



# Shamanic Quest for the Spirit of Salvia: The Divinatory, Visionary, and Healing Powers of the Sage of the Seers

By Ross Heaven

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## Shamanic Quest for the Spirit of Salvia: The Divinatory, Visionary, and Healing Powers of the Sage of the Seers By Ross Heaven

The first practical guide to the transformative uses of salvia

- Explains how salvia connects you with your higher purpose and aids you in envisioning your unique path in life
- Describes appropriate methods of use, a shamanic diet to increase effectiveness, and the meaning of the symbols experienced during salvia's ecstatic embrace
- Explores recent clinical research into salvia's long-term positive psychological effects and its potential as a treatment for Alzheimer's, depression, and addiction

*Salvia divinorum* has been used since ancient times by the Mazatec shamans of Mexico for divination, vision quests, and healing. Known by many names--nearly all associated with the Virgin Mary, who has come to symbolize the spirit of salvia--this plant ally is now regarded as the most powerful natural hallucinogen.

Providing the first practical guide to the shamanic, spiritual, and therapeutic uses of salvia, Ross Heaven shares his in-depth quest to connect with the spirit of this plant teacher. He explores recent clinical research into its many long-term psychological effects, such as increased insight and self-confidence, improved mood and concentration, and feelings of calmness and connection with nature, as well as salvia's potential for combating diseases like Alzheimer's, depression, and even cocaine addiction.

Reviewing the traditional Mazatec ceremonies surrounding salvia's harvest and use, Heaven describes appropriate methods of consumption, typical dosages, and the shamanic diet he used to increase salvia's effectiveness. Examining firsthand accounts of salvia journeys from around the world, he decodes the meaning of the symbolic images experienced during salvia's ecstatic embrace and details the interplay between salvia and the lucid dreaming state. Comparing salvia to ayahuasca and the San Pedro cactus, Heaven explains that salvia's greatest

strength as a shamanic plant ally lies in its ability to connect you with your higher purpose and aid you in envisioning your unique path in life.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

“*Shamanic Quest for the Spirit of Salvia* enriches its readers with a fuller picture including art works of both the author and others, diverse personal experiences, rich quotations from others’ works, history, healing and rituals from South America and Europe.” (Thomas B. Roberts, PhD, author of *The Psychedelic Future of the Mind*, and editor of *Spiritual Growth*)

“Absolutely LOVING the *Shamanic Quest for the Spirit of Salvia*! FANTASTIC work; really advanced shamanic knowledge, Our species really needed this book!” (David Jay Brown, author of *The New Science of Psychedelics*)

“Join Ross Heaven as he examines the deepest aspects of one of the most powerful and least used plant hallucinogen in History. The tangles of experience weave a wonderful view on such a powerful teacher (Salvia). Just reading about it makes one’s mind go to another place of existence just like what the plant does. Delicious reading if you ask me. Enjoy the mystery as it deepens and learn about the potential for the medical value of the plant.” (Rev. Water Smith, *Dragibus*, Winter 2014)

#### About the Author

Ross Heaven is a psychologist and healer with extensive training in the shamanic, transpersonal, and psychospiritual traditions. The author of more than 10 books, including *Plant Spirit Shamanism* and *Cactus of Mystery*, he teaches workshops on shamanism and plant medicines and coordinates trips to Peru to work with indigenous shamans. He lives in Spain and the United Kingdom.

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### Chapter 2

#### The Quest in Peru

Beginning the Shamanic Exploration of Salvia (Salvinorin 20X Concentrate) in Iquitos - The Search for the Spirit of the Plant and Its Applications for Healing - A Diet of Salvia and Its Use with San Pedro and Ayahuasca

#### DIETING SALVIA

A few ceremonies ago I decided that the way to get to know the spirit of Salvia--a first step for all shamans in developing a connection with a plant--was to diet it.

The diet is a ritual process of restricting certain foodstuffs that might interfere with or overwhelm the subtleties of the chosen plant, so there must be no chili or other strong herbs, no lemons, limes, or salt as these cut through magic and can kill the spirit of a plant, which, at first, is very fragile within you. There can be no meat either (pork especially, as the pig can become possessed by a forest spirit, which shares an affinity for human beings, and can be passed on to us and harm us spiritually or physically), and no alcohol or sex.

The restriction on sex is because during orgasm men give away their power--the energy of the plant that has built up in them through the process of dieting it--while women can take in the energies of a man, and if he is not in a state of dietary purity she can become disempowered or infected by unclean energies.

Essentially a diet is a meditative fast that allows for deep connection with the plant that we hope will become our ally. It is like making a new friend: spending time and focusing as much as possible on the development of our relationship until we feel that it is established.

The typical shamanic diet is followed for seven days, during which the shaman hopes and expects that a subtle alchemy will take place in his body and spirit whereby the plant is transformed through intent and gentle coaxing--by the romancing of it--changing its form from material to essence or soul and finally into an ally when that essence becomes part of his own. Then there is an after-diet for seven days so that the new friendship can be cemented.

During the initial period it is important to develop as close a connection as possible to the plant, and I had decided, as is customary in Amazonian diets, to drink a cup of the plant tea each morning, made the evening before by adding the leaves to hot water. In addition I would bathe in the tea each day and, finally, make a tincture of the leaves in *aguardiente* (cane alcohol, also known as "fire water" in Peru), which I would sip in the afternoon and hold in my mouth for fifteen minutes to allow the essence of the plant to be absorbed.

During the after-diet it is no longer necessary to follow these practices, because the spirit of the plant is now in you, but the fast and other restrictions continue as its spirit is still young and can be overwhelmed by alcohol, for example, or lost through sex.

The following notes are taken from the journal I kept at the time of my Salvia diet and reflect my day-to-day experiences.

### **Day 1: Sorrow and Connection**

*Through my work with Salvia, I feel as if I am more in touch with my emotions. This may be one of the subtle effects of the plant. Both the visions and the experience of smoking it can be dramatic, but it is the aftereffects that bring the emotional insights, not the dismantling and drama of the immediate session.*

*I feel sad today and a little lost. It seems like through the diet my body is coming back into balance and my "self" is therefore moving its energy away from physical needs to deal with deeper emotional issues. What is arising has to do with my experiences of childhood, power, disempowerment, and the feelings that come from this. It may also be the "S" thing [a volunteer at the center causing persistent problems]. Perhaps this is enhanced by Salvia too: a sense of empathy and connection between people and the sadness of seeing something beautiful that is also so damaged.*

*I found a quotation from Paul Shepard's *Man in the Landscape* that is like the experience of dieting.*

*To the desert go prophets and hermits  
Through deserts go pilgrims and exiles.*

*Here the leaders of the great religions have sought the therapeutic and spiritual values of retreat,  
not to escape but to find reality.*

On the diet we withdraw from the world and embrace solitude. Through this we hope to find something real. (Although, as I later discovered, with Salvia you are just as likely to find out what is *not* real.)

### **Day 2: Emotional X-Rays**

*Bathed. Drank. Sipped the tincture. My emotions are pronounced again, experienced today as frustration. I've been thinking about "S" again. There seems such sadness and tragedy in her but hidden beneath a tough, almost emotionless exterior. It feels somehow like she has a business arrangement with life: to use*

*and be used in equal measure, calculating the cost and reward in each relationship before she commits to it, and then making her commitment contingent anyway, just in case things change.*

*It is interesting how Salvia seems to be amplifying my sense of her, as if it provides a sort of “emotional x-ray” of the people around me. San Pedro operates in the same way, another plant affinity. Mexican curanderos use the term *placitas* to describe the heart-to-heart, soul-to-soul connection they try to develop with their clients to make their counseling and healings more effective, and I can see how Salvia could be useful for this. For the same reason it might be valuable in Western therapeutic work. This sense of empathy and seeing into the soul is what Dale Pendell meant when he wrote that after his work with Salvia, “Everything around me gradually became more intelligent.”*

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