

## A GREAT YOGI

*In my travels I spent time with a great yogi. Once he said to me,  
"Become so still you will hear the blood flowing through your veins."  
One night as I sat in quiet, I seemed on the verge of entering a  
world inside so vast I know it is the source of all of us.*

- MIRA

On July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011, Polunsky Unit Death Row was put on lockdown status (meaning no movement by prisoners is allowed on the unit), and the prison guards began a systematic search of the prison grounds, starting at one end and working their way to the other, looking for what they consider contraband - anything a prisoner should not have. During this process, everything in my cell is rooted through by these security guards who work at this twenty-first century death camp, including my own person. For me, this process has already occurred. The guards have come to my housing area and ordered me to remove all my clothing (so they can check it for dangerous contraband, you see), then allowed me to get dressed, then handcuffed me, rolled open the cell door and escorted me out of the cell. I'm put in a shower that is 4ft x 6ft in size and left there for an hour while they search thoroughly through my belongings in the cell. This happens to Texas Death Row at least four times a year.

The cell I am caged in is 9ft x 12ft in size or about the size of a walk-in closet in an average sized American home. When not on lockdown, I am allowed out of this cell (always handcuffed behind my back and escorted by two guards) for a two-hour recreation period, five days a week in the day room, which is more or less a larger cage that is made out of bars from the floor to the ceiling and reminds me of a huge, old world zoo monkey cage. I'm also allowed to shower once a day. For the remaining 22 hours I am confined to this closet-sized cell — in fact I literally live my life in a 100ft x 100ft square area.

Since the lockdown began, I have not been allowed out of my cell except to shower every third day. This is the 21<sup>st</sup> day locked in this super-maximum security cell that was designed to break the most hardened criminal's spirit, making that poor soul manageable and weak as a lamb. I often think of what this "secure unit housing" was designed for and how a non-Death Row prisoner who, after finding himself sealed away in one of these cells, has the opportunity to work his way out in 18 months with good behavior. How he's allowed to go back to minimum security population, where there is no 22 hour confinement in closet-sized cells and no two-hour recreation periods in a large monkey cage. He has an opportunity to leave in 18 months... I will be confined in this manner until I am exonerated of the crime I was sent here for, or until they murder me in the name of justice. I've been here 12 years and 3 months, give or take a week or two. I've been here for 12 years and 3 months and there are men here who've lived like this for 30 years plus.

This morning I opened my eyes and looked at my sad surroundings... the dingy walls which seem to be closing in, the paint peeling off them; the smell of mildew, raw sewage, sour water and bug exterminating spray. I look at the cell door, through the white painted screen that is welded into the windows cut into the door, and all I see is another dingy wall and a bright fluorescent light that seemingly is left on 24 hours a day. I sit up, lean over and click on my low watt desktop lamp and start my day. I do my best not to think of another day locked in this cell, not being allowed out of this tomb. I try not to think about only being given six sandwiches to eat all day (usually three peanut butter and three bologna on bread, a chicken patty if we're fortunate), using all my mental discipline not to obsess

over the fact that it will be another 100 degrees Fahrenheit day, and by 3.00 p.m. I'll be on my cell floor, laying still, moving as little as possible, hoping to avoid sweating all night long. I do my best to avoid all of that as I start my day.

I wash my face, brush my teeth, and give thanks that I have a few spoons of instant coffee left, allowing me to have a much needed cup of hot coffee. I fill my three cup hot pot to heat the water and sit down on my bunk, picking up a book. Lately it's been "Spiritual Gems", written by an Indian Perfect Master... other times it will be the Bible or some other positive, spiritually themed reading material. It's early morning and blissfully quiet in the building; everyone is sleeping as much as possible to make the passage of time go faster and I can't blame them. For me, quiet is what I desire.

As I have my cup of coffee and start to read, the words and thoughts of Maharaj Sewan Singh fill my mind. My focus narrows and I feel a wonderful, calming feeling come over me. I lean over and click off the lamp. Sitting on my bunk, back straight, hands on my lap, I close my eyes and begin to meditate. This is my absolute favorite time of the day... I collect my attention and focus at the eye center (more or less in the middle of your forehead, just above your eyes), taking deep breaths, clearing my mind of all thoughts and distractions, casting off all my concerns, my needs and desires and completely existing in the moment. With total control over my mind, I run through my daily spiritual practice, meditating upon the holy names of God, listening to the celestial sound-stream (which is the life-giving force-vibration that connects all living organisms), and somewhere in the middle of this practice I leave this hell hole. I feel my spirit collect at the eye center and I begin to go. These dark walls begin to fall away, the door, the bunk I'm sitting on, the sink and toilet, everything in my small living area falls away and I go to my special, private place.

This sacred place is the reality I'm working for daily, weekly, monthly and yearly and it looks much like this..

As the walls fall away, the morning sun begins to shine. I open my eyes and find myself sitting on a smooth, wooden deck that's attached to the back of my home; in my special meditation area, with a soft rubber mat under me. I take a deep breath and can smell the roses that are in the garden and other fragrant flowers; the tall, shade-giving trees and green grass. I can hear the water, softly flowing down the 5-step waterfall created from smooth river bed stones, peacefully collecting into the pool in the center of this scene. The sound of water trickling in is so amazing, after a decade of hearing metal upon metal clanging, non-stop screaming, doors slamming. The sounds and smells of my paradise are bliss. I hear the Japanese Koi carp in the pool, splashing around, letting me know they're swimming, and I see the two turtles that live in the garden slowly moving through the grass, over the flat, grey and white stones ringing the pool, then sliding into the water for a nice swim. I get up and walk to the edge of the pool and sit on the edge, putting my legs and feet into the cool water, and it feels so wonderful. I look out upon the area and see the flowers and fruits and vegetables planted in the garden and smile at that accomplishment. I see the glassed in green house that allows us to have fresh flowers growing year around, the sun's rays reflecting off the clear window panes, and think of all the beautiful colored roses inside; red, blue, purple and yellow, along with the tulips and other flowers. I think of these things and thank our Lord for them. I hear the dogs barking, the chickens clucking and the ducks quacking. I hear the horses neighing in the corral and look over to them, taking in their beauty, and feel so fortunate to have my own paradise. And when I'm here in this world within my mind, I am a million miles away from that death camp in Texas. I feel so happy, so grateful, so appreciative, because I KNOW this will be my reality. As it is in my mind, so shall it be in this, the third dimension.

I feel the Koi fish swim close to me and nip at my fingers as I run them through the water and I thank

the Universe for another day, for all my blessings, great and small, and in this way I create a piece of heaven in this man-made hell.

I dwell in this sacred place for 30..., 45... sometimes even 60 minutes as often as I possibly can, for I know that going there in my mind will lead me to this amazing place in this lifetime, and that reality is so exciting for me.

I slowly start to come out of my paradise, allowing it to shrink down, enveloping it in a clear bubble, mentally sending this intention out into the Universe. I pray for everyone and again send out my gratitude and appreciation for the amazing gift of life and all that is in it as I come out of this super state of consciousness, ready to face another day, another year, another decade in this place. If our Lord and the Universe stands with us, who can stand against us?

When I sit so still that I can hear the blood flowing through my veins, it is bliss for me. I find myself sitting next to a vast, limitless ocean that is God and quietly take in His awesome presence next to the water... and every now and then I have moments of enlightenment, when I slip a toe - sometimes even a foot - into this Ocean and am blessed with visions of the Kingdom of Heaven, and long to dwell there forever.

Peace,  
Charles Don Flores