

DAKINI



DAKINI II (Newsheet for Upasikas and mitras)

January 1977

This issue is really more of a newssheet as contributions have not exactly been flooding in. Where are you all? Are you alive, well, practising? Write in and let us know what you are doing. I think it would be best if DAKINI came out every other month, so the next issue will come out at the beginning of March and the copy date will be the 15th February. That gives everyone plenty of time to contribute.

So onto the news.

STUDY GROUPS

There have been three mitra study groups this Autumn; one for newer mitras in London studying Mitrata; one also in London studying selections from the Sutta Nipata and then the Conditions for the Stability of Societies, and one in Brighton studying Dhyana for Beginners. Next session the Wednesday night group will continue to study Mitrata. This group ran only for six weeks, up until the beginning of Bhante's lecture series so it will be good to see everyone again. The group will start at 7.00 p.m. on January 12th at no. 1 Balmore Street. The second London group will study Dhyana for Beginners - day and time not yet fixed. Unfortunately I will not be going to Brighton this session to lead a group there, but I hope to lead a day retreat and possibly a weekend retreat for the Brighton mitras. Thanks to everyone down there for their hospitality, especially Sue.

WEEKEND RETREATS

No definite plans for weekend retreats have been made yet. I would like to hold smaller retreats probably at Court Lodge. More details later.

FEEDBACK ON DAKINI

I had positive feedback from those people who received Dakini by hand and also several letters. I would like to print the one from Mallika because it was so good to receive:

Dear Dhammadinna

Congratulations on the appearance of DAKINI. I feel full of joy at its inception. A really positive, practical step in the development of mitras and Upasikas has been made and deserves the support of all women in the Order and Friends.

Put my name on the booking list for a room in the womens' centre when I visit London and do what you will with the enclosed donation.

Love to all (men too!)

Sd. Mallika.

The donation was for £10. Thank you very much Mallika.

ARTWORK FOR DAKINI

You can get hold of special stencils from Gestetner. One kind has squares on for drawing and one is specially for tracing with. If people want to submit fairly simple artwork they could send it on stencil (for a Gestetner 360 machine, or could send in finished artwork which could be traced onto stencil here.

COST OF DAKINI

I have worked out that an average sized DAKINI (4 pages) will cost 12p per copy. This includes cost of stencils, paper, letter heading and postage, the latter being shared between everyone. People who get their DAKINI distributed by hand can pay on the spot and could those who get it through the post please send me the money, preferably for a years supply plus for the first issue. This works out at 84p. For the moment its probably if you send the money by Postal Order to me (Dhammadinna). Please do send the money even though it seems a small amount. So far the money is coming out of my pocket and out of Christines who paid for the letter heading.

COMMUNITY NEWS

In Archway, even though we are threatened with eviction fairly soon, there have been some recent changes in the communities. In no 1, where Anoma and I live, we have been joined by Helen Johnston from Cornwall and Christine Seymour who formerly lived in no 11. Joan Graham and Hilary Swain who were living in no 3 in a mixed house (Friends and non Friends as well as male and female) have moved to no 11, and Dawn who was living at no 11 has moved to 20 Windscombe Street!

Christine Moissetter and Dawn Inkster have applied for a lease on shop and flat premises in Brighton and hope to move in in the Spring. Christine hopes to start some sort of business the profits of which will go towards maintaining the premises and also towards a country retreat centre (for women).

VISITS

Over the past few months, especially during Bhantes lecture series we have had quite a few people visiting and staying at no 1. Teresa from Norwich stayed a couple of times, Christine, Dawn and Denise from Brighton have been up. Srimala has been to stay for a couple of weekends and Malini came to stay after her two month solitary in Wales.

NEW WOMENS COMMUNITY

No sooner had Christine and Helen moved into no 1 than they were both charging around on Helens motorbike looking for a new community. Since then we have seen quite a few places and spent much time considering the pros and cons of buying, leasing, renting, housing associations, and buying the end of leases. What emerges from all this is that at the moment we dont have enough money to do most of these things, nor enough time as we expect to have to leave Archway around March. However there is a chance of one or two houses on rent from the Department of Environment in Wanstead (East London on the Central Line). These would be short life lets of probably up to three years at quite a cheap rent. Both houses are quite large (10-11 rooms) and each could house a community of 5 with space for other things to happen. We will be sending in written application for these houses shortly. It means we will be re-housed fairly cheaply and in the sort of size house we want. Also it will give us breathing space and time to really concentrate on getting some money together so that we can buy a place when this let runs out, or before if possible. We will obviously not be near the New London Centre but Wanstead is 6 tube stops from Bethnal Green so there will be a centre in striking distance. The houses are probably large enough to hold small weekend retreats and similar activities and there will be space for guests. One house is in fairly good condition though the second one needs a fair amount of work. We will start fundraising for a more permanent community straight away and a leaflet will be produced shortly. In the next week we will be forming a council of 5 or 6 Order members (Upasikas) so that we will be a financially and legally autonomous centre with our own charity status, and we will be opening our own bank account. Although we will have the constitution of a Centre we will be calling ourselves xxxxx Community for the moment. We may in time take on activities of an open centre, or we may not. Primarily we will be concentrating on the community, on expanding Kusa cushions into clothes and upholstery and on catering for mitra activities. If we get the houses we will probably be able to move in in March. It does really feel as though things are happening and that some big changes will occur over the next few months.

As far as fundraising goes for the permanent womens community I have several things in mind. Firstly there is going to be a small appeals leaflet. If you can think

of anyone we could send this to, please let me know. There are, of course, the usual fundraising things - people can give lumpsums, or loans, or tithe themselves to the project for a length of time. For instance if every Upasika and mitra gave a £1 a week for a year that would raise £2,800! We can do work-a-months. We can run small fundraising ventures like jumble sales or benefit dinners etc. Any ideas welcome.

LETTERS

I have just received a long letter from Megha in Christchurch. Part of the letter was about their first womens retreat which four of them attended over a weekend. and which was a success.

I have also had a card from Jinamata who recently moved back to Germany to Berlin, with her daughter Lila. The card said:-

Thanks for 'Dakini'. I haven't written because I've been so overwhelmed by re-adjusting here. It was more difficult than I thought. I've made many friends - all women! - and that's lovely. I've got in contact with the Women's Centre. I go to the Women's bookshop (no man is allowed in there). I am in a womens' group - and it's good. The job situation is still bad..... Lila is fine, speaking German..... Love to everyone at no 1, I hope to write in a few days.

Love

Sd. Jinamata.

CHRISTMAS IN BALMORE STREET

Many of us are due to go on the two week womens retreat tomorrow (December 27th) at Aryatara. Quite a few people stayed in London over the Christmas period. ~~on~~ Christmas day 8 of us gathered for a Christmas meal of nut roast, cheese and bean loaf many vegetables and sauces brought by different people, followed by trifle and fruit flan and cream. Not to mention chocolates and wine and cider. After this we staggered onto Hampstead Heath at dusk and stood on Parliament Hill and looked over the twinkling lights of London. It was cold and fresh with a beautiful crescent moon in the sky. Then we visited Bodhishri and Annie who live very near the Heath, where we ate some more, listened to music and even watched some telly. Today, Sunday Malini arrived from Glasgow and Liz from Brighton and the door bell has been going all day. A thoroughly pagan Christmas and so to retreat!

POEM ON SEEING A WHITE DOG ON THE HEATH

Joan Graham

Because I read the title in the gallery,
and because I read the label on the dress.
When confronted by the stars,
or a garden gate ajar,
I find myself completely at a loss.
So I'll send a white kite spinning,
soaring skywards,
and watch its frail white arrow
trace the stars.
And I'll send a russet pointer,
running o'er the downs,
and mark his path
with measure, rule and square.

NOT-TO-HARM

Gotami

- human flesh
- apes' flesh
- dog, cat, horseflesh
- deer, cow, sheepflesh
- pig
- flesh drained of blood
- grouse, gamebird or caviarre
- domestic fowl
- fish
- wild birds' eggs
- cheese, milk, butter
- gelatin, rennit, glue
- leather
- wool
- blood
- honey
- root vegetables, digging
- leafy vegetables, cutting
- grains
- flowers
- seeds, nuts, fruits
- fungi
- fallen fruits, nuts
- germs, bacteria

What have I undertaken, in the first precept?
Can I fulfil the undertaking?

As the definition of life becomes more subtle, there is a more doubtful area between what is and what is not living, but if we take the words of the precept to include living things, then I would say that it seems impossible to continue to live without using living or once-living things: paper comes from trees; the thread used in my eye-operation is obtained by caesarian section from the silk-worm; footwear, clothing, furnishings, before plastics, were leather, wool, silk, wood, purpose grown. People are too many needs to be supplied by taking sheepskin from the sheep that have (naturally) died: our usage supports farming of animals and plants. As for food, one thinks, loosely, "vegetarianism is a 'non-harming' diet". But is it? From human flesh to fallen fruit our diet range over a wide spectrum of possibilities of living things, and I have not yet met one person who does not draw an emotional limit somewhere in all but the most extreme survival situations. To New Zealand Airlines' staff, in my experience, 'vegetarian' means 'one who does not eat red meat, but eats chicken and fish'. Thai monks translate

'non-harming diet' as 'anything one is given as long as it was not killed purposely for the meal'; and some do not even add the rider. A Thai fisherman told me "I don't kill the fish. They jump onto the hook." What a cop-out! A world-wide assumption is that I am not killing animals if I buy meat: someone else kills them. A natural-life-community member writes "I find that I cannot eat our own chickens, that I am, as it were, on first-name terms with; so we buy our own chicken from the butchers"!!! The most common meaning given to 'vegetarian' is 'one who eats no food obtained by destruction of animal life' with personal variations: eggs but no milk; cheese but no rennit; and so on, which is reasonably 'non-harming', practical and simple in this country at this time. But what if we became even more sensitive? We now know that the old taunt for vegetarians is not a myth; cabbages do scream when they are cut. Do we stop eating vegetables that have to be cut, killed? What about the inevitable killing of insects and so on involved in digging ground for cultivation in anything larger than situations where each clod and plant can have individual attention? What about flowers? What about seeds, nuts and fruit? These in the 'natural' environment, are produced in much greater quantities than actually needed to re-seed the earth due to the plant dying, but in cultivated environments this may not be so. Coming to medicine, we still have with us the problem that arose for the strict sect, the Jains, when it was discovered that their water-filters and careful food-washing and so on could in no way help the constant destruction of bacteria, even going on in their own bodies, all the time. Shall we kill mosquitoes or suffer malaria? Shall we kill rabid animals. Shall we use insecticides or eat worm-holed apples, and what the slugs leave of our lettuce? Has anyone found a diet which, without rationalisation, can be seen to be completely 'Non-harmful' and yet which maintains human beings in a 'vibrantly alive' condition? And must we clothe ourselves in plastic, refuse to have operations and take no action against mice, slugs, mosquitoes, lice etc? Or do we perhaps have to come to the conclusion that all life lives on life, and that we can only undertake to harm as little as possible consistent with human health?

Comments please.

-----6-----

I read somewhere that Venus is going to be the influential planet in 1977 ousting the male dominant Mercury and making it a womens' year - so a happy new year to all our readers.