

DAKINI



DAKINI 13

2ND ANNIVERSARY ISSUE!

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EDITORIAL Anona

In Dakini 12 I printed a criticism of Dakini by Helen Johnson. I'd hoped to have some feedback on this, but unfortunately, I've only received one letter from Faith Johnson. But firstly, regarding Helen's criticism, I did in fact write to her at the time, and we had an exchange of letters about Dakini and women in the Movement generally. She did suggest that I quoted some of my letter to her in Dakini, but as this was in October last year - some three months ago - I felt I'd rather just briefly say what I think about her criticism now.

The first thing I want to get straight is this term "the women's Movement" which is used by both Helen and Faith about women in the Friends. This is not a women's Movement. The FWBO is the Movement and there are women involved in it. The term "women's Movement" is therefore inappropriate.

Although Helen does not specifically mention Amaravati when she talks about "businesses being set up", as this is the only place where businesses have been set up only by women, I assume she is talking about here. I read through the last few Amaravati News's in Dakini, which is where the businesses have been mentioned, and two things occurred to me. One is that, where I have written the Amaravati News, my style of writing tends to be a bit over exuberant. This isn't because I want to create a false impression about how things are going, but because when I feel positive and good about things, it tends to come out that way. Now that I'm aware of this, I'll try and guard against getting too carried away! But in spite of this, basically there's just been the facts about what businesses have been started; what people are doing etc. Not a lot of detail it's true and maybe it would be worthwhile going into things a bit more deeply. But I think that to say that there has been "An over statement of events which have a positive foundation leading to a falsified, rather euphoric mis-representation of what is actually happening" is being a bit extreme.

To find out what is happening with our businesses currently, please read the current News from Amaravati, but whilst on the subject of businesses, I feel that Helen's criticism is a bit one-sided. I agree that efficiency etc. is essential for our Right Livelihood projects. And we are working hard at trying to make our businesses more efficient, profitable etc. But the spirit behind what we are doing and the motivation is also important. Maybe Amaravati News has concentrated more on these aspects of our businesses, and that's why Helen wants to know more about the more strictly

business aspects, but let's not forget why we're setting up businesses. It's to provide creative working situations in which people can grow more easily, and also to provide more money for the Movement, which means money to help spread the Dharma. So efficiency and making money are not ends in themselves.

Regarding what Helen says about "filling a magazine with very positive-sounding articles is a way of producing an image of a flourishing, exciting, dynamic situation which may not always be true" - most of the articles in Dakini are personal and quite a lot of them over the last few months have spoken of difficult times. Dakini 11 (which was the issue before the one in which Helen's criticism appeared) was a particularly positive one - probably because of the summer retreat and there being two articles on positive emotions. But then the Mandarava retreat was really positive - so why should anyone say anything else when this was the case? Helen wasn't on the retreat so maybe it did seem to her as if people were being over positive, but I think the articles included in this issue were only a reflection of what people actually experienced.

Since the end of Pundarika/Baltimore Street days and then Amaravati - Mandarava starting up - and Beulah, things have got markedly better for the majority of women in the FWBO. There are more women Order members for those women who want contact with them - more retreats, more communities, more women feeling more positive and more confident. Bhante himself said that he felt the women in the Movement had grown more in the last two years than the rest of the movement had in 10. So is it surprising that Dakini gives off such a positive air? Perhaps there could be more said about "areas where we haven't achieved so much" - now that things are so much more positive, but I think that on the whole Dakini has only been a reflection of how the women that have written for it have actually experienced things. I do feel that because there were previously so few women involved and things were talked about in terms of "the women" that sometimes there is a bit of a tendency for a group feeling to creep in. Perhaps this is partly what Helen is picking up on. But now that things are broadening out - Sanghaevi and Shridevi having moved to Beulah (and Malini just last weekend!) - Dharmadonna to Leatherhead - Punyavati to Brighton etc. - I think this will naturally improve. The point I'm trying to make is that if Dakini sounds very positive, it's mainly because overall, most women feel that way.

This brings me to Faith's letter, which reads:

"I was interested to read the article in the last issue of Dakini in which the writer raised the issue that the publication presented a rather one-sided self-congratulatory picture of the Women's movement.

I personally find it inspiring to read Dakini; as the author of the article herself said, generally only news of a negative type ever reaches publication. This magazine, on the other hand, with its numerous thoughtful and deeply felt insights into how the women are involving, gave me a great deal of encouragement when I was living on my own out of contact with others. The other side of the coin I can imagine only too well, we all have our difficulties. However, it might be even more inspiring to hear from others, not that they have had these difficulties, one takes that as read, but how, in fact, they have overcome them. I would also like to know the policy of the Editor. Is it her deliberate aim to keep this kind of 'slant' to Dakini? or would she be, whilst remaining herself an impartial Editress, be prepared to publish articles of such a nature, so long, I would presume, as an overall positive character were preserved".

I'm glad Faith finds Dakini inspiring and encouraging. Regarding her comment "I would also like to know the policy of the Editor...etc.", perhaps it would be helpful to go back and see why Dakini was started in

the first place, specially as this is our Second Anniversary Edition! Two years ago, there were fewer women Order members and not an awful lot happening amongst the women in the FWBO. So Dakini was started as a means of communication amongst the women, as a medium where women trying to evolve could express their experiences, thoughts etc. It was also a way of letting women know of retreats and events particularly for women. So it was started as a positive contribution to women in the Movement - to help enrich and inspire their growth. As I said earlier, things have changed a lot in the past two years, but it still seems valuable to share our experiences, let other women in the Friends know what's happening in your life or at your community/centre/co-op etc.; to inspire other women with a poem, or some thoughts on how you see an aspect of the Dharma, or a book you've read, or a film you've seen. Or just a letter to introduce yourself.

I don't think any of us would like to see Dakini filled with negative, depressing things. I remember Bhante saying once that SHABDA (the newsletter for Order members) did seem at that time to be being used as a place to let off negative emotions. He commented that it would be good to realise that there were going to be 80 odd Order members (I think there were around that at this particular time) reading your article over breakfast and it wasn't going to be very inspiring breakfast reading for them! He encouraged us therefore to think about this and try and write something that would inspire others, not depress them. And that if there were negative things you wanted to talk about, then thrash them out with a few people you knew well, not subject the whole Order to them. I think the same sort of thing could be applied to Dakini, except that on the whole I don't think people have subjected Dakini readers to their negative emotions.

Bearing all this in mind, I am happy to include all contributions sent to me for Dakini. As for articles on how people have overcome difficulties, this sounds quite inspiring, as Faith has said, and I'd be only too pleased to receive any such articles. Also, any constructive criticism on Dakini as a whole, or particular articles. Helen's criticism certainly set me thinking and was quite useful. In fact, I think Dakini would benefit from more feedback generally, so let's have more articles, more energy, more feedback!

P.S. I'm sorry for the lateness of this issue. Time and space have been short recently.

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NEWS FROM AMARAVATI Anoma

If you're not extending yourself, you're probably stagnating. If you haven't got something to work towards - not just the ultimate goal of Enlightenment, but other smaller goals along the way - you're probably sliding back. These things have been said before I know, but recently I've been more aware of them. At Amaravati, we've been spending a year and a half doing up a decaying house; setting up an industrial co-operative with two businesses (Kusa Cushions and Spectrum Decorating), opening up our doors for women's Mitra Days and retreats etc. But we've been doing much more than this. We've been extending ourselves, discovering ourselves, learning to be more independent, particularly from men. We are six miles away from the nearest Centre, the LBC, and although quite a few of us do go to classes there and appreciate the Centre, we are not directly involved. The community has evolved organically in its own way, according to the growth of its members. The personnel has changed quite a bit over the 18 months, but I feel that something which started poking up its head in Balmore Street (where the founding members of this community used to live) has been growing and flourishing here in Wanstead. OK, there's been the occasional slow periods caused by attacks of cold, lethargy etc., but nothing which can stop this flower eventually blossoming. To enable this to happen and as a natural expression of the growth of the community, we want to extend ourselves into a public centre. For various reasons, we'd like to stay in London and one possibility is that we get involved with the West London centre. We're going to attend some classes over there and have as much contact with each other as we can to see if it does seem possible to combine our resources. They are looking for a new Centre so, if we do decide to go ahead, we would be starting this together. Anyway, by the time the next Dakini comes out, I'll be able to give you more details of what we're going to be doing.

Marichi and I used to be involved with classes at Pundarika and Anjali at Brighton but none of us has been directly involved with a Centre for some time. I've quite missed this, but before getting into a public centre again, we needed to strengthen ourselves, become more independent, become more ourselves in fact. Now I think we will have no real problem. We have Order members and strong Mitras who've had the opportunity of living and practising in a total situation, and at least one yoga teacher, and two businesses. What we're most short of is money.

I'm writing this report the day after a community evening, during which there was quite a fierce discussion about money. I think we are all feeling a bit stirred up this morning, but it's necessary to be clear on this subject. Particularly as we are going to need to make more money than we have been doing if we are to get a Centre going. Our businesses do make money but improvements need to be made in our management, our pricing and our efforts (more consistency etc) if we are going to really succeed. These are already starting to be made. Blue Lotus Co-operative Ltd. is now officially registered and we have a co-op meeting once a month. Kusa Cushions and Spectrum Decorating have started having their own meetings once a week on a Monday morning. About six of us recently attended a seminar on co-operatives, got together by Kulamitra of the Pureland Co-op. This involved people involved in co-ops throughout the movement and I think people who went to it found it quite useful and even inspiring. Co-ops are quite a new thing in the Movement and so for everyone involved, it's a case of learning as you go. Therefore, getting together periodically to talk about things and exchange ideas etc. is very helpful.

Kusa Cushions, managed by Anjali, involves Kay Roberts, and now Rosy Anderson who's moved into the community from Glasgow, Faith Johnson & Teresa. Joan, who's been working with Kusa Cushions for around two years has now joined the decorating team. Baggy pants have basically been dropped as they haven't proved to be very profitable, and Kusa Cushions is concentrating on cushions and mats and curtains. They made 200 cushions for the LBC and 100 mats, and also made the curtains for the shrineroom. They are now building up a stock of cushions and mats for sale at the next Festival of Mind and Body at Olympia in April, and also to sell in shops. They are building up a list of suitable shops in London and Teresa and Faith Johnson who has now moved here from Devon will be visiting these shops and any others they find, from next week to try and open up markets for our cushions and mats. They've been giving thought to packaging the cushions to make them more presentable in shops and to new motifs, materials etc. They've also been getting a catalogue together, with photos of the cushions and will be sending these out to meditation centres, shops and anywhere else which might be interested in cushions. Rosy, who's experienced in this kind of work, has been working on the lay-out of the catalogue and is also working on new motifs for the cushions. Kay has just started taking on curtain jobs which come in from local advertising. I've been trying to put in a day a week stuffing cushions, and anyone else who has some free time is asked to do a bit of stuffing.

The painting and decorating team is now Vimala (Manager), Hilary, Joan and Karola who has recently moved in from Hackney and who was previously doing decorating with some other women in that area. Since the retreat, there hasn't been much work. Apparently it's a bad time for painting and decorating. But they made good use of the time in finishing painting the hall here at Anaravati; tackling the dry rot in the 'pad' outside (into which Hilary has moved); painting and decorating Hilary's old room into which Rosie has moved, and also Kay's room. Except for a few bits and pieces, the whole house (17 rooms!) has been decorated now. This week they've been doing some wall-papering and painting at a young typesetting office and are estimating two whole houses to paint and decorate. So for the time being at least, it looks like the lean time is over!

With all foreseeable outgoings taken into account over the next couple of months, we are a hundred pounds or so in credit. But this doesn't include what comes in from the businesses between now and then. So we are poised to actually start accumulating some extra money.

Also in the pipeline is a catering business which will be managed by Teresa with Anne MacFillan and Marichi. This will start when we move to wherever we move to and in the meantime, we need to get the capital to start it. Part of this will hopefully come from loans and part from working outside. Anne is still working in the local library and bringing in quite a sizeable cheque each month. Teresa, as I said earlier will be opening some time with Kusa Cushions and some time getting a cookery book together with Annie Leigh from Mandarava.

Other news is that Marichi is going to India in a few weeks! She will be going for about 3 months. It's something she's wanted to do for some time and she feels this is the best time to do it, before getting involved in a Centre and a business. So she's getting things organised for her trip, and has handed over the housekeeping to Diana, with help from Faith. Diana

and Faith have been busy re-organising the kitchen and putting up the odd poster and down the odd mat, and generally improving the look of the community, besides providing us with good meals. Incidentally, we have finally got a large cooker, with six burners, two ovens and a grill, which is real luxury after a two ring calor gas burner!

Sometime in the next few months, Vinala will be moving to Mandarava. As I said earlier, Malini has now moved to Beulah and there's only Anne Murphy and Annie Leigh at Mandarava. Anne M. isn't planning to stay all that much longer and Annie is often away. Vinala will be moving there, hopefully with one or possibly two others. She will be going out to work to bring in some money to do repairs on the place and provide things needed for the retreat centre. Her first priority will probably be a car as Mandarava is 14 miles from Norwich with a fairly infrequent bus service. So, sorry as we shall be to see her go, I think she'll put a lot into Mandarava and be a very good person to have there. In the meantime, she's working to make herself redundant from the decorating team. She was due to leave in June, but if possible, she now plans to leave at the end of March.

We now have two study groups - one still studying the Bodhicaryavatara - the other one studying the 11 Positive Mental Events from a recent Mitrata. The smaller groups mean more space for people to speak, and a better situation in which to really go into things which come up during the course of study.

Our Speakers Class the other week was quite exciting with one planned talk by Diana and four impromptu talks by Vinala, Marichi, Hilary and Sanghadevi. These ranged from about 6 minutes to 15, with the speaker being given the subject just two minutes before they were due to speak! The subjects they were given (by myself and Vinala) were: "Ksanti and Virya" (Vinala), "What the Bodhisattva Ideal Means to me" (Marichi), "Mind Reactive and Mind Creative" (Hilary) and "What Being an Order Member Means to Me" (Sanghadevi). I was impressed at the quality of the talks. None of them 'undd' and 'ahd' very much and what they talked about was interesting. I particularly enjoyed Sanghadevi's talk. We have now opened up the class further and any woman who'd like to come, and is prepared to give a talk is welcome. Please let us know beforehand though. And be prepared to come on a reasonably regular basis. We try to have them every two weeks (on a Friday evening) but due to retreats and other events at weekends, it's not always possible. However, if you're interested, give me a ring and I'll let you know when the next one is.

There's another open women's retreat this weekend. We only had about four bookings at the beginning of the week but now there are around 19 or 20 people coming! Quite a lot of quite new women - two from Cheltenham, two from Edinburgh, 3 from Norwich, 2 from Brighton and others from London. I haven't met quite a few of them, so I'm looking forward to that.

So, at the risk of being over positive!, I think the community is on the up and up. There are 13 of us living here and so it's the fullest and I think in many ways the most energetic and exciting it's ever been.

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On the recent women's retreat at Mandarava, talks were given by the four Order members present: Anjali, Vinala, Malini and Shridevi. A couple of people suggested to me that they be included in Dakini, so here is the first talk, given by Anjali:

WHERE BUDDHISM BEGINS Anjali

We're going to hear from Vinala how the Buddha-to-be experienced his own life-style as unsatisfactory and how he saw the Four Sights which completely shook him up and caused him to go forth in search of the Truth. His initial motivation was dissatisfaction, and this is where Buddhism begins, from a feeling of dissatisfaction. This is the first of what are known as the Four Noble Truths. After the Buddha had gained Enlightenment sitting under the Bodhi Tree and had decided to try and share his vision he made his way to Sarnath and there in the deer park approached the five ascetics who had been his disciples when he had practised austerities. They'd been disgusted when he had given up his earlier practises, and as he approached then now they were quite contemptuous. 'Here comes old Gautama, the softie, let's just ignore him'. So they turned their backs. But as the Buddha approached they couldn't help themselves bowing down, offering him a seat, flowers and perfume, and almost in spite of themselves were receptive to his teaching. And his first discourse went something like this:

(1) Now this, monks, is the noble truth of pain: birth is painful, old age is painful, sickness is painful, death is painful, sorrow, lamentation, dejection, and despair are painful. In short the five groups of grasping are painful.

(2) Now this, monks, is the noble truth of the cause of pain: the craving, which tends to rebirth, combined with pleasure and lust, finding pleasure here and there; namely, the craving for passion, the craving for existence, the craving for non-existence.

(3) Now this, monks, is the noble truth of the cessation of pain: the cessation without a remainder of craving, the abandonment, forsaking, release, non-attachment.

(4) Now this, monks, is the noble truth of the way that leads to the cessation of pain: This is the Noble Eightfold Way, namely, right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

Bhante comments on the first Noble Truth, which here is rendered as pain, but can also be rendered as dissatisfaction.

'By beginning with the fact of pain, Buddhism involved the whole nature of man from the very outset. Recognition of the First Noble Truth comes not as a pleasant intellectual diversion but as a terrible emotional shock. The scriptures say that one feels then like a man who suddenly realises that his turban is in flames. Only a shock of this kind is strong enough to galvanize the whole being into action. The most astonishing intellectual discovery is no more than an agreeable titillation in the region of the cerebral hemisphere. Only when a man feels strongly will he act effectively. It is for this reason above all others that Buddhism starts not with a concept but with a feeling, not with intellectual postulation, but with emotional experience.'

So it's through our original feeling of dissatisfaction that we look for something beyond ourselves and it's through keeping this feeling alive that we continue to make an effort. It can go against the grain to foster dissatisfaction in oneself - our whole society is geared to conformity not individuality, and we are products of that society. So first of all we have to recognise and come to terms with any feelings of guilt we might have about feeling dissatisfied. It's not that dissatisfaction, which is painful, is a good thing for its own sake - that would be masochistic. But it's a very powerful means to help us change. So how can we keep our

dissatisfaction alive and kicking? Dissatisfaction can be stimulated by recognising our own and our society's imperfections. Actually it seems almost impossible to clearly recognise our own imperfections - we usually see ourselves as much worse than we are or much better than we are. But if we're open to one or two or even many spiritual friends then we can get an idea of where we're at. Even when we know that some habit, say a neurotic behaviour pattern, is not conducive to our growth and development, it's very easy just to settle down and learn to live with that fact. We can rationalise that, well everything's a process, everything changes - I won't always be like this! But in a seminar on 'Conditions for the Stability of the Order' Bhante warns us of the inherent energy in neurotic behaviour that sustains that behaviour decade after decade. So if we're sufficiently dissatisfied then we must take appropriate action and a vow can be very useful here. If we've been behaving in one particular way all our lives to suddenly stop behaving that way could make us blocked, but if we make a vow for a suitably short period of time then the transformation can take place gradually. As well as vowing not to do something it can be very creative to take a positive vow at the same time e.g. if someone takes a vow to stop smoking for a certain period, then they could also vow to spend the money they'd saved on flowers for the shrine, thereby creating a pleasant smell instead of smoke.

The stronger our aspirations are the more inspired we will be to change and therefore the more dissatisfied with our present state. Other members of the Sangha have a great effect on strengthening our aspirations in quite simple ways. They can be, for us, like the jewel trees tinkling the dharma in the Pure Land. For instance it's very easy in conversation to slip into gossip and perhaps start running somebody down. An ordinary friend might join in, but a spiritual friend can really wave Manjushri's sword and cut through our negativity by simply saying something positive about the person. And we can instantly relate to the possibility that there is a more creative way of behaving and that with awareness and practise we too could be more creative.

True dissatisfaction is accompanied by an element of insight. We've seen through the old patterns, the old habits and we want something new, something different. This has to be distinguished from disgruntlement, which is wanting something but not being able to get it. For most of us, our initial motivation for the spiritual life will be a mixture of both dissatisfaction and disgruntlement and as we become aware of our disgruntlements we may feel we have to satisfy these on their own level before we can grow and develop. This may be so in some cases, but Bhante has said that disgruntlement can turn into true dissatisfaction through leading the spiritual life.

Strong dissatisfaction requires highly developed critical powers, but these must be accompanied by equally developed positive emotion, otherwise we'll become negative and cold. Study, especially in the context of a study group, can stimulate our critical faculties, make us consider what we really feel and the metta bhavana will gradually transform our emotional nature.

Bhante is the most dissatisfied person I've met so far - he wants to change everything and I'd like to conclude with one of his poems:

NEW

I should like to speak
With a new voice, speak
Like Adam in the Garden, speak
Like the Rishis of old, announcing
In strong jubilant voices the Sun
Moon Stars Dawn Winds Fire
Storm and above all the god-given
Intoxicating ecstatic
Soma, speak
Like divine men celebrating

The divine cosmos with divine names.
 I should like to speak
 With a new voice, telling
 The new things that I know, chanting
 In incomparable rhythms
 New things to new men, singing
 The new horizon, the new vision
 The new dawn, the new day.
 I should like to use
 New words, use
 Words pristine, primeval, words
 Resonant, expressive, creative,
 Such as, breathed to music, built Ilion.
 (The old words
 Are too tired soiled stale lifeless.)
 New words
 Come to me from the stars
 From your eyes from
 Space
 New words vibrant, radiant, able to utter
 The new me, able
 To build for new
 Men a new world.

---oOo---

THE FOUR SIGHTS Vinaya

"Buddhism". The word evokes different reactions, as many as there are people

Sitting in the tube one day, looking at the faces around me, the thought arose: why do some people want to follow the spiritual path? and why, for some, is it just not a possibility at all - doesn't even get considered?

I found this difficult to answer directly. Instead I wondered if there was an example, for those of us who did want to follow it, of someone at the very beginning of their spiritual life, just as we are at the beginning of ours. The fully enlightened Buddha, like a great mountain peak, is inspiring, but both can seem at times to be equally far away. Thinking more about the Buddha, it occurred to me that the beginning of his spiritual life is known to us, in the episode traditionally known as the Four Sights.

Prince Gautama Siddhartha was a prince of the Shakya tribe in North East India, 2,500 years ago. Well versed in the arts and skills befitting a prince of that culture, he was young and healthy both physically and psychologically. He was intelligent, successful and wealthy. He lacked nothing which a human being needs to be integrated and emotionally positive and stable. (Perhaps some of us may have a way to go before we reach this stage of development).

The Four Sights is the traditional story of how Siddhartha went beyond his current way of life; good in many ways though it was, he found it not totally satisfying.

Apparently his father gave Siddhartha three palaces to live in, one for each of the seasons in India. He was quite sheltered. But one day, driven by Chanda the charioteer with the horse Kanthaka. Siddhartha was moved to leave his all-enclosing palace and go round the streets of the city. In the course of this trip, he must have seen many things, but the one that struck him particularly is known as the First Sight, that of an old man. Affected by the realisation of the universality of old age, he went back to his palace.

The second time he came out, amongst the many and varied sights to be seen,

he was affected by that of a man suffering illness - the second Sight. Realising the inescapable universality of illness and suffering, he went back to his palace.

The next time he went out, Siddhartha saw the Third Sight - that of a dead man. He saw that death, too, is the universal lot of mankind. And he went back to the palace.

So, the first three of the Four Sightings were old age, illness and death. Siddhartha did not merely see them with eye and brain, but in a deeper sense, saw into them. They affected him at an emotional level, even an existential level, so that he was moved to consider them, could not ignore the questions they posed to his being - and so had to find a solution to the meaning of old age, illness and death. In India the sight of an old man, a sick man and a dead man were commonplace events. But Siddhartha saw the Universality of old age, suffering and death: conditions which apply to the life of every man and woman. Inescapable as they are, yet for him there had to be a solution or resolution of the problem. There had to be an escape from them.

Which brings us to the fourth and last Sighting, because traditionally it represents the way to the solution of Siddhartha's problem. Leaving the palace and driving round the city for the fourth time, he saw a sadhu or holy man, dressed in the traditional saffron coloured rags, wandering from place to place, begging for food; someone who had left worldly life, left home and gone forth to answer his life's true question.

Siddhartha decided to do the same. He left home one night, went forth from his protective palace. Chanda drove him to the bank of the river Anoma. He put aside his rich clothes for the dyed saffron robes and crossed over to the other shore of the river; then proceeded on the course of development which culminated in a few years in the enlightenment experience under the Bodhi tree.

Insofar as we follow his example - find our own question, and try with all our being to find its resolution, leaving no remnant behind, so we are also leaving home, gone forth and taking refuge in the Buddha, his teaching, and those who follow it. Our own life's question might take a different form from Siddhartha's; but our attempt to answer it will involve the same process - we leave the known, go forward to the unknown. To the extent that we do this, not merely intellectually, or even emotionally, but with as much of our being as we are aware of - to that extent we are committed to the Three Jewels.

--oOo--

OFFERING Faith Johnson

It's said
On going to see your spiritual guide
Gifts should be offered:-
I took a pebble from a Cornish beach,
Curiously wrought and fashioned by the sea;
Cast on the shore, sucked back by the tides;
Through endless neap tides, spring tides sculpted
Into its present shape,
A thing of beauty.
It seemed a fitting offering.
I could not visualise a store bought gift,
But far more precious,
By the profound ocean proffered,
I gave a simple pebble.

MANDARAVA Shridevi

mandarava
mythical flower
in the jungle
female moist mysterious

cocoon on the wall
of a warm room
girls fluttering multicoloured
butterflies
circling easily each other
in a calm dance

at night the stars are
strong on dark velvet sky
the full moon
pulls towards herself
feminine beings

one morning
the dawn tender blue and pink
with soft snow
envelops all in her embrace
bright ice sparkles in frost
blossoms
on the shrine room window

my heart flies high in fragrant
peace, it melts:
tears

---oOo---

GREENGATES (the new women's community in Leatherhead) Anne Rowlands

As some of you probably already know, we have formed another community - a women's community - in Leatherhead, Surrey. On the 31st October, Anni Norman, Sue Lawson, Dhammadinna and I moved into a fairly large detached house which we are renting from the Department of Transport. A short while later, Do Phillips also moved in, so there are now 5 members of the community.

Dhammadinna moved down from Amaravati to join us and we are all really pleased to have her around, though unfortunately she has had many engagements over the last 3 months and we haven't seen much of her as yet.

Anni, Sue and I all work in Croydon in 'Friends Foods' and 'The Secret Garden' Cafe, a co-operative venture connected with the centre at Aryatara. Do has recently made a studio for her sculpting work in the basement of the cafe. As Croydon is about 13 miles away from Leatherhead, it was necessary for us to acquire a car, - public transport being a phenomenal cost.

We are really lucky to have this house - thanks to Anni for putting so much energy into finding a suitable place for a community. As I have already said we have rented it from the Department of Transport - on an 18 month lease for the time being. It may well be that part of the back garden will be required after that date for the M.25 development. This would be a great shame for we have a beautiful, large garden at the back of the house complete with a fish pond, four oak trees and two resident squirrels. Large fields

back onto the garden and beyond the fields are some woods - the whole scenery looks amazingly beautiful, especially so during the recent snowfall.

As Dhammadinna has been away a bit and the rest of us have been working in Croydon and attending the Centre, we haven't, until over the Christmas period, spent much time together in the house, so it has taken us a while to sort out a programme. However, we now get up at six in the morning and sit together before we go to work. This has made a great difference to the feel and atmosphere of the community - a real, positive attempt is being made to create a spiritual community as opposed to just a few people living together. As well as this we are holding community meetings once a week, to discuss the practical and not-so-practical matters and to allow us all the space to say how we feel if we should so wish. One half hour or so a week is also put aside for a community clean up, when we all get busy with our mops, dusters, scrubbing brushes and Vin to clear up the house. We take it in turns (a rota is made up) to be the waker-upper, the leader of the meditations, housekeeper and shrine-keeper.

The house does have the feel of a large spacious family house with 'nice' wallpaper on the walls of every room. In order to start to change this appearance, and to bring us all together more, we held a four day working retreat just after Christmas. We started, and finished, the kitchen which was the worst room in the house and I think we all really enjoyed working on it. It is certainly now the best place to sit, and often the warmest too! Working on the kitchen together and sitting quite a lot more together, really seemed to open us up a lot more to one another and helped to improve communication between us, and also made us all more aware of some of the possibilities that living together in a spiritual community can bring about. I'm sure we're all now excited about the future of Greengates in 1979.

--oOo--

...please see back page for
note from Dhammadinna

The following poem was written by Dawn Bouic, a Mitra living in a remote part of Wales. She stayed at Anaravati during the opening week of Sukhavati and wrote me the following letter shortly afterwards, to accompany the poem.

Dear Anoma,

I have enclosed this poem for possible future inclusion in Dakini.

It came about in a strange way. In fact, I had gone to sleep on the bus, from London to Bristol and when I woke up, as we were entering the Bus Station, I was aware of this poem in my mind. I had to scribble it down on the back of Bhante's "Buddhism and Blasphemy" before I was so awake that it had gone again.

I hope that you are all well and happy,
with Metta to you all,

Dawn.

JOY Dawn Bouic

Joy is waking
Joy is sleeping
Joy is walking
Joy is sitting.

Joy is stepping with silent tread
Watching sparrows and finches going to bed.

Joy is the sky when it's windy and wild
Joy is a cow reflective and mild.

Joy is a field
Sheep all around grazing
A waterfall tumbling
Cats everywhere lazing.

Joy is being alone in the forest at night
The trees breathing love to the foxes in sight

Joy is the poems and pictures from children
That say 'Happy Day' so spontaneously given

Joy is the foal, the dam and the sire
Joy is collecting the wood for the fire

Joy is a buzzard slow gliding and free
Joy is YOU and Joy is ME.

--oOo--

OFFERINGS FOR DAKINI Helen Johnson

WAKING THIS MORNING
WAS CLEAR AND CALM
EMPTY
OF THE DAY BEFORE
UNTOUCHED
BY THAT TO COME.

EVERY SECOND SHOULD,
LIKE THIS MORNING,
BE COMPLETE
STANDING ALONE IN ETERNITY
NEITHER ROBBING FROM
THOSE BEFORE
NOR FEEDING THOSE
YET TO COME.

...

I HAVE FOUND MYSELF A KOAN
SOMETHING WHICH ARISES
AGAIN AND AGAIN
THROWING ME OFF A PRECIPICE
INTO DARKNESS

IT IS DIFFICULT TO DECIDE
WHETHER TO GO NEAR THAT CLIFF
OR SIMPLY RUN THE OTHER WAY -
ALWAYS SUPPOSING I HAVE
THAT CHOICE WHICH I IMAGINE -

PICKING MYSELF UP
CONSTANTLY SCRATCHED AND BLOODIED,
BUT OH THAT POSSIBILITY -
OF GAINING A HEAD FOR HEIGHTS!

...

THERE'S NOW
TIME OF INFINITE POSSIBILITIES.
A NEW ERA,
A BEGINNING AND AN END.

GROWING UP;
 GROWING.... UNFOLDMENT;
 TALLER, STRONGER, MORE BEAUTIFUL....
 MORE ALONE....
 UP..... ALWAYS SEEKING;
 FOLLOWING A PATH TOWARDS LIGHT....
 WATCHING THE PATTERNS UNFOLD....
 CONSTANTLY...
 KALEIDOSCOPIC.

...

ONE DAY, SOON
 I WILL HAVE TO SHOW MYSELF
 FACE TO FACE
 CALL A HALT....

CASTING OFF FEAR
 BY MY OWN POWER,
 FOR A SECOND
 HALT THE WHEEL

THUS CAUSING
 THE PATTERN OF THE UNIVERSE
 TO CHANGE
 AND REFORM.

...

GIVING
 LOVING
 FLUIDITY
 DON'T LOOK FORWARD
 CAN'T LOOK BACK
 TAKE CARE
 OF ONLY
 NOW.

---oOo---

LEOTARD FOR SALE Joan Graham

Would anyone like to buy a nearly new emerald green, Dance Centre, medium, leotard, price £2.25 - for £1.75? If so please phone Joan at Amaravati.

---oOo---

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

FEBRUARY

evening 9th/
 10th/11th

OPEN WOMEN'S WEEKEND RETREAT at AMARAVATI. All women welcome. Please contact retreat organiser at Amaravati immediately if you want to come. Cost £3.

evening 16th/
 17th/18th

WEEKEND RETREAT at WHITE ROW for all women involved with the BRIGHTON CENTRE ONLY. Booking forms from Amaravati or Brighton Centre. Cost £3.

/Contd...

FEBRUARY cont.

evening 16th/
17/18

NORFOLK WOMEN MITRA STUDY RETREAT at Mandarava. For details, contact Dhammadinna at Greengates, Oxshott Road, Leatherhead, Surrey. Phone Leatherhead 77526.

evening 23rd/
24/25 till
morning Mon
26th

LONG WEEKEND RETREAT for all WOMEN ORDER MEMBERS at MANDARAVA. Please contact Anoma for details.

MARCH

evening 16th/
17/18th

ARYATARA AND BRIGHTON MITRA RETREAT at WHITE ROW. For details, please contact Dhammadinna.

Sunday 25th

MITRA DAY at AMARAVATI. Start 10.30 a.m. till approx 7.30 p.m. £1 charge for food.

evening 30th/
31st/1st April

TO BE CONFIRMED. OPEN WOMEN'S WEEKEND RETREAT AT MANDARAVA. Cost would be £8. If you're interested to go, please contact the Retreat Organiser at AMARAVATI nearer the time. Also, confirmation will appear in the next issue of Dakini.

APRIL

EVENING 13th/
14th/15th

OPEN WOMEN'S RETREAT AT AMARAVATI. ALL WOMEN WELCOME. Booking forms from Retreat Organiser at Amravati. Cost £8.

MAY

7th to 17th

WOMEN'S MITRA RETREAT at MANDARAVA. THIS HAS BEEN CHANGED FROM THE DATES IN APRIL GIVEN IN THE LAST ISSUE OF DAKINI, TO AVOID CLASHING WITH OTHER EVENTS ALREADY PLANNED. TO BOOK, CONTACT THE RETREAT ORGANISER AT AMARAVATI (NOT MANDARAVA). BOOKINGS ONLY ACCEPTED FOR THE FULL 10 DAYS. COST £4 PER DAY.

JUNE

22/23/24

THREE DAY RETREAT FOR ALL WOMEN MITRAS AND ORDER MEMBERS at MANDARAVA. More details in next issue.

---oOo---

...NOTE FROM DHAMMADINNA As most of you know, I have moved to Greengates, which is now called Khadiravani. This means "She of the Acacia Grove" and is one of the names of Green Tara. Greengates should still be included in the address though, as this is part of the postal address.

I'm still Convenor of Women Mitras, and I'll be using the community as a base from which to travel around to other Centres and take retreats etc. I'm hoping to see as many people as possible and have some contact somehow with all Mitras, either on retreats, through personal contact, or letters. So please do contact me here at Khadiravani and if you change your address, let me know.

Address and tel no.

'Khadiravani'

Greengates,
Oxshott Road,

Leatherhead, Surrey. Tel: Leatherhead 77526.

NEXT DAKINI: MARCH

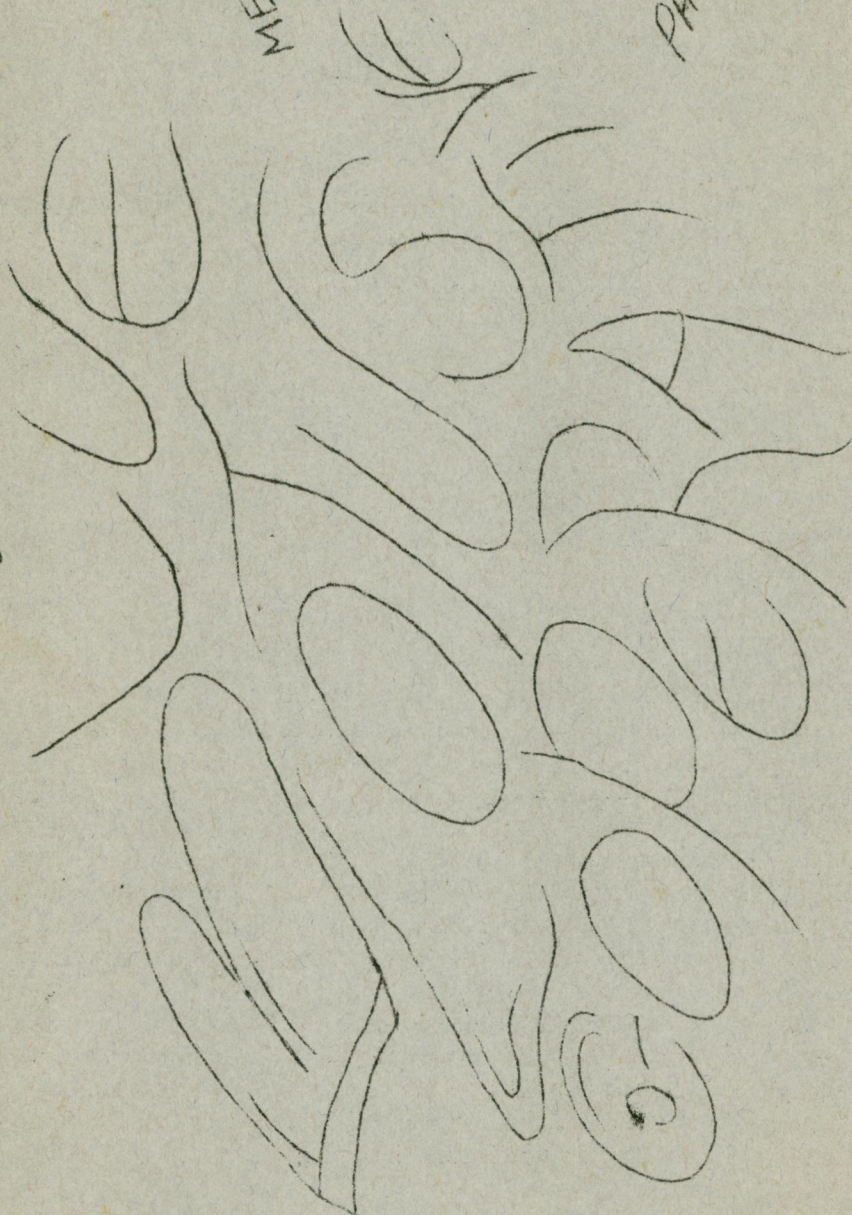
COPY DATE: 1st week in March please.

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