

SPACECRUISER INQUIRY: True Guidance for the Inner Journey

by A. H. Almaas

Chapter One

WHY INQUIRE?

When we think about ourselves, what do we experience? What do we see? What are our lives like? Most of us live in a continual struggle of seeking pleasure and pushing away pain. For long stretches of time, we persistently feel that our lives aren't "enough"—full enough, rich enough, complete enough.

Once in a while, we find ourselves experiencing contentment; everything seems just right. But usually we feel this contentment only briefly. We then try to "improve" something, or we worry about the future, or in some other way fail to simply be with the contentment.

Suppose it is a beautiful day at the beach. Perhaps you are sitting on your blanket, sipping ice tea and basking in the sun. Everything is fine, but after a while you start getting a little bored. You take a book out of your beach bag and begin to read, but you find yourself feeling irritable. Then you realize that the main character in the story reminds you of your father, who never let you have any privacy. Even though you are by yourself, you suddenly get the feeling that someone is standing over you, judging you for relaxing on the beach and getting a tan rather than cleaning out the garage. You decide that it's probably not a very good book and put it away. What you really want, you feel now, is something to eat. Halfway through eating your sandwich and chips, though, you realize you weren't really hungry. Maybe a nap would make you feel better. You close your

eyes, but now you are completely restless. The contentment of an hour ago is gone, and you don't know how you lost it.

This is how we live—trying to manipulate the outer world so that our inner world can be at peace. But this struggle is a hopeless task; it is not what will bring us to a state of contentment. This example of our internal process points to a basic fact of our ongoing experience: We don't know how to leave ourselves alone. Every internal action involves some kind of rejection of our present state, our actual reality. And there is a deeper consequence to this attitude of rejection: By rejecting what is so for us in the present moment, we are rejecting ourselves. We are out of touch with our Being. Aiming toward the future, we sacrifice the present. By looking outside ourselves for what is missing, we subject ourselves, our souls, to the pain of abandonment.

But the fact is: Nothing is missing! Our true nature is actually always there. Our true nature is Being. And everything is made of this true nature: rocks, people, clouds, peach trees—all the things in our life. However, these things do not exist independently, the way we think they do. What we are really seeing are the various forms of Being. To understand Being itself, the nature of what we truly are, we must penetrate the inner, fundamental nature of existence. To be open to this fundamental nature, we must question what we think we are: Am I really a white male, of a certain height and weight and age and address, who is defined by my personal history? And if that's not me, what is?

We are like the river that doesn't know it is fundamentally composed of water. It is afraid of expanding because it believes that it might not be a river anymore. But once you know you are water, what difference does it make whether you are a river or a lake?

Your Being is what is constantly manifesting as you. It thinks by using your brain. It walks by using your legs. But in your daily experience, you think you are a

bundle of arms and legs and thoughts, and do not experience the unity that underlies all of your experience.

When we are not in touch with Being, we experience a kind of hollowness. We lack a sense of wholeness, or value, or capacity, or meaning. We might search endlessly for pleasure or contentment, but without an appreciation of our true nature, we are missing most of the pleasure that is possible in our lives.

Our nature, our Being, is the most precious thing there is, yet most of us lose touch with it as we dream, wish, hope, scheme, and struggle to have what we think is a good life. We want the right diploma, the best job, the ideal mate. But without some appreciation of our true nature, we end up on the outer fringes of life, always tasting a bland imitation of the nectar of existence.

Copyright 2002 Hameed Ali