



By: Dr. Russell Jaffe

Interest in non-invasive measurements and non-invasive therapies led to a general interest in light therapy also sometimes called color therapy or phototherapy.

20th century advocates included Dinshah Jhadiali (Spectro Chrome Metry Encyclopedia of Color and Light). Before him there was Edwin Babbitt (Color and Light) from which Faber Birren extracted parts and made a lifetime's work in fashion and design. There was also Dr. Abrams and his light box with a 2,000 watt Klieg light source passing through glass of different colors (made of lead glass; can not be painted nor made of acetate or plastic).

Along the way, anecdotes came up about a Buddhist monk who had decoded a color healing system. By report, the system had been included in the teachings of the Buddha, practiced for 500 years, lost for 2,000 years and rediscovered by this fellow, Bhanté Dharmawara.

To my surprise, he was then a scholar in residence at Georgetown University. Only much later did I learn he accepted this position so that his great granddaughter (Phobol Cheng) would qualify for a faculty scholarship so that she would gain a Masters in International Studies to then become the Cambodian representative at the United Nations in New York.

The few times I went, hoping he might be in the building, he was not. The staff said that he was a nice older fellow, however, he kept his own calendar and schedule. At the end of the semester (May) he departed without any forwarding information that I was able to obtain.

A few months later, Chris McCloud (an etheric massage therapist who had studied with Diana Adkins) called seeking a ride to a monk's birthday party. Reluctantly I agreed, probably because in our social circle mine was the only operative vehicle at that moment. In Oxon Hill Maryland was the first buddhist vihara in the Capital District.

**Address:**

Cambodian Buddhist Society, Inc.  
13800 New Hampshire Avenue  
Silver Spring, MD 20904  
Voice & Fax: 301-622-6544  
<http://www.cambodian-buddhist.org/>

The Cambodian Buddhist Society, Inc. was organized in 1976 and incorporated in the State of Maryland in 1978. The headquarters of the society, called the Cambodian Buddhist Temple (Wat Buddhikarama), was located first in Oxon Hill, MD, then in New Carrollton, MD, and finally was moved to Silver Spring, MD in 1987.

The Cambodian Buddhist Society, Inc. is governed by a Board of Directors of 15 members. Except for the Buddhist monks on the Board, all members of the Board are elected biannually.

### **The four objectives of the Cambodian Buddhist Society, Inc., are:**

- to conserve the Cambodian Buddhist religion
- to conserve the Cambodian culture
- to provide training
- to provide human assistance

Vatt Buddhikarama plays a crucial role in Cambodian life in Cambodia and especially in America. There are at the time of this writing six Buddhist Monks at the Temple. These monks serve as Dhamma teachers and counselors, and preside over various ceremonies. They perform religious and traditional ceremonies at the Temple and at peoples' homes upon invitation. These ceremonies include birthdays, weddings, funerals, memorial services, and house warmings, to name just a few. Cambodians invite Buddhist Monks to give them blessings.

Every Sunday, the Temple conducts classes on the Cambodian language, Cambodian classical and folklore dance, Cambodian music, and chanting. Also, every Saturday, the Temple provides citizenship training for people, especially the elderly, who want to become citizens of the United States. At the same time, English lessons are given to the elderly.

### **The Vihara (Buddha Hall).**

The Buddha Hall is a genuine Cambodian Shrine which has all the characteristics of a typical Cambodian Vihara in Cambodia. On the outside, the Shrine is decorated with all the Cambodian art works reserved for a Buddhist temple. Inside on the main floor, a giant Buddha Image imposingly sits on the altar surrounded by smaller images. Large oil paintings depicting the life of the Buddha decorate the wall, and two large crystal chandeliers along with ceiling spot-lights provide lighting for the Shrine. The building

was completed at the end of 1992 and was consecrated in July 1993. The total cost of the project was about \$1.7 million dollars. Because of this distinctive and artful Vihara, the Cambodian Buddhist Temple is a point of interest for tourists visiting the Washington DC area. The main instigator of the shrine was Ven. Oung Mean Candavanno, former abbot of the Cambodian Buddhist Temple.

### **Ven. Preah Sumedhavansa Oung Mean Candavanno**

Ven. Preah Sumedhavansa Oung Mean Candavanno was born on March 13, 1927 near Phnom Penh, Cambodia. He became a novice monk at the age of 14, and remained ordained as a Buddhist monk after the novice service. He studied religion, Pali, and Sanskrit in Cambodia, Thailand, Burma, India, and England. He was fluent in Khmer (Cambodian), Hindi, French, English, Pali, Sanskrit, Thai, and Burmese. He served in several positions in the Cambodian Buddhist hierarchy and in delegations to several countries.

In 1974, Ven. Candavanno pursued his doctorate program at Manchester University, England. His study was cut short by the events in Cambodia in 1975; and he migrated to the United States in January, 1978. At the Cambodian Buddhist Temple (Wat Buddhikarama), Ven Candavanno immediately expanded the activities of the Cambodian Buddhist Society, Inc. He was so popular that he was able to raise more than one million dollars in one year to complete the Vihara (Buddha Hall).

Ven. Preah Sumedhavansa Oung Mean Candavanno passed away on Tuesday March 16, 1993 at the age of 66. Bhané had ordained and mentored him.

### **Back to the ‘meeting Bhané’ saga**

When leaving his birthday party, I gave him my card and affirmed my interest in studying with him the color healing system he had re-discovered.

Two days later, while puttering around a 2 bedroom bachelor’s apartment in Greenbelt, Maryland, there was a knock on the door. Upon opening the door, I was surprised to find him standing in front of me. He said, “You look surprised, did you not invite me?” My response was something to the effect... yes, I invited you, however, I thought you might call before coming. “Why”, he said, “You are here.”

He came in and wandered around the apartment in silence for 15 minutes. Long enough for me to be uncomfortable with the silence. Long enough for him to find nooks and crannies that I did not know existed. At the end of his inspection, he announced that the apartment was suitable. The monks who were with him, went out to the car and brought in his possessions. He moved in.

It was like having a foster grandfather. Bhante initially distinguished himself through mindful awareness, compassion, kindness, excellent timing, and as a great cook.

While my interests were esoteric and subtle, he giggled when i inquired about such subjects. He spent time in the kitchen until I discovered that he felt my feet were not well grounded. He guided me in cutting carrots and onions; celery and parsley. As I became a better cook and chef du cuisine, he became much more interesting and engaging.

Over time, because of the people who sought him out for counsel, it became clearer who he was. While he never claimed anything, he had documentation when needed that often astounded and amused. While he never rushed, he was never late. He was as docile as a dove and as cunning as a fox. He never lied and he was often shrewd.

The awareness and frame of reference seemed so vastly more than I could imagine that he became the principal spiritual influence in my life.

Bob Leichtman, when asked to look at Bhanté, commented that this was his second to the last lifetime. That his reincarnation is the due and eagerly awaited next Maitreya Buddha; the Next enlightened human. Bob also commented that in this lifetime, Bhanté would have a global influence through serendipitous interactions with remarkable people. Among those of whom I was aware, Jawaharlal Nehru, B K Nehru, Mohandas Gandhi, B. R. Ambedkar, Indira Gandhi, Meira Kumar, Norodom Sihanouk, Savang Vadhana, John G Bennett, the 14th Dalai Lama, Jerry Brown, John Vasconcellos, Mark Leno, Timothy Healy, Josh Reynolds, Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, Abdul-Aziz Said, Elon Leibner and Dudley & Volina Lyons.