

# The Only Choice Is Peace of Mind

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**Sundari:** Hello, Sharon. I am resending you the email I sent to you in reply to your first question, with a few adjustments and additions, as I don't think you understood it. You basically asked the same question again in your second email. We cannot give you the answer to what is the right thing for you to do, so please read this email carefully and think about it before you reply again.

**Sharon:** A long time ago that I wrote an email to you. I created a lot of stress in my life by not being happy with the job I had. Now I am going to start in a kindergarten – hopefully this is less stress, but also you don't earn much money... so what? Now I have the opportunity to start a further education that is called “systemic counselling.” It takes three years and is a possibility to extend my studies in social work. The bank will pay me part of the costs after this education is finished. But until that I have to pay monthly and I might get some money problems. Also, I have to pay for some dental health problems monthly now... is it a mistake to do this, because financially it is little difficult and it means more stress? For more relaxation this is not good, but for more education it is good. Maybe it can give me some more chances to find a job in social work in future... I don't know. So what is right here?

**Sundari:** Lifestyle issues are not easy to counsel within the framework of Vedanta, because it is really not designed to give that kind of advice. The purpose of Vedanta is not to tell the individual how to live their life or what decisions are right for them. This depends on their *svadharma* as well as many other factors, all of which are unpredictable and always changing because they are a product of *mithya*, or the apparent reality. They have nothing to do with who you really are, which is awareness. Awareness is the only thing that never changes and that knows Sharon the *jiva*: the one who knows what she thinks and feels, who knows the one having all these doubts and asking this question. Sharon is an object known to you, awareness, and she has an apparent existence in the apparent reality. As the *jiva*, or apparent individual, Sharon wants to be happy, to enjoy her life and to have peace of mind, so she wants to make the “right” choice for the *jiva*. The apparent reality is the world, the *dharma* field, or *Isvara*, and it is made up of the three *gunas*: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, which is called ignorance, or *maya*. The *gunas* control and govern everything in the apparent reality. What happens in Sharon's life is therefore a product of the *gunas* that colour “her” particular conditioning (*svadharma*), or *vasana* load. We all have to work with our inborn nature and within the life situation we find ourselves, which is where *Isvara* has put us, according to the *karma* we incarnate with. The choice Sharon has to make is how she is going to interact with what happens in her world, not with what happens in “her” world, because it is not “her” world. It is *Isvara's* world. Only with self-knowledge can Sharon's life be brought into alignment with choices that will maximise peace of mind (*sattva*), which is what is conducive to achieving *moksa*, or freedom from Sharon, not for her. Whatever Sharon's life situation is, it is only relatively important, after all. It is only important insofar as it either obstructs or assists Sharon in what she needs to do to find freedom from dependence of objects, meaning Sharon.

Even if you have to take a pay cut and make do with less for a while, at least you are planning for a future where you will have a better income and better prospects. Sometimes one has to make choices that involve sacrifice or tough times. It is fine to do so; suffering strengthens the desire for self-inquiry. In our Western world we tend to be very spoilt and want things to be easy. It cannot always be so. So practice *karma yoga*, which means before you even make a decision to act, consecrate your choice to *Isvara*, knowing that you are not in charge of the results and knowing that you will take the results that do come as *prasad*. Do this with great love and devotion, as *karma yoga* is simply surrendering Sharon to the self, knowing that she will be taken care of. Have total faith in this, get rid of doubts. If fear or doubt comes up, which it most likely will, consecrate this to *Isvara* as well.

Continue self-inquiry and gain knowledge of how the *gunas* function in the *dharma* field (the world); practice managing them. Fear is *rajas*; indecisiveness and doubt are *tamas*. Clarity and confidence are *sattva*. To repeat: the entire *dharma* field is run by a system of natural laws that are governed by the *gunas*, which belong to *Isvara*, not to the individual. As the *gunas* are always operating, it will not take long to see them in action. See what triggers them, what thoughts and feelings arise with them as each *guna* has a predictable thought patterns and feelings that arise with it. Take note how this plays out in the mind and body. The body is inert, but it is nonetheless a printout for the subconscious mind, the subtle body. If you have too much *rajas*, you need more *sattva* and some *tamas* (you need some *tamas* to sleep). If you have too much *tamas*, you need some *rajas* and more *sattva* (you need some *rajas* to get things done). Go to the website and read up on the *gunas*; James and I post emails that deal with the topic every month.

Managing the *gunas* means that Sharon has to be vigilant, like having a little hawk sitting on her shoulder saying: "There it is again, this feeling/thinking/action is coming up in Sharon!" The *gunas* and therefore Sharon's conditioning (or *vasanas*) are only a problem if Sharon identifies with them as belonging to "her." They belong to *Isvara*. To make the non-binding, Sharon must first acknowledge what her conditioning is, realise it does not belong to "her" and then apply *karma yoga* (which is taking action or not, surrendering the result to *Isvara*) and *triguna vibhava yoga* (managing the *gunas*). To manage the *gunas* means that Sharon adjusts her life to make peace of mind her MAIN GOAL! She will not have peace of mind any other way. If your lifestyle is too *rajasic/tamasic* it will NOT produce *sattva* no matter how hard Sharon tries to make it so or what decisions she makes. Take stock of everything in your life: where you live, what you do for a living, your relationships with people, sex, money, health and diet, entertainment; all these things have to be addressed. You have to look at what your values are because they underpin your *vasanas* (likes and dislikes). This is what it means to understand Sharon's *svadharma* (her conditioning, or nature) and doing what is "right for her": following her *svadharma*, or nature, which is following *dharma* or - choosing *sattva*, peace of mind.

This is the "work" Sharon; you have to do it! Apply all the *yogas*: *jnana yoga* (self-inquiry) *karma yoga* and *triguna vibhava yoga*. In this way you will find the answers to your life situation. No one can do it for you or give you the answers. It is pointless asking us, we cannot help you make the "right" choice because there is no such thing. Today the right choice is one thing and tomorrow it could be something else. The right choice is the choice for peace of mind, which is following your nature and *dharma*.

It sounds to me by your question that you are seeing things only from the apparent reality, the *jiva*, or Sharon. So decide: Who are you, are you the self or are you

Sharon? If you want solutions for Sharon and you want the best of all worlds for her, then *moksa* is not a priority and Vedanta is not for you. Maybe you need to take a good look at the qualifications outlined in James' book *How to Attain Enlightenment*. There is no perfect way to live in the apparent reality; the only way to live there is to know that you are always free of it because it depends on you as awareness, but you do not depend on it.

**Sharon:** Probably you can also not give me an advice or maybe you can because you are more life-experienced. 😊

**Sundari:** Like I said, no one can advise you, Sharon; there is no wrong or right choice.

I repeat what I said above: there is only the choice to live thinking that you are Sharon the *jiva* or the choice for *moksa*, which is for freedom from Sharon, the *jiva*. You decide.

Are you Sharon with all her problems and with decisions to make or are you awareness? Just remember that there are no real solutions in *samsara* for the *jiva*; it is a zero-sum game and Sharon cannot win, because there is an upside and a downside to everything. It does not matter much what you do. Only self-knowledge matters because the only thing that is real and never changes is you, awareness.