

What Can I Do?

Shams Martínez

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Shams: Hello, Amália, thank you for your email. I'll answer trying to focus first on the main question. You'll have to excuse me because my English is not the best. Please, feel free to ask again if something is not clear.

Amália: What can I do? Not that I need to "do" anything, but what to do with my mind while living in this world??

Shams: What can you do? It all depends on your goal. Do you know what is your goal? Do you have it clear? If you say you're a student of Vedanta, you have only one objective: knowledge. Is that really your goal?

So first you have to ask yourself if you really want to apply to your mind the means of knowledge that is Vedanta. If your answer is yes, Vedanta will tell you what to do, explaining to you every step with great detail. On the other hand, if you don't want to apply the means of knowledge to your mind, then there are many things to do because this world consists basically of doing things.

When you choose to go for the worldly goals without knowledge, you'll have exactly that: the world, lots of action and lots of consequences to those actions. All of them (despite their different flavors and colors) are plain and simple experience. It's called *samsara* and does not have to be something terrible. All your epiphanies, all your experiences (from the densest to the most subtle) belong to that class of things.

So in summary, there are two options. The first is to take the path of knowledge and follow the steps of Vedanta. The second one is to continue looking for experience to fulfill you.

Are you clear about this?

Amália: My name is Amália and I have been in touch with Isaiah for a while, and he recommended you. I hope it is alright for me to write to you.

I read your bio on the ShiningWorld website, and I really identified myself with the same pursuit you had before non-duality.

I've always had that feeling of trying to figure out what life is about. It's like I feel so incomplete and I wonder, what do I really want? Why am I here?? What's there to get? What is happiness?

Shams: Amália wants to be free. It is the only desire of all beings. Although we all seem to want different things, the only thing you care about is being free. Free from what? Limits. If you do not to feel incomplete and limited, you would not have these questions.

Vedanta says that you are already full and limitless. You do not have to do anything

to achieve it. However, you're still feeling bound by the limitation. Why? Because of ignorance. Because you ignore that you are already full and limitless.

So how can you get free when you are already free? With knowledge.

You say you feel incomplete and uncertain about what you really want. If you're perceiving it, then that feeling is not you but an object in you. You are free right now and the idea of being incomplete is only one object in you too.

Why are you here? Because you've always been here and always will be. There is no goal to achieve because you are the goal. You are already complete. It seems like you came to the world and are doing things in the world but that is a misunderstanding. One day the world appeared in you (not vice versa) and also a woman with a history appeared in you, and as in a game, you pretend to be her. Actually, you are awareness. You're out of time and space. You are the one that allows everything else to happen. Am I talking about a vision? Is it an experience? Is it something special? No. It's just understanding, it's just knowing how things are and who you are. There is nothing special here.

What's there to get? In the world, for the person you think you are, there are many things to get. But they are basically divided into two types: experience and knowledge. Without the knowledge, the experience brings a lot of confusion. And what is that knowledge? It is knowledge about your true identity. That's what you need to get, that's what Amália is looking for day and night: knowledge of her true identity. I'll repeat it: knowledge of her true identity.

So what is happiness? Happiness is you. When you get what you want and feel joy, that joy comes from you. Knowledge makes this clear.

Amália: I came across the ShiningWorld website and James after having a non-dual experience that changed my life. I don't know how it happened but I was already listening to Eckhart Tolle, and I had read a book by Michael Singer, *The Untethered Soul*, where he speaks about "watching the mind"...

One day I was in such a good mood that I just couldn't be bothered to get upset with anything... so I said to myself, "Whatever happens today I am not going to give ANY importance to it because all I want is to be happy and I don't want to sacrifice that for anything." After a few minutes my mind started to argue with me and it was bringing problems to my head that were not even happening at that moment. Then I really concentrated on what was happening and I said to myself, "This is not real!!!" The problem that the mind wanted to argue with was a problem that wasn't even happening at that moment... at that moment I was just walking down the stairs... but the mind made it so real. I then said to myself, "What am I? Am I the problem I'm listening to in my head or am I just walking down the stairs?" I then left the mind alone. I simply did not believe anything that the mind was saying. (I wish I could do that now!!!!!!)

Shams: An experience is useless if you don't get knowledge. All the experiences of the world are the same: objects appearing in you. And what are you? You are observing that in the mind. You are watching the mind. You are not the mind. You are not the body.

Amália: I stuck with that thought and then after a while, I don't know what happened but I could see that I wasn't separate from ANYTHING!!!! From that day onwards I was one with everything, completely happy, nothing could upset me. After a few days, that "experience" disappeared... don't ask me how because I don't even understand what happened!!!!

Shams: Yes, you are not separate from anything, but you are free of everything. Everything depends on you, and you don't depend on anything. Sometimes an experience can show you that truth. That is the thing with experiences: they are deaf and dumb, and depend only in what you interpret them be. The experience showed you a truth (you are not separate from anything) but it didn't show you the whole picture. Only Vedanta can do that.

For example, you can ask yourself what really changed for you. Remember that you are the witness, that you are the one watching the mind, not the mind. First, the mind wondered and had problems. Then there was a special experience and the mind was filled with light and happiness (*sattva*). Finally, as always happens, experience and mind went back to normal. But does something change in the witness? Awareness is the same at the beginning, in the middle and at the end. Nothing changes in you. Nothing changes in the witness that is watching the mind.

Amália: At that time I was very new to non-duality... I searched on the Web and found James. He then explained to me what had happened and that I needed knowledge. That was a few years ago... in the meantime, I've had epiphanies again... but I am struggling a lot with this knowledge business and non-duality.

Shams: And you? What happened to you, awareness? You speak as if you are a body-mind named Amália, but you are not. You are awareness. All those things happened in you, but nothing happened to you. That is the knowledge that James was talking about.

Amália: Isaiah was very kind to me, and his effort to help me was a huge blessing for me.

I think that the experiences of non-duality were actually not good for me because I now have some sort of "idea" of what enlightenment is and I just can't carry on with inquiry. I am always dismissing everything.

Shams: You are not dismissing everything. If you were dismissing everything, you would dismiss the mind. But you are sure that you are the mind. There is no problem with old experiences. Are those experiences here right now? They are gone. Now there are just some ideas. Are you able to look at those ideas? If you can do it, you can dismiss them. You can really start dismissing everything by watching the mind.

So do you have your own idea about enlightenment? That is no problem either. Look at that. It's only an idea. Can you see it? You are not it. You are not defined by that. So dismiss it.

If you become a serious Vedanta student, you will learn how to dismiss everything until you get to the only thing that no one can dismiss: yourself.

Amália: I don't know where to put my attention anymore... I don't know how to act in this world without wanting things! I always fall for the trap of "object happiness."

Shams: Don't stop wanting things. Just understand that the joy is in you. It seems to me that you are not understanding that 100%. Look at the teaching again. It's not wrong to go for things. It's just a delusion, a misunderstanding. You have to understand why it is like that.

Amália: I have a simple life. I am from Portugal but live in the United Kingdom. My life consists of work – housework – which I really appreciate because it gives me time to enquire and to really pay attention to the teachings. I don't have many distractions.

Shams: That's very good.

Amália: I read the book *How to Attain Enlightenment* but I still don't understand what is the deal?!

Shams: The deal is about knowledge of your true identity. For now, maybe it's not very easy for your mind to get it. It's clear that you missed the most important message in the book. What can you do now? You have to be sure if you really want to go for the knowledge. But most important of all, either you want to follow Vedanta or you don't want it, you have to be confident that everything is okay, that you are okay and that everything is gonna be alright.

If you choose Vedanta, you will have to follow the steps. For example, if you couldn't understand James' book, you have to do some work on your mind because the mind should be clear and calm in order to understand the teaching. So this would be the recommendation for you. You have to cultivate a *sattvic* mind as a requirement to be able to understand. How to do it? The answer is *karma yoga*, devotion and *guna* management. Everything is on the book, and your questions are very welcome here too.

Amália: I am just so tired of the feeling of incompleteness... of having to get experiences to feel alive... I am really tired.

Shams: But you are the witness watching the mind. Are you the one who is tired? That tiredness is just an object in you. You are free of it. You are free of the seeking of experiences to feel alive. Do you get it? It doesn't matter. If you get it or don't get it, there are just objects appearing in you. You are just watching them. You are watching a show. You are not in the show.

Amália: I understand that my problem is wanting one thing and not realizing that while I am looking for that "thing" I am just denying my fullness.

Shams: Want everything you want. That is not a problem. But you have to investigate why you want those things. You want things because of the fullness that seems to dwell there. Once you get the desired object, you feel relieved and full, for a moment. Where did that feeling come from? The mind, for that moment, stopped its seeking and looked within. So the joy came from looking at you. Because it is you. You don't have to change the experience. You just have to understand it. It's good to go for things but it's better to know what is your true motivation.

Amália: I am sorry for this long email but it's like my life depends on this. Thank you for listening.

~ All my love, Amália

Shams: I hope this is helpful for you. I would like to tell you that it is okay if you take it easy. It is the best way to do things, taking it easy. Keep looking at the mind, remembering that you are nothing that appears there, i.e. ideas and emotions. Don't try to change them. Just look at them. Now there are some emotions of despair and doubt. So what? That emotions are expression of your true nature that is love.

You read James' book but you are not applying *karma yoga*. Amália will feel better when she understands that she is in the hands of Life (God, the Goddess, Kosmos, call it whatever you want) and she doesn't have to struggle for anything because everything is out of her control and everything is just fine. Only a mind that can take this with love is able to allow the knowledge to grow.

~ All my love too, Shams