exercises, methodology to open up to have access to some spiritual dimension that most people are not in touch with and not aware of.

People are mostly in touch with their sensation, emotions and so on. While the spiritual dimension is a whole other realm of experience of different kinds. And it is really the source of our true humanness. It is a source of love and passion and clarity and determination and courage and all of that.

These days in the current virus atmosphere you see many people coming out doing really good things and putting themselves on the line, sometimes in danger. And people say, and especially me, they say, 'well, the human spirit is coming out' and I wonder when they say human spirit what they're talking about? Do they know what spirit is? They mean the goodness or humanity coming out. Well, where does this goodness come from? Where was it before? It's good this is happening like that. But there isn't the understanding that we do have a spiritual dimension.

We have some spiritual nature or true nature, which is nonphysical, but when we experience it, it is just as real as the physical actually, it is what underlies the physical. But the one thing I know at my work with students, is that there is a work of what's in the way of the issue, of the barriers and obstacles and the views and the beliefs and the concepts that are in the way.

At some point they come and experience the recognition; 'I'm not in contact', 'I am disconnected', and that is felt as a very deep wound. Like a universal one to oneself, total wounding and one consciousness like something yanked out from the depth, and that pain is there in everybody. That's fundamental, and people can reach it at some point. We have to experience it and become the entry way into the actual connection.

But apart from that, just an ordinary life we don't have access to our true goodness, to our true courage, or true intelligence, and clarity, and love. Because when we experience them, that is almost substantial, they're palpable; being, experiencing and being that palpable sense of beingness, and spiritual nature and the true nature of consciousness. We see what we are. What is the meaning of life? Why are we here? What is really precious about a human life that we try to preserve? It's because we have this potential.

When we see it, it's like a thousand times more pressure than we think, is the price of our life. And so of course to be estranged from that is bound to create all time difficulties. Of course there are the psychological reasons, mentally, all of that leads to problems and some of it actually is part of the disconnection. What led to this disconnection? But many of those difficulties like psychological kinds of difficulties, conflict, pains and different kinds of suffering and conflict and anguish. Is because we don't know what we are.

Alex Howard: And there are many different ways that people try to deal with that. That pain and that suffering and of course we see that in everything from addictions to people living a life of constant doingness and busyness, too. There's many different strategies that people use to try and disconnect or numb or be free from that pain.

A H Almaas: Yes. I mean, of course, everybody's got their strategy of how to deal with it. Not just to deal with the disconnection, to deal with the results of it, the pain and emptiness and the meaninglessness in one's life and the disruptions or conflict with the lives and life relation with other people and with ourselves.

People know if you don't know your spiritual nature, it's difficult to talk about what is self-love. What is it that you are loving? It's difficult to actually love somebody else in the sense

of true love, meaning loving them for what they are, for who they are, not what I want from them. When we are in touch with this, these become natural.

Alex Howard: I think also when people start to make contact with that pain and often that may be labeled as trauma, or that maybe the trauma is within that. That they can feel that there's something wrong with them, that they are alone in that experience of that deep suffering or that deep longing, that's there. And I hope part of what may be very helpful for people to hear in what you're saying, is that that doesn't make them crazy. That doesn't make them different. That's actually an experience that is shared by everyone.

A H Almaas: Everybody and anybody who has a sense of ego, sense of self, is bound to have this.

It's universal suffering as everybody has suffering, and it is both on the surface and the depth, on many levels. And in some sense it is a trauma, I mean, people define trauma in different ways.

In all ways, from abuse and being hurt in an unbearable way, to loss and abandonment, and all of these are called trauma. But this is a trauma in a different right. It is human trauma throughout the ages. There are always very few people who have access to their spiritual dimension, and they could feel a kind of fulfillment that has a natural spontaneous happiness that is not interfered with by conflicts or emotional pain; but it's possible, it's what spiritual teachings are there for, what I spend my life doing.

How people connect with this part of themselves and it does take work, it does take time. Just like dealing with any other kind of trauma, it has a different kind of rewards. Like I know, for instance, I have many students who have very severe trauma. And during our work, we don't really deal with the severe trauma that has to do with abuse, actual mistreatment. Because that has a kind of vulnerability and dissociation and stuff, a person then is not really a candidate for spiritual work.

Spiritual work needs somebody to be a more normal kind of emotional makeup. So when I have encountered people like that, in our work, I see that that counts as a barrier to them engaging in spiritual work, regardless of how much they meditate, not much happened, because they dissociated at the deep level, they can't connect. So what I do with these people, I send them to trauma therapy. And after a few years working out, they come back, then it's possible for them to start working to access the spiritual depth. And what I notice then, is that the trauma therapy, especially if I send them to somebody good, I know some good people, is that they do go through the trauma and then become able to be open.

However, the openness is not just spiritual reality, by being more open emotionally they can be vulnerable without getting terrified or frozen. But they still carry with them that sense of being a traumatized person. That's one thing I see lacking in most trauma therapies is that they don't deal with the identity of a trauma identity. So that is part where spiritual work becomes really handy. Which is like, it doesn't matter what your history was, whether you were traumatized or you're a neglected person or whatever. If that forms your identity, it will continue to be there and will become a barrier to that spiritual dimension that will give you true joy and happiness, knowing oneself in a good way, and being able to be truly generous with other people and help from a clear way, not from selfish, self-centered way.

Alex Howard: One of the things that was, having been a student of your work for many years, one of the things that was most helpful to me, particularly early on was, and that you touched on a little bit earlier, was the realization that that deep pain and suffering was not something to be gotten rid of and not something to escape. It was actually the gateway. It was actually moving through that was the way to contact saying something that was deeper. Perhaps you could say a bit about how the present moment and how our immediate experience, whatever we find to be there, is actually the way in, rather than something to be run away from.

A H Almaas: One thing to realize is that is specific to the kind of spiritual teaching I give. Not all spiritual teaching does that, many spiritual teachings don't deal directly with the pain or the trauma. They go around it with different kinds of techniques in a visualization way or whatever. But to actually welcome and embrace the present moment experience, whether it's just normal or boring or painful. To embrace it and to understand it, any kind of pain all the way to that deep total wounding of being disconnected from a spiritual need. To embrace it and to understand what it is. And so embracing it doesn't mean identifying with it, it means experiencing it fully, recognizing that it is what I'm experiencing now. If I reject it, I reject something about myself. So embracing it and understanding it and feeling it as much as possible.

A person has to be able to feel and be in touch with themselves and their body, their emotion, their hearts, and really feeling the pain. If we really feel, especially that deeper wounding, it's like a gash in the center of the body from top to bottom and almost you could actually sometimes have a visual sense of it as a body kind of wound. And feels hurt like an emotional, hard, physical hurt. If you feel it and tolerate it and then let it happen and go through it. It becomes like a portal, a wormhole that you go in and then that thing becomes open and spacious. Spaciousness and wounding clears out, spaciousness then leads to the possibilities of the human spirit. And then all kinds of things, our lives are more pure qualities of consciousness, like pure love or pure awareness, things like that, it's amazing what happens. And also the sense of true self. The spiritual nature arises in a way within oneself that feels right at the center. This is my center. This is what I am. That's what gives meaning, true meaning to my life. Meaning that is independent of everything else that happens in my life, everything I do or I don't do.

Alex Howard: To be able to use the word tolerates, I think that's quite a good word sometimes. To be able to learn to feel that pain and that suffering can be very difficult initially. And I shall reflect on some of my own early experiences in your work, and moments of very intense terror arising and in a sense of wanting to do almost anything but stay with and feel.

I appreciate the distinction that you made between a specific kind of PTSD trauma, where someone needs to work with a professional in that context, versus what can still be incredibly difficult and intense feelings that can come up.

What helps people learn to stay present to that? What helps people learn to increasingly tolerate and metabolize and move through those experiences?

A H Almaas: Now first to go to that central wounding. Not easy to go directly, because the practice I do is to inquire into our present experience at the moment, whatever it is. And by

doing that, we encounter different difficulties, emotional conflicts, anguish, frustration, feeling hurt, feeling rejected, all these have pains and difficulties. So a person needs to work with all of these plus fears and jealousies.

So as the person works with these things and one continues and as one actually works with these things, they have more access to spiritual nature, but not in its fullness, just some qualities. That trains their consciousness to be at ease with difficulties, with pain. So by the time we get into that deeper wounding, a person is already somewhat acclimated and used to that pain is not a problem. This kind of pain, which is more of a physical quality, also almost feels physical and terror around it.

First is a terrible feeling, like you're going to die. You're going to die again, you're going to disappear and nothing would be left of you. Because it is a dissolving of the usual sense of self-identity. Frankly terror, and then, of course, the pain itself.

As I said, it is difficult, but usually the practice, because a person does it for a while, for some few years, there is a practice of learning how to stay with one's experience. And of course, I also give the specific practices of presence that are like more meditation style practices.

A person learned to just be present to their body regardless of what happened, to be present in the here and now regardless, that is a supportive practice through the practice of actually exploring what is happening, and that by going deeper and deeper.

Most people think if they explore that emotion, they will just get to the deeper emotions or they will get to their childhood. They don't know that you're still on the horizontal level you could penetrate that deeper if you know how to stay with it, and when you're feeling pain or emptiness, that's not the end. You are staying, and being comfortable with it. Or at least letting it be it, the curtain opens to something else, a whole other dimension. Of course, psychology therapists are not trained in that, they don't know about that unless they have a spiritual background. But, you know, a spiritual teacher does, that's what they do.

So that's my way of working with it. Many people who do spiritual teaching don't deal with pain or whatever, it's just to be aware that you are a consciousness, we are this violence or something like that. And you could do that, but that doesn't really deal with it. The pain is not gone, or disconnected.

Alex Howard There's something that I wonder about how to bring it a bit more alive for people. That I certainly again, reflecting in my own experience there's something about the experience, you describe it like a portal where one pops through and has that taste or that contact with, what we call essence or true nature or whatever. Which is a very experiential thing that's quite hard to just understand as a concept or as an idea. And I wonder for people that are watching this, that it's how it could possibly be the case that the place that I'd least want to go to is actually the place for something new to happen, for something to open.

Perhaps you could say a bit more about what's there on the other side of those portals? Perhaps a bit about what true nature is or what it is that one's accessing through those portals?

A H Almaas: You see people, individuals who are not familiar with spiritual experience or spiritual practice, when they hear us, they think it sounds abstract and mental because they can't relate to it.

So it appears as words.

While I'm talking about, I'm talking from experience, from knowing very concrete, palpable experience. Sometimes experiencing, for instance, true fulfillment, it's nothing like the emotion of feeling fulfilled. You really feel your heart full of some kind of nectar or sweetness that pervades the whole of consciousness and melts you from inside.

That's more palpable than any emotion or thought. But people don't know there is such a thing. So they just say, you must be just fantasizing or imagining. That's what many people who are not involved in spiritual teaching will think. They'll think it's either an imagination or for neurologists they will say, well it's part of your brain probably firing. But, you know, you have to have experience for this to really make sense. So if you don't make sense, if you don't have the experience for some people, they just have a sense of something missing.

They have a sense that their life's missing something or there's some emptiness, meaningless or they have a yearning or a longing for something more fundamental, something more profound, give their life some kind of inherent meaning. So many people are aware of that before they're aware of the actual spiritual dimension.

So I will say for those people who are feeling like that or feeling something missing or something, and their life is not complete, or their yearning for something, they don't know what it is. I will tell those people, you're right. You are on the right track. Follow that feeling. See what it takes you.

Alex Howard: You mentioned one of the tools that you teach is the practice of inquiry. Say a little bit about what inquiry is and how that helps with this deepening and this following of these threats?

A H Almaas: So inquiry is similar to psychotherapy, but very different. Similar in the sense it deals with ordinary content, with emotions, feelings, sensations and all that. It's different in the sense it is staying with the here and now, with the 'what I am experiencing in this moment'. It might bring association from the past or something like that, which are also welcome. However, it is staying on the experience and not taking it to be all that there is, not taking at face value and not assuming I really know what it means, what it is.

Most people are not even aware of all of their experience. So first we need to be in touch with as much of our experience as possible. The next thing is to acknowledge our unknowing, our incomplete knowing what it is. And then we can bring a sense of curiosity, wanting to know what it is? Because I want to know what I'm experiencing. Where is it coming from? And then there is, the teaching has very precise instructions, skills about how to look into that experience and feel it. Look into it, I don't mean visually, I mean to sense it and feel it and even see it, and with a curiosity and a questioning of what it is? Where does it come from?

Like I'm feeling some kind of sense of a bit sad, a little bit sad and, okay, let me see, what's the sadness feel like?

Oh, it feels like something invading the chest area, something like teary, whatever.

Okay, teary.

What's the tear-iest part?

When I look into it, it also has a warmth to it. So there's more and more discrimination.

Oh it is, it has a warmth to it.

The warmth, because I'm sad about something, yes there's sadness, but the warmth, not just sadness.

The warmth feels like there is a warm atmosphere. There's a feeling that, the consciousness, and when I sensed into this warm atmosphere.

What's it like? I feel a tenderness and a delicacy and fineness. And so what's that?

That's not exactly sadness.

And so, as you see it is a matter of exploration, questioning and curiosity. What is this tenderness? When I feel this tenderness. This warmth, I start to feel caring, I can feel caring for myself or for others and then I can, oh, this is kind of a love that has more kindness. Loving kindness and then becoming very precise. It is loving kindness. I could sense it, I know the texture of it and know that feeling of it, I know the effect of it as a kind of warmth and a tenderness that makes me feel capable to be empathic, attuned and varied in an immediate way. So that you see, I went through and explored my experience. I went from just feeling a little sad, to experiencing a spiritual kind of dimension where our spiritual nature can be.

Alex Howard: And what I think is important, as well about what you're describing, is using one's heart and one's felt sense. And also using the clarity of one's mind to be curious, it's a fully embodied approach of exploration.

A H Almaas: Well, this inquiry that I work with requires all, everything, all of our body with its sensations, our heart and feeling and affect, and it requires the mind with this knowing and discrimination. Even memory, because some of the stuff is related to things in the past and that kind of bearing to understanding the truth of what is happening. So it is an integration actually, of all what we call the three centers. The three centers of operation of the human being.

Alex Howard: I think it's also you mentioned the body there. And I also think that just to kind of tie together some of these pieces we've been touching on so far, perhaps say a bit about why the sensing practice, why being connected and present to one's body is an important anchor or foundation or support of this process.

A H Almaas It's very simple. Most people experience whatever they experience in their body. Experience happens in the body, through the body. So if somebody is not in touch with their body, with the sensation to their body, they're not in touch with their experience in any full way.

That's just a way out of the outer expression of the experience or the action that comes out, but they don't know what it is, what they experience. Because we, human beings, really are an experiential field. We are a sensitive creation field where our experience bubbles up. And

that happens in the body, inseparable from the body, and a major part of the experience is sensation, even emotions.

There's no emotion without sensation. So to be in touch with that we do a lot of practices, physical practices, breathing practices, the state of practices to be as in touch with the body as possible. To open up the body because the body also goes through tension, it needs you to be liberated from all these constrictions. So the body needs to be liberated, the heart needs to be liberated, the mind needs to be liberated from its prejudices, from its position, from its idea. So it's open to seeing something new, freshly.

Alex Howard: Hopefully for people that are watching that there's something that's very reassuring or supportive about the idea that we're not trying to escape, we're not trying to get away from.

What we're actually learning to do is to be present to and inquire into and explore what's there. But I imagine there's also people that are watching this that have experienced traumas, not just historically in their life, but also as part of their spiritual path. People have had quite difficult experiences with certain traditions. People sometimes relate to themselves in ways that have been too harsh.

I wonder if you could say a little bit about how trauma can show up on the spiritual path and in spiritual practice.

A H Almaas: Well first of all, because you go deeper and in your experience, your unconsciousness, your unconscious manifests whatever there is in it.

Some people have classical traumas that they didn't know about. And I've worked with people who after 5, 6 years of working, she recognized she was sexually abused by her father, she didn't know that. You see what comes up.

So those things can be encountered and spiritual work can unearth these things. And then whether I kind of work with it depends on the intensity of that kind of trauma. If it is not so intense, a person's not too dissociated, that can work. Otherwise, I'll send them to a specialist, somebody who works with trauma. But we encounter many kinds of lesser traumas like being abandoned alone as a child, having a broken home; father, mother are separated and fighting and all of that it's very painful for a child. And that's something we have to contend with.

We have to experience it because it determines a lot of what we experience consciously. So all of these things, I mean, human life is full of trauma. If we take it in this general sense, the human race is traumatized that way, it's full of pain.

Buddha said that "life is suffering" he meant physical but actually, when you go to Buddhism, it is psychological more than anything else. So there are a lot of reasons why there is psychological pain, a lot of it historical, a lot of it is also fundamental, the fact that we are not conscious of who we truly are.

Alex Howard: Sometimes when people get in touch with it, be it that kind of core wound, or be it some of the psychological suffering, it can feel very overwhelming. Sometimes it can

come up for people that don't have what it takes to deal with this. And I think sometimes it's hard to unsee things once you've seen them.

I think people can sometimes find themselves in these very tricky places where they've started to contact things and feel things that feel very frightening and overwhelming. But they don't know where to go with that.

What supports people moving through those really difficult chapters on their inner path?

A H Almaas Well, of course, somebody can learn to do meditation and stuff to support themselves. But, the way I teach it is that a person really needs a teacher, somebody who can help them, who they can be in their presence of and they can work with them.

The teacher will be the support, the outer support that allows the person to dive into their experience and feeling there's somebody there who understands, who is there, who is able to help them tolerate this situation.

So, my work I do, private or one-to-one kind of session to help the person to go specifically through their experience.

We have what we call small groups where a teacher has a group of twelve people or so and they're all working with each other.

We're working on stuff that's arising in them. We have what we call a larger group where the teacher gives a teaching, practical presentation, about spiritual nature and obstacles to it.

A lot of them are difficult and obstacles are always difficult, nobody likes obstacles in themselves because they're blockages. That's what I mean. Yes, the person needs a lot of support. Most people won't be able to do it by themselves.

Yeah, most people need help from somebody else and a spiritual friend we call it or a teacher.

Alex Howard: Yeah, there's something I think as well about being part of a community that's on a similar path.

Because often I think again, perhaps sometimes another trauma of being on a kind of inner path is one starts to feel distance from perhaps the people that had been there, group of friends or community. Because what's really interesting to someone when they're starting to open up is just different to what's there in day to day life and there could be a kind of trauma sometimes of isolation and separation.

And that absence of holding and support and that's being part of a student body can be quite important, I guess, in holding people.

A H Almaas: That's why, you noticed that around the world, individuals who became illuminated or awakened by themselves, alone without being in a group, there are very few, you could count them with the fingers of the hand.

So that's why for most people, they really need some support to feel the supportive kind of contacts, and that is a group, individuals who are studying the same thing, learning the same thing, working on the same thing in the same way. So they're understanding each other, mirrors for each other, and supporting each other. They question and confront each other.

So everybody is being truthful with each other. Everybody is interested in knowing the truth of who they are. And part of the truth of who they are is to know their relationship with each other. So working out the relationship between these two with each other is a rich field when covering all kinds of difficult history and traumas, and the relational part that is a big part of human life.

Alex Howard: And yet it also strikes me that there are many stories over the years of spiritual communities, particularly built around charismatic spiritual leaders that can have big shadows sometimes.

And there's also a lot of trauma of people being part of student bodies, or teachings that have ended up with problems. And I think sometimes that can be almost the deepest trauma when one opens themselves on that very deep level.

How can one wisely choose a path? What are some of the discerning questions that can be helpful for someone to ensure that they're not going down a path which is likely to, particularly, I think people that have trauma histories can sometimes resonate with abusive structures in a sense. There's something that's almost familiar for them in that.

Do you have any suggestions of checks and balances or ways that people can?

A H Almaas Yeah, you're right. I mean, there are people who are traumatized and they tend to not notice that the person they're working with is traumatizing, is doing something inappropriate.

The thing for them is normalized and it has happened in many cases where the teacher is inappropriate, exploitative, traumatizing.

I mean, just like recently in Europe, we have Sehgal Ruchi, for instance. He got exposed by his own student that he was being abusive. And that tradition he is in is Buddhism, it's not an abusive tradition, compassion is the main thing. But he as an individual hasn't worked out his own needs, his own demons. And sometimes, regardless of how illuminated he was, which tells you another thing like just being illuminated, awake it doesn't mean you've worked out all that thing.

That's what I mentioned earlier, people go round. Do you think it's working for them? So, yes, that happens and I remember the Dalai Lama responding to that. Because he said, "well, when you choose a spiritual teacher, whatever the spiritual teachers say is, is the right thing. You have to follow them." The Dalai Lama said, "no, you need to question. You need to make sure and you need to use your intelligence and your clarity." And that's how I see it. First of all in spirituality you want to find out what is appropriate, what resonates with you. There are many spiritual teachings with different kinds, what resonates that makes sense to oneself.

But then you need to vet the teacher in the sense, not think of them as godlike, they are human beings beside being in touch with this spiritual dimension. And to see how there are. How are all of their relationships with their students? How they interact with their students, how they live their life.

Do they have addictions or hidden things that the students talk about in the background, but don't bring up to the teachers, for instance?

You need to be aware of all these things because you don't want to get into a situation and get involved for many years to find out that this teacher, not only has been abusing other people, you might have been the object of some kind of exploitation of these other people. And then that's a deep wound. When that happens to people, I've known few people in our school who were with teachers like that, it's very difficult to get over it. It's difficult for the person then to trust the teachers, because they were betrayed, that's how they felt, betrayed.

Very deep betrayal when they are the most vulnerable.

The irony is when you work on your spirituality, you are totally vulnerable inside, you're totally open. So if you get exploited or hurt in a way that is inappropriate, it's really painful, it's really difficult. And it takes some time and takes contact with spiritual teaching and maybe with other students who can know the teacher and the teaching. But it is sad that that happens in an area where it's supposed to be good people with the goodness of humanity. With the compassion and love and the true internal clarity that kind of thing happens and it is traumatic. I mean, people do get traumatized and it's like big trauma. They might need actual experts some time to first deal with the trauma before trying to connect with another spiritual teaching or teacher.

Alex Howard: And I guess it's also, it's important people realize that just like one can grow up in an abusive, dysfunctional family, it doesn't mean that all family structure is dysfunctional and abusive and the same way spiritual paths. Just because someone's been wounded in one place, it's important to remember that that's not reflective of everything that's out there.

A H Almaas Yeah, it is true. But for a person who was traumatized, spiritual teaching is very difficult for them to trust, to open up and trust. I understand that. I've seen it happen. I've interacted with people and many individuals like that, and I sympathize with them, actually. They were wounded in a place that is very deep. So it's a question of trust then. Trust and open up in a deep way and opening up in a deep way means working through that trauma with another teacher or other teaching. It requires that. So how do you work with this inner spiritual context, unless trauma that happened in a spiritual situation. It's a tough one, but some people do get through it.

Alex Howard: Yeah.

A H Almaas: Possible to get through it, not then because you're right. Not all spiritual teaching is the same. Not all spiritual teachers are the same. There are spiritual teachers, who are really wholesome, who don't have big destructive shadows. And there are some who have a shadow part of themselves that hasn't been worked out. And part of it depends on the teacher and part of it depends on the teaching. What kind of teaching does it deal with these things or not? Because a teaching that doesn't deal with emotion, tends to produce illuminated people who have not worked through, they still have their shadow. But there are teachings who work with these things directly and that is more, more certainty that the teacher will be more clean that way. Safe.

Alex Howard: Hameed, I'm mindful of time, but for people that want to find out more about you and The Diamond Approach, the Ridhwan school, what do you suggest is a good entry point? What's a good way for people to find out more?

A H Almaas: Well, I mean, we have an online department now, so Diamond Approach online. DiamondApproach.org/Diamond-Approach-Online

For instance, one can go there and see our courses online courses, a short one, a longer one to begin. Or somebody can go to our main website at DiamondApproach.org and that way see what the teaching's about. And there are ways there as to, how to access a teacher if you want to just connect with a teacher to work with individually. And instead of getting into a group, we could actually find out about a group that is beginning or open and join the group, if you are ready for a group. But many people are not yet ready for a group, they might first need to take some couple or so online courses and see what it's like for them. And so they have more taste, more direct experience of the teaching.

Alex Howard: I probably shouldn't say it, but of all the things that we're covering in this conference, your work has been the thing that helped me the most. So I would certainly encourage people to explore further.

A H Almaas: You went through many of those wounds. Obviously, the way you're asking questions, I could tell you have encountered that and worked with it, which is nice.

Alex Howard: Hameed, thank you so much for your time today. I really appreciate it and I really encourage people to explore further.

A H Almaas: I hope it is helpful for people listening to it. Whenever I do something, I want it to be useful.

Alex Howard: Hameed, thank you.

A H Almaas: Okay. Good talking to you.