MN 123 — Incredible and Amazing

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Text

Middle Discourses 123

Incredible and Amazing

So I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvatthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery.

Then after the meal, on return from almsround, several mendicants sat together in the assembly hall and this discussion came up among them:

"It's incredible, reverends, it's amazing! The Realized One has such psychic power and might! For he is able to know the Buddhas of the past who have become completely quenched, cut off proliferation, cut off the course, finished off the cycle, and passed beyond all suffering: 'Such is the birth, names, clans, conduct, teachings, wisdom, meditation, and freedom of those Blessed Ones.'

When they said this, Venerable Ānanda said, "The Realized Ones are incredible, reverends, and they have incredible qualities. They're amazing, and they have amazing qualities." But this conversation among those mendicants was left unfinished.

Then in the late afternoon, the Buddha came out of retreat, went to the assembly hall, sat down on the seat spread out, and addressed the mendicants: "Mendicants, what were you sitting talking about just now? What conversation was left unfinished?"

So the mendicants told him what they had been talking about. The Buddha said, "Well then, Ānanda, say some more about the incredible and amazing qualities of the Realized One."

"Sir, I have heard and learned this in the presence of the Buddha: 'Mindful and aware, the being intent on awakening was reborn in the host of joyful gods.' This I remember as an incredible quality of the Buddha.

I have learned this in the presence of the Buddha: 'Mindful and aware, the being intent on awakening remained in the host of joyful gods.' This too I remember as an incredible quality of the Buddha.

I have learned this in the presence of the Buddha: 'For the whole of that life, the being intent on awakening remained in the host of joyful gods.' This too I remember as an incredible quality of the Buddha.

I have learned this in the presence of the Buddha: ‘Mindful and aware, the being intent on awakening passed away from the host of joyful gods and was conceived in his mother’s womb.’ This too I remember as an incredible quality of the Buddha.

I have learned this in the presence of the Buddha: ‘When the being intent on awakening passes away from the host of joyful gods, he is conceived in his mother’s womb. And then—in this world with its gods, Māras, and divinities, this population with its ascetics and brahmins, gods and humans—an immeasurable, magnificent light appears, surpassing the glory of the gods. Even in the boundless gloom of interstellar space—so utterly dark that even the luminosity of the moon and the sun, so mighty and powerful, makes no impression—an immeasurable, magnificent light appears, surpassing the glory of the gods. And even the sentient beings reborn there recognize each other by that light: “So, it seems other sentient beings have been reborn here!” And this ten-thousandfold galaxy shakes and rocks and trembles. And an immeasurable, magnificent light appears in the world, surpassing the glory of the gods.’ This too I remember as an incredible quality of the Buddha.

I have learned this in the presence of the Buddha: ‘When the being intent on awakening is conceived in his mother’s womb, four godlings approach to guard the four quarters, so that no human or non-human or anyone at all shall harm the being intent on awakening or his mother.’ This too I remember as an incredible quality of the Buddha.

I have learned this in the presence of the Buddha: ‘When the being intent on awakening is conceived in his mother’s womb, she becomes naturally ethical. She refrains from killing living creatures, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and beer, wine, and liquor intoxicants.’ This too I remember as an incredible quality of the Buddha.

I have learned this in the presence of the Buddha: ‘When the being intent on awakening is conceived in his mother’s womb, she no longer thinks of men in a sexual way, and she cannot be violated by a man of lustful intent.’ This too I remember as an incredible quality of the Buddha.

I have learned this in the presence of the Buddha: ‘When the being intent on awakening is conceived in his mother’s womb, she obtains the five kinds of sensual stimulation and amuses herself, supplied and provided with them.’ This too I remember as an incredible quality of the Buddha.

I have learned this in the presence of the Buddha: ‘When the being intent on awakening is conceived in his mother’s womb, no afflictions beset her. She’s happy and free of bodily fatigue. And she sees the being intent on awakening in her womb, whole in his major and minor limbs, not deficient in any faculty. Suppose there was a beryl gem that was naturally lustrous, eight-faceted, well-worked. And it was strung with a thread of blue, yellow, red, white, or golden brown. And a person with clear eyes were to take it in their hand and examine it: “This beryl gem is naturally lustrous, eight-faceted, well-worked. And it’s strung with a thread of blue, yellow, red, white, or golden brown.”

In the same way, when the being intent on awakening is conceived in his mother’s womb, no afflictions beset her. She’s happy and free of bodily fatigue. And she sees the being intent on awakening in her womb, whole in his major and minor limbs, not deficient in any

faculty.’ This too I remember as an incredible quality of the Buddha.

I have learned this in the presence of the Buddha: ‘Seven days after the being intent on awakening is born, his mother passes away and is reborn in the host of joyful gods.’ This too I remember as an incredible quality of the Buddha.

I have learned this in the presence of the Buddha: ‘Other women carry the infant in the womb for nine or ten months before giving birth. Not so the mother of the being intent on awakening. She gives birth after exactly ten months.’ This too I remember as an incredible quality of the Buddha.

I have learned this in the presence of the Buddha: ‘Other women give birth while sitting or lying down. Not so the mother of the being intent on awakening. She only gives birth standing up.’ This too I remember as an incredible quality of the Buddha.

I have learned this in the presence of the Buddha: ‘When the being intent on awakening emerges from his mother’s womb, gods receive him first, then humans.’ This too I remember as an incredible quality of the Buddha.

I have learned this in the presence of the Buddha: ‘When the being intent on awakening emerges from his mother’s womb, before he reaches the ground, four godlings receive him and place him before his mother, saying: “Rejoice, O Queen! An illustrious son is born to you.”’ This too I remember as an incredible quality of the Buddha.

I have learned this in the presence of the Buddha: ‘When the being intent on awakening emerges from his mother’s womb, he emerges already clean, unsoiled by waters, mucus, blood, or any other kind of impurity, pure and clean. Suppose a jewel-treasure was placed on a cloth from Kāsi. The jewel would not soil the cloth, nor would the cloth soil the jewel. Why is that? Because of the cleanliness of them both.

In the same way, when the being intent on awakening emerges from his mother’s womb, he emerges already clean, unsoiled by waters, mucus, blood, or any other kind of impurity, pure and clean.’ This too I remember as an incredible quality of the Buddha.

I have learned this in the presence of the Buddha: ‘When the being intent on awakening emerges from his mother’s womb, two showers of water appear from the sky, one cool, one warm, for bathing the being intent on awakening and his mother.’ This too I remember as an incredible quality of the Buddha.

I have learned this in the presence of the Buddha: ‘As soon as he’s born, the being intent on awakening stands firm with his own feet on the ground. Facing north, he takes seven strides with a white parasol held above him, surveys all quarters, and makes this dramatic proclamation: “I am the foremost in the world! I am the eldest in the world! I am the first in the world! This is my last rebirth; now there’ll be no more future lives.”’ This too I remember as an incredible quality of the Buddha.

I have learned this in the presence of the Buddha: ‘When the being intent on awakening emerges from his mother’s womb, then—in this world with its gods, Māras, and divinities, this population with its ascetics and brahmins, gods and humans—an immeasurable, magnificent light appears, surpassing the glory of the gods. Even in the boundless gloom

of interstellar space—so utterly dark that even the luminosity of the moon and the sun, so mighty and powerful, makes no impression—an immeasurable, magnificent light appears, surpassing the glory of the gods. And the sentient beings reborn there recognize each other by that light: “So, it seems other sentient beings have been reborn here!” And this ten-thousandfold galaxy shakes and rocks and trembles. And an immeasurable, magnificent light appears in the world, surpassing the glory of the gods.’ This too I remember as an incredible and amazing quality of the Buddha.”

“Well then, Ānanda, you should also remember this as an incredible and amazing quality of the Realized One. It’s that the Realized One knows feelings as they arise, as they remain, and as they go away. He knows perceptions as they arise, as they remain, and as they go away. He knows thoughts as they arise, as they remain, and as they go away. This too you should remember as an incredible and amazing quality of the Realized One.”

“Sir, the Buddha knows feelings as they arise, as they remain, and as they go away. He knows perceptions as they arise, as they remain, and as they go away. He knows thoughts as they arise, as they remain, and as they go away. This too I remember as an incredible and amazing quality of the Buddha.”

That is what Venerable Ānanda said, and the Teacher concurred. Satisfied, those mendicants approved what Venerable Ānanda said.