

The information and experiences of Venerable Waharaka Abhayarathanalankara Thero are very important to today's society for a number of reasons. One is the unique spiritual understanding and ability he had from his childhood, which arose due to the sansaric tendencies he developed in previous lifetimes as a practitioner. Also, despite not wearing robes, he performed his daily activities in a layman's home and carried out his spiritual duties piously, rendering boundless service to beings in the world with his spiritual strength. Those services extend through many aspects that contribute to the well-being of society, and ultimately, his unique ability to guide the world toward the ultimate Nirvana that brings eternal peace to all beings is extremely important.

The experiences of the Venerable One, who dedicated all his property, including the three acres of land inherited from his lineage, to the Sasana and engaged in the meaningful life of preaching the Dhamma to living beings, are very valuable to reveal to today's society. Therefore, the Venerable One agreed to share a little of those experiences for the benefit of the world. These are his experiences.

My grandmother used to say that there is hell under the earth and heaven among the stars. She said that those who do good deeds go to heaven, and when their good deeds are finished, they leave heaven again. So when I said that there is no point in going to heaven, she said that to go beyond that one has to eliminate samsara, and she also said that to eliminate samsara I would need to become a monk. That increased my desire to become a monk. Although I had a natural desire to become a monk, it was sharpened by my grandmother. Although my grandmother wanted me to become a monk, my parents did not. Therefore, I had to go to school as a lay child, leaning toward Buddha Dhamma.

To understand the truth, one must be truthful. I realized that one cannot understand the truth by being untruthful. I understood this and became interested in analyzing the practical side of Buddhism. For that, concentration of mind is necessary. That is why I practiced meditation. Moreover, meditation had been a part of my life since childhood.

However, at an early age, my parents themselves, upon my strong request, arranged for me to become a monk in a temple near Warakapola. But I did not get what I expected, so I stayed there only a few days. It became clear that my goals would not be fulfilled there, so I returned home. In the same way, I went to several other temples to become a monk, but there was no suitable environment for me in any of them. I remember an incident that touched my heart. One day, two visiting monks came to the temple. At that time, there were two small benches and chairs in that place. Out of my immense respect for the Sangha, I brought two of the tallest chairs in the temple for them to sit on. The monks returned and, after a while, the chief monk scolded me severely, saying that they were from a lower caste, and that good chairs should not be given to them—that those small chairs were reserved for them. I felt very sorry for them. At the same time, I was disappointed. I realized that this was not the Dhamma the Buddha preached, and that one cannot learn the true Dhamma by staying in such places.

So, I have been interested in this Dhamma since I was a child and have been investigating it. I have wanted to become a monk since I was seven years old. I remember that time—I used to meditate under a mango tree, wearing a yellow cloth as a robe. Since then, I have been accustomed to meditating alone without anyone's help. I have had this desire since I was very young. I don't know what it is. Maybe it is a sansaric habit, because at such a young age, the

thoughts that come to the minds of children are not like that. The mind goes to play. But I wanted to find out what kind of Dhamma the Supreme Buddha preached.

That is why I didn't focus on reading novels and short stories like other people. I focused on reading scriptures. I would skip my schoolwork and read about the Dhamma until dawn. It was a great pleasure and comfort to me.

When I was in the seventh or eighth grade at school, I bought Abhidhamma books from the library. I read them, and I could understand them easily. After I became a young man, I borrowed advanced books from schools and temples that explained Buddhism and read them. I didn't have to memorize any of them. As soon as I read them once, I understood and remembered them. So I didn't need to ask anyone. They helped me understand more about this samsara.

The journey that began like this gradually evolved and progressed. Then I realized that I had to find the correct Dhamma preached by the Supreme Buddha. That was my effort from that day on. I was not very interested in other worldly subjects. I also turned to meditation in that way. The way I turned to that direction was also very wonderful. When I was in the fifth grade at school, I heard one of our brothers, who was in a class higher than me, always reciting a verse from a book. That was:

"The greatest merit of all merit is meditation."

This is a poem in the Lowada Sangarawa. So I thought, I need to look into this meditation. Since then, I have been interested in it.

I had heard about Ānāpāna Sati meditation. I was interested in breathing in and out. I am going to tell you about my sincere experience.

Our ancestral home was located on the same land where this temple is located today. So in those days, I would meditate late at night after everyone in the house had gone to sleep. Because I didn't want anyone else to know about this, I got into the habit of meditating every night. I practiced Ānāpāna Sati meditation and Mettā meditation.

I sat on the bed where I was sleeping, curled up in a blanket, and started meditating. Although it wasn't very unusual at the beginning, after a few days I felt a clear difference. But I still didn't know what meditation was and nobody had told me. Then one day I felt a vast peace that I couldn't even imagine. A vast ease. I felt a stream of air made of light entering and leaving my body. My whole body felt light, as if it didn't exist. That state of mind was very peaceful. My body felt light—like moonlight. I felt as if I were floating in white light through the fog.

This is how I came to a very free state of mind. My face felt as if a flower had bloomed in the middle of moonlight. My whole body became very light. The moonlight-like light on my face then started to spread throughout my entire body. Then a strange feeling came. When that feeling arose, my entire body was bathed in a golden light. I no longer had any awareness of my physical body. I experienced all of this at different stages of the same meditation posture. Each time, I experienced a wonderful sense of peace in that state.

Gradually, I began to experience this state more and more. Finally, my whole body became a single beam of light. At that time, I had no idea where I was sitting or even of my own body. I

could only see an infinite sky. In the middle of that sky, there was this beam of light. It was very still. It was very peaceful. I could think calmly and peacefully. But I no longer had the feeling of the physical body that I had before. There was no need to think about it or look around. There was no such thing as looking up, looking down, looking right, or looking left. All these aspects were visible at the same time. That was the special thing. Everything was there—above, below, all around, all together.

It is immediately apparent. That is the nature of the state of mind. And I am telling you this from my experience. I am not saying these things to ascribe anything special to myself. I am telling you only what I have experienced. That is all.

Now I thought: What is this? Is this the truth? Is this a feeling? What kind of state is this? A question arose. At that moment, I understood the answer to the question—it was the light of pabhassara. What is this light of pabhassara? Is this truth? That was the question that remained for me.

But I realized that this was not the truth. What I was experiencing was a moment created by an energy form in infinite space coming together. This was the result of a cause, a result formed through effort and exertion.

Actually, no one had ever told me about these things before. So I couldn't understand those situations technically. But later, I learned only by name what those things were by reading books.

I realized that the light of pabhassara I had seen was a cause and effect built up through effort, and that the sky, which was perceived as an immense freedom above and below, was a very free and pleasant feeling. In a few moments, the beam of brilliant light (a tube of light about 6 feet tall and the size of an ordinary person) disappeared, and the sense of "I" became an infinite sky. Now, I felt a very free mental state, with no visible limit or end above or below.

Again, a question arose, asking why this was, what was the truth. But at the same time, in response, I realized that this was not the truth but a result of a cause—an infinite mental awareness, embracing an infinite sky like fog.

I also understood that it was possible to leave that sky and become free. At the same time, I was free from the sky, without noticing the sky that had been like a cloud of mist. A very peaceful, colorless, infinite feeling replaced the infinite sky, and yet I was still in the same infinite state. It was much more peaceful than the sky.

Again, the thought came: Is this the truth? At the same time, I realized that this feeling was also a cause and effect, formed as a result of effort. I realized how peaceful and serene it was to be freed from this effort. At that moment, having given up the effort, I became like a tiny speck of feeling, the size of a green gram, filled with peace and serenity. Now I had reached a state where there was no mental perception of the world, and I felt nothing outside of that tiny speck of feeling.

But even that was a place where one could still think: What kind of situation is this? What is this? At the same time, I understood it as a cause and effect, a mental expansion. I realized

there was a constant effort, a struggle. I understood that it was possible to be free from it, and that was a great relief.

Then the feeling began to break down and become smaller. It became the size of a mustard seed, then the size of a needle. It became even more subtle, and finally the feeling came to an end. At that point, the thought arose that life was over, and the idea of dying appeared. Again, a certain amount of effort and energy built up, and the feeling expanded back to the size of a green gram. But that too did not last—it passed away again as before. The craving for life arose again.

As this process continued, the mind realized that effort itself is the result of action, that each amount of feeling arises and fades away without leaving any essence, and that living is labor without essence. At that time, without any expectation, the effort was abandoned, and everything became silent. The feeling became null.

Without knowing how long it remained that way, I realized that there was once again a very small amount of feeling. I experienced that abandoning all effort and letting go of the world is the end of all suffering. I realized that the true freedom I had discovered through concentration and searching for the truth was beyond the world. I had found what I was looking for. Subtly, I realized that there was nothing more to do, no more Nibbana to go beyond. After that, I began to return the way I had gone.

I reflected on the previous experiences as they arose and passed away, and I returned to that state. Then I focused again on the tiny speck of feeling, the size of a green gram. I reached that state. I reflected on the infinite sky, and my mind expanded to infinity. I reflected on the sky that was like a mist, and I connected myself to it, as though I were wrapping a vast, rough nature with my mind. I reflected on the light body, and it appeared in the middle of the sky as before. I reflected on the light body with its parts, and I reached that state. I reflected on a gaseous body, a face like a flower blooming in the moonlight, and I reached that state. I remembered how the light, gaseous body breathed streams of light in and out. I felt that nature. I felt the meditation posture.

I remembered the touch of where I was. I realized that I was descending from above to the ground, settling onto something. But since I did not realize I was in the room, I focused on the sound of the wall clock going “tick-tock.” Then, realizing that I was in the room, I clearly heard the clock ticking.

When I remembered the hand on my hip again, I slowly raised it. At that moment, I felt the physical sensation of a heavy body. I realized that I had left the jhāna. When I looked at the time, it was 3:30 in the morning. I started at 10:00 p.m. Although five and a half hours had passed, it felt as if I had been meditating for only about an hour.

In this way, I reached the highest level of meditation. I felt liberated. During those five hours, I had my first experience of cetovimutti—liberation of mind. I mention this not for praise or recognition by revealing extraordinary abilities, but to prevent the harm that could have been caused by groups of people who tried to mislead others with various ideas.