

## **Bhanté Dharmawara and Governor Jerry Brown**

In the 1980s, it was my privilege to be one of many who advised certain politicians including Governor Jerry Brown. On the ballot, his name is Edmund G Brown, Jr; his dad had been governor of California and left Jerry a family home in Laurel Canyon area of LA. That is where I did my first briefing for the first Governor Brown administration. Other briefings were in Sacramento, Boston, Bay area and to prepare for a variety of press conferences or debates.

Governor Brown is curious, especially about issues that affect the citizens of California. His interests include sustainability to life of meaningful moments and spiritual integrity.

We had friends in common, including Judy Skutch, Bill Whitson, Paul Hawken, Michael Lerner, Richard Neil Snyder, Amory Lovins, Rabbi Zalman Schachter Shalomi, John Denver, Darrell Steinberg, Willie Brown, John Vasconcellos and Sue North. As a result, from time to time, we discussed solutions to complex healthcare and environmental issues along with deep dives into the data and what objectively was known about issues of interest to him.

He had an innate sense of when people had agendas; he preferred people who cared because it was their ability to be agnostic about current trends and media intensive campaigns in comparison and contrast to a careful and objective review of the partisans and content of each issue. Since my income was secure through higher tech companies founded by me, it was possible for me to be as objective as possible while always being upon to new information.

After the initial briefing, Governor Brown asked if I knew well a popular Indochinese minister. While the answer was yes, my suggestion was that Jerry meet Bhanté Dharmawara, my mentor in mindfulness, empathy and gratitude among ways in which he shaped me without ever taking away my ability to choose.

Bhanté met Governor Brown in Sacramento, Laurel Canyon and Stockton. Jerry mentioned to me that of all the spiritual leaders he has met, Bhanté was clearly among the most unusual and worthy of following.

During an interregnum for him in politics, Governor Brown spent time in a Zen Buddhist retreat in Japan. When in the United States, among those whom he sought out for guidance was Bhanté.