

## **In Gratitude**

Recently we had a special opportunity to reflect on one of Canada's (and North America's) first Buddhist teachers - Anagarika Dhammadinna, or more fondly known as Anagarika. She was born in 1913 in Austria and immigrated to Canada with her son, Walter, in 1951. She was ordained in 1964 in Sri Lanka by the late Venerable Nyanasatta Maha Thera, and returned to Canada in 1965 where she continued her studies, practiced and shared her wisdom with others.

On September 13, 2015 a memorial day of celebration was co-hosted by *Dhamma: A Theravada Buddhist Society* and *Sakyadhita Canada Association of Buddhist Women*, marking the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her passing. The day was a beautiful way to celebrate the teachings and the dedicated teacher who enabled others to have a taste of the teachings for themselves. A more detailed description of the day is posted on the Sakyadhita Canada website ([www.sakyadhitacanada.org](http://www.sakyadhitacanada.org)). However, what follows are a few personal reflections.

My heart center felt radiant. Even before the event, I could feel the swelling of metta. Traveling to the retreat centre felt like a primer for the day itself. It was reminiscent of how many of us start our meditation practices, i.e., with Metta. We start with an intentional recollection of our teacher(s) or benefactor(s). Often the mere thought of that person(s) triggers immense gratitude and appreciation, which in turn opens the heart and melts our perceived sense of separation. Our gratitude is like the spark that fuels the fires of Metta and once established it can use all kinds of materials as fuel (even the wet logs of animosity can burn when the fire is hot enough). Those we love or are friendly towards; those we feel neutral towards; and to those whom feelings of animosity may be present – all of our experience can be used in our Metta practice. Through gratitude and loving appreciation we open to life, even aspects that we don't like. This gratitude felt like a gas line. Not just a spark, or a match, but something much bigger, with flow, and without beginning or end. It was like seeing the whole lineage, the whole triple gem, in the micro and the macro.

There were concurrent streams (of reality) that seemed to parallel each other and in which awareness seemed to hop between. One was the stream of gratitude (past & present) and the other the stream of experience (mine & other). A third stream of mindfulness, seemed to hold them all. At times the stream of gratitude would empty into the current happenings and sometimes arch back to memories from the past that were related and would infuse the present. It felt like an interconnectedness of time and space. Then, the meshing of others' gratitude and memories seemed to steep and color 'my' experience until it just felt like all the streams were combining.

It made little sense to try to decipher which was which. Suffice it to say, it was a richer and more multifaceted experience.

Shifting from an attachment of the doer and opening to the being fills the heart. Attending to the convergence of the 'streams' and relaxing the grip of identification resulted in a profound feeling of flow. It felt like a stream of truth. Another way of saying it is that I was now relating to the stream and flow and not so much to the rock of being. Throughout the day, gratitude was much like a portal into this larger experience where the walls of self would fade and light of truth flowered.

Words of a song came to mind, "the dream never dies just the dreamer." Perhaps the phrase came to mind since it also reflected the dropping the "...er" and connecting to living the bare experience. And in this case the dream is the Dhamma; the teachings of truth and freedom that the Buddha realized and shared so that others may find the way for themselves. Our teachers continue this lineage, and empower each of us so that the reality of the Dhamma may be lived through the lives we live. It has been taught that there is an aspect of Right Understanding whereby we need to hear the teachings, because it is too difficult or paradoxical for us to come to it on our own. Our teachers, our Sangha, provide a beautiful tapestry of interwoven connection of the teachings of the awakened one – which unfurls like a map, or path to follow. The dream is love and for it to flow through our lives is what it's all about. It is what unites us all. It is our humanity.

It was wonderful to experience how Anagarika's life had touched so many and that her impact is felt just as strongly today, and for some perhaps even stronger. I personally felt immense gratitude towards her and her family, for her sharing the teachings and opening the way for so many of us in the west. And I'm also deeply appreciative that Anagarika taught my teacher, Jayantā, who in turn has generously spent her life sharing with others.

Anagarika Dhammadinna's legacy is the Dhamma that lives in the hearts of those that remember her and in the lineage of that transmission. My practice has been enriched by this experience and depth of the metta that flows is appreciatively greater. Just the mere thought of her or my teachers generates a more profound openness and a new appreciation for the concept of, taking refuge in the natural, beautiful state of being.

And now twenty-five years after her passing, I have received something new – a deeper understanding has been passed on and a deeper appreciation flows back.

Heartfelt thanks!  
Wendy McAdam