

# DAKINI

DAKINI 9

MAY 1978

A Newsletter for women Order members, Mitras and Friends,  
produced by the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (Wanstead),  
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WESAK - CELEBRATION OF THE BUDDHA'S ENLIGHTENMENT - MAY 22ND

"Many a house of life  
Hath held me - seeking ever him who wrought.  
These prisons of the senses, sorrow-fraught;  
Sore was my ceaseless strife!

But now,  
Thou builder of this tabernacle - thou!  
I know thee! Never shalt thou build again  
These walls of pain,  
Nor raise the roof-tree of deceits, nor lay  
Fresh rafters on the clay;  
Broken thy house is, and the ridge-pole split!  
Delusion fashioned it!  
Safe pass I thence - deliverance to obtain.'





Wesak - Celebration of the Buddha's Enlightenment.			
Text from 'The Dhammapada' and also Sir Edwin Arnold's 'The Light of Asia'			
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#### EDITORIAL     Anoma

This being the month of May, during which we celebrate Wesak, let's cast our minds in the direction of Enlightenment. We can't actually cast them too far in that direction, of course, because long before we reach Enlightenment, our rational minds will have collapsed in a useless heap! And besides, it's not only our minds we want to cast in the direction of Enlightenment but our hearts too; in fact our whole selves.

So what does Enlightenment mean? Well what it means to me at the moment is (1) change, or rather, complete transformation, and (2) seeing oneself as one actually is. At first these two might seem contradictory. One seems to do with actively reaching out, striving to attain, and the other seemingly with sitting back and letting it happen. But it's not quite like that.

Firstly there is Enlightenment; the Goal, the Further Shore, the Ideal - something we aspire towards. Then there is you...or me.. struggling with the gravitational pull, sometimes succeeding, sometimes getting a bit swamped, sometimes feeling inspired, sometimes feeling a bit dull, etc. etc. So how do we get from one state to the other? We CHANGE. We have to be completely and utterly transformed. As Bhante says in his lecture 'The Bodhisattva's Dream' (from 'The Sutra of Golden Light' series):-

'If we want to develop spiritually, we must die. If we want to be completely transformed, as distinct from peripherally transformed, we must die....if we're not prepared to die, we cannot be a Bodhisattva, we cannot be a Buddhist....we have to be ready to experience spiritual death at any time. We have to be ready at any time to give up the old life, the old self, the old consciousness. Have to be ready to



forget the old problems and the old solutions. We have to be ready to make a completely fresh start. Otherwise we cannot be totally transformed".

Of course, spiritual death can be painful. But if you consider this for a bit, it would be painful. If it was easy to become Enlightened, we'd all be Buddhas and Bodhisattvas right now. But the gravitational pull is very strong; our conditioning has been with us for years and isn't easy to break. So we need to strive, make an effort to break through, work on ourselves, not give up, and, less obviously, not fool ourselves that we're working towards Enlightenment when we're not, by consciously or unconsciously trying to pummel and squeeze the ideals and values of the Buddha-Dharma to fit into our own conditioned view of things. Or on the other hand, imagining that our own conditioned view of things is quite OK and that we almost don't need the ideals and values of the Buddha-Dharma. Either way what we're actually doing is rationalising our desire not to change. So we need to be honest, receptive and heroic.

But the Zen tradition says that we are all Buddhas already if we only knew it. - almost as if we didn't have to bother that much. But actually it's just another way of looking at Enlightenment. Sometimes one can see Enlightenment as a glittering star way out there somewhere, and lose sight of the fact that it is actually here within us all the time; we just don't happen to be able to see it. So we need to open up, look closely at ourselves, be honest with ourselves, not take anything for granted, experience everything, live every moment. Most of all we have to look to ourselves for Enlightenment, not 'out there'. There's a zen poem (from a book called 'Zen Poems of China and Japan - the Crane's Bill' which I would very much recommend) which illustrates this point.

"Saddled as everyone with karma,  
Who can deny the Buddha-mind within?  
Ever yoked, yet not a glimpse of him.  
At last I've tracked him down: myself."

(Tettsu)

So it's us! We don't have to look anywhere else. But to experience our Buddha nature, we have to clear away all the fog of our illusion about ourselves; whatever is obstructing our vision. We have to allow our cluttered illusion of ourselves to die to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas that we actually are.

Very recently I have been experiencing the spiritual death of a part of myself. At the time of dying I felt devastated; as if I'd barely recognise myself at the end of it. But in the cool light of day, as it were, I thought, well, I don't actually feel that different in a way. It's as if I've actually always been like this, but was just fooled into believing myself to be otherwise due to years of conditioning. It seems to me if one carries this through, and more and more of one's tightly hugged 'idea' of oneself dies and more and more of what one actually is is reborn; one will ultimately see that one always was an Enlightened Being. It just took all that effort and striving and determination to finally realise it.

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## AMARAVATI NEWS

The period since the last Dakini began with the community separating. The Order members left for the 10 day Order convention near Hastings; Anne went to Norfolk to work in the Rainbow and spend time at Mandarava; Anne Murphy left for a 10 day solitary in Wales; Helen went to Devon; Kay had left for a month's solitary in Cornwall; Maggie came with us to the convention to be part of the Mitra team of cooks, Hilary and Joan stayed behind to hold the fort. After the convention we gradually re-assembled, Marichi moved in and Anoma left for her solitary in Wales.

The convention itself was an amazing experience. It is 2 years since we have had a convention and I feel personally that the quality of this gathering far superseded all previous conventions. Over 80 Order members from all over the world assembled in Vinehall School near Hastings for 10 days of meditation, study, lectures, communication and play. Previous conventions have been arranged around general discussions of various topics, but this year's was much more like a retreat. Bhante led the morning meditation (mindfulness or metta) which was followed by breakfast, 3 hours of study in groups led by Order members, lunch, free time, prostration practice for those who do this practice, personal visualisation practice, supper, talks and lectures either by Bhante or by Order members, visualisation practice led by Bhante and puja. Vinehall school was really suitable for such a gathering as there was adequate bedroom space, a large shrine room, a large sitting room, dining room, a gym for yoga practice (and basket ball) and a chapel which served as a lecture theatre. There were also small classrooms which were used for study. The grounds were beautiful and very high up. Everything was smoothly organised, all our food was provided and all we had to do was wash up once in the 10 days we were there. It really was like being in the Pure Land! The overall feeling was very positive and it was of course great to have Bhante around for 10 whole days. Bhante talked a lot about the importance and value of being together as an Order and one night likened the Order to the 1000 armed Avalokitesvara, each hand being like an individual Order member stretching out to the world. On this occasion, however it was as if each hand was shaking the hands next to it, a very pleasurable sensation! He also said that it is important for us to get together to see how different we are even though we are all committed to the same Ideal. This enables us to see that our way, our community, our centre is only part of a much greater whole, and this contact with so many other Order members opens us out to greater and greater possibilities. On the last evening we celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the WBO with a special puja and left the next day strengthened and inspired by the experience.

We returned to Amaravati to find Joan and Hilary heroically working through our latest record job (sticking labels on LP covers) and we helped to finish it off next day. Thus we earned £200 which has enabled us to put wall to wall carpeting in the new shrineroom. We have now finished off the final touches to the shrine room which we used and dedicated on the Mitra day on Sunday 14th May (Maggie's account on page ). We have also made quite a bit of headway with the stairs, hall and landing, so the end of the house decoration is in sight. What with this knowledge and the coming of Spring (returned from a recent weekend visit to Norwich to find our apple and pear trees suddenly in full blossom) the atmosphere is charged with change and the desire for change. People feel like moving onto something new and many discussions have been held around the general topic of what sort of right



livelihood situations we are going to set up. All of us have been concerned in working on and in the house for the last year (we will be 1 in June) and have also lived on £2 a week spending money per person for that time, and have just been breaking even as a community financially also. Now we feel the need to get into some new things; to raise our standard of living and to provide surplus resources for future ventures. We want to expand Kusa Cushions and buy an industrial sewing machine, and buy a new decent van. Also the house is on a short let and we want very much to build up capital so that we can acquire a more permanent base in London as well as rent, buy or build a cottage for solitary retreats and 'Dharma holidays' for community members and other women. So we have lots of ideas and schemes and will have to spend the next few months getting down to practical steps.

One of the themes of the convention was outgoingness towards people outside the Movement, and outgoingness in general. Most of us have been fully occupied in the community for a long time but this feeling also has been moving through the house. Many people attend classes and courses and yoga classes at the EEMC, I go to take a study group at Aryatara, Anoma will shortly be starting a group for EEMC women, Anjali and Sanghadevi have led a women's weekend retreat in Brighton and are soon going to Scotland to do the same. As well as being more outgoing we have also had several visitors. The Brighton Mitras came up for our 4 day working retreat, Caroline from Holland and Lesley from Aberdeen have recently stayed for several days as well as others dropping in for a weekend or for the day. And we opened the house to the largest number of visitors so far when we held the Mitra Day here.

Within the community itself we are still studying the Bodhicaryavatara on Thursdays and now have Fridays as a tape lecture evening.

This month has been quite eventful. We recently celebrated Sanghadevi's first birthday (as an Order member) and the return of Anoma from solitary, Phante dropped by for a chat and to see the new shrine room and we had the first Mitra Day here.

The blossom has now fallen from the trees but the sun is shining. We are as ever always happy to hear from and see people.

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THE SELF     Beryl Dewane

It is hard to find  
Our real self.  
The self that is real  
Of our many selves.  
Once in a while  
We are more aware,  
Then for a space  
It is there.  
No longer pretending  
To be a real self.  
That self we find  
Is there.

--oOo--



LETTER FROM HILARY BLAKISTON

Tel: Tivetshall 344

Mandarava,  
Street Farm,  
Aslacton,  
Nr. Norwich, Norfolk.

Dear Friends,

It seems that a common difficulty many of us have when thinking of writing a letter or article for 'Dakini', is where to begin, when one is faced with the knowledge that many readers don't know you and might have little experience of the Spiritual Community, which for me brings up the whole issue of truthful communication, something which only recently have I started to experience, and feel sure that could be expanded on but a thousand times.

I really wanted to write about 'Mandarava', but to put things in perspective, I've decided to give a brief synopsis of how I came to be living here.

I came in contact with the 'Friends' twenty months ago when I went to live in Cornwall to do a year's course in Midwifery. I had recently returned from India which had opened up new facets of life for me, and having come across many people who meditated, (more Westerners than Indians actually) and seemed to be gaining something from it on a psychological level anyway, I felt that I would like to give it a try! A poster at the hospital in which I was working, led me to a weekly beginners meditation class, at that time being led by a Mitra, as no Order member was then living in Cornwall. A few weeks later we started to listen to Bhante's Eightfold Path series on tape - this was the first practical Buddhism that had come my way, and it started to strike deep. This led some months later, to my first retreat which got me thoroughly hooked I think, and from there it seems to have been a fairly consistent upward flowing path for my level of commitment and comprehension of the Dharma.

Last summer, four of us plus three children, set up a 'Friends' community in Cornwall which was my first experience of living and meditating daily with other Buddhists, and realizing that despite varied personality differences, our common commitment was heading in the same direction, so I started feeling slightly freer within myself.

Sadly, due to the fact of it being both a family and a mixed community, which in themselves seemed to cause certain communication blocks, and also the fact of the nearest centre and contact with the Order being nearly 300 miles away in London (except for 6 weekly weekend retreats when two or three Order members would usually come down) led me to start feeling alienated, though I wasn't particularly aware of it at the time, I only knew that frustrations were building up inside me.

At Christmas I experienced my first all womens retreat, following which I returned to live alone in a caravan in Cornwall, to try and get a bit more in touch with myself, treating my time more or less as a solitary retreat. The other question with which I was toying was whether or not I wanted to move into a women's community, the idea of which until that point I had completely shunned, despite the positivity that radiated from many Friends living in single sex communities - I just couldn't see 'me' living in one!

The outcome of this saga is that after 6 weeks alone in the



caravan, I came to terms with the fact that the only way to genuinely discover how I felt about living in a single sex community, was to experience it first hand. So three days after deciding and openly acknowledging the fact, I traversed the then snow drifted counties of Devon and Somerset, heading Eastwards, and finally arriving in Norfolk in dense fog, and to Mandarava.

I've hardly looked back since! There are 5 of us living here Malini, Beryl, Suzie, Annie (recently back from India) and myself. Mandarava has been going almost a year now and has seen many changing phases, the most difficult thing to cope with, seems to have been the fact of almost a complete change over of occupants since it started as a community, but it does look now as though the people living here will be staying for a reasonable length of time, so hopefully forming a firmer foundation on which to build a truly positive and creative environment.

Basically we are a farming community with the hopes of eventually becoming self-supporting. We have 6 $\frac{1}{2}$  acres of land, a proportion of which at present we rent out, and the rest we are slowly preparing for cultivation. The three 75 feet long greenhouses are gradually being reglazed, painted, and profuse weeds being dug up, and already tomato, pepper, aubergine, cucumber marrow and many other seeds are pushing their way up to see daylight, in the hopes that we will have a plentiful crop of vegetables and herbs this summer. Beds of nettles and couch grass are gradually being transformed into vegetable and flower beds (to the detriment of our overworked spines and arm muscles) fruit trees have also been planted and we hope before long to have grass which we can actually call 'lawn'.

The farmhouse itself has seen a few changes recently too. The rather dingy clay-lump walled kitchen is now brightly painted yellow and copper colours, while the attic shrineroom sparkles white with the Tibetan colours of red, blue and yellow on the beams, also a new shrine has been constructed. Those who suffered the penetrating cold in the shrineroom on the Christmas retreat will now be pleased to hear that we have an effective, powerful gas fire installed. Annie at present is busy converting the cowshed into her art studio, and before long we hope to have all the outbuildings mained to electricity.

A daily programme cannot be strictly observed as we all work two days a week outside the community, so as to financially support ourselves. We do however, have a morning meditation and evening Puja together, and Srimala holds a weekly study group for women Mitras in her house in Norwich. We also attend the 'Regulars' class at the FWBO Centre in Norwich - Vajradhatu. We hold house and council meetings when we feel it necessary rather than on a regular basis.

Living with women is proving far better than I had anticipated, as a deeper level of communication seems able to take place with the knowledge that games are not being played, as so often seems to occur when living with the opposite sex; it's very freeing to be open and truthful. We do however welcome any male visitors here during the day, as none of us wish to cut ourselves off from men, realizing that "healthy" man/woman friendships can be of great value, as can any relationship between two people of whatever sex, who are treading the same spiritual path, and whose foremost commitment is to climbing the spiral.

As well as being a community, we are also the retreat centre for all women in the FWBO. We are shortly going to start conversions



on some of the outbuildings, so as to accomodate more women on retreats. There is a 3 week retreat being held here in the summer (from 4th to 26th August - booking form enclosed with this issue - Anoma). It would be really good to see new, as well as old Friends coming for all or part of that time. We are also holding an open day here on Midsummer day. For more information about that, contact your nearest centre. If any women would like to come and stay at any time, you would be very welcome. Please write or phone if you want to come.

So basically things at Mandarava are positive, healthy and growing. It feels alive to be living here, to be seeing both changes in myself and the others, and to get a real change of experiencing the true meaning of Spiritual Community.

"Inspired by the Dharma,  
May we soon meet again  
In prosperity and boon!"

With lots of metta to you all,

from Hilary.

--oOo--

A POEM from MARGHERITA PUNZI

Once this wood was vibrant with wild daffodils -  
But now this growth, tangled, torn, and wrenched from the  
warm earth  
Brooks little passing through, 'cept perhaps to reach  
The odd shaft of light, sharp to the eye - keeling the  
mind.  
If there were glades - once inviting with fingers of wood,  
pointing forever,  
Now merely dank, darkbog cloggs the feet and any indication  
is dead-wood.  
I would bulldoze this wood and raze forever hope of colour  
or light,  
I would slash with scythes every twanging twig that dared  
make its presence known,  
And I would burn, burn, burn any tree that leaned towards  
the sun,  
And I would wattle any opening that let life force flow  
through,  
But that I saw a green shoot uncoiling in the ooze  
And I would save that - whilst darkness descends and threatens  
oblivion -  
For a day in remembrance of what can be known, can be known,  
Can be known, can be known, can be known, can be known.

---oOo---

BRIGHTON WOMEN'S COMMUNITY     Margherita Punzi

Exeter Street has for five years been well known as a Friends Community in Brighton and thanks to Anjali, it has been a successful women's community for the last year not only for the women living there but also as a place for all the women in Brighton Friends to come to for various reasons including Women's Puja evening.

Unfortunately we have to give the place up by the end of June as



the landlady is coming back to England to take up residence here. Both Diana and Sulocana will be going elsewhere - out of Brighton, but I would very much like to form another women's community in Brighton, together with others who would be willing to help find a place to rent.

It is important that Brighton has a women's community for many reasons, not least that women from other centres have somewhere to stay on visits and that it certainly engages some kind of coherence for the somewhat scattered but very keen women in Brighton ('scattered' meaning geographically of course). And I must add personal reasons for wishing to help form a new women's community: this last year has been the most constructive year of my life and I can't imagine a rate of growth, such as I feel has occurred here, happening in any other situation.

If there are women anywhere in the Friends who would be interested in coming to Brighton perhaps they would contact me at 62, Exeter Street and we could get together as soon as possible. Anyone whold be welcome to come and stay at Exeter Street, should theywish to 'suss out' the situation or whatever.

--oOo--

MITRA DAY AT AMARAVATI      Maggie Oakshott (with occasional embellish-  
(14th May)                              ments by Anoma)

At about 10.15 a.m. people started to arrive in little groups and by eleven in the morning all of us - led by Srimala - were seated in Amaravati's new airy shrine room just completed a few days before, for the dedication followed by a double meditation. The shrine room is decorated in buttermilk and white with a gold fitted carpet. The shrine itself is gold and red with a pale blue backdrop. It easily held the 32 of us who were there - people from Croydon, Brighton, Norwich, Glasgow, Mandarava, Beulah and Amaravati.

Then the break gave us time to have lunch, renew contact with old friends and meet a few new ones.

In the afternoon the Order members gave a series of short talks on the theme of the positive emotions. Marichi, drawing our attention to an extra rupa on the shrine, that of a graceful Sarasvati with her vina (a musical instrument rather like a lute), goddess associated with learning and culture, invoked her aid to the speakers.

Srimala spoke about Dana, beginning with the giving of material things, and ending with giving oneself, non-attachment; dana, the first of the Paramitas on the path of the Bodhisattva.

Marichi spoke extempore on Faith and Devotion - quoting Cole Porter and Mind in Buddhist Psychology - saying that faith and devotion grows as one's knowledge of Reality grows.

Sanghadevi spoke on the first of the four Brahma Viharas, Metta, the fundamental positive emotion which it is vital to develop, and is the basis for the development of the other three Brahma Viharas.

Anoma spoke on Karuna, compassion, describing its qualities and naming some of its practitioners. She ended her talk by describing



Green Tara, the spiritual daughter of Avalokitesvara, who represents the quintessence of compassion.

Dhammadinna spoke on Mudita, sympathetic joy, rejoicing in others' merits, the antidote to the difficult-to-admit-to feelings of envy and jealousy. She said at the end of her talk that it had just occurred to her that there were so many positive emotions to practise that there was really no excuse for being negative!

Anjali spoke on the fourth and last of the Brahma Viharas, Upeksha, equanimity, which is not the same as indifference, but is, as described in the Mangala Sutta, "a heart untouched by worldly things, a heart that is not swayed by sorrow, a heart passionless, secure". To help illustrate the positive emotion of equanimity, Anjali told a very funny story about two Dervishes.

I can't really do justice to the content of the talks - I'd like to hear them again. I left the shrine room with much to think about in the way of developing positively.

During the concluding puja Anoma sang one of Milarepa's songs, originally sung by the Tibetan yogi to his disciple Rechungpa, about death and the impermanence of all conditioned things.

Thinking about it, I felt it was a good day and I appreciated meeting everyone. It felt relaxed and spontaneous and also well-established. I look forward to the next one.

--oOo--

#### A POEM from ANOMA

For thirty years  
to have loved so much  
and expressed so little  
I wept  
at the realization.

--oOo--

#### FORTHCOMING EVENTS

##### JUNE

#### AMARAVATI RENOVATION - 'THE LAST HAUL' - WORKING WEEKEND RETREAT

On June 25th last year eleven of us moved into what has now become Amaravati. As we come up to our first birthday, we are also in sight of the end of the renovation work. It's been a long haul but, I feel, well worth the effort. As mentioned earlier in this issue, we have now held the first Mitra Day here at Amaravati and in the Autumn we will be starting to hold weekend retreats too. Our guest rooms out in the back garden are particularly pleasant places to stay in the summer, so if you can, do take the opportunity to come and visit.

As Dhammadinna said in "Amaravati News", we are now moving into the area of Right Livelihood, but at the same time, there is still quite a bit of decorating to do on the house. So we thought we'd hold another Working Weekend Retreat on 8TH AND 9TH JUNE. This will be, I think, the fourth Working Retreat we've had and I'll take the opportunity of saying thank you to everyone who's come to help with the work. Also those who've been here at other times and pitched in. If you'd like to come this time, you'd be very welcome.



If you have any scrapers, brushes etc., bring them along. Also, if you fancy doing a bit of gardening while you're here, I'm sure Hilary will be glad of your help.

Please ring and let us know when you're coming. Even if it's only for a few hours, it all helps.

#### MANDARAVA OPEN DAY

As Hilary mentioned in her letter, Mandarava is having an Open Day on Midsummer's Day, Saturday 24th June. For more information please contact your nearest centre, or Mandarava itself. I believe there's a children's party in the afternoon, amongst other things!

#### JULY

##### MITRA DAY AT AMARAVATI

On SUNDAY 9TH JULY, there will be another Mitra Day at Amaravati, starting at 10.30 a.m. If you'd like to stay over-night either before or after, please let us know. It was a pleasure to welcome so many people to the last Mitra Day and we're looking forward to seeing everyone again on July 9th. Let's hope it's a sunny day this time!

#### AUGUST

##### 3 WEEK OPEN RETREAT AT MANDARAVA

As promised in Dakini 8, enclosed is a booking form for the above retreat. Bookings are already coming in, so don't leave it too late if you're thinking of coming. Also, don't forget there's a 10% discount if you book for the whole 3 weeks.

If there's something happening in your area which is of particular interest to women in the Friends, please let me know and I'll include it in this section.

--oCo--

NEXT DAKINI: JULY

COPY DATE: 1st July



