

## **A. Hameed Ali – the Person**

Interview by Bob Olson

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### **When and where were you born?**

I was born in Kuwait in 1944. The actual birth date is not certain because records were not kept at that time in Kuwait and people did not celebrate birthdays.

### **What is your educational background?**

I was mostly educated in the sciences. I received my BA in physics and math, my MA in physics, and stopped my PhD studies in physics just about the time of writing my thesis. Some years later I received a Ph D in psychology specializing in Reichian Therapy. I am mostly self-educated in the psychological and psychoanalytic fields.

### **How did being married and having children influence your spiritual development?**

It is difficult to say. I usually think of marriage and family as an important place to live the fruits of the teaching, and not as a place to learn, though learning is bound to happen. What I know is that I made the work, developing it and teaching it, my first priority. It has always come before marriage, family and children. When it comes to the work, I want to benefit students as much as I do family. My family members are simply members of the human race when it comes to the work. Who gets my service is determined by readiness and commitment to the work, not family ties.

I also regard marriage and family as an expression of being an ordinary member of the human race. It is part of living life fully and part of the fruition of the inner work. Spiritual development has many elements of fruition. One important one is being a complete human being in society. Being in relation to other human beings with the fullness of fruition expresses this development.

Of course, learning to be with another human being is one major crucible in working out personal issues and developing the personal qualities that are important for personal maturity that express the principle of the work of being in the world but not of it. In such respect marriage and intimate relating have been significant influences in my learning, but not how I tend to view these life situations. I have been married twice, one before I started functioning as a teacher and one after I started, and it is clear to me how different I have been in them.

### **What did you learn from your family of origin about religion and spirituality?**

My mother is religious and comes from a religious family that functioned as leadership for a particular Muslim congregation in the Middle East. Her father and uncle were in this line of religious leadership but had very obvious spiritual orientations and inclinations. Some of their ancestors were intimately linked to some well-known Sufis. They were not Sufis but had developed some true spiritual qualities. My mother is religious but in the old traditional style of Islam, which included tolerance, kindness, humanness, generosity and open mindedness. My father, on the other hand, was secular. He believed in God but he did not live a religious or spiritual life.

The overall effect on me was a freedom to be whatever I wanted in terms of religion. There was no pressure to be religious or not, but religious teachings and spiritual attitudes were around in the environment and in the character of the people. I grew up in my teens as secular, and my interest in the truth turned me towards the sciences, as the way to find what is true and real in the world. I think this is a direct influence from my parents' openness. The lack of pressure gave me the freedom to find my way without coercion or indoctrination.

I had no explicit religious or spiritual leanings until my twenties, but in retrospect I realize I had many spiritual experiences and inclinations that I did not see at the time as such, but were simply the normal way of being and behaving. It was much later that I realized these conditions and flavors were not normal or usual for most people. In other words, the quality of beingness in my family, and the combination of religious and secular influences, created an environment where spiritual intimacy and depth were present without thinking of them as anything unusual. I think this condition has influenced my understanding that spiritual realization is part of the inherent potential of humanity, and that spirituality can be inseparable from being in the world. It also taught me that spirituality is not necessarily connected to any particular teaching or faith, but is natural to being truly human. This is more what underlies my understanding of the principle of being in the world but not of it, much more so than the explicit Sufi

teaching, which I was not aware of till my adult years. I had no direct Sufi teaching in my childhood, and was not interested explicitly in spiritual matters until my adult years.

### **What profession did your parents want you to pursue?**

They did not have a profession in mind for me. My father was happy that I was pursuing scientific studies, but they both were simply happy that I was doing well in school, without regard to what I was studying. I think it was part of the culture in Kuwait at that time that there was no calculated planning for future professions, just the trust that things will turn out fine if the individual develops the right character. I myself thought I would become a scientist, and only in my late twenties did I realize that what was behind that was an implicit love to know the truth of reality in as objective a manner as possible.

### **Why did you study physics and what led you to discount studying physics and turn to the study of inner Reality?**

I studied physics because I was interested in knowing and comprehending the universe. I loved studying reality in any way, since I was young, and I appreciated the beauty and the mathematical precision of science. I both enjoyed such studies and did quite well in them.

In my late twenties, when I was working on my PhD in physics in the Rad Lab in Berkeley, I realized that what I was truly after was a truth of the universe that was not available in the sciences at the time. Around the same time, I became aware of what kind of people most scientists were, and that I did not want to be like that. I mean to be mostly intellect centered, at the expense of other faculties and qualities of human beings. I saw that the truth I had been looking for, without explicitly knowing it, was the underlying ontological and metaphysical foundation of existence. I went through a few years where I experienced my interest in the sciences waning as my interest in studying inner ways of experience increased. That was a radical turn around, and I went through many kinds of anxieties because of it. I did not do it intentionally; it just happened. I never felt this as a discounting of science, for I am still interested in it and value it for humanity's lot. I simply discovered it was not the modality that was going to take me to fulfill my destiny.

### **Why do you think the Diamond Approach manifested through you?**

It is difficult to know why, and I have always wondered why. I never thought of myself as being special in any way, and had no childhood training or exposure to spiritual teachings. When I think about it the best answer I come up with is that I was in the right time and the right place for it to come through. I think the fact that I grew up in a traditional but open-minded culture, in a safe and loving and human environment (a kind of environment disappearing fast around the earth) which gave me some kind of implicit connection to and understanding of the underlying spiritual reality and spiritual values; plus my scientific training and discipline of mind that resulted from it, made me a relatively fit vehicle for this particular teaching. Also, the fact that I grew up in a traditional culture that implicitly appreciated spiritual values, combined with spending my adult years in a Western culture at the vanguard of secular, scientific and technological advances, seem to have given me a kind of openness, malleability and capacity to be receptive and appreciative of the precise but experientially profound teaching of the Diamond Approach. I also think that my exposure and involvement in the developing growth therapies in the sixties and seventies added to this preparation.

It is like the absolute has given my individual soul the destiny to receive and put out this teaching, and has groomed my soul specifically for it by putting me in the situations necessary to develop the right vessel for a teaching that embodies the ancient wisdom but relevant to a post modern Western secular scientific culture. My personal background combines both ingredients in some kind of balance that seems necessary for the emergence of the Diamond Approach. I did not do it myself individually, did not know that was going on, and found it out only after the fact, as insight into my unfolding destiny. There can be other important factors that I am not aware of at this point. One important point here is that this function of putting the teaching out included being a guinea pig for this new path, to be tried and tested. It is actually more of a responsibility than a privilege, but a responsibility I am grateful to shoulder, for it has given me an effective way to serve.

### **How do you feel about the state of the world?**

I tend not to think the state of the world to be especially good or especially bad. It seems to me, it is not worse nor better than I remember from forty years ago. And when I study history, it seems to me that the world is materially better off than it used to be in ancient times, but psychologically about the same. I think there is more education in

the world now, and more awareness of human rights and values in a global way, but human individuals, in general, do not seem to have improved much. I do not think people are worse as people; I think they are the same, still a mixture of love and hate, gentleness and violence, generosity and greed, brilliance and stupidity. The coexisting polarities are still with us as they were with ancient humanity, where the balance between them goes through some slight variations, slightly up and slightly down.

In general, I think there is some slight improvement because of the improvement of physical conditions and the increase in education, but it is a very small improvement, that I think can continue for thousands of years before we can feel a significant change in the state of the world. I am neither apocalyptic nor messianic, and believe both tendencies are a reflection of imbalance in the mind. I know most people lean one way or the other, but I find myself not to be involved in this polarity and not interested in it. This leaves us with the present, and what each individual can do for themselves and for humanity, in simple and human terms, without having to be special or in a special era.

### **Does the state of the world reflect a loving and intelligent Spirit?**

I do not know about what underlies the present state of the world, but I do know that what happens in the world, and the universe as a whole, is not up to human beings only. I think if it was up to us human beings we would not have survived this far; our exaggerated animality would have destroyed us.

When I view things from the perspective of spiritual realization it is clear that the universe is the outer form of spirit, the appearance or body of "God." All that happens is simply the morphogenic transformation of this appearance. It is ultimately not our doing, yet we are some of the vessels through which spirit functions. Since this spiritual ground and nature is inherently good, pure and self-revealing, I am generally optimistic about where the universe is going. Whatever happens, whether it is what we call good or bad, it is going the way this intelligence wills it.

This does not relieve us from personal responsibility, for we are the vessels through which much happens in the world, and our happiness and fulfillment is in serving this spiritual intelligence. To serve it means to be willing vehicles for its pure perfections of love, peace, clarity and so on to manifest and function in the world.

### **Do you have any hobbies or favorite pastimes?**

No. I love reality and enjoy living it. Everything I do is a matter of investigating reality or living and expressing it. It does not matter what I do, or how I spend my time, as long it is living the truth I have realized.

This does not mean I do not enjoy the simple things in life; I do and I enjoy some things more than others. I enjoy people, nature, beauty, movies, swimming, food and so on, but none of these is a hobby. They are just some of the outer content of my everyday personal life. What matters is the in-touchness with the heart of life, the inner true nature with its peace, magnificence, clarity and radiance.

### **How do your parents feel about your teachings?**

My father was disappointed that I left science, but before he died, he was fine when he realized I was still living a good life. He just wanted to make sure I did not fail life and that I was able to take care of myself. His encounter with Sufis in his youth was mostly negative and he ended up believing many of them were charlatans and superstitious, so he was concerned that I was getting involved in mystical teachings. But when he saw I was still a practical and effective person, and was able to take care of myself, he was okay with what I was doing, even though he was not familiar with the specifics of what I was doing. My mother is contented that I am happy with what I do. She does not know or understand my teaching much, except that it is of a spiritual nature. She sometimes makes noises about me needing to be more religious, but tends to trust that what I am doing is good. She seems to look more at how I personally feel and express myself than what I teach. As far as I can tell, she likes what she sees, and we have a very good relationship.

### **Do you get angry? If so how is does your anger express itself now versus before you engaged fully in the inner journey?**

I get angry sometimes. In the past, I did not get angry easily, and it used to be more difficult to be aware of it or to express it. But I was never that angry of a person. The difference now is that when anger comes it tends to be strong and fiery, and not concerned about judgment. I tend to express my anger mostly to get things moving when

there is no other way to do it. It easily and swiftly transforms into some kind of strength. It also tends to pass rapidly without leftovers, sometimes surprising how there remains just peacefulness and contentment after it.

### **How has your sexual life changed since you began the inner journey?**

It got deeper, stronger, more pleasurable, more intimate and more exquisite. Sexual energy became much more available, without historical constraints. Sexual feelings and experience have developed in ways I could not imagine before the transformation. Sexual life is actually one significant way that human maturity expresses itself, developing as this maturity deepens and expands, bringing about further ranges of experience and interaction. In other words, the liberation of realization liberates sexuality to become what it can be. It is also always developing and changing and bringing about newer possibility of being and expressing.

At the same time I have never felt inclined to think of my sexual life as a way to expand my spiritual realization. It is the other way around. It is one way that spiritual realization expresses itself, by giving the absolute the opportunity to experience some of its delightful possibilities.

### **If you are sitting next to someone on an airplane and they ask you what you do, what might you say? (I remember you sharing that once you told a person you write cook books).**

It depends on the situation or the individual. If the individual is simply trying to make conversation, I can say anything. I can talk about being a researcher of human nature, a consciousness dealer, a scientist, one involved in human development, and so on. If the individual is truly interested I can talk more directly about the work in a way that can communicate to the individual. Most of the time in these situations the individual is trying to strike a conversation or trying to be nice or is lonely and needing company. I respond to these, and not just to the letter of the questions. I do not remember anything about cook books; sometimes I say I am an author and talk about writing and so on, and have said outrageous things in order to simply engage in a warm or lively conversation. . However, I tend to be private in public and keep my life to myself, unless there is a real need or interest. I tend not to have a need for conversation or socializing, and I am by temperament not that social. Because of that what I say sometimes is to discourage further social talk.

### **Why did you come to the United States and how has living in this country influenced you?**

I came to this country to go to college. I went to the University of California in Berkeley, where I studied math and physics. I had a scholarship from the Kuwait ministry of Education.

Living in this country influenced me mostly through education and my encounter with a modern Western culture. I am by now very much a post-modern consciousness, reaping the benefits of science and technology, and thriving in the openness and freedom of a democratic and free market economy. The Diamond Approach could not have developed except in a secular and free society, as we have in the US. Living in this country has completed the preparation of my individual soul necessary for fulfilling my destiny, that of being the conduit, vehicle, and servant of the absolute in its manifestation of the teaching of the Diamond Approach. Hence, I am grateful to both my country of origin and the country I am living in presently, both for me individually and for the fulfillment of my destiny in formulating and putting out the Diamond Approach.

### **What have been the pivotal external events and internal experiences that have influenced you?**

In terms of external events: First the polio I got when I was about two years old. This created a vulnerability and physical dependence on others, which helped me become a socially sensitive individual, but also inwardly autonomous. It also gave me the necessity to turn inward to experience life. The actual mechanics of having to use a crutch to walk has affected my body in a way where I could not ignore my inner sensations. So I developed an inner sensitivity and a dynamic inner life that has always been independent of external situations. The polio created a limitation in terms of physical and social functioning, but it also allowed some inner strengths to develop.

The second external event occurred when I was in college in my early twenties. I was involved in a traffic accident and had to be on the critical list in a hospital for some time. At the moment of the accident I left the body, but my experience was not the usual out-of-body experience. Rather I right away saw myself in the absolute and recognized myself as the embodiment of what I later came to know as the Diamond Guidance, a faceted body of light and presence, a diamond body, that contains all the qualities of true nature. At the time, I forgot that perception and retained only a carefree basic trust that life and existence are good and the right things will happen. It took a few years of inner work some years later to regain the memory of this experience, as part of the process of

integrating the functioning of the Diamond Guidance. It was a real process of reliving, as if I was undergoing it in the moment, which resulted in much understanding of what happened after that. What I see now is that the accident functioned as the turning point of my attention from studying the universe externally to exploring it internally. That happened as a gradual process of discovery and not as an instant conversion, which also means the process developed a systematic body of knowledge.

However, I think none of these events could have affected me the way they did if I had not received true nurturance and love from my parents and family in early childhood. Even though my childhood included the trauma of polio and coming close to death, and various psychological difficulties and conflicts in my family dynamics, love and caring were implicitly present as the atmosphere that my siblings and I grew up in. That affected me, I believe, more than anything else, directly and implicitly at the time and later on as I got to explicitly recognize it in my personal journey of discovery.

Another event that I think influenced me a great deal was leaving Kuwait at age 18 and moving to the US. That created a confluence of the values of traditional cultures and those of modernity in my consciousness in a way that resulted in an integration relevant for our times, an integration that is not separate from the integration of the mature human being in the Diamond Approach.

Another one is meeting my friend Karen Johnson, and the development of our friendship in ways that I never imagined possible, a friendship of spirit that became one of the important crucibles for the development of the Diamond Approach.

In terms of inner experiences, one important one is that of recognizing myself as the embodiment of the Diamond Guidance, at the time of the traffic accident. I think that perception went underground in my consciousness and exerted an influence, slowly but inexorably, to reveal the nature and functioning of the Diamond Guidance, methodically and gradually and in great and explicit detail. This has become one major way that the Diamond Approach manifested. The Diamond Guidance did not just manifest, but rather functioned to reveal the teaching of the Diamond Approach, and to unfold my soul and experience towards the deepening realization of true nature in its various qualities and dimensions. That is why I usually say that individually I could not have developed the Diamond Approach. It was revealed by the Diamond Guidance, which is the messenger and the intelligent guidance of the absolute to reveal its treasures and its ultimate mystery.

Another experience was the discovery of true nature as presence. I knew about the concept of essence and true nature but did not know it was presence, or what presence was. So recognizing what I am, as the very beingness of consciousness and awareness, opened up the inner realm in a way that never closed down. It began the true inner unfoldment and the arising of the teaching of Diamond Approach.

Many transformative experiences ensued after that, each one deeper and more profound than the other. One was the realization of the point of light and presence, which shifted my identity with experiential certainty to the realm of spirit. Another was the discovery of the personal essence, the pearl beyond price, which made it possible for me to recognize the importance and nature of human maturity and its relation to spiritual realization and its integration in everyday living. Another important experience, which became a continuing and deepening realization, is the recognition of the absolute as what I ultimately am, and understanding its transcendence of all manifestation, its immanence as the body of the divine, and its expression as the total human being in the world. The discovery of the absolute was the moment I recognized the true object of my heart's search, and the beginning of the wordless contentment of arriving home.

Another experience is the recognition and understanding of the soul, which led to the unfolding of its knowledge and potential, and its integration in the absolute transcendent mystery, as I detail in *Luminous Night's Journey*. There have been innumerable experiences, discoveries and realizations, each one of them revealing to me the essence of one traditional teaching or another. At each of these junctures I felt I was so free and fulfilled I could have died at that moment with total fulfillment and satisfaction. A book can be written about each of them, yet the true realization is the recognition that it is not the experiences but the transformation and liberation that come with them, which is both a metamorphic transubstantiation of the soul and the abiding in the absolute nature. In time I saw that the journey is a path of ripening.

We must not think this is all that is possible for a human being. This is the enlightenment and realization necessary for liberation. But the human potential extends much further, where the liberation allows the freedom to access realms of experience and perception, and ways of being and action, that are not usually discussed by the various teachings. They are the inner life of the mature human being, one who has integrated the inner path.

### **Who have been the formal and informal teachers in your life? How did they influence you?**

I have already discussed this matter in the introduction to Luminous Night's Journey. I have had many human teachers, who benefited me a great deal, and to whom I am deeply grateful. Yet my primary teacher has always been true nature, my own essential nature, especially through its messenger and guide, the Diamond Guidance.

### **Who are your teachers now?**

When you recognize yourself with certainty and continuity as the true nature with all its majesty and beauty, you do not have teachers anymore. It does not make sense any longer. I was also in the unusual situation where I recognized that my process of ripening was not only for myself, but was mostly functioning as the vehicle for the arising and the transmission of the Diamond Approach. To be formally and continually studying with a teacher would have limited this function, or at least not allowed it to unfold in its own logic and pace. Yet, as an individual soul that embodies the absolute nature I learn from everybody. All life situations and all individuals are sources of learning. I continue to learn from contacts with various teachers and teachings, without adopting any as my teacher. I also have good friends with whom I talk and exchange ideas, and I continue to study and explore in general.

At the same time, for some time now my work is not primarily to work on myself, that always continues anyway, but to serve the absolute nature by being and living it in the midst of the world. It is to be the mystery and to express its enchanting luminosity

### **Do you have any regrets in life?**

No regrets. Simply sorrow for mistakes I made and could not have done otherwise at the time. The sorrow is mostly for actions that helped cause pain and suffering to others. There is the sense of sorrow when remembering such actions, but the individual who actually took these actions is not around anymore. It is not what I am now. In terms of the course of my own life, I have no regrets and I cannot have any. For I have recognized for some time, with a redundancy of confirmation, that my life is guided by something deeper and more fundamental than my individual mind. In a more fundamental sense, I experience and recognize myself as the absolute nature, and how can the absolute, which is transcendent to everything, have regrets.

### **What's it like to be Hameed?**

It is what you see and it is other than what you see. What you see is Hameed, the ordinary, good-natured person who loves people and enjoys life, discovery and being. He has his concerns and his ordinary worldly interests and pleasures. He has his limitations that he has to contend with, just as all human beings do. Yet, the heart of this ordinary individual, his experience of himself, has no self-image, and no constant inner form. It is invisible to all except to ones who know it intimately from their own experience, ones who have left the ordinary world but still live in it. One has to have first realized the absolute before one can have a glimpse or understanding, even appreciation, of such inner life. It is not something to be discussed except with ones who can see or approach it, and hence I have never taught it. What it's like to be that is not like anything known in the known world. It is invisible partly because it is not possible to imagine it. Its beginning is detachment from being the absolute, and hence the absence of concern about realization and inner states in general.

### **Why did you use the pen name A.H. Almaas for your books?**

When I first wanted to publish *Essence* and the *Elixir of Enlightenment*, the publisher, Weiser, thought that my name sounded too Sufi and Sufi books were not popular at the time. That coincided with my sentiment at the time, which was partly that I wanted to be anonymous because of valuing my privacy, and partly because of recognizing that the Diamond Guidance was the source of the teaching, not myself as an individual. My friend, Hameed Qabazard, came up with the name, A. H. Almaas. I liked it because it has my initials, A. H. A. but Almaas meant in Arabic, and other languages, diamonds. So the name expresses the truth that the individual, A. Hameed Ali, is the outer vessel for the inner source, the diamonds of consciousness.

### **How do you have the time to be husband, father, spiritual leader, and to write a dozen original and profound books?**

First, I have not put that much time into being a father; I arranged my life so that I could focus on my work, where there are many students all needing care, not just my children. I have organized my life in such a way as to support my function of putting out the teaching of the Diamond Approach. Everything else is either supportive of this

function or is peripheral to my life. Such clarity and focus, and the dedication to serving the truth, create a great deal of time, for time is not wasted in so many things that are not necessary or useful. It is part of being a mature human adult in the inner path meaning. That is why I do not have hobbies. For most people, time is wasted in inner rumination and reactivity, or external interests that do not serve the ultimate truth. I am simply not interested in these inner or outer things. Even my vacations and resting time, my entertainment and socializing, are to support the service of truth. Yet, it is natural, and feels pleasurable, and is what I want and prefer to do. So there is no sense of inner compulsion. In the true maturity of realization, there is no distinction between serving the truth and doing what one wants to do. There is total harmony between the two, as two ways of saying the same thing.

Yet, the organization of my life and its circumstances are a continuing process. It is always changing as things happen, as my body ages, as the world changes, as the realization develops and reveals new possibilities, and as the work and the school develop and evolve. Also, I am aware of the limitations of time and my personal limitations and the limitations of my situation, and have to always use my intelligence to do what I can, and not to plan on doing more than I can.

But I think what underlies this sense of the availability of time is the awareness of the timelessness of reality. Timelessness gives the sense and feeling of spaciousness in time, which psychologically or subjectively feels as absence of time-crowdedness. This, plus the mature recognition of the limitations of ordinary time become integrated into efficient functioning and living. Actually, the real trick is not that of finding time for the things you mention, but having enough empty space and time for the arising of new discoveries that develop and enrich the teaching.

### **What are some of your personal and professional goals for the future?**

I have no personal or professional goals for the future. I do not usually set up goals for myself. I just do what is needed, and things develop the way they can. Who am I to know what is supposed to happen in the future? My destiny is to put out the Diamond Approach, and it is happening. I will keep doing it in whatever way that presents itself as effective and doable. It has been a long time since I realized I exhausted all my goals and ambitions. My primary goal was the realization of the secret of existence, and since then I have not seen any new goals developing.

What is left are momentary goals, like planning to eat dinner with a friend a couple of nights from now, or travel arrangements for a vacation in a few months and so on. But no goals as we usually understand them. My life is pretty much in the moment, and what is there to want when reality is at hand? Furthermore, service does not require the setting up of future goals, for it has its own intelligence and inner logic. It is the spontaneous outflow of true nature in life circumstances in the moment. And the implicit trust that its intelligence is sufficient to lead it to whatever needs to be done.

### **Do you know of any enlightened people on the planet today? Are you enlightened? Do you expect to be enlightened?**

I use the concept of enlightenment sparingly because I use it in a technical way. I do not mean simply the experience of true nature, the recognition of true nature, or even the realization of or abiding in true nature, whether non-dual or not. Many people, including many teachers, use the term in these ways. If we use it to mean such things, then of course I am enlightened and we have also many enlightened individuals in our school. That is why I usually use the concept of realization, which I differentiate from enlightenment, even though I am aware that my teachers use the two terms interchangeably.

By realization I mean the ability to abide in true nature, to recognize and be true nature. Since true nature has many dimensions, or degrees of subtlety, there are degrees or levels of realization. Also, because there are many degrees of completeness of realization or capacity of abiding in true nature, there are many levels of realization. Hence, realization can develop and mature, by realizing true nature in subtler, deeper or more total ways, and by the completeness of such capacity of abiding. This implies that one can attain a degree of realization but there still remain some obscurations, issues, unresolved personal or historical conditioning, or the possibility of the arising of such.

When realization becomes full and permanent I call it enlightenment. This has two sides. One is that there are no more obscurations or the possibility of the development of obscurations. No more issues, no more inner lack of clarity and no more inner limitations of one's experience. The other is the full and permanent awareness of the totality of true nature, in all its subtlety and dimensions, with the total freedom for it to manifest in whatever way

necessary. Together they imply permanent living in the fullness of the real world, without holding to any particular teaching or perspective, or view of enlightenment or need for it.

This is the reason why I do not subscribe to the view of there being enlightened but neurotic or crazy individuals.

I do not know anybody enlightened this way, and I am definitely not so enlightened. If there are presently enlightened beings like this I have not met them. There are, though, many realized individuals with various degrees of realization; and I do not see myself as one of the most realized. Realization can also come in kinds, so there are not only different degrees but also different kinds of realization.

Do I expect to arrive at full realization or enlightenment? I do not expect or not expect it; it is a possibility, but it does not concern me. It is simply the natural maturation of realization, as long as there is sincerity, the true openness to reality and the absence of the need to know in a final way.

### **Do you have a regular mediation practice? What is your experience when you meditate?**

I have several practices that I engage depending on the time, but mostly it is being where I am, and light-hearted inquiry that arises spontaneously some of the time. My experience during meditation is pretty much the same as outside of meditation, except that the continuous focus of meditation sometimes gives my condition more clarity of manifestation. I have already discussed this condition some above.

### **What is your fondest childhood memory?**

I do not know, but one I remember is that of eating dinner with my father, his friends, and my younger brother, in the dark on the beach, some summer night. We were all eating from the same bowl, lamb and rice, and none of us could see what we were eating or who was eating what. I felt so free, trusting, enjoying the food, the company and the canopy of stars lighting the night sky.

### **How do you see your role on the planet?**

I have many roles, but my function and destiny is to put out the Diamond Approach, as my primary way of living and serving true nature.

### **How has your reading influenced your spiritual path?**

There are different kinds of reading, depending on the kind of book. Primarily, I have benefited from two kinds of books. I learned a great deal from scholarly or technical ones, in both psychology and spirituality. I learned much of my knowledge of psychology and psychoanalysis from studying books. The reading had to be checked and compared with experience and observation, mine and others. The result is the integration of much of this psychological knowledge in the understanding of mind and soul, which became very instrumental in the conceptualizations and methodology of the Diamond Approach. The same with reading the texts of many of the traditional teachings; the concepts and views helped me be open to various kinds of realities and helped me understand and formulate my experience and the content of the teaching.

The other kind of books are the expression of the states of realization. These are books written by realized individuals and teachers, from various traditions and teachings. Frequently these books are edited versions of talks such teachers had given. In this kind of reading the learning is not cerebral, but more of accessing the states of consciousness of the writer or teacher. The books function as conduits for the transmission of their states of realization. I happened to develop the sensitivity to be open to such direct transmission through the word. I learned a great deal this way, where the reading and understanding of the books became the experience and exposure to the states of realization of the particular authors. It is obvious how this can influence one's spiritual path, for these experiences contribute both to the openness of the consciousness and the development of wisdom. This helped me in my own realization, and in the formulation of the Diamond Approach. Usually, I experience the conditions discussed in the books, and then I will see their relation to what is arising in the Diamond Approach. This both helped to expand my experience in the Diamond Approach, and to see how it was understood in other teachings. The result is that the Diamond Approach manifested within a direct knowing of many of the well known conditions discussed in traditional teachings.

The usual sequence of events is that I will experience something from some teaching or teacher. But since I am interested in being where I am, my experience will unfold in such a way to reveal new qualities or dimensions in the

Diamond Approach, contrasted with the experience from the other teaching, and showing how the Diamond Approach connects it to ego experience and so on. Sometimes it happens the other way around. Something arises as part of the Diamond Approach, like a dimension of Being. I read some books that I get interested in as a result. My experience helps me be open to the teaching in the book, which then develops the unfoldment of the Diamond Approach with greater precision and specificity. It is amazing how the Diamond Guidance makes it so clear what the teaching I received from the book is, and what is actually the teaching of the Diamond Approach, and how they are similar or different.

It is important to see how the Diamond Approach manifested not only in a Western secular environment, but in an environment suffused by the availability of many traditional and new spiritual teachings.

### **Who is your favorite author/authors?**

In terms of spiritual writers, I think the best is Idries Shah, in the many books he wrote about Sufism and Sufi teachings. Not in terms of the depth or subtlety of thought or teaching, but in the skill of writing that used spiritual capacities. He wrote in such a way that each word did its job exactly and to the point. It is what I call objective writing, written from a true place that wanted to communicate some truths, and that is all. No extra personal vested interests or emotional need satisfaction. I think he succeeded in various degrees in his books to do that. I see his writing as expressing some of the capacities of the Diamond Guidance. It seems to me that he used his writing as part of his way of transmission of his teaching to his students. If one truly worked with his writings one becomes open to the direct transmission from Idries Shah of the spiritual energy of his Naqshabandi lineage. It is similar to what Rumi did in his poetry.

I also enjoy reading fiction, especially science fiction. My favorite writer here is Frank Herbert, author of the Dune series.

**In the preface of your new book, “The Inner Journey Home,” you wrote: “By writing and publishing this book, and the others before it, I am fulfilling a facet of my personal function as a discriminating and expressive organ, and an appreciative servant, of this wonderful and magnificent truth of Reality”. What are some other facets of your life? Can you say more about how you are a “discriminating and expressive organ”? Can you say more about how you are an appreciative servant of this wonderful and magnificent truth of Reality?**

Other facets of my function are teaching students, training teachers, communicating in various ways and forms in public and in private, living the different areas of my life as an expression of realization and so on. All these are facets of putting out the Diamond Approach, which is my primary function.

By organ I am referring to the individual soul as it matures, comes into its own, and fulfills its destiny. When the soul matures it explicitly and consciously becomes an organ of perception and action for the absolute. It always is, but its maturity means its clarification and completion so that it consciously becomes aware of that, and recognizes that its fulfilled life is to serve the absolute by willingly and happily functioning as its organ of perception and action.

As the individual soul I recognize myself as the appreciative servant of the absolute, at the same time that I recognize the absolute to be my nature and identity. As the absolute I manifest the soul as my organ of perception and action in the world of manifestation, for without the soul I have no way of having experience, perception, knowledge and so on. As the soul I am the surrendered soul accepting and happily fulfilling its function of serving the absolute by being its personal vehicle and instrument.

When the soul matures the absolute becomes aware of itself, for the developed soul gives it the discriminating capacity necessary for such recognition and enlightenment. I am both, in inseparable oneness, just as the body includes the eye and the eye is inseparable from the body.

**At the end of Chapter Twenty Four in your new book “The Inner Journey Home” you wrote: “We are essence with all facets, dimensions and aspects, but we are also the human being , with his perishable body, his corruptible mind and twisted heart.” Enlightened beings have perishable bodies. Do they also have corruptible minds and twisted hearts?**

I am referring here to the normal condition of human beings, where we are true nature with all of its purity, the soul which is corruptible and the body which is perishable. The more realized we are the more we have our soul clarified and matured, which means purified of the causes of corruption. Full enlightenment means the soul is completely

clarified, purified, completed and awakened so there is no more corruptibility. In this condition the soul is totally inseparable from the absolute, totally characterized by its incorruptible purity.

**How have you been influenced by women in your spiritual life?**

Starting with my mother, grandmothers, sisters and cousins, later with friends and lovers, then wives and daughters, students and teachers, I wouldn't be who I am without women. Woman is one way the absolute manifests itself in order to experience and know itself. Man is another. With the two together, the absolute knows itself in ways not possible by each one of them. The absolute is eternally unchanging, but it manifests all the changes of the universe. I have developed a great deal because of my relation to women and manifest my nature in ways not possible except with women. In terms of formal teaching I never had an outside female teacher, but I have not had formal teachers for over 25 years now. Yet, my development wouldn't be the way it is if it was not for the influence of my various relationships with women, as family, friends and students. The maturity of my heart, and the completeness of the sense of being a man, are two particular areas that could not have happened without relation to women.