

# Spirituality & Health Podcast

A.H. Almaas

## Transcript

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**Rami:** From *Spirituality & Health Magazine*, I'm Rabbi Rami and this is the *Spirituality & Health* Podcast. Our guest today, A.H. Almaas, also known as Hameed Ali, is a Kuwaiti born American, a prolific author, a world-renowned spiritual teacher, and the founder of The Diamond Approach, which works with but ultimately moves beyond the tools of psychology and spirituality and moves toward a more holistic understanding of all life as a manifesting of the absolute, which we call by different names, **[unintelligible 00:00:41]** God, Allah, Mother, Brahman, et cetera. His new book is *Keys to the Enneagram: How to Unlock the Highest Potential of Every Personality Type*. A.H. Almaas, welcome to *Spirituality & Health Magazine*.

**Almaas:** Well, hi, Rami. [chuckles] Glad to be here.

**Rami:** No. I very much appreciate you being here. I have been reading your books for years and we were just talking a moment ago that you and I actually met once when you were giving a keynote address at the Inner Directions Conference in LA Jolla, California, I don't know, 30 years ago. [chuckles] I have no idea, but it was a long time ago. I was the MC, you were the featured speaker, and I managed to steal you away. We went for a walk and I got to pick your brain and listen to your wisdom. It's a shame that I haven't been in touch since, but I have been reading the books.

In fact, this new book, *Keys to the Enneagram*, I don't know if this is really the right way to put it but seems to be a sequel to an earlier book you did, really 20 years ago, also, on the Enneagram called *Facets of Unity: The Enneagram of Holy Ideas*. I have to tell you, I use that book all the time. In fact, I'm doing this conversation on the Enneagram on Zoom recently and that was the book because it's such a different take on the Enneagram compared to, I think, all of the other Enneagram books that are out there. What led you to revisit the Enneagram 20 years later?

**Almaas:** Well, at the time, I had understanding of the vision that made me write that book, *The Facets of Unity*. At the same time, I had more understanding and knowledge as part of that vision, which I didn't think writing about it that time because the holy ideas were something that nobody writes about in the Enneagram world, which is a huge world now. So many books, so many authors. I wrote about the holy ideas to present the holy ideas through meaning to the holy ideas. Then in time, I realized that the holy idea book is not approachable by many of the readers of the Enneagram. It's pretty advanced, spiritually speaking.

Then I thought, "Well, maybe then the rest of **[unintelligible 00:03:19]** understanding knowledge will help approach that book and can become a book on its own, has its own wisdom." That's why I decided to write it. I think people should

read this book first, *Keys to the Enneagram*, then read the Holy Ideas. I should have done it that way, but I did it the opposite way.

**Rami:** Well, I have to agree that in both points one, *The Facets of Unity* is not an easy read, whereas the *Keys to the Enneagram* is much more accessible, and I agree that if people are listening and you're wondering, "Oh, where should I start?" Start with *Keys to the Enneagram* and then when you finish that book, don't imagine you, "I got it now. I get it. I understand my ennea type" or whatever. Go on to read *Facets of Unity*. It's like going from an undergrad course to a grad course. It's really, really deep and powerful. If you have some grounding in the Enneagram by reading *Keys to the Enneagram*, moving on to *Facets of Unity* can only be to your benefit.

I have to really applaud you for realizing, "Well, I know more now than I did before." Not everyone, especially in the spiritual author world admits to that like, "Well, I had my revelation and it's always been there and I haven't changed my mind. I don't need to admit that I've changed," but you're taking a much more honest approach and I appreciate that. While I'm listening to you even just briefly here, I imagine lots of people who are listening may know something about the Enneagram. What they know is, I think, a lot of people who know something about the Enneagram imagine it in terms of psychological type like another version of Myers' Briggs or disc or something.

I want to underscore, and have you underscore that you're going in a different direction. You're not really helping people understand their psychology and how to make peace with their Enneagram type. You're going much further than that. My sense is you can tell me if I'm off.

**Almaas:** Yes. You're right, Rami. I assume in the book, the *Keys to the Enneagram* that the reader already familiar with the psychological types because I don't really give much explanation or description of the psychological types. I assume some knowledge of that. Then I want them to go further by understanding how did this type come about? What is its inner underpinnings which takes it to spiritual roots, which is the attempt of the book, really. Which is the way I present both books. That Enneagram originally is a spiritual tool. It's not a topology which is how many people see it. It is useful as a topology, but that is not its original and ancient roots. I adhere more to the original purpose, which is that it is map or way or tool or knowledge that can help us open to our spiritual nature and hands to liberation and connection with the Divine.

That's really both books have that. The new book, the *Keys to the Enneagram*, basically, I call it keys because each type has underlying a particular way that spiritual nature manifest, particular way that is unique to the individual in the sense it is most easily accessible to them. Really the type is an outer reflection of that manifestation of spiritual nature. By one knowing their type well and studying it, not taking it to be the final thing, then one can find out what is the deeper roots of it, and that way, connecting with spiritual reality in a way that is unique to that type in **[unintelligible 00:08:01]**, I call it the natural endowment that time.

**Rami:** I think a lot of people and myself included when I first learned of the Enneagram, I took a test. I'm an Enneagram five. I learned that. I said, "That

explains all the things I do. Now, I know why I do what I do," and that's it. It was a better way to understand my egoic self, [crosstalk].

**Almaas:** That is fun at the present time. [crosstalk].

**Rami:** Yes. It was fun. It was insightful. It was accurate, but it was all about my ego. Not in a negative sense. It was just about myself with a lower case s for self, but in your books, it's like, "Okay, that's fine, but look, if you go deeper, you're going to go beyond the lower case s self, the ego itself into the non-dual capital S self, that non-dual reality of which each of us is a part." First of all, in the facets book, when you say facets, it's like in the Diamond Approach. There's a diamond, multiple facets, they're all faces of the same diamond. My being a five, it's just a five face of a diamond that I share with you and every other consciousness on in the universe. You really take it in a direction that people will a, benefit from, but also may not have thought about in the context of being Enneagram. I'm sure people are going to want to know. What's your type?

**Almaas:** I was typed by the person, Linda from the [unintelligible 00:09:50] as a five too.

**Rami:** We're both five. We're the best type. [laughs].

**Almaas:** Well, I don't know, [crosstalk].

**Rami:** I'm kidding.

**Almaas:** I know. [unintelligible 00:10:02] some people think they're the worst.

[laughter]

**Rami:** Yes, there's some types that are so alien to me that I go, "Oh, yes, that definitely is not me." It doesn't make it bad, it's just definitely not me. How do you personally work? You can use the five as an example because that's you. The fact that we're both fives is, I would assume, incidental or an accidental, but how do you work with the knowledge that you're a five, if we can use you as an example people might understand how they can work with their own type.

**Almaas:** I think I'll use another type, [unintelligible 00:10:43]-

**Rami:** That's fine.

**Almaas:** -because the quality of five is not easy for people to understand. Let's take type eight. It's simpler, that's why I start the book with it. Type eight is more loud person considered, called egovenge, but not necessarily vengeful, but they tend to be aggressive, loud and they're for justice and things like that. What I usually work with it, is first to learn that this type, the way that you have the strength and this loudness and capacity, which person can be a bully, or they can be just like us. That's held back. Is really imply an idea of how to be. That's what all types are. There's an ideal, I call it ego ideal, which is common in psychology, that each ego has its ideal.

The ego is constructed around the ideal. The eight ideal is the ideal of being strong, of being powerful, and strong and capable. When the ideal is in the type, it becomes a little bit depending on how stuck a person is and the type has taught me how inflexible terms of their identification or the patterns or qualities and traits of the type. The more one is rigid and stuck in it, the more that the ideal is more-- not just a reflection of something real, but some kind of a distortion of it. The less stuck a person is, the less distortion and the more it's a reflection.

If you recognize, first you-- eight will need to recognize their ideal which is, "I have the ideal. I want to be really strong, capable and powerful person who fights for justice." To recognize this ideal and then recognizing this ideal is an idea, right? It's an idea, an image and to see that this idea, this image reflects something more fundamental, deeper, some experiential way of experiencing one's being and that will reveal that the ideal of the eight is a quality of spirit. I call it strength which is more of the fire of spirit. Being fire and red and hot and expansive and capable. When somebody has it, it gives a sense of courage and boldness.

It becomes distorted in the eight. It becomes sometime loud or unabashed or outrageous or sometimes, destructive. The real quality is collected and strong without having to be loud, capable without having to be aggressive, or just a matter of being. True courage, true boldness, that is just a quality of being. If we connect with that, we recognize that this strength is really a sense of presence, "I am but here I am as I am." Strength. The strength of being and the strength of spirit. When one connects with that, that is the natural endowment of point eight. That natural endowment is the quality that point eight is-- that is most easily accessible to the eight type because there are other qualities like point two for instance. Their quality, the essential form that they idealize, is a kind of melting love.

Point eight can connect to melting love, but that's not what they gravitate their soul because it's oriented that way. It's oriented towards strength but strength is the presence of spirit. If one can be that, it makes it possible to connect with other ways of experiencing the spirit. Also, the points then that the type point eight can use that capacity, boldness, to be able to go to their holy ideas and unlock the inner hidden secrets that block the holy idea. That takes us to the holy idea book.

**Rami:** I think I heard this right, and I think it's important that people follow this idea, that if whatever your number is, if you're striving to be that, then you're living the distorted view of that if there's that kind of willful, egoic effort, but when you don't strive to be an eight, when you don't feel that compulsion, they-- assuming you're an eight, when you're not striving to be an eight, you're naturally an eight at its best. Is that fair?

**Almaas:** Well, yes, but I'll refine this a little bit.

**Rami:** Yes.

**Almaas:** The eight is not even trying to be an eight. They are trying to be strong, bringing the strength.

**Rami:** Right, okay.

**Almaas:** They're trying to be the spiritual quality of true fire of spirit, but they're doing it through an external, emotional or mental, or physical way of extemporizing something that is more intrinsic, more essential, which is just being it. They don't do anything to be that. That's it.

**Rami:** It seems that-- I'll introduce an idea that you spend a lot of time on in *Facets of Unity*, but I think it's apropos here. The notion of basic trust, that if we come-- I don't know if the word is into or out-- of our type with a sense of basic trust, then we are the strength and we're not striving to be strong. We are that archetypal energy, whatever we're going to call it. This idea of basic trust, I think, it's difficult, not so much to understand, though I'm going to ask you to explain it.

I think it's difficult for a lot of people or maybe I'm just projecting, it's difficult for me to experience. You talk about it. You say that basic trust is experienced as an unquestioned sense of safety and security that's intrinsic to the way you act and live. I'm not doubting the definition, that's from *Facets of Unity*, but I'm going "Wow, have I experienced an unquestioned sense of safety and security?" I'd have to-- maybe at moments, but certainly, not on an ongoing basis. Basic trust is an attitude toward life. Tell us more about basic trust, how you understand it, how it plays into the Enneagram.

**Almaas:** I'm happy to do that. That's stated in the other book, which is because it is where it's discussed in the other book, which is the *Facets of Unity*. I remember when I first learned about politics, basic stuff, I was working with students. I noticed many of them were having difficulty I didn't expect in terms accessing the sense of presence of their spirit. The I am-ness, and how difficult is it? I didn't understand and it took me for a while. Finally, I understood it and **[unintelligible 00:19:36]**, "Oh, yes, that's what it is." They're lacking something. Then I ended up calling basic trust because I realized I already had it, and I didn't need to learn it the way I learned it later. I had something about it, some integration of it.

Then that led me to investigate it, and then turned out, it is really in the-- When I was investigating it, is that basic trust is the way we feel when we come into the world. First, when you imagine infant, when they're just born, assuming that their mother was healthy and had natural birth. They come to the world, they have no fears, no distrust, and safety. They're safe unless something bad happens, so the feeling of inherent-- Okay, they're things who are fine and inherent to the soul because it comes from a spiritual nature.

However, in time, it become **[unintelligible 00:21:01]** and becomes **[unintelligible 00:21:03]** because of we get clobbered in childhood. I have a life circumstances and we lose touch of it. It becomes limited but we never lose it completely. Different people have different degrees of freedom. You say, Rami, "Well, **[unintelligible 00:21:22]**--" It's hard to say a sense of safety and complete, that is true. That is part of it, but basic trust is bigger than that.

Basic trust is trusting that things work out, that the universe works out, that things work out, like you trust, for instance, that the sun is going to come out tomorrow. You trust that you're going to wake up after you sleep. You trust that when you eat your food, it's going to be digested. All of that is implicit trust. You don't say, "Well, I don't

know if am I going to go sleep now. I don't know if I can wake up." Most people don't do that.

Some people do. They don't have that trust. They go to sleep. They're going to wake up, and it's true, sometimes, some people don't wake up, but that's-- Somebody dies in their sleep. Usually, we have **[unintelligible 00:22:22]** trust and our body works in general, our breathing works, our circulation work, until we get sick. Then we have some questions. We also trust that when you walk, your legs will work. All that implies some kind level of basic trust. It can become more complete, more explicit when we feel that, regardless what happens, I am relaxed. I am at ease. There's some kind of safety. That's the completeness of basic trust. Everybody grows up with the measure of it.

If you don't have basic trust at all, you just won't survive **[unintelligible 00:23:10]** being. No, you won't. Trust that things will work out. They're just the sense that things work out, that what I do will work out, that my mind can think, and then that my body works. All that implies basic trust unless something happens. When you go to the spiritual level, you realize that basic trust is something inherent to the fact when we are in touch with our true nature, the spiritual nature because it is indestructible and completely pure, there is trust that'll be fine regardless what happen in life.

Even if things don't work out in my life, I'll be fine because I am, essentially, an indestructible spirit. That is the depth of it. That, of course, one has to be awakened to their essential spiritual nature to have that kind of basic trust. There are all these degrees that I mentioned about basic trust that everybody has some level of basic trust, some more than others.

**Rami:** It's one way you could understand Jesus when he says, "You have to become like little children" because you said newborns come into the world with this sense of basic trust. You talk about it.

**Almaas:** Yes. Basic trust and innocence. Why innocent? Because you know everything is fine. [chuckles] You're happy to smile at people, that you don't trust somebody is going to mistreat you or exploit you until something happen and they do. Then you develop the distrust. Distrust is develop, something that develop. Basic trust is already there. It can only get limited.

**Rami:** As you were saying, basic trust fully-- If there's such a thing as fully realized, it exists, you still have it even if things don't turn out for the best, as far as the ego is concerned. The digestive system isn't working even if you don't wake up in the morning after going to sleep at night, the trust is all of this is okay.

**Almaas:** Yes. It is okay and it would be fine too.

**Rami:** How does that play into the Enneagram?

**Almaas:** Well, that takes us to the holy idea of basic trust because the loss of the basic trust makes the individual develop strategies of how to deal with the world. Those strategies of how to deal with the world, how to run their life, how to live, these strategies becomes then embodied in what I call the ego ideal and how to be, because really, the basic trust is related to something else. I mentioned that, but

which is the holy environment, which is how much love and caring there is in our original experience.

The mechanism or the study is how do we live and how we're going to be so that there will be this love and caring and nourishment, and that we will be fine. That is then-- I call it in the holy idea book is basic trust, when it is limited or lost, change to a distrust which becomes a specific reaction to that loss. That reaction, which is in a beginning of ego or against the ego **[unintelligible 00:27:34]** itself in one of nine ways depending on the holy idea which also connected to the spiritual equality, which then become the basis of how this reaction or how the specific reaction, which is the way we respond to situations in general. That way of respond, as I said, is embodied in idea of how we're going to be, how we're going to interact, how we're going to relate to the world and other people. That develops then our time.

**Rami:** Yes. I can see how my own lack of basic trust-- I compensate for my lack of basic trust as a five, which sends me-- If I only knew enough, if I only had enough information, enough knowledge, I would regain that basic trust, as opposed to knowing you've already got basic trust, you're born with that it, in that state. It's already present, it's distorted or I'm blocked from it or whatever I've done so I can't reach it.

That striving to get something that's going to bring me back to what I already have is always counterproductive that in a sense, you take-- This is mixing of my spiritual metaphors here, but if you try to take a dower way, **[unintelligible 00:29:11]** non-coercive action approach, so that-- At least the way I've been reading this, and if I'm wrong, please correct me, but it's don't do what you are naturally inclined to do, just be with what's happening and you'll rediscover the basic trust. In my case of five, you won't bury the trust or come up with a pseudo trust based on knowledge. Matter of fact, that I can never have enough. I don't know if that is making any sense, but--

**Almaas:** Yes. For five, the ego idea become knowing, knowledge. Then knowledge, really, in the way I describe it in *The Keys to the Enneagram* is a slight distortion of the true quality which is understanding, understanding reality. The five think by accumulating knowledge, they will be okay. However, if they understand themselves as reality, then they'll see it's not a matter of how much I know is what I am.

**Rami:** Exactly. What you are is going to be-- I don't know, held by the universe, whatever it is. That what you are is going to be connected to this basic trust. That's the realization. That's the realization, that is enlightenment. Having that as a felt experience, knowing that beyond the conceptual way of knowing things.

**Almaas:** Yes. Well, I'm also bringing up that to get into the spiritual path or to the spiritual end of the journey is not just to be free from our trouble or suffering that to discover reality as we have these amazing, beautiful secrets and endless secrets and surprises and discovery. I want people to **[unintelligible 00:31:21]** spiritual work, just to be free from the problem but to see that normal, it is really the true reason why we here is to enjoy reality, enjoy what God has given.

Remember, you're talking about **[unintelligible 00:31:41]**, that human beings are to serve complete creation and correct it, but what for? When it's completed, when we feel it completed, it is fun, it is enjoyable, it's blissful. Part of the bliss is not you just

sit and feel happy, no. You're continually discovering new interesting thing that turns you on so life becomes an adventure.

**Rami:** That is a perfect place to end. [laughs]. Hameed, thank you so much. This was very, very interesting. Hopefully, people got a lot out of this. I certainly did. Our guest today, A. H. Almaas, is the author of *Keys to the Enneagram: How to Unlock the Highest Potential of Every Personality Type*. You can learn more about his work at [diamondapproach.org](http://diamondapproach.org) and you can read my essay on the Enneagram on the Spirituality & Health website, [spiritualityhealth.com](http://spiritualityhealth.com). Hameed, thank you so much for talking with us on *Spirituality & Health* podcast.

**Hameed:** Oh, good. Good talking with you, Rami.

[music]

**Rami:** You've been listening to the *Spirituality & Health* Podcast. If you liked this episode, please rate and review us in your favorite podcast app. If you enjoyed this episode, be sure to share us on social media and tag us at Spirit Health Mag. You can also follow me on the Spirituality & Health website where I write a regular column called Roadside Musings. Don't forget to subscribe to the print magazine as well. The *Spirituality & Health* podcast is produced by Ezra Baker Trupiano and our executive producer is Mallory Corbin. I'm Rabbi Rami. Thanks for listening.

**[00:33:52] [END OF AUDIO]**