

# The Hamster Wheel

Ram (James Swartz)

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Dear James,

Hello again! I've been keeping up to date with ShiningWorld via the newsletter and was really sorry to read of your recent health issues. I've been thinking of you, and hope you are doing much better now. I'm sure Sundari has been taking good care of you and hope you are taking good care of yourself too. ☺

**James:** I'm doing fine, owing to the wonders of modern medicine, to wit, a stent. Thanks for your well wishes.

**Cory:** I've just booked my flights to Spain. I'm delighted that I'm going to join you in Malaga next month. ☺ I'm really looking forward to it! I had a strong inner prompting to just go for it... so I paid heed and took action!

It's probably just what I need right now too. It's been a strange few months. I got sucked up by *samsara* again, chewed up and then spat out rather unceremoniously.

I've had a number of big projects going on which consumed a lot of time and energy but they were *dharma*-aligned, so that was fine. What happened though was I ended up getting into another relationship. I didn't seek it out. I was pursued by someone for quite a while, and in spite of my initial hesitancy I really felt a strong connection with him and figured that perhaps *Isvara* had brought it along for a reason. I thought I could maybe balance the practise of self-knowledge with a relationship. Well... wrong! It didn't work at all, least of all because this guy turned out to have some psychological issues and a very controlling streak, which I didn't see at first and which I eventually realised I wasn't prepared to accept. It triggered my old relationship *vasanas* and added a few new ones – it “killed my Zen,” as a friend put it! The train eventually came off the tracks and ended up a smouldering wreckage. And yet I'd asked *Isvara* to resolve it all... and although I didn't like the way it ended I knew that I'd been saved from something that wasn't right for me. I realised I'm not here to chase after relationships, or anything else in *samsara*, for that matter. It's not my *dharma*, at least not at this point and time in my life, and I ought to know by now that going against my *dharma* hurts in the worst possible way.

I had a little emotional healing to do. I stepped up my meditation practice and have now more or less got my subtle body back into balance. I realised that the most important thing in my life is *moksa*. Nothing else “cuts the mustard” (as they say here)! I started watching your videos first thing in the morning and last thing at night, re-reading your book and e-*satsangs*, and all the answers I needed came to me. I did a fearless (and initially a tad fearful!) moral inventory, and realised that in spite of intellectually understanding the teaching and knowing that I'm the self, I was still holding a number of worldly *vasanas* and was under the impression that I need to seek certain things in the world in order to be happy. Most other people my age have found an apparently stable base in life, with careers and young families, whereas I am kind of a ghost in this world.

**James:** Your choice of words is interesting: “I have always felt like I was a ghost in this life, invisible to the world, moving in a special dimension, not lonely but alone.” Most of us spiritual types have that feeling.

**Cory:** I realised I’d “disqualified” myself by getting caught up in a dysfunctional relationship with someone who had a hefty *vasana* load. I was pulling myself in different directions and failing to commit fully to my *svadharma*.

**James:** Well, better late than never, Cory. The trick is to see the train coming and check to see it is going to the right destination before you get on. ☺ But no blame, it is *prasad* insofar as it helped clarify your ultimate purpose. I won’t give you much of a lecture because it seems you have learned your lesson but relationships by their very definition are not designed for *moksa*, quite the opposite. One wants them because one wants to depend on someone else for love rather than drawing on the inexhaustible wellspring of love that is yourself. Yes, the *svadharma* of ghosts like us is *moksa*, nothing less.

**Cory:** I had this idea that if *Isvara* brings certain people and situations into my life it means they’re “right” for me and I should go with it. But I guess that can’t always be the case. Maybe sometimes it’s a test to get me to discriminate and be able to say no to things that aren’t in alignment with my *svadharma*?

**James:** Yes, absolutely. You have to know when to say no to *Isvara*. Discrimination above all else. When there is *vasana* pressure one forgets one’s purpose. If you say no to *Isvara* he will not be disappointed. He will just dig up some other fool to satisfy the poor sod’s needs. It is not personal.

**Cory:** I probably needed the experience to highlight where I was going wrong and to make me fully analyse my values and motivations. It’s hard being a *sannyasi* in this culture (or probably any culture these days). I’m so very different to everyone else I know and it’s taken me a number of years to actually learn to appreciate and be true to that. It requires a brutal stripping away of most of the values society instills into us. But I realised I have no other choice: the hamster wheel of *maya* just doesn’t work for me. I’m so tired of it and all its associated hurts and frustrations. And they’re self-inflicted and self-perpetuated too. I’ve heard you say how ignorance is incredibly intelligent, and it’s so true! There are a million different ways – often really, really subtle, insidious ways – that *maya* tries to suck us back under. I keep telling myself I won’t be fooled again...! Hopefully, one of these days I won’t be. ☺

**James:** Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom. Always keep in mind your goal. Evaluate everything from its point of view. While it will be hard at times facing down your *vasanas* it is ultimately rewarding and builds self spiritual self-esteem.

**Cory:** I’m spending more time each day training my mind to identify as awareness and detach from the objects appearing in it. It’s really helping, and quite quickly. The *gunas* are settling down

and I'm experiencing a lot more *sattva* again, which makes everything so, so much easier. I'm going to keep on this track no matter what distractions are thrown my way.

**James:** Attaboy! Crank up your resolve.

**Cory:** I feel so incredibly blessed to have been led to Vedanta – it's an amazing honour and privilege. I mean, how many lifetimes might I have waited for this – for all the circumstances to align so perfectly to bring the teaching into my life? I am immensely grateful to *Isvara* and to you as an instrument of *Isvara*. I'm determined not to squander it.

**James:** Good on you!

**Cory:** So those are the misadventures of this particular *jiva*. I can actually see the humour to it all now! This whole existential drama is deliciously absurd.

**James:** Yes, *jiva's* adventures and misadventures are all just grist for the mill of self-inquiry. It seems you have come through this little *vasana* thicket with flying colors. I am glad you are coming to Spain. It will be time well spent.

~ Much love, James

**Cory:** Really looking forward to meeting you and Sundari and everyone else next month. See you then. ☺