Jan Martin
c/o Benbah

DAKINI

DAKINI 17 SEPTEMBER 1979

A Newsletter for women Order members and Vitras, compiled by Upasika Anoma at 33, Byam Street, Fulham, London, S.W.6. Tel: 736 2105

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CONTENTS

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LETTER FROM ANIKETA Auckland, July, 28th 1979.

Dear Anoma,

Here, for 'Dakini', are some impressions of, and reflections on, the recent (JUly 20-22nd) Women's retreat held in the country, about 120 miles out of Auckland City. It was the first retreat of its kind for the FWBO in New Zealand. (There was one small gathering of women for a weekend in the early days when Padmashri was an Order member, and in some ways it gave a very tiny taste of what single sex retreats could be, but as an intensive retreat led and supported by several Order members, there is no comparison -'comparisons are odious' anyway - and perhaps it isn't fair to compare 'then' and 'now'; for 'then' the FWBO, and the WBO, was very small, and Padmashri was the only woman Order member in Auckland - but this does show how the Movement in New Zealand is growing, and in particular, is an indication of the growing and developing of ever deepening levels of commitment, and understanding of commitment to Buddha - Dharma - Sangha, slowly, very slowly, but surely.

The women present were - Upasikas Megha, Aniketa and Suvajri, Mitras (in alphabetical order) Verne Barrett, Judith Dubignon, Marion Feasey, Rosemary Sharples, Margaret Tisch, and Friends, Caryl McKirdy and Susan Storey.

The programme, apart from the study and the usual Meditation - Puja framework, grew out of the retreat itself. Megha led the Meditation and Puja, and yours truly led the study, which was on Milarepa's story-song, "A Woman's Role in the Dharma". At the time of planning we did not have the seminar tapes on this study, and as I was going on a three week solitary retreat immediately previous to the Women's Retreat, I offered to do the necessary preparation for leading the study, which for me was invaluable experience. The tapes arrived just at the right time - sooner, and I might not have done the study as thoroughly nor have opened myself to the text, later, and we would not have had the support and inspiration of the tapes after our study sessions. As it was, it was most encouraging to discover that we covered nearly all the points raised at the seminar, and raised some of our own. But enough about that.

The venue was "The Cottage", on a farm just out of a country town, Otorohanga, in the South Auckland Province in the central Hauraki Plains area of the North Island. It has recently been leased by the FWBO (Auckland) for solitary retreats and small, more intimate and intensive single-sex retreats. It is large enough to accommodate twelve people, and yet small enough for 'solitaries'. Conditions are austere and primitive when compared with city suburban homes where there are beds and electric blankets and all mod. cons. for comfortable winter living, but not that harsh to be a distraction. Indeed the conditions are just the thing for calling up all those necessary 'heroic' qualities of enduring physical discomfort cheerfully, and strengthening determination to practise Dharma! That Milarepa's songs were most appropriate hardly needs to be said! This is especially so in winter, sleeping on thin foam-rubber mattresses on thin, worn carpets (in some instances). Then there was the possibility of encountering a rat as a tenant in the attic. (Udaya had quite a battle with one on his solitary retreat in May). Rotting boards in the laundry-cum-toilet-cum-woodshed gave testimony to impermanence, with the mouldy smell of death and decay, and almost rotting moment by moment before one's eyes as one used 'the facilities'! Busy spiders spinning misty, dusty webs in dark corners, and feeling that ominous hole in the corner above the toilet cistern - the rat's front door? certainly didn't help when it came to eliminating waste! But somehow this austere setting served to show off all the more clearly and intensely all the glowing facets, within and without, that made up the retreat.

Encircling the cottage were the gently rolling green hills, and over-arching all, the unobstructed expanse of the sky, with an ever changing display of pink and gold dawns and green and gold sunsets, of silently moving clouds, stately and irridescing with the soft colours of opals, unexpectedly in shafts of sunlight and rain vapour, and at night millions of stars in a velvety sky.

Within the cottage, as counterpoint to the starkness and severity there was the cheerful roaring wood-fires, sizzling, and popping and crackling - wood collected by most of us and sawn up by Suvajri resourcefully bringing a new-brand saw, and by rosemary, and no doubt by others. There was the visual and bodily warmth of cosy shawls, colourful blankets, and velvet patch-work quilt in mossy greens and muted reds, mattresses draped with covers glowing with warm oranges and reds and purples. There were glowing faces and shining eyes, talking, smiling, laughter, some tears, silences, enjoying meals lovingly prepared on a decrepit electric cooker, drinking tea out of a variety of handleless cups, all the better for clasping chilly fingers round.. There was a brisk working-bee on Saturday, and one brisk walking without chanting, round the cottage in between a double sit on Sunday morning, teaching lessons in mindfulness of walking at a quick pace over uneven ground! Then there was inspiring study-discussion, and listening to the seminar tapes - Bhante and other women Order members and Mitras in England, as well as London's ? traffic boom, present by proxy, as it were, - our Mandala within the wider Mandala. And round, and in, and through everything the inspiring influence of the shrine and what that stands for. The rupa sat stark on an old-gold synthetic silk brocade pad, and over the tiers of the shrine shimmered an orange-red shot-silk taffeta covering - candles glowed with steady flames, burnishing the rupa and reflecting and lighting up the golden orange robes in the picture of Bhante on the shrine. Before the shrine were pots offered of yellow and white jonquils and New Zealand flax, and one small jar of violets, fresh and delicate. The meditations and pujas and the chanting, especially the chanting, the Sabbe Satta Sukkhi Hontu and mantra chanting, vibrating and rippling out long after voices were silent. The air was resonant with the 'after' sounds of Om Tare, Tuttare, Ture, Svaha - and the fading tones of the bell.

All in all, this retreat has been an encouraging and inspiring recognition of the growing involvement of women in the Movement in New Zealand, and of the fact that women in the FWBO can be and are increasingly becoming independent on all levels, namely the level oforganisation, of study, of practice, and of just being on their own on solitary retreats, and together; relating more creatively as individuals and less reactively as members of a group. We are, perhaps, not suddenly going to change old ingrained habitual ways of seeing ourselves and relating automatically (and to the impatient part of my nature, this is a hard fact to face) but with growing awareness and recognition of, and most importantly, freely acknowledging reactive patterns of communicating in ourselves, as they arise, then the way will be made clear and straight, and there will be fewer and fewer blocks and hindrances, and more and more stumbling-blocks become stepping-stones, for the 'unimpeded progress of Truth!

Yours in the Dharma,

Aniketa

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LETTER FROM ANNI NORMAN

Khadiravani 22.7.79

Dear Dakini,

The other night I had a dream I was outside when it began to rain, it was

raining hard but I just stood there getting soaked thru, after all I couldn't do anything about it. I was drenched when someone came up to me and pulled an umbrella off my arm, which I had been holding unbeknown to me all the time. This person said "You've been holding this but why don't you use it?"

When I was thinking about this dream I realised that we have so much that we don't make use of. So many positive qualities that we suppress, we are just not aware of them. Each one of us possesses so much which most of the time lays hidden.

What we must do is not see ourselves as any particular set thing, we must open ourselves up to our potential which we do in meditation and let this positiveness express itself. In every situation we have two choices - that is, to react the same way we've been doing all our lives or we can be creative - we can stop that reactivity. Don't be afraid, that doesn't mean there will be nothing to express, we will be allowing a more creative side of ourselves to express itself.

We set so many ideas of ourselves to hold us in, put us in a safe little box, that to change is to free these ideas, so we become absolutely anything we wish. We are nothing but our ideas of ourselves! Change these ideas and we can change ourselves.

A few days later Bhante's poem SECRET WINGS was read in a puja and it just seemed to express everything I'd been experiencing.

SECRET WINGS

We cry that we are weak although
We will not stir our secret wings
The world is dark - because we are
Blind to the starriness of things.

We pluck our rainbow-tinted plumes
And with their heaven-born beauty try
To fledge nocturnal shafts, and then
Complain "Alas! we cannot fly "

We mutter "All is dust" or else
With mocking words accost the wise:
"Show us the Sun which shines beyond
The Veil" - and then we close our eyes.

To powers above and powers beneath
In quest of Truth men sue for aid,
Who stand athwart the Light and fear
The shadow that themselves have made.

Oh cry no more that you are weak
But stir and spread your secret wings,
And say "The world is bright, because
We glimpse the starriness of things."

Soar with your rainbow plumes and reach
That near-far land where all are one,
Where Beauty's face is aye unveiled
And every star shall be a sun.

--oOo--

PADMASAMBHAVA Eve Gill

Oh great one,
Man among men,
Oh lover,
For you know the passionate intensity of the
truly Spiritual Life.
You have united the gods and the demons
Turning them, turning them to the Dharma,
Taming or angering the very energies, we feeble
beings dare not touch!
With wisdom and vigour you conquered!

The ages change brilliance
To damp drab shade,
But with you,
You stand ageless, brilliant, alive!
In my heart I hold you still,
Among shapes and colour of landscapes,
Adorned with jewels and rich robes,
Till your very face shines with the radiance
of the Enlightened Ones.

I entreat you to stay among ~~the ruins of man~~,
And inspire us to go beyond,
From the very conditioned nature we call humanity,
To the shores of True Humanity, Enlightenment!

--oOo--

6th August 1979.

POEM FROM SUE LAWSON "Khadiravani"

Caught
In a Net
Groping, thrusting,
Clawing, suffocation
Hands finding space
But held apart
By Net
Never coming together.
Panic
Fear
Darkness
Fight
Silent Scream.

But the Net
Closes in.
Exhaustion, Emptiness,
Aching, Longing
Stillness
Quiet
Breathe.

Feel the fear
Feel the darkness
Feel the pressure
That wants to break.

I Fear
I Panic.
I catch myself
in Nets
in fear of
feeling.

But in fear
I feel
In the darkness
I feel.
In the feeling
I see
I weave my own Nets.
In the feeling
I see
I need no Nets.
Away with Nets!

--oOo--

POEM FROM ANNE MACMILLAN

I sit
Suspended
In the bright, clear, jewel
Of the moment between.
This moment, this feeling
A training for
Reality.

A gateway
In the eye of the storm.

--oOo--

LETTER FROM ANONA

33 Byam Street,
Fulham,
London SW6.
Tel: 736 2105

Dear fellow Order members and Mitras,

It's now a week into October and the September Dakini is not out! My apologies. What with moving from Amaravati to Fulham and having now just got over a week of flu' - Dakini has got more and more held up. I wanted to write quite a bit for this issue - about our move from Amaravati and also something in answer to Susanna Laurola's article in the last Dakini, but as time is short, I thought I'd write this letter, covering as much as possible, but not going into as much depth as I'd intended.

The last time there was anything about Amaravati in Dakini was in March. I wrote then about how we intended to find a large house in West London and move over, as we had decided to become involved with the Centre there. Well, six months later, we have at least found a temporary house in Fulham. We moved in at the beginning of September. Who's"we"? Well, six of us - Anjali, Eve, Anne, Kay, Karola and myself. During the six months of looking for property, it became clear that some members of the community at Amaravati were more into the move to West London and getting a small centre off the ground, than others. So Joan and Teresa decided they'd like to remain in East London and become more involved with the LBC. They got a flat in Hackney which is just a couple of miles from Bethnal Green. Later on Marichi too decided to involve herself with the LBC and has a room in a friend's house in Camden for the time being. She will be supporting and I think leading, study groups for women Mitras and Friends from the LBC,

which will give Sanghadevi some much needed help in this area.

Hilary decided to head in a new direction and has movedto Brighton. She's living above Sunrise restaurant and working in the restaurant and possibly the shop too.

We haven't got a name for the community here. As we're only here for a short time, we thought we'd wait until there was a more permanent building before coming up with a suitable name, so in the meantime we're "The Byam Street Community". The house is in an area of Fulham called Sands End - close to Wandsworth Bridge. Our neighbours were immediately friendly and generally the area is much livelier and friendlier than Wanstead, where Amaravati was situated. We have a couple of ten year old girls who visit us quite often and onethem seems genuinely drawn to us and what we're doing. She's even asked how to meditate. They went off the other day gleefully carrying lighted insence sticks which they'd asked for! They were in the local newsagent recently and one of them announced to Ron, the newsagent, "She's a Buddhist, Ron". Ron answered, "Oh really, it doesn't show!" So we're probably quite well known already! The local florist is also intrigued as I buy so many flowers there (for the shrine at the Centre and the community). "You do like your flowers, don't you dear" Not much goes by unnoticed round here, I think. I like it actually. It's the first time I've lived anywhere in London where there's some kind of community feel.

It's really good to be so near to the Centre - only half an hour's walk or a short bus ride. After having to travel across London a couple of times a week, this is quite a joy! I've been spending my time involved with classes and the Centre generally, and also looking for new premises for a Centre, community and shop. I've also been looking for a part time job to support me. Anne has got a job in a rare bookshop part time and will be helping with the Centre for the rest of the time. Karola is doing painting and decorating for the time being. Anjali and Kay are running Blue Lotus Typesetting which is still in Bethnal Green at present. This was quite a project to get into as it ivvolved raising quite a bit of money which we're having to pay off week by week. So there needs to be plenty ofwork to make sure we stay in busines.. They now have a few regular customers and are doing all the Movement's work (i.e. Newsletter, Nitrata etc). Kay and Anjali have been working really hard - often late into evenings, as well as having to travel across from West London. I've just heard that this week they've got loads of work, so I hope things stay that way.

Kusa Cushions is housed in the same building in East London - with Eve now looking after it. Both businesses will move over when we're more settled.

We spent the day at the Centre last Saturday with others involved, painting the shrineroom, putting down a new carpet in the reception room and making one or two other changes. It's made the small centre look more spacious and less cluttered than it used to.

So...that's all I've got time to say about our move at present. I feel as if we've been here for months actually instead of just a month!

Just a few words on Susanna's article from the last issue, "LET'S DEVELOP METTA AND COMPASSION TOWARDS THE OPPOSITE SEX". It was unfortunate that her male friend didn't receive a very friendly reception when he knocked at Amaravati's door, but that doesn't mean it was Amaravati's 'policy' to be unfriendly to men at the door. We had just agreed not to have them in the house. Some women might have been quite friendly to the occasional man at the door (they were in fact very occasional) and some not so friendly. Probably depending on their mood at the time. But I think Susanna and her friend put too much onto this particular incident. Understandably so in a way as that was all they had to go on.

As for the hostile attitude of women in the FWBO/in England towards men and vice versa again, I don't think one should generalise. Of course we should develop metta and compassion towards men - we're trying to develop these qualities towards all sentient beings! But, to be very brief about a subject where I could probably say much more, sometimes, particularly living in a women's community, one can become particularly aware of one's conditioning and where one's been passive towards men or whatever and feel quite angry. At these times, one can feel hostile towards men in general and even verbalise this in one's own spiritual community! This can be quite therapeutic. But actually, if one's been in a single sex community for some time, this usually dies down after a while. Obviously one should be aware that eventually one has to get in touch with more positive feelings towards men. In fact, I think most members of the Amaravati community that was, now feel quite positively towards men, on the whole. Sorry only to scrape the surface of this question, Susanna, maybe I'll say more another time. I Hope this has been of some help, anyway.

I really enjoyed seeing everyone on the last Order/Mitra 3 Day Event. Keep the contributions coming!

Lots of Love, Anoma.

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NEW MITRAS

ARYATARA	GAY VOLLER	'Khadiravani' Greengates, Oxshott Road, Leatherhead, Surrey.
NORWICH	VIDA BROWNING	The Lodge Cottage Gateley Hall Estate, Gateley, Nr. Dereham, Norfolk.
	DAPHNE LUCE	Wilby Cottage, West End Avenue, Brundall, Nr. Norwich, Norfolk.
GLASGOW	TRISH (sorry, don't know her other name! Details in next issue)	

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WOMEN'S RETREAT CENTRE Anoma

As many of you will know by now, due to unforeseen circumstances, our lease for Mandarava, which had another 3 years to run, has had to be terminated prematurely. This means that after the Winter retreat, we will have to hire places in which to hold women's retreats. Obviously this won't be as good as having our own centre and it will probably be difficult to find places suitable and available for such things as our Order/Mitra events. We are starting to look into places to hire and there's a possibility of getting Four Winds for a couple of weeks next summer (Four Winds has been used for Friends' retreats in the past, and is a nice place). If anyone has any ideas about possible places to hire for retreats, please let me know.

What we really need is to buy our own retreat centre. This won't be an easy task, but we have a couple of ideas up our sleeves, and Anne Murphy

will be spearheading a fundraising campaign, in conjunction with women Order members.

The first fundraising event has already been arranged - details after this. So any ideas for fundraising, please get in touch with Anne, Dhammadinna or myself. If you have any money you want to put in, send it to Anjali at 33 Byam Street for the time being - FWBO (Wanstead) account. Any money received will go into a special deposit account.

FIRST FUNDRAISING EVENT Anne Macmillan

Saturday, 24th November should prove to be an entertaining, and indeed, historic evening. It sees the first fund raising event for our New Women's Retreat Centre Fund - a Poetry evening at the LBC Annexe. The seed for this idea germinated on a recent one-day women's retreat at Khadiravani when Liz Pankhurst, Anne Rowlands and myself talked about Cultural Events and Poetry Readings and the possibility of doing one with all women reading. Since then, with the need for funds for a new retreat centre taking on an urgency which necessitates action, that possibility has become a definite happening. We have been very fortunate in enlisting the help of Pamela Stephenson, a Friend from the LBC. As well as practical help and advice with voice production and presentation (Pamela is a professional actress), she has also supplied a wealth of ideas, which have been worked on and added to by the enthusiastic team involved.

The theme of the evening will be poems which we feel relate to the 6 Lokas on the Wheel of Life and also what we consider 'Spiral' poetry--i.e. inspirational poems which lead one's mind from the cyclic to the spiral plane. I won't say any more about the programme (I don't want to spoil the surprise) except that we promise a very special night. The date has been fixed to correspond with a Mitra day on the Sunday at the LBC and we hope for a really big turn out. Not only to help raise money for a cause which must be near all our hearts, but also to enjoy yourselves.

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS Compiled by Anoma

OCTOBER

13/14 — WOMEN'S MASSAGE WEEKEND lead by Malini at the LBC Annexe (non residential). Phone LBC to book. 981 1225. Cost £10

26/7/8th — SILENT ORDER MEDITATION RETREAT at Mandarava.

NOVEMBER **

24th (evening) — POETRY READING at LBC Annexe by women Order members, Mitras and Friends in aid of Women's Retreat Centre. Advertising will be coming to Centres shortly - or ring LBC nearer the time.

25th — MITRA DAY AT THE LBC. Starting 10 a.m. Programme of meditation and study. 2 meals. Cost £3. Book through LBC.

DECEMBER

22nd Ded to 6th Jan — OPEN RETREAT AT MANDARAVA. Come for all or part of the time. £4 per day. Please encourage women from your Centre to book for this too! Book c/o Retreat Organiser at Mandarava.

NEXT DAKINI: November COPY DATE: First week November

** 10/11th Nov. RESIDENTIAL MASSAGE WEEKEND at MANDARAVA - for those who have done a weekend with Malini before. Cost £10. Book c/o Retreat Organiser, Mandarava.