

## Bhanté and the Peace Weavers

In about 1995 Bhanté was in residence at the Stockton Vihara, discussed in other episodes. One of the senior monks called to let me know that Bhanté had been meditating for three days. By report, he had neither eaten nor drunk, urinated nor defecated in that time.

Sky, my son, was about eight. He and I flew to SFO airport and then drove to Stockton. Upon arrival, it was soon clear that Bhanté was in a coma and not just meditating. The resident monks did not want to let Bhanté go although they did not know what to do for him.

Bhanté's student Ed Pejack brought his van to the temple at ~3 AM. He, Sky and I brought Bhanté to the van. Ed was faculty at University of the Pacific in Stockton at that time. He and his wife revered Bhanté and he reciprocated their affection.

While en route to SFO, I infused ascorbate into Bhanté. With all the charm and multi-million-mile flight status I could muster, United airlines agreed to let me be medical chaperone for Bhanté on a flight from SFO to EWR. Upon arrival, we were met by friends and Bhanté was transported to the Peace Weavers community.

In Lambertville, New Jersey at that time was an intention community founded by Greg Lynn Weaver. The community largely resided in an octagonal building on a wooded piece of land just North of the town of Lambertville. There were 10-12 people in the community as I remember it then. There were several couples and other individuals who aspired to meaningful work focused within an autonomous community of spiritually oriented people. They devoted themselves fully to caring for Bhanté in all ways for the weeks that were needed. My role was to come and go twice a day to inquire, comment and take Bhanté's pulses. Fortunately, we had a home in Hopewell, NJ that was about 20 minutes from the Peace Weavers. This made the commute easy.

Bhanté had long had a delicate digestive track. The origins of that are for another episode. In this case, he needed a gravity fed colonic irrigation device to help clean waste and toxic matter from his colon. At that time Dotolo made such devices here in the United States. After getting Mr. Dotolo on the phone and qualifying the urgency of our medical need, he graciously sent a unit overnight with detailed instructions about the plumbing needed. By that afternoon the unit with installed and had been tested.

It was relatively easy to get Bhanté onto the slant board on his side. The colonic took about an hour each time. We did two a day for a few days. Once Bhanté recovered and moved on, Jeanette, one of the members of the community, continued to use the device as a regional service for some years afterward.

The Peace Weavers community purchased a tract of land in Western New York state. They moved to Bath, N.Y.

“The RoundHouse in Lambertville was our original center. Known architecturally as the Silo House, it was the first passive solar house in New Jersey. Built in 1974, it was designed by the award-winning firm Jersey Devil.

Several of our co-founders lived together there in the early '90s. Others grouped together in community living arrangements nearby.

The building was beautiful. Bhante, upon first seeing it, said "Oh, you live in a Temple!" It was simply three round silo tops connected by hallways.

We felt very creative one day and renamed it the "RoundHouse", and later we named our Center in Bath NY the "LongHouse", because it is long. Good thing as kids we learned our shapes!

Many of us trained in different healing modalities – e.g. massage, reflexology, vegetarian cooking, meditation, colonic therapy, etc. We shared, and continue to offer, these practices with others in individual healing sessions and retreats. Together we discovered the healing opportunities of being in spiritual family, or sangha.

We saw how working on ourselves, individually and collectively, helped facilitate healing for others. Also, the support we received living in community gave us strength to help others to heal.

As a connected core group, we could receive those in need of transitional support – i.e. troubled youth, single parents, the ill, and the dying. Twenty years later we still work on ourselves daily and support others | through transitional times.

We did Circles, sweat lodges, community gatherings, fasting and silent retreats. We also held large vegetarian Thanksgiving celebrations and hosted spiritual Elders.

Our Center was a hub of healing physically, emotionally and spiritually for many from NJ, PA, MD, NY and elsewhere. New people came continuously to our events; and, thus, our circle continued to hold more and more people within it.

In addition to all the activities at the RoundHouse, we did service work with the homeless in Philadelphia, shared Circle in numerous places, and brought the heartbeat of the drum and songs to many places (e.g. schools, colleges, yoga centers) in New Jersey and other states.

One of our annual events was our Spring Gathering in Washington Crossing Park on the Delaware River with great food, music, and ceremony. Often we would bring Master Drummers to conduct Drum Workshops with people drumming their hearts out.

At the RoundHouse, a small crew of people served the extended family for fourteen years through circles, sweat lodges, retreats, seasonal gatherings, healing sessions, meditations, drum workshops, speakers, hosting spiritual Elders, and supporting individuals in times of crisis or transition. In all of our work we were dedicated to honoring traditions of kindness and compassion and inspiring change.

In 1994, we found a piece of land in Bath, NY which became a new Center and home for us – Thunder Mountain Peace Sanctuary. For the next nine years we had two centers until 2003 when we brought our Center at the RoundHouse to a close. It was a difficult decision, but we felt we could ultimately serve ourselves and others best by focusing all of our attention on our Peace Sanctuary in New York.

Since 2003 we have continued to serve the PeaceWeaver extended community in the New Jersey area with a variety of events including our annual New Year's Peace Gathering, Spring Gatherings, and Drum Workshops.

### **Bhante Dharmawara & other Elders**

In 1990 Greg Lynn met Bhante Dharmawara, a 100 year old Buddhist monk, meditation teacher and healer originally from Cambodia. Upon meeting one another, Bhante took Greg Lynn on as his healing attendant. Bhante joined us in

doing group meditations, healing sessions and retreats at the Round House. He quickly became our Grand Elder and lived with us off and on during his next ten years at the RoundHouse and later at our Center in New York.

Bhante had a profound commitment to wellness. One of his meditations was, "I am what I think. I am what I eat and drink." He underscored how "our health is our greatest possession, without it we cannot serve ourselves or serve others". At age 38 doctors gave Bhante six months to live, which spurred him to change his diet and lifestyle. At that time he became a Buddhist monk and stopped eating meat. He felt that changing to a plant based diet really saved his life and enabled him to live well beyond 100.

In 1996, Bhante came to live with us on Thunder Mountain in New York. He was with us for almost a whole year and turned 108 on February 12, 1997. Together we continued group meditations and silent retreats. Even at his advanced age he and Greg Lynn still did healing sessions with many people. This was a very special time for us as community with this global Elder who passed in 1999 at the age of 110 – the world's oldest vegan and Buddhist monk.

As a healer Bhante had many "medicines" he would offer: vegan diet, meditation, green light, affirmations, and perhaps the one he used most often was humor. Laughter opens up Body and Mind and brings in new life force energy. Every day we would have many deep laughs together. One evening a friend was bringing in a smoothie for Bhante when she tripped, and the smoothie, in slow motion, went flying through the air, landing on Bhante's face, neck and all over his monk's robes. Without hesitation Bhante yelled out "This is such Great Luck! Any time you spill anything it is Great Luck!" – which immediately let the person who tripped feel not just Great Luck, but Great Relief!

Bhante was the Eldest Elder of the PeaceWeavers. When he was here, we welcomed Elders from many traditions to meet him – i.e. Seneca, Catholic, Tibetan Buddhist Elders and others. By working so closely with Bhante we came to appreciate the experience and wisdom that comes with Eldership. Bhante was a true Weaver of Peace.

Some of the Elders we've hosted from various cultures and traditions include Jake Swamp (Mohawk), Chester Kahn (Dine), Connie (Hopi) & Earnest (Pueblo) Mirabal, Fred Goodnight, Milt & Flo Weaver, Andy & Irene Naytowhow (Cree), Ingwe (Kenyan), Nnakku Mulondo (Ugandan), Kunchok, Namtso, & Tenzin Yignyen (Tibetan Buddhist), Barbara & Peter Weber, Jose Lucero (Pueblo), George Isaacs, Carl Schafer, Pat Hite, Ray McAdam, Ken McCleary, Agnes White Mouse and Harriet Two Strike (Lakota), and Baba Olatunji (Nigerian).

Please see [Our Elders](#) page for more information on Bhante and the other Elders listed here."

<http://peaceweavers.com/about/history/>