



150 Stories for 150 Years

He Stared at Me Briefly and then Asked: "What is Truth?"

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How many times had I dreamed about cold beer in prison? No matter as I finished my third bottle and began walking towards campus. I sat down next to a tree and marveled at my parallel universe: that morning I was in prison. Bob McCoy walked up to me and asked how it felt being free, and I replied it felt great: the beer helped. I wondered what my future at Wilmington held for me. I graduated cum laude about two years later.

March 1991, Brindavan, India

The chanting woke me up. I quickly dressed and left my room in the ashram and went outside. I only had to walk a short distance to the large covered patio where the crowd had gathered, clapping and singing: Hari Krishna, Kari Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Hari, Hari; Hari Rama, Hari Rama, Rama, Rama, Hari, Hari. Approaching the crowd, a man appeared suddenly in front of me. I knew who he was and stood there in shock. There was a large photo of him on my guru's wall, and I had bowed low in front of it prior to leaving for India, asking for guidance.

He stared at me briefly and then asked: "What is truth?" I replied: "Om Tat Sat is truth." He told me I was correct and then disappeared right in front of me, leaving me speechless. I knew that the human form was held together by the vibration of "Om" and that the human form could be transformed into a body of light, and then be further transformed into undifferentiated pure consciousness.

The yogi who had appeared and then disappeared right in front of me had just demonstrated the truth of my answer perfectly. I knew him as Lahiry Mahasay, made famous in Autobiography of a Yogi by Paramahansa Yogananda. Lahiri had left his body 105 years prior to appearing in front of me; demonstrating that there was no such thing as death. Christ had demonstrated exactly the same thing: "I have said, Ye are gods! It is written in your law, even that eternal law which hath meaning to the infinite."

Mansfield Prison, 1966

I sat in a small prison cell and prayed to Christ: "Lord, if you can get me out of this hell hole, I will devote the rest of my life to serving you."

Several years later, after I had graduated from Wilmington and the University of Chicago, I found myself standing in front of that very same cell with my class from Wilmington, and staring into the face of the black inmate staring back at us, I glanced past him to where I had scratched my initials on the yellow wall. LMC was still visible. My students had no idea just what I was staring at, or that that black man was none other than me, and that I would never escape from that cell. Society would never allow it!

[RETURN TO SITE](#)