

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF MASTERY

On one occasion the Venerable Sariputta was dwelling at Savatthi in Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's Park. Then one morning he dressed and, taking bowl and robe, entered Savatthi for alms. When he had walked for alms in Savatthi from the almsround, after his meal he went to the Blind Men's Grove for the day's abiding.

Having plunged into the Blind Men's Grove, he sat down at the foot of a tree for the day's abiding.

Then, in the evening, the Venerable Sāriputta emerged from seclusion and went to Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's Park. The Venerable Ananda saw him coming in the distance and said to him: "Friend Sariputta, your faculties are serene, your facial complexion is pure and bright. In what dwelling have you spent the day?"

"Here, friend, secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, I entered and dwelled in the first jhana, which is accompanied by thought and examination, with rapture and happiness born of seclusion. Yet, friend, it did not occur to me, 'I am attaining the first jhana,' or 'I have attained the first jhana,' or 'I have emerged from the first jhana.'"

"It must be because I-making, mine-making, and the underlying tendency to conceit have been thoroughly uprooted in your mind for a long time that such thoughts did not occur to you."

[On another occasion the Venerable Sariputta said:] "Here, friend, with the subsiding of thought and examination, I entered and dwelled in the second jhana, which has internal confidence and unification of mind, is without thought and examination, and has rapture and happiness born of concentration. Yet, friend, it did not occur to me, 'I am attaining the second jhana,' or 'I have attained the second jhana,' or 'I have emerged from the second jhana.'"

"It must be because I-making, mine-making, and the underlying tendency to conceit have been thoroughly uprooted in your mind for a long time that such thoughts did not occur to you."

[On another occasion the Venerable Sariputta said:] "Here, friend, with the fading away as well of rapture, I dwelled equanimous and, mindful and clearly comprehending, I experienced happiness with the body; I entered and dwelled in the third jhana, of which the noble ones declare: 'He is equanimous, mindful, one who dwells happily.' Yet, friend, it did not occur to me, 'I am attaining the the third jhana....'"

[On another occasion the Venerable Sariputta said:] "Here, friend, with the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous passing away of joy and displeasure, I entered and dwelled in the fourth jhana, which is neither painful nor pleasant and includes the purification of mindfulness by equanimity. Yet, friend, it did no occur to me, 'I am attaining the fouth jhana....'"

[On another occasion the Venerable Sariputta said:] “Here, friend, with the complete transcending of perceptions of forms, with the passing away of perceptions of sensory impingement, with nonattention to perceptions of diversity, aware that ‘space is infinite,’ I entered and dwelled in the base of the infinity of space. Yet, friend, it did not occur to me, ‘I am attaining the base of the infinity of space....’”

[On another occasion the Venerable Sariputta said:] “Here, friend, by completely transcending the base of the infinity of space, aware that ‘consciousness is infinite,’ I entered and dwelled in the base of the infinity of consciousness. Yet, friend, it did not occur to me, ‘I am attaining the base of the infinity of consciousness....’”

[On another occasion the Venerable Sariputta said:] “Here, friend, by completely transcending the base of the infinity of consciousness, aware that ‘there is nothing,’ I entered and dwelled in the base of nothingness. Yet, friend, it did not occur to me, ‘I am attaining the base of nothingness... .’”

[On another occasion the Venerable Sariputta said:] “Here, friend, by completely transcending the base of nothingness, I entered and dwelled in the base of neither-perception-nor-nonperception. Yet, friend, it did not occur to me, ‘I am attaining the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception... .’”

[On another occasion the Venerable Sariputta said:] “Here, friend, by completely transcending the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, I entered and dwelled in the cessation of perception and feeling. Yet, friend, it did not occur to me, ‘I am attaining the cessation of perception and feeling,’ or ‘I have attained the cessation of perception and feeling,’ or ‘I have emerged from the cessation of perception and feeling.’”

“It must be because I-making, mine-making, and the underlying tendency to conceit have been thoroughly uprooted in your mind for a long time that such thoughts did not occur to you.”

(SN 28:1–9, combined; III 235–38)

In the Buddha’s Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pali Canon. Edited by Bhikkhu Bodhi. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2005, 296–298.