

# A Very Cool Spiritual Dream

Ram (James Swartz)

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Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/1567>

**Marty:** Dear James, a normal-looking snake had swallowed an elephant. I could distinctly see the elongated scales on the snake's body which was unusually elastic after swallowing the elephant. But it couldn't go down further in to the snake's body. I was in complete awe and did not like what I was seeing.

I pricked here and there the struggling snake with whatever cheap sharp objects I could find, like toothpick sticks, with a view to get the elephant out again. The elephant inside was struggling to get out of the snake. After a few seconds of continuous pricking and struggling the snake gave up, but it could neither swallow nor open the mouth big enough to let the elephant out.

So many creatures, including me, pulled down the snake, like pulling down a sack in order to relieve the elephant. The pachyderm came out and danced and rejoiced. Everyone was happy. The snake just left the scene without disturbing anyone. When I woke up, I felt eerie thinking of that snake and the ghastly things it is capable of doing.

Can you, if you have time, interpret this one for me?! I am reading your book. It needs a lot of attention. One thing in particular that I must, simply must, understand and follow is the *karma yoga* aspect. I am focusing on that in daily life.

Everything's fine and good there, I believe. My warm regards and *namaskars* to you.

**James:** Dear Marty, this is a very cool dream with an important message. I think it is about your fear that your ego will swallow your spirituality. It is a common fear. The elephant probably represented your large, living desire for truth, and the snake that part of you that wants to (1) destroy it because it feels threatened by it or (2) benefit from it by ingesting it. This is often called "enlightenment sickness," the ego trying to co-opt one's awakening. The ego is "unusually elastic," meaning it can accommodate to anything that serves its purpose. This swallowing, devouring part of yourself – the ego is always hungry – is observed by you, awareness.

This situation is a struggle. Spiritual life is always a struggle between your *vasanas*, represented by the snake – snakes live underground, which is a good symbol for the causal body, the unconscious, from which the desires spring.

In the third stage of this little drama, the elephant is freed from with the help of "so many creatures." I think this refers to the idea that everyone in life is your friend, trying to help you be happy. Specifically, I think it probably indicates the tradition of finders, the lineage of successful seekers, who have left helping words – the scripture – for your benefit. You can't do this enlightenment thing alone. You need help.

The snake leaving on its own means that that greedy part of yourself is leaving without much fanfare. The more you dedicate yourself to your spiritual path, the more you break the back of the ego. It is never destroyed. It loses its aggression and is no longer a threat. The key is the *karma yoga* attitude.

~ Love, James

**Marty:** James, thanks for your reply. I think your interpretation of the dream is right on. I think the residual ego memory misses what it misses, but there is no drive in awareness to pursue it – just a dead baby.

My experience reading your book proved that “knowledge,” not experience, is what cooks the goose.

I can see how a teacher wanting to keep power would keep talking about experience, keeping students chasing their tail. I also know now why so many of the “Neo” teachers were of no benefit to me. I couldn’t get the knowledge from them.

**James:** Yes, the experience teaching is the perfect con, but I wonder how many of those who promote it realize it. I think most of them believe that they are actually experiencing something special. It is true that knowledge affects experience but only in the sense that the mind effortlessly gets more and more peaceful.

**Marty:** I suspect that you have been getting some grief for your book and your stand on knowledge versus experience. But the truth will win out. The knowledge can’t be lost, whatever experience happens.

**James:** You will probably not believe it, but I have not heard one word from anyone about it! Evidently, only those who need to hear it get the book. Or those who disagree are afraid to argue about it. A reasonable person cannot argue with Vedanta. It was worked out a long time ago. The Neo teaching, such as it is, is just bits and pieces of remembered knowledge and beliefs floating around in the Western spiritual world picked up in a completely happenstance way and cobbled together with virtually no discrimination.

**Marty:** You said, “Watch for boredom.” Oh, God, yes! What is left is “no person,” so what is there to do? What was meaningful in the old sense no longer has any juice. I’m in the “he who stands and waits also serves” place. I can trust that awareness will reveal something to do and take care of the boredom in its own way, in its own time. Even the drive to teach is absent. Nothing “personal” to do.

Anyhow, at this point the “dead baby” will just stay dead. The memories will fade, something new will appear to use my remaining time correctly.

~ With love, Marty

**James:** Seems everything is right on track. Take care of yourself.

~ Love, James