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## **Reflections on Teaching Yoga and Buddhism in Cambodia – The Prison is the Temple**

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Existence in a provincial prison in Cambodia can be a dismal affair, but after having taught Yoga and Buddhism in one on a part-time and volunteer basis over the last year, one can not help but be impressed by the spirit of the men and women who serve time in one.

This writer has also found that the men and women there do appreciate the efforts of others to assist them in anyway possible.

During this writer's most recent experience of teaching Yoga and Buddhism there, I was told more then once "thankyou" for things that had been taught and shared with the men and women, or some of the things such as hats, clothing, books, magazines and food that I had been able to give to them.

Perhaps that is because they recognize the commitment and effort of this writer or more fully understand and appreciate the need and benefits of the Yoga and Buddhist teachings and practices.

Anyone who has practiced Yoga and meditation extensively or taught them has experienced and knows the mental and physical benefits that is can bring an individual and there is no reason there to think that men and women in prison can not experience such a thing also.

One of the things that we have tried to make the men and women in prison more mindful about is that it is where we are at the moment, be it a prison, our home, a club or restaurant, or in a bus, plane or train is our temple and that we need to serve in it and act in a way that reflects that understanding.

In many respects, a prison is the highest manifestation of a temple, providing that the men and women in it are provided with clean clothing, a safe, secure and clean living and sleeping environment, healthy and adequate food and an opportunity to both work and educate themselves. Sadly, these things are lacking and not being worked to being provided in Cambodian prisons and it is more through the effort of individuals and private organizations to bring about such a thing.

But a prison does provide one with the discipline and opportunity to live a regulated lifestyle with there being regular times for bathing, sleeping and eating, and through that, a positive evolution of one's mind and consciousness can occur.

This is what we want to happen when we practice Yoga and Buddhism and what many of us have sought out and committed ourselves to over the years, be it a weekend or month - long retreat in upstate New York or Massachusetts, or a trip to and stay in a temple in Thailand or Sri Lanka.

We have been taught or learned to recognize that a sparse and simple environment and a disciplined approach to daily life and living bring about benefits.

Perhaps if instead of wanting more and more and not being satisfied unless we have those things to indulge in or confuse and overwhelm us, we worked to simplicity and contentment, we could make our own house, home and our community and the world as a whole a temple.