

123 *Acchhariya-abbhūta Sutta* Wonderful and Marvellous

1. THUS HAVE I HEARD. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s Park.

2. Now a number of bhikkhus were sitting in the assembly hall, where they had met together on returning from their alms-round, after their meal, when this discussion arose among them: “It is wonderful, friends, it is marvellous, how mighty and powerful is the Tathāgata! For he is able to know about the Buddhas of the past – who attained to final Nibbāna, cut [the tangle of] proliferation, broke the cycle, ended the round, and surmounted all suffering – that for those Blessed Ones their birth was thus, their names were thus, their clans were thus, their virtue was thus, their state [of concentration] was thus, their wisdom was thus, their abiding [in attainments] was thus, their deliverance was thus.”¹¹⁶⁰

When this was said, the venerable Ānanda told the bhikkhus: “Friends, Tathāgatas are wonderful and have wonderful qualities. Tathāgatas are marvellous and have marvellous qualities.” [119]

However, their discussion was interrupted; for the Blessed One rose from meditation when it was evening, went to the assembly hall, and sat down on a seat made ready. Then he addressed the bhikkhus thus: “Bhikkhus, for what discussion are you sitting together here now? And what was your discussion that was interrupted?”

“Here, venerable sir, we were sitting in the assembly hall, where we had met together on returning from our almsround, after our meal, when this discussion arose among us: ‘It is wonderful, friends, it is marvellous...their deliverance was thus.’ When this was said, venerable sir, the venerable Ānanda said to us: ‘Friends, Tathāgatas are wonderful and have wonderful

qualities. Tathāgatas are marvellous and have marvellous qualities.' This was our discussion, venerable sir, that was interrupted when the Blessed One arrived."

Then the Blessed One addressed the venerable Ānanda: "That being so, Ānanda, explain more fully the Tathāgata's wonderful and marvellous qualities."

3. "I heard and learned this, venerable sir, from the Blessed One's own lips: 'Mindful and fully aware, Ānanda, the Bodhisatta appeared in the Tusita heaven.'¹¹⁶¹ That [120] mindful and fully aware the Bodhisatta appeared in the Tusita heaven – this I remember as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

4. "I heard and learned this from the Blessed One's own lips: 'Mindful and fully aware the Bodhisatta remained in the Tusita heaven.' This too I remember as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

5. "I heard and learned this from the Blessed One's own lips: 'For the whole of his life-span the Bodhisatta remained in the Tusita heaven.' This too I remember as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

6. "I heard and learned this from the Blessed One's own lips: 'Mindful and fully aware the Bodhisatta passed away from the Tusita heaven and descended into his mother's womb.' This too I remember as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

7. "I heard and learned this from the Blessed One's own lips: 'When the Bodhisatta passed away from the Tusita heaven and descended into his mother's womb, then a great immeasurable light surpassing the splendour of the gods appeared in the world with its gods, its Māras, and its Brahmās, in this generation with its recluses and brahmins, with its princes and its people. And even in those abysmal world interspaces of vacancy, gloom, and utter darkness, where the moon and the sun, mighty and powerful as they are, cannot make their light prevail – there too a great immeasurable light surpassing the splendour of the gods appeared.'¹¹⁶² And the beings born there perceived each other by that light: "So other beings, indeed, have appeared here." And this ten-thousandfold world system shook and quaked and trembled, and there too a great immeasurable light surpassing the

splendour of the gods appeared.' This too I remember as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

8. "I heard and learned this from the Blessed One's own lips: 'When the Bodhisatta had descended into his mother's womb, four young deities came to guard him at the four quarters so that no humans or non-humans or anyone at all could harm the Bodhisatta or his mother.'¹¹⁶³ This too I remember as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

9. "I heard and learned this from the Blessed One's own lips: 'When the Bodhisatta had descended into his mother's womb, she became intrinsically virtuous, refraining from killing living beings, from taking what is not given, from misconduct in sensual pleasures, from false speech, and from wines, liquors, and intoxicants, which are the basis of negligence.' This too I remember as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One. [121]

10. "I heard and learned this from the Blessed One's own lips: 'When the Bodhisatta had descended into his mother's womb, no sensual thought arose in her concerning men, and she was inaccessible to any man having a lustful mind.' This too I remember as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

11. "I heard and learned this from the Blessed One's own lips: 'When the Bodhisatta had descended into his mother's womb, she obtained the five cords of sensual pleasure, and furnished and endowed with them, she enjoyed herself with them.' This too I remember as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

12. "I heard and learned this from the Blessed One's own lips: 'When the Bodhisatta had descended into his mother's womb, no kind of affliction arose in her; she was blissful and free from bodily fatigue. She saw the Bodhisatta within her womb with all his limbs, lacking no faculty. Suppose a blue, yellow, red, white, or brown thread were strung through a fine beryl gem of purest water, eight-faceted, well cut, and a man with good sight were to take it in his hand and review it thus: "This is a fine beryl gem of purest water, eight-faceted, well cut, and through it is strung a blue, yellow, red, white, or brown thread"; so too when the Bodhisatta had descended into his mother's womb...she saw the Bodhisatta within her womb with all his limbs, lacking no

faculty.' This too I remember as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One. [122]

13. "I heard and learned this from the Blessed One's own lips: 'Seven days after the birth of the Bodhisatta, his mother died and reappeared in the Tusita heaven.'¹¹⁶⁴ This too I remember as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

14. "I heard and learned this from the Blessed One's own lips: 'Other women give birth after carrying the child in the womb for nine or ten months, but not so the Bodhisatta's mother. The Bodhisatta's mother gave birth after carrying him in her womb for exactly ten months.' This too I remember as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

15. "I heard and learned this from the Blessed One's own lips: 'Other women give birth seated or lying down, but not so the Bodhisatta's mother. The Bodhisatta's mother gave birth to him standing up.' This too I remember as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

16. "I heard and learned this from the Blessed One's own lips: 'When the Bodhisatta came forth from his mother's womb, first gods received him, then human beings.' This too I remember as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

17. "I heard and learned this from the Blessed One's own lips: 'When the Bodhisatta came forth from his mother's womb, he did not touch the earth. The four young gods received him and set him before his mother saying: "Rejoice, O queen, a son of great power has been born to you."¹¹⁶⁵ This too I remember as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

18. "I heard and learned this from the Blessed One's own lips: 'When the Bodhisatta came forth from his mother's womb, he came forth unsullied, unsmear'd [123] by water or humours or blood or any kind of impurity, clean, and unsullied. Suppose there were a gem placed on Kāsi cloth, then the gem would not smear the cloth or the cloth the gem. Why is that? Because of the purity of both. So too when the Bodhisatta came forth...clean and unsullied.' This too I remember as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

19. "I heard and learned this from the Blessed One's own lips: 'When the Bodhisatta came forth from his mother's womb, two jets of water appeared to pour from the sky, one cool and one warm, for bathing the Bodhisatta and his mother.'

This too I remember as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

20. "I heard and learned this from the Blessed One's own lips: 'As soon as the Bodhisatta was born, he stood firmly with his feet on the ground; then he took seven steps north, and with a white parasol held over him, he surveyed each quarter and uttered the words of the Leader of the Herd: "I am the highest in the world; I am the best in the world; I am the foremost in the world. This is my last birth; now there is no renewal of being for me."¹¹⁶⁵ This too I remember as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

21. "I heard and learned this from the Blessed One's own lips: 'When the Bodhisatta came forth from his mother's womb, then a great immeasurable light surpassing the splendour of the gods appeared in the world with its gods, its Māras, and its Brahmās, in this generation with its recluses and brahmins, with its princes and its people. And even in those abysmal world inter-spaces of vacancy, gloom, and utter darkness, where the moon and the sun, mighty and powerful as they are, cannot make their light prevail – [124] there too a great immeasurable light surpassing the splendour of the gods appeared. And the beings born there perceived each other by that light: "So other beings, indeed, have appeared here." And this ten-thousandfold world system shook and quaked and trembled, and there too a great immeasurable light surpassing the splendour of the gods appeared.' That when the Bodhisatta came forth from his mother's womb, then a great immeasurable light surpassing the splendour of the gods appeared...this too I remember as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One."

22. "That being so, Ānanda, remember this too as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Tathāgata: Here, Ānanda, for the Tathāgata feelings are known as they arise, as they are present, as they disappear; perceptions are known as they arise, as they are present, as they disappear; thoughts are known as they arise, as they are present, as they disappear.¹¹⁶⁶ Remember this too, Ānanda, as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Tathāgata."

23. "Venerable sir, since for the Blessed One feelings are known as they arise, as they are present, as they disappear; perceptions are known as they arise, as they are present, as they

disappear; thoughts are known as they arise, as they are present, as they disappear – this too I remember as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.”

That is what the venerable Ānanda said. The Teacher approved. The bhikkhus were satisfied and delighted in the venerable Ānanda’s words.

paths and fruits, will stand the test." MA adds that the mundane virtuous qualities are also intended as a criterion of soundness.

SUTTA 123

- 1160 This ability is exemplified by DN 14, which provides detailed information about the six Buddhas preceding Gotama.
- 1161 This refers to the Bodhisatta's rebirth in the Tusita heaven, which followed his preceding human existence as Vessantara and preceded his birth in the human world as Siddhattha Gotama.
- 1162 MA: Between every three world systems there is an interspace measuring 8,000 yojanas; it is like the space between three cartwheels or almsbowls touching one another. The beings who live there have taken rebirth there because of committing some heavy, terrible offence against their parents or righteous recluses and brahmins, or because of some habitual evil deed like killing animals, etc.
- 1163 MA: The four deities were the Four Great Kings (the presiding deities of the heaven of the Four Great Kings).
- 1164 MA: This happened, not through a defect in the birth, but through the expiration of her lifespan; for the place (in the womb) occupied by the Bodhisatta, like the inner chamber of a cetiya, is not to be used by others.
- 1165 MA explains each aspect of this event as a foretoken of the Buddha's later attainments. Thus, his standing with his feet (*pāda*) firmly on the ground was a foretoken of his attaining the four bases for spiritual power (*iddhipāda*); his facing the north, of his going above and beyond the multitude; his seven steps, of his acquiring the seven enlightenment factors; the white parasol, of his acquiring the parasol of deliverance; his surveying the quarters, of his acquiring the unobstructed knowledge of omniscience; his uttering the words of the Leader of the Herd, of his setting in motion the irreversible Wheel of the Dhamma; his statement "This is my last birth," of his passing away into the Nibbāna element with no residue remaining (of the factors of existence).

- 1166 This statement seems to be the Buddha's way of calling attention to the quality he regarded as the true wonder and marvel.

SUTTA 124

- 1167 According to MA, Ven. Bakkula became a monk in his eightieth year, which would make him 160 at the time this sutta takes place. He was declared by the Buddha to be the foremost disciple with respect to good health.
- 1168 MA says that the passages here enclosed in brackets were added by the elders who compiled the Dhamma.
- 1169 This passage and those to follow show Ven. Bakkula as an observer of the ascetic practices. The *kaṭhina* time is the period following the three-month rains residence when bhikkhus make new robes from the cloth they have received.
- 1170 MA says that after he went forth, he was an ordinary man for seven days, but on the eighth day he attained arahantship together with the analytical knowledges (*paṭisambhidā*).
- 1171 MA: Ven. Bakkula himself did not give the ordination (which would have been a violation of his mode of practice) but arranged for other bhikkhus to give it.
- 1172 MA: Ven. Bakkula had considered that all his life he had never made himself a burden to the other bhikkhus, and he did not want his body to be a burden after his death. Thus he entered into meditation on the heat element and attained final Nibbāna by causing his entire body to be consumed by the blaze. Only the relics remained.
- 1173 MA says that this sutta was recited at the second compilation of the Dhamma, held about a hundred years after the Buddha's passing away.

SUTTA 125

- 1174 MA identifies Prince Jayasena as a son of King Bimbisāra.
- 1175 The simile as at MN 90.11.
- 1176 Note that here the four foundations of mindfulness are expounded in the place usually reserved for the four jhānas.