MN 123 — MN 123 Amazing & Astounding Qualities | Acchariy'abbhūtadhamma Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

Source: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/MN/MN123.html

Source revision: sha256:06db98f11dbe5b66e3b290b0f8bcaa44ec5f2fe3d1e1b74062fcf0baea044036

License: CC-BY-NC-4.0 — https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

License URL: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

Copyright: Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017

License notice: Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017 This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported. To see a copy of this license visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/. "Commercial" shall mean any sale, whether for commercial or non-profit purposes or entities. Questions about this book may be addressed to Metta Forest Monastery Valley Center, CA 92082-1409 U.S.A. Additional resources More Dhamma talks, books and translations by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu are available to download in digital audio and various ebook formats at dhammatalks.org. Printed copy A paperback copy of this book is available free of charge. To request one, write to: Book Request, Metta Forest Monastery, PO Box 1409, Valley Center, CA 92082 USA.

Attribution: From Handful of Leaves, Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu; https://www.dhammatalks.org/Archive/Writings/Ebooks/SuttaPitaka_251113.epub. Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017 This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported. To see a copy of this license visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/. "Commercial" shall mean any sale, whether for commercial or non-profit purposes or entities. Questions about this book may be addressed to Metta Forest Monastery Valley Center, CA 92082-1409 U.S.A. Additional resources More Dhamma talks, books and translations by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu are available to download in digital audio and various ebook formats at dhammatalks.org. Printed copy A paperback copy of this book is available free of charge. To request one, write to: Book Request, Metta Forest Monastery, PO Box 1409, Valley Center, CA 92082 USA.

Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

Completeness: ABBREVIATED. Every source-unit character is preserved, including introductions, notes and verse structure. Thanissaro's collection-level note explicitly states that repetitions were cut: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/about.html. This is evidence about the translation method, not an assertion that every individual unit contains an omission; no repetitions reconstructed.

Text

Amazing & Astounding Qualities

Acchariy'abbhūtadhamma Sutta (MN 123)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvatthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Now at that time, a large number of monks, after the meal, on returning from their alms round, had gathered at the meeting hall, when this conversation arose among them: "It's amazing, friends. It's astounding, the great might, the great power of the Tathāgata, in that the Tathāgata knows of the Awakened Ones of the past—those totally unbound, who have cut through objectification, who have cut the cycle, who have put an end to the round, who have lifted away all suffering & stress: 'Such was the birth of those Blessed Ones, such was their name, such their clan, such their

virtue, such their Dhamma, such their discernment, such their (mental) dwelling, such their release.'"

When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to those monks, "Friends, Tathāgatas are both amazing & endowed with amazing qualities, both astounding & endowed with astounding qualities." But the conversation among them was interrupted.

For the Blessed One, emerging from his seclusion in the late afternoon, went to the meeting hall and, on arrival, sat down on a seat laid out. Seated, he addressed the monks: "For what topic of conversation, monks, are you gathered together here? In the midst of what topic of conversation have you been interrupted?"

"Just now, lord, after the meal, on returning from our alms round, we gathered at the meeting hall, when this conversation arose among us: 'It's amazing, friends. It's astounding, the great might, the great power of the Tathāgata, in that the Tathāgata knows of the Awakened Ones of the past—those totally unbound, who have cut through objectification, who have cut the cycle, who have put an end to the round, who have lifted away all suffering & stress: "Such was the birth of those Blessed Ones, such was their name, such their clan, such their virtue, such their Dhamma, such their discernment, such their (mental) dwelling, such their release.'"

"When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to us, 'Friends, Tathāgatas are both amazing & endowed with amazing qualities, both astounding & endowed with astounding qualities.' But the conversation among us was interrupted when the Blessed One approached."

Then the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda, "That being the case, Ānanda, elaborate to a greater extent on the Tathāgata's amazing & astounding qualities."

"In the Blessed One's presence, lord, I have heard this, in the Blessed One's presence I have learned this: 'Mindful & alert, the bodhisatta appeared among the Tusita host.' And the fact that, mindful & alert, the bodhisatta, appeared among the Tusita host: I hold this to be an amazing & astounding quality of the Blessed One.

"In the Blessed One's presence, lord, I have heard this, in the Blessed One's presence I have learned this: 'Mindful & alert, the bodhisatta stayed for a full lifespan in the Tusita host.' ...

"...'Mindful & alert, the bodhisatta, descending from the Tusita host, alighted in his mother's womb.' ...

"...'When the bodhisatta, mindful & alert descended from the Tusita host and alighted in his mother's womb, a great, measureless radiance surpassing the effulgence of the devas appeared in the cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, with its people with their contemplatives & brahmans, their royalty & commonfolk. Even in the inter-cosmic [intergalactic?] void of the unrestrained darkness, pitch-black darkness, where even the light of the sun & moon—so mighty, so powerful—doesn't reach, even there the great,

measureless radiance surpassing the effulgence of the devas appeared. And the beings reborn there perceived one another by that radiance: "So other beings have been reborn here, too!" And so this ten-thousand-fold cosmos shivered & quivered & quaked, while the great, measureless radiance appeared in the cosmos, surpassing the effulgence of the devas.' ...

"...'When the bodhisatta, mindful & alert, had alighted in his mother's womb, four male devas came to guard him from four directions, (thinking,) "May no human or non-human beings or anyone at all harm the bodhisatta or his mother."' ...

"...'When the bodhisatta had alighted in his mother's womb, the bodhisatta's mother was naturally virtuous, abstaining from taking life, abstaining from taking what is not given, abstaining from sexual misconduct, abstaining from telling lies, abstaining from distilled & fermented drinks that cause heedlessness.' ...

"...'When the bodhisatta had alighted in his mother's womb, there appeared in the bodhisatta's mother no intention imbued with sensuality toward men, and the bodhisatta's mother was inaccessible to any man with an impassioned mind.' ...

"...'When the bodhisatta had alighted in his mother's womb, the bodhisatta's mother was one who received the five strings of sensuality. She went around endowed and provided with the five strings of sensuality.' ...

"...'When the bodhisatta had alighted in his mother's womb, there appeared in the bodhisatta's mother no illness. She was happy and unafflicted in body. And she saw the bodhisatta within her womb with all his limbs and no inferior faculties. Suppose that there were a beryl gem, beautiful, radiant, eight-faceted, well-cut & polished, and through it were strung a blue, yellow, red, white, or beige thread. And then a man of good eyesight, taking it in his hand, would contemplate it: "This is a beryl gem, beautiful, radiant, eight-faceted, well-cut & polished, and through it is strung a blue, yellow, red, white, or beige thread." In the same way, when the bodhisatta had alighted in his mother's womb, the bodhisatta's mother experienced no illness. She was happy and unafflicted in body. And she saw the bodhisatta within her womb with all his limbs and no inferior faculties.' ...

"...'When the bodhisatta had been born seven days, the bodhisatta's mother passed away and reappeared in the Tusita host.' ...

"...'Whereas other women give birth after nurturing the fetus in the womb between nine and ten lunar months, that's not how the bodhisatta's mother gave birth to the bodhisatta. After nurturing the bodhisatta in her womb exactly ten lunar months, the bodhisatta's mother gave birth.' ...

"...'Whereas other women give birth while sitting or lying down, that's not how the bodhisatta's mother gave birth to the bodhisatta. The bodhisatta's mother gave birth to the bodhisatta while standing.' ...

"…'When the bodhisatta left his mother's womb, devas received him first, and then human beings.' …

"…'When the bodhisatta left his mother's womb but before he reached the ground, four male devas received him and set him in front of his mother, (saying,) "Be gratified, O queen. A son of great influence has been born to you.'" …

"…'When the bodhisatta left his mother's womb, he left it immaculate, unsullied by fluid, unsullied by mucus, unsullied by blood, unsullied by lymph: pure, very pure. Just as a when a gemstone is placed on Kāsi cloth, neither would the gemstone sully the cloth, nor the cloth the gemstone. Why is that? Because of the purity of both. In the same way, when the bodhisatta left his mother's womb he left it immaculate, unsullied by fluid, unsullied by mucus, unsullied by blood, unsullied by lymph: pure, very pure.' …

"…'When the bodhisatta left his mother's womb, two streams of water appeared from the sky—one cool, the other warm—to wash the bodhisatta and his mother.' …

"…'As soon as the bodhisatta was born, he stood steadily with his feet on the ground and, facing north, took seven steps while a white parasol was held over him. Surveying all the directions, he made a bellowing statement: "I am the foremost of the world. I am chief of the world. I am the best of the world.'" …

"In the Blessed One's presence, lord, I have heard this, in the Blessed One's presence I have learned this: 'When the bodhisatta left his mother's womb, a great, measureless radiance surpassing the effulgence of the devas appeared in the cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, with its people with their contemplatives & brahmans, their royalty & commonfolk. Even in the inter-cosmic void of the unrestrained darkness, pitch-black darkness, where even the light of the sun & moon—so mighty, so powerful—doesn't reach, even there the great, measureless radiance surpassing the effulgence of the devas appeared. And the beings reborn there perceived one another by that radiance: "So other beings have been reborn here, too!" And so this ten-thousand-fold cosmos shivered & quivered & quaked, while the great, measureless radiance appeared in the cosmos, surpassing the effulgence of the devas.' And the fact that when the bodhisatta left his mother's womb… this ten-thousand-fold cosmos shivered & quivered & quaked, while the great, measureless radiance appeared in the cosmos, surpassing the effulgence of the devas: I hold this, too, to be an amazing & astounding quality of the Blessed One."

"That being the case, Ānanda, you can hold this, too, to be an amazing & astounding quality of the Tathāgata: There is the case where feelings are known to the Tathāgata when they arise, known when they remain, known when they go to their end. Perceptions are known to the Tathāgata when they arise, known when they remain, known when they go to their end. Thoughts are known to the Tathāgata when they arise, known when they remain, known when they go to their end. You can hold this, too, Ānanda, to be an amazing & astounding quality of the Tathāgata."

“The fact, lord, that feelings are known to the Blessed One when they arise, known when they remain, known when they go to their end; perceptions are known to the Blessed One when they arise, known when they remain, known when they go to their end; thoughts are known to the Blessed One when they arise, known when they remain, known when they go to their end: I hold this, too, lord, to be an amazing & astounding quality of the Blessed One.”

That is what Ven. Ānanda said. The Teacher approved. Gratified, the monks delighted in Ven. Ānanda’s words.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: Sn 3:11