DN 11 — Kevatta (Kevaddha) Sutta: To Kevatta

English translation by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

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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

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying at Nalanda in Pavarika's mango grove. Then Kevatta the householder approached the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: "Lord, this Nalanda is powerful, both prosperous and populous, filled with people who have faith in the Blessed One. It would be good if the Blessed One were to direct a monk to display a miracle of psychic power from his superior human state so that Nalanda would to an even greater extent have faith in the Blessed One."

When this was said, the Blessed One said to Kevatta the householder, "Kevatta, I don't teach the monks in this way: 'Come, monks, display a miracle of psychic power to the lay people clad in white.'"

A second time... A third time, Kevatta the householder said to the Blessed One: "I won't argue with the Blessed One, but I tell you: Lord, this Nalanda is powerful, both prosperous and populous, filled with people who have faith in the Blessed One. It would be good if the Blessed One were to direct a monk to display a miracle of psychic power from his superior human state so that Nalanda would to an even greater extent have faith in the Blessed One."

A third time, the Blessed One said to Kevatta the householder, "Kevatta, I don't teach the monks in this way: 'Come, monks, display a miracle of psychic power to the lay people clad in white.'

"Kevatta, there are these three miracles that I have declared, having directly known and realized them for myself. Which three? The miracle of psychic power, the miracle of telepathy, and the miracle of instruction.

The Miracle of Psychic Power

"And what is the miracle of psychic power? There is the case where a monk wields manifold psychic powers. Having been one he becomes many; having been many he becomes one. He appears. He vanishes. He goes unimpeded through walls, ramparts, and mountains as if through space. He dives in and out of the earth as if it were water. He walks on water without sinking as if it were dry land. Sitting cross-legged he flies through the air like a winged bird. With his hand he touches and strokes even the sun and moon, so mighty and powerful. He exercises influence with his body even as far as the Brahma worlds.

"Then someone who has faith and conviction in him sees him wielding manifold psychic powers... exercising influence with his body even as far as the Brahma worlds. He reports this to someone who has no faith and no conviction, telling him, 'Isn't it awesome. Isn't it astounding, how great the power, how great the prowess of this contemplative. Just now I saw him wielding manifold psychic powers... exercising influence with his body even as far as the Brahma worlds.'

"Then the person without faith, without conviction, would say to the person with faith and with conviction: 'Sir, there is a charm called the Gandhari charm by which the monk wielded manifold psychic powers... exercising influence with his body even as far as the Brahma worlds.' What do you think, Kevatta — isn't that what the man without faith, without conviction, would say to the man with faith and with conviction?"

"Yes, lord, that's just what he would say."

"Seeing this drawback to the miracle of psychic power, Kevatta, I feel horrified, humiliated, and disgusted with the miracle of psychic power.

The Miracle of Telepathy

"And what is the miracle of telepathy? There is the case where a monk reads the minds, the mental events, the thoughts, the ponderings of other beings, other individuals, [saying,] 'Such is your thinking, here is where your thinking is, thus is your mind.'

"Then someone who has faith and conviction in him sees him reading the minds... of other beings... He reports this to someone who has no faith and no conviction, telling him, 'Isn't it awesome. Isn't it astounding, how great the power, how great the prowess of this contemplative. Just now I saw him reading the minds... of other beings...'

"Then the person without faith, without conviction, would say to the person with faith and with conviction: 'Sir, there is a charm called the Manika charm by which the monk read the minds... of other beings...' What do you think, Kevatta — isn't that what the man without faith, without conviction, would say to the man with faith and with conviction?"

"Yes, lord, that's just what he would say."

"Seeing this drawback to the miracle of telepathy, Kevatta, I feel horrified, humiliated, and disgusted with the miracle of telepathy.

The Miracle of Instruction

"And what is the miracle of instruction? There is the case where a monk gives instruction in this way: 'Direct your thought in this way, don't direct it in that. Attend to things in this way, don't attend to them in that. Let go of this, enter and remain in that.' This, Kevatta, is called the miracle of instruction.

"Furthermore, there is the case where a Tathagata appears in the world, worthy and rightly self-awakened. He teaches the Dhamma admirable in its beginning, admirable in its middle, admirable in its end. He proclaims the holy life both in its particulars and in its essence, entirely perfect, surpassingly pure.

"A householder or householder's son, hearing the Dhamma, gains conviction in the Tathagata and reflects: 'Household life is confining, a dusty path. The life gone forth is like the open air. It is not easy living at home to practice the holy life totally perfect, totally pure, like a polished shell. What if I were to shave off my hair and beard, put on the ochre robes, and go forth from the household life into homelessness?'

"So after some time he abandons his mass of wealth, large or small; leaves his circle of relatives, large or small; shaves off his hair and beard, puts on the ochre robes, and goes forth from the household life into homelessness.

"When he has thus gone forth, he lives restrained by the rules of the monastic code, seeing danger in the slightest faults. Consummate in his virtue, he guards the doors of his senses, is possessed of mindfulness and alertness, and is content.

The Lesser Section on Virtue

"And how is a monk consummate in virtue? Abandoning the taking of life, he abstains from the taking of life. He dwells with his rod laid down, his knife laid down, scrupulous, merciful, compassionate for the welfare of all living beings. This is part of his virtue.

"Abandoning the taking of what is not given, he abstains from taking what is not given. He takes only what is given, accepts only what is given, lives not by stealth but by means of a self that has become pure. This, too, is part of his virtue.

"Abandoning uncelibacy, he lives a celibate life, aloof, refraining from the sexual act that is the villager's way. This, too, is part of his virtue.

"Abandoning false speech, he abstains from false speech. He speaks the truth, holds to the truth, is firm, reliable, no deceiver of the world. This, too, is part of his virtue.

"Abandoning divisive speech he abstains from divisive speech. What he has heard here he does not tell there to break those people apart from these people here. What he has heard there he does not tell here to break these people apart from those people there. Thus reconciling those who have broken apart or cementing those who are united, he loves concord, delights in concord, enjoys concord, speaks things that create concord. This, too, is part of his virtue.

"Abandoning abusive speech, he abstains from abusive speech. He speaks words that are soothing to the ear, that are affectionate, that go to the heart, that are polite, appealing and pleasing to people at large. This, too, is part of his virtue.

"Abandoning idle chatter, he abstains from idle chatter. He speaks in season, speaks what is factual, what is in accordance with the goal, the Dhamma, and the Vinaya. He speaks words worth treasuring, seasonable, reasonable, circumscribed, connected with the goal. This, too, is part of his virtue.

"He abstains from damaging seed and plant life.

"He eats only once a day, refraining from the evening meal and from food at the wrong time of day.

"He abstains from dancing, singing, instrumental music, and from watching shows.

"He abstains from wearing garlands and from beautifying himself with scents and cosmetics.

"He abstains from high and luxurious beds and seats.

"He abstains from accepting gold and money.

"He abstains from accepting uncooked grain... raw meat... women and girls... male and female slaves... goats and sheep... fowl and pigs... elephants, cattle, steeds, and mares... fields and property.

"He abstains from running messages... from buying and selling... from dealing with false scales, false metals, and false measures... from bribery, deception, and fraud.

"He abstains from mutilating, executing, imprisoning, highway robbery, plunder, and violence.

"This, too, is part of his virtue.

The Intermediate Section on Virtue

"Whereas some brahmans and contemplatives, living off food given in faith, are addicted to damaging seed and plant life such as these — plants propagated from roots, stems, joints, buddings, and seeds — he abstains from damaging seed and plant life such as these. This, too, is part of his virtue.

"Whereas some brahmans and contemplatives, living off food given in faith, are addicted to consuming stored-up goods such as these — stored-up food, stored-up drinks, stored-up clothing, stored-up vehicles, stored-up bedding, stored-up scents, and stored-up meat — he abstains from consuming stored-up goods such as these. This, too, is part of his virtue.

"Whereas some brahmans and contemplatives, living off food given in faith, are addicted to watching shows such as these — dancing, singing, instrumental music, plays, ballad recitations, hand-clapping, cymbals and drums, magic lantern scenes, acrobatic and conjuring tricks, elephant fights, horse fights, buffalo fights, bull fights, goat fights, ram fights, cock fights, quail fights; fighting with staves, boxing, wrestling, war-games, roll calls, battle arrays, and regimental reviews — he abstains from watching shows such as these. This, too, is part of his virtue.

"Whereas some brahmans and contemplatives, living off food given in faith, are addicted to heedless and idle games such as these — eight-row chess, ten-row chess, chess in the air, hopscotch, spillikins, dice, stick games, hand-pictures, ball-games, blowing through toy pipes, playing with toy plows, turning somersaults, playing with toy windmills, toy measures, toy chariots, toy bows, guessing letters drawn in the air, guessing thoughts, mimicking deformities — he abstains from heedless and idle games such as these. This, too, is part of his virtue.

"Whereas some brahmans and contemplatives, living off food given in faith, are addicted to high and luxurious furnishings such as these — over-sized couches, couches adorned with carved animals, long-haired coverlets, multi-colored patchwork coverlets, white woolen coverlets, woolen coverlets embroidered with flowers or animal figures, stuffed quilts, coverlets with fringe, silk coverlets embroidered with gems; large woolen carpets; elephant, horse, and chariot rugs, antelope-hide rugs, deer-hide rugs; couches with awnings, couches with red cushions for the head and feet — he abstains from using high and luxurious furnishings such as these. This, too, is part of his virtue.

"Whereas some brahmans and contemplatives, living off food given in faith, are addicted to scents, cosmetics, and means of beautification such as these — rubbing powders into the body, massaging with oils, bathing in perfumed water, kneading the limbs, using mirrors, ointments, garlands, scents, creams, face-powders, mascara, bracelets, head-bands, decorated walking sticks, ornamented water-bottles, swords, fancy sunshades, decorated sandals, turbans, gems, yak-tail whisks, long-fringed white robes — he abstains from using scents, cosmetics, and means of beautification such as these. This, too, is part of his virtue.

"Whereas some brahmans and contemplatives, living off food given in faith, are addicted to talking about lowly topics such as these — talking about kings, robbers, ministers of state; armies, alarms, and battles; food and drink; clothing, furniture, garlands, and scents; relatives; vehicles; villages, towns, cities, the countryside; women and heroes; the gossip of the street and the well; tales of the dead; tales of diversity [philosophical discussions of the past and future], the creation of the world and of the sea, and talk of whether things exist or not — he abstains from talking about lowly topics such as these. This, too, is part of his virtue.

"Whereas some brahmans and contemplatives, living off food given in faith, are addicted to debates such as these — 'You understand this doctrine and discipline? I'm the one who understands this doctrine and discipline. How could you understand this doctrine and discipline? You're practicing wrongly. I'm practicing rightly. I'm being consistent. You're not. What should be said first you said last. What should be said last you said first. What you took so long to think out has been refuted. Your doctrine has been overthrown. You're defeated. Go and try to salvage your doctrine; extricate yourself if you can!' — he abstains from debates such as these. This, too, is part of his virtue.

"Whereas some brahmans and contemplatives, living off food given in faith, are addicted to running messages and errands for people such as these — kings, ministers of state, noble warriors, brahmans, householders, or youths [who say], 'Go here, go there, take this there, fetch that here' — he abstains from running messages and errands for people such as these. This, too, is part of his virtue.

"Whereas some brahmans and contemplatives, living off food given in faith, engage in scheming, persuading, hinting, belittling, and pursuing gain with gain, he abstains from forms of scheming and persuading [improper ways of trying to gain material support from donors] such as these. This, too, is part of his virtue.

The Great Section on Virtue

"Whereas some brahmans and contemplatives, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood, by such lowly arts as:

reading marks on the limbs [e.g., palmistry];

reading omens and signs;

interpreting celestial events [falling stars, comets];

interpreting dreams;

reading marks on the body [e.g., phrenology];

reading marks on cloth gnawed by mice;

offering fire oblations, oblations from a ladle, oblations of husks, rice powder, rice grains, ghee, and oil;

offering oblations from the mouth;

offering blood-sacrifices;

making predictions based on the fingertips;

geomancy;

laying demons in a cemetery;

placing spells on spirits;

reciting house-protection charms;

snake charming, poison-lore, scorpion-lore, rat-lore, bird-lore, crow-lore;

fortune-telling based on visions;

giving protective charms;

interpreting the calls of birds and animals —

he abstains from wrong livelihood, from lowly arts such as these.

"Whereas some brahmans and contemplatives, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood, by such lowly arts as: determining lucky and unlucky gems, garments, staffs, swords, spears, arrows, bows, and other weapons; women, boys, girls, male slaves, female slaves; elephants, horses, buffaloes, bulls, cows, goats, rams, fowl, quails, lizards, long-eared rodents, tortoises, and other animals — he abstains from wrong livelihood, from lowly arts such as these.

"Whereas some brahmans and contemplatives, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood, by such lowly arts as forecasting:

the rulers will march forth;

the rulers will march forth and return;

our rulers will attack, and their rulers will retreat;

their rulers will attack, and our rulers will retreat;

there will be triumph for our rulers and defeat for their rulers;

there will be triumph for their rulers and defeat for our rulers;

thus there will be triumph, thus there will be defeat —

he abstains from wrong livelihood, from lowly arts such as these.

"Whereas some brahmans and contemplatives, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood, by such lowly arts as forecasting:

there will be a lunar eclipse;

there will be a solar eclipse;

there will be an occultation of an asterism;

the sun and moon will go their normal courses;

the sun and moon will go astray;

the asterisms will go their normal courses;

the asterisms will go astray;

there will be a meteor shower;

there will be a darkening of the sky;

there will be an earthquake;

there will be thunder coming from a clear sky;

there will be a rising, a setting, a darkening, a brightening of the sun, moon, and asterisms;

such will be the result of the lunar eclipse... the rising, setting, darkening, brightening of the sun, moon, and asterisms —

he abstains from wrong livelihood, from lowly arts such as these.

"Whereas some brahmans and contemplatives, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood, by such lowly arts as forecasting:

there will be abundant rain; there will be a drought;

there will be plenty; there will be famine;

there will be rest and security; there will be danger;

there will be disease; there will be freedom from disease;

or they earn their living by counting, accounting, calculation, composing poetry, or teaching hedonistic arts and doctrines —

he abstains from wrong livelihood, from lowly arts such as these.

"Whereas some brahmans and contemplatives, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood, by such lowly arts as:

calculating auspicious dates for marriages, betrothals, divorces; for collecting debts or making investments and loans; for being attractive or unattractive; curing women who have undergone miscarriages or abortions;

reciting spells to bind a man's tongue, to paralyze his jaws, to make him lose control over his hands, or to bring on deafness;

getting oracular answers to questions addressed to a mirror, to a young girl, or to a spirit medium;

worshipping the sun, worshipping the Great Brahma, bringing forth flames from the mouth, invoking the goddess of luck —

he abstains from wrong livelihood, from lowly arts such as these.

"Whereas some brahmans and contemplatives, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood, by such lowly arts as:

promising gifts to devas in return for favors; fulfilling such promises;

demonology;

teaching house-protection spells;

inducing virility and impotence;

consecrating sites for construction;

giving ceremonial mouthwashes and ceremonial bathing;

offering sacrificial fires;

preparing emetics, purgatives, expectorants, diuretics, headache cures;

preparing ear-oil, eye-drops, oil for treatment through the nose, collyrium, and counter-medicines; curing cataracts, practicing surgery, practicing as a children's doctor, administering medicines and treatments to cure their after-effects —

he abstains from wrong livelihood, from lowly arts such as these. This, too, is part of his virtue.

"A monk thus consummate in virtue sees no danger anywhere from his restraint through virtue. Just as a head-anointed noble warrior king who has defeated his enemies sees no danger anywhere from his enemies, in the same way the monk thus consummate in virtue sees no danger anywhere from his restraint through virtue. Endowed with this noble aggregate of virtue, he is inwardly sensitive to the pleasure of being blameless. This is how a monk is consummate in virtue.

Sense Restraint

"And how does a monk guard the doors of his senses? On seeing a form with the eye, he does not grasp at any theme or details by which — if he were to dwell without restraint over the faculty of the eye — evil, unskillful qualities such as greed or distress might assail him. On hearing a sound with the ear... On smelling an odor with the nose... On tasting a

flavor with the tongue... On touching a tactile sensation with the body... On cognizing an idea with the intellect, he does not grasp at any theme or details by which — if he were to dwell without restraint over the faculty of the intellect — evil, unskillful qualities such as greed or distress might assail him. Endowed with this noble restraint over the sense faculties, he is inwardly sensitive to the pleasure of being blameless. This is how a monk guards the doors of his senses.

Mindfulness & Alertness

"And how is a monk possessed of mindfulness and alertness? When going forward and returning, he acts with alertness. When looking toward and looking away... when bending and extending his limbs... when carrying his outer cloak, his upper robe, and his bowl... when eating, drinking, chewing, and tasting... when urinating and defecating... when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, and remaining silent, he acts with alertness. This is how a monk is possessed of mindfulness and alertness.

Contentedness

"And how is a monk content? Just as a bird, wherever it goes, flies with its wings as its only burden; so too is he content with a set of robes to provide for his body and almsfood to provide for his hunger. Wherever he goes, he takes only his barest necessities along. This is how a monk is content.

Abandoning the Hindrances

"Endowed with this noble aggregate of virtue, this noble restraint over the sense faculties, this noble mindfulness and alertness, and this noble contentment, he seeks out a secluded dwelling: a forest, the shade of a tree, a mountain, a glen, a hillside cave, a charnel ground, a jungle grove, the open air, a heap of straw. After his meal, returning from his alms round, he sits down, crosses his legs, holds his body erect, and brings mindfulness to the fore.

"Abandoning covetousness with regard to the world, he dwells with an awareness devoid of covetousness. He cleanses his mind of covetousness. Abandoning ill will and anger, he dwells with an awareness devoid of ill will, sympathetic with the welfare of all living beings. He cleanses his mind of ill will and anger. Abandoning sloth & drowsiness, he dwells with an awareness devoid of sloth & drowsiness, mindful, alert, percipient of light. He cleanses his mind of sloth & drowsiness. Abandoning restlessness and anxiety, he dwells undisturbed, his mind inwardly stilled. He cleanses his mind of restlessness and anxiety. Abandoning uncertainty, he dwells having crossed over uncertainty, with no perplexity with regard to skillful mental qualities. He cleanses his mind of uncertainty.

"Suppose that a man, taking a loan, invests it in his business affairs. His business affairs succeed. He repays his old debts and there is extra left over for maintaining his wife. The thought would occur to him, 'Before, taking a loan, I invested it in my business affairs. Now my business affairs have succeeded. I have repaid my old debts and there is extra left over

for maintaining my wife.' Because of that he would experience joy and happiness.

"Now suppose that a man falls sick — in pain and seriously ill. He does not enjoy his meals, and there is no strength in his body. As time passes, he eventually recovers from that sickness. He enjoys his meals and there is strength in his body. The thought would occur to him, 'Before, I was sick... Now I am recovered from that sickness. I enjoy my meals and there is strength in my body.' Because of that he would experience joy and happiness.

"Now suppose that a man is bound in prison. As time passes, he eventually is released from that bondage, safe and sound, with no loss of property. The thought would occur to him, 'Before, I was bound in prison. Now I am released from that bondage, safe and sound, with no loss of my property.' Because of that he would experience joy and happiness.

"Now suppose that a man is a slave, subject to others, not subject to himself, unable to go where he likes. As time passes, he eventually is released from that slavery, subject to himself, not subject to others, freed, able to go where he likes. The thought would occur to him, 'Before, I was a slave... Now I am released from that slavery, subject to myself, not subject to others, freed, able to go where I like.' Because of that he would experience joy and happiness.

"Now suppose that a man, carrying money and goods, is traveling by a road through desolate country. As time passes, he eventually emerges from that desolate country, safe and sound, with no loss of property. The thought would occur to him, 'Before, carrying money and goods, I was traveling by a road through desolate country. Now I have emerged from that desolate country, safe and sound, with no loss of my property.' Because of that he would experience joy and happiness.

"In the same way, when these five hindrances are not abandoned in himself, the monk regards it as a debt, a sickness, a prison, slavery, a road through desolate country. But when these five hindrances are abandoned in himself, he regards it as unindebtedness, good health, release from prison, freedom, a place of security. Seeing that they have been abandoned within him, he becomes glad. Glad, he becomes enraptured. Enraptured, his body grows tranquil. His body tranquil, he is sensitive to pleasure. Feeling pleasure, his mind becomes concentrated.

The Four Jhanas

"Quite withdrawn from sensuality, withdrawn from unskillful mental qualities, he enters and remains in the first jhana: rapture and pleasure born from withdrawal, accompanied by directed thought and evaluation. He permeates and pervades, suffuses and fills this very body with the rapture and pleasure born from withdrawal. Just as if a skilled bathman or bathman's apprentice would pour bath powder into a brass basin and knead it together, sprinkling it again and again with water, so that his ball of bath powder — saturated, moisture-laden, permeated within and without — would nevertheless not drip; even so, the monk permeates... this very body with the rapture and pleasure born of withdrawal.

There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by rapture and pleasure born from withdrawal.

"This, too, is called the miracle of instruction.

"Furthermore, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters and remains in the second jhana: rapture and pleasure born of composure, unification of awareness free from directed thought and evaluation — internal assurance. He permeates and pervades, suffuses and fills this very body with the rapture and pleasure born of composure. Just like a lake with spring-water welling up from within, having no inflow from the east, west, north, or south, and with the skies supplying abundant showers time and again, so that the cool fount of water welling up from within the lake would permeate and pervade, suffuse and fill it with cool waters, there being no part of the lake unpervaded by the cool waters; even so, the monk permeates... this very body with the rapture and pleasure born of composure. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by rapture and pleasure born of composure.

"This, too, is called the miracle of instruction.

"And furthermore, with the fading of rapture, he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhana, of which the Noble Ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.' He permeates and pervades, suffuses and fills this very body with the pleasure divested of rapture. Just as in a lotus pond, some of the lotuses, born and growing in the water, stay immersed in the water and flourish without standing up out of the water, so that they are permeated and pervaded, suffused and filled with cool water from their roots to their tips, and nothing of those lotuses would be unpervaded with cool water; even so, the monk permeates... this very body with the pleasure divested of rapture. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded with pleasure divested of rapture.

"This, too, is called the miracle of instruction.

"And furthermore, with the abandoning of pleasure and stress — as with the earlier disappearance of elation and distress — he enters and remains in the fourth jhana: purity of equanimity and mindfulness, neither-pleasure nor stress. He sits, permeating the body with a pure, bright awareness. Just as if a man were sitting covered from head to foot with a white cloth so that there would be no part of his body to which the white cloth did not extend; even so, the monk sits, permeating the body with a pure, bright awareness. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by pure, bright awareness.

"This, too, is called the miracle of instruction.

Insight Knowledge

"With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, he directs and inclines it to

knowledge and vision. He discerns: 'This body of mine is endowed with form, composed of the four primary elements, born from mother and father, nourished with rice and porridge, subject to inconstancy, rubbing, pressing, dissolution, and dispersion. And this consciousness of mine is supported here and bound up here.' Just as if there were a beautiful beryl gem of the purest water — eight faceted, well polished, clear, limpid, consummate in all its aspects, and going through the middle of it was a blue, yellow, red, white, or brown thread — and a man with good eyesight, taking it in his hand, were to reflect on it thus: 'This is a beautiful beryl gem of the purest water, eight faceted, well polished, clear, limpid, consummate in all its aspects. And this, going through the middle of it, is a blue, yellow, red, white, or brown thread.' In the same way — with his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability — the monk directs and inclines it to knowledge and vision. He discerns: 'This body of mine is endowed with form, composed of the four primary elements, born from mother and father, nourished with rice and porridge, subject to inconstancy, rubbing, pressing, dissolution, and dispersion. And this consciousness of mine is supported here and bound up here.'

"This, too, is called the miracle of instruction.

The Mind-made Body

"With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, he directs and inclines it to creating a mind-made body. From this body he creates another body, endowed with form, made of the mind, complete in all its parts, not inferior in its faculties. Just as if a man were to draw a reed from its sheath. The thought would occur to him: 'This is the sheath, this is the reed. The sheath is one thing, the reed another, but the reed has been drawn out from the sheath.' Or as if a man were to draw a sword from its scabbard. The thought would occur to him: 'This is the sword, this is the scabbard. The sword is one thing, the scabbard another, but the sword has been drawn out from the scabbard.' Or as if a man were to pull a snake out from its slough. The thought would occur to him: 'This is the snake, this is the slough. The snake is one thing, the slough another, but the snake has been pulled out from the slough.' In the same way — with his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, the monk directs and inclines it to creating a mind-made body. From this body he creates another body, endowed with form, made of the mind, complete in all its parts, not inferior in its faculties.

"This, too, is called the miracle of instruction.

Supranormal Powers

"With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, he directs and inclines it to the modes of supranormal powers. He wields manifold supranormal powers. Having been one he becomes many; having been many he becomes one. He appears. He vanishes. He goes

unimpeded through walls, ramparts, and mountains as if through space. He dives in and out of the earth as if it were water. He walks on water without sinking as if it were dry land. Sitting cross-legged he flies through the air like a winged bird. With his hand he touches and strokes even the sun and moon, so mighty and powerful. He exercises influence with his body even as far as the Brahma worlds. Just as a skilled potter or his assistant could craft from well-prepared clay whatever kind of pottery vessel he likes, or as a skilled ivory-carver or his assistant could craft from well-prepared ivory any kind of ivory-work he likes, or as a skilled goldsmith or his assistant could craft from well-prepared gold any kind of gold article he likes; in the same way — with his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability — the monk directs and inclines it to the modes of supranormal powers... He exercises influence with his body even as far as the Brahma worlds.

"This, too, is called the miracle of instruction.

Clairaudience

"With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, he directs and inclines it to the divine ear-element. He hears — by means of the divine ear-element, purified and surpassing the human — both kinds of sounds: divine and human, whether near or far. Just as if a man traveling along a highway were to hear the sounds of kettledrums, small drums, conchs, cymbals, and tom-toms. He would know, 'That is the sound of kettledrums, that is the sound of small drums, that is the sound of conchs, that is the sound of cymbals, and that is the sound of tom-toms.' In the same way — with his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability — the monk directs and inclines it to the divine ear-element. He hears — by means of the divine ear-element, purified and surpassing the human — both kinds of sounds: divine and human, whether near or far.

"This, too, is called the miracle of instruction.

Mind Reading

"With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, he directs and inclines it to knowledge of the awareness of other beings. He knows the awareness of other beings, other individuals, having encompassed it with his own awareness. He discerns a mind with passion as a mind with passion, and a mind without passion as a mind without passion. He discerns a mind with aversion as a mind with aversion, and a mind without aversion as a mind without aversion. He discerns a mind with delusion as a mind with delusion, and a mind without delusion as a mind without delusion. He discerns a restricted mind as a restricted mind, and a scattered mind as a scattered mind. He discerns an enlarged mind as an enlarged mind, and an unenlarged mind as an unenlarged mind. He discerns an excelled mind [one that is not at the most excellent level] as an excelled mind, and an unexcelled mind as an unexcelled mind. He discerns a concentrated mind as a

concentrated mind, and an unconcentrated mind as an unconcentrated mind. He discerns a released mind as a released mind, and an unreleased mind as an unreleased mind. Just as if a young woman — or man — fond of ornaments, examining the reflection of her own face in a bright mirror or a bowl of clear water would know 'blemished' if it were blemished, or 'unblemished' if it were not. In the same way — with his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability — the monk directs and inclines it to knowledge of the awareness of other beings. He knows the awareness of other beings, other individuals, having encompassed it with his own awareness. He discerns a mind with passion as a mind with passion, and a mind without passion as a mind without passion... a released mind as a released mind, and an unreleased mind as an unreleased mind.

"This, too, is called the miracle of instruction.

Recollection of Past Lives

"With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, he directs and inclines it to knowledge of the recollection of past lives (lit: previous homes). He recollects his manifold past lives, i.e., one birth, two births, three births, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, one hundred, one thousand, one hundred thousand, many aeons of cosmic contraction, many aeons of cosmic expansion, many aeons of cosmic contraction and expansion, [recollecting], 'There I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose there. There too I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose here.' Thus he recollects his manifold past lives in their modes and details. Just as if a man were to go from his home village to another village, and then from that village to yet another village, and then from that village back to his home village. The thought would occur to him, 'I went from my home village to that village over there. There I stood in such a way, sat in such a way, talked in such a way, and remained silent in such a way. From that village I went to that village over there, and there I stood in such a way, sat in such a way, talked in such a way, and remained silent in such a way. From that village I came back home.' In the same way — with his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability — the monk directs and inclines it to knowledge of the recollection of past lives. He recollects his manifold past lives... in their modes and details.

"This, too, is called the miracle of instruction.

The Passing Away & Re-appearance of Beings

"With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, he directs and inclines it to knowledge of the passing away and re-appearance of beings. He sees — by means of the

divine eye, purified and surpassing the human — beings passing away and re-appearing, and he discerns how they are inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate in accordance with their kamma: 'These beings — who were endowed with bad conduct of body, speech, and mind, who reviled the noble ones, held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views — with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell. But these beings — who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, and mind, who did not revile the noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views — with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in the good destinations, in the heavenly world.' Thus — by means of the divine eye, purified and surpassing the human — he sees beings passing away and re-appearing, and he discerns how they are inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate in accordance with their kamma. Just as if there were a tall building in the central square [of a town], and a man with good eyesight standing on top of it were to see people entering a house, leaving it, walking along the street, and sitting in the central square. The thought would occur to him, 'These people are entering a house, leaving it, walking along the streets, and sitting in the central square.' In the same way — with his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability — the monk directs and inclines it to knowledge of the passing away and re-appearance of beings. He sees — by means of the divine eye, purified and surpassing the human — beings passing away and re-appearing, and he discerns how they are inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate in accordance with their kamma...

"This, too, is called the miracle of instruction.

The Ending of Mental Fermentations

"With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, the monk directs and inclines it to the knowledge of the ending of the mental fermentations. He discerns, as it has come to be, that 'This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress... This is the way leading to the cessation of stress... These are mental fermentations... This is the origination of fermentations... This is the cessation of fermentations... This is the way leading to the cessation of fermentations.' His heart, thus knowing, thus seeing, is released from the fermentation of sensuality, the fermentation of becoming, the fermentation of ignorance. With release, there is the knowledge, 'Released.' He discerns that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.' Just as if there were a pool of water in a mountain glen — clear, limpid, and unsullied — where a man with good eyesight standing on the bank could see shells, gravel, and pebbles, and also shoals of fish swimming about and resting, and it would occur to him, 'This pool of water is clear, limpid, and unsullied. Here are these shells, gravel, and pebbles, and also these shoals of fish swimming about and resting.' In the same way — with his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability — the monk directs and inclines it to the knowledge of the ending of the mental fermentations. He discerns, as it has come to be,

that 'This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress... This is the way leading to the cessation of stress... These are mental fermentations... This is the origination of fermentations... This is the cessation of fermentations... This is the way leading to the cessation of fermentations.' His heart, thus knowing, thus seeing, is released from the fermentation of sensuality, the fermentation of becoming, the fermentation of ignorance. With release, there is the knowledge, 'Released.' He discerns that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'

"This, too, is called the miracle of instruction.

"These are the three miracles that I declare, Kevatta, having directly known and realized them for myself.

Conversations with the Gods

"Once, Kevatta, this train of thought arose in the awareness of a certain monk in this very community of monks: 'Where do these four great elements — the earth property, the liquid property, the fire property, and the wind property — cease without remainder?' Then he attained to such a state of concentration that the way leading to the gods appeared in his centered mind. So he approached the gods of the retinue of the Four Great Kings and, on arrival, asked them, 'Friends, where do these four great elements — the earth property, the liquid property, the fire property, and the wind property — cease without remainder?'

"When this was said, the gods of the retinue of the Four Great Kings said to the monk, 'We also don't know where the four great elements... cease without remainder. But there are the Four Great Kings who are higher and more sublime than we. They should know where the four great elements... cease without remainder.'

"So the monk approached the Four Great Kings and, on arrival, asked them, 'Friends, where do these four great elements... cease without remainder?'

"When this was said, the Four Great Kings said to the monk, 'We also don't know where the four great elements... cease without remainder. But there are the gods of the Thirty-three who are higher and more sublime than we. They should know...'

"So the monk approached the gods of the Thirty-three and, on arrival, asked them, 'Friends, where do these four great elements... cease without remainder?'

"When this was said, the gods of the Thirty-three said to the monk, 'We also don't know where the four great elements... cease without remainder. But there is Sakka, the ruler of the gods, who is higher and more sublime than we. He should know... '

"So the monk approached Sakka, the ruler of the gods, and, on arrival, asked him, 'Friend, where do these four great elements... cease without remainder?'

"When this was said, Sakka, the ruler of the gods, said to the monk, 'I also don't know where the four great elements... cease without remainder. But there are the Yama gods who are higher and more sublime than I. They should know...'...

"The Yama gods said, 'We also don't know... But there is the god named Suyama... He should know...'...

"Suyama said, 'I also don't know... But there is the god named Santusita... He should know...'...

"Santusita said, 'I also don't know... But there are the Nimmanarati gods... They should know...'...

"The Nimmanarati gods said, 'We also don't know... But there is the god named Sunimmita... He should know...'...

"Sunimmita said, 'I also don't know... But there are the Paranimmitavasavatti gods... They should know...'...

"The Paranimmitavasavatti gods said, 'We also don't know... But there is the god named Paranimmita Vasavatti... He should know...'...

"So the monk approached the god Vasavatti and, on arrival, asked him, 'Friend, where do these four great elements... cease without remainder?'

"When this was said, the god Vasavatti said to the monk, 'I also don't know where the four great elements... cease without remainder. But there are the gods of the retinue of Brahma who are higher and more sublime than I. They should know where the four great elements... cease without remainder'...

"Then the monk attained to such a state of concentration that the way leading to the gods of the retinue of Brahma appeared in his centered mind. So he approached the gods of the retinue of Brahma and, on arrival, asked them, 'Friends, where do these four great elements — the earth property, the liquid property, the fire property, and the wind property — cease without remainder?'

"When this was said, the gods of the retinue of Brahma said to the monk, 'We also don't know where the four great elements... cease without remainder. But there is Brahma, the Great Brahma, the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the All-Seeing, All-Powerful, the Sovereign Lord, the Maker, Creator, Chief, Appointer and Ruler, Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be. He is higher and more sublime than we. He should know where the four great elements... cease without remainder.'

"'But where, friends, is the Great Brahma now?'

"'Monk, we also don't know where Brahma is or in what way Brahma is. But when signs appear, light shines forth, and a radiance appears, Brahma will appear. For these are the portents of Brahma's appearance: light shines forth and a radiance appears.'

"Then it was not long before Brahma appeared.

"So the monk approached the Great Brahma and, on arrival, said, 'Friend, where do these four great elements — the earth property, the liquid property, the fire property, and the wind property — cease without remainder?'

"When this was said, the Great Brahma said to the monk, 'I, monk, am Brahma, the Great Brahma, the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the All-Seeing, All-Powerful, the Sovereign Lord, the Maker, Creator, Chief, Appointer and Ruler, Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be.'

A second time, the monk said to the Great Brahma, 'Friend, I didn't ask you if you were Brahma, the Great Brahma, the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the All-Seeing, All-Powerful, the Sovereign Lord, the Maker, Creator, Chief, Appointer and Ruler, Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be. I asked you where these four great elements — the earth property, the liquid property, the fire property, and the wind property — cease without remainder.'

"A second time, the Great Brahma said to the monk, 'I, monk, am Brahma, the Great Brahma, the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the All-Seeing, All-Powerful, the Sovereign Lord, the Maker, Creator, Chief, Appointer and Ruler, Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be.'

"A third time, the monk said to the Great Brahma, 'Friend, I didn't ask you if you were Brahma, the Great Brahma, the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the All-Seeing, All-Powerful, the Sovereign Lord, the Maker, Creator, Chief, Appointer and Ruler, Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be. I asked you where these four great elements — the earth property, the liquid property, the fire property, and the wind property — cease without remainder.'

"Then the Great Brahma, taking the monk by the arm and leading him off to one side, said to him, 'These gods of the retinue of Brahma believe, "There is nothing that the Great Brahma does not know. There is nothing that the Great Brahma does not see. There is nothing of which the Great Brahma is unaware. There is nothing that the Great Brahma has not realized." That is why I did not say in their presence that I, too, don't know where the four great elements... cease without remainder. So you have acted wrongly, acted incorrectly, in bypassing the Blessed One in search of an answer to this question elsewhere. Go right back to the Blessed One and, on arrival, ask him this question. However he answers it, you should take it to heart.'

"Then — just as a strong man might extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm — the monk disappeared from the Brahma world and immediately appeared in front of me. Having bowed down to me, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to me, 'Lord, where do these four great elements — the earth property, the liquid property, the fire

property, and the wind property — cease without remainder?'

"When this was said, I said to him,[2] 'Once, monk, some sea-faring merchants took a shore-sighting bird and set sail in their ship. When they could not see the shore, they released the shore-sighting bird. It flew to the east, south, west, north, straight up, and to all the intermediate points of the compass. If it saw the shore in any direction, it flew there. If it did not see the shore in any direction, it returned right back to the ship. In the same way, monk, having gone as far as the Brahma world in search of an answer to your question, you have come right back to my presence.

"'Your question should not be phrased in this way: Where do these four great elements — the earth property, the liquid property, the fire property, and the wind property — cease without remainder? Instead, it should be phrased like this:

Where do water, earth, fire, & wind have no footing? Where are long & short, coarse & fine, fair & foul, name & form brought to an end?

"'And the answer to that is:

Consciousness without feature,[1] without end, luminous all around: Here water, earth, fire, & wind have no footing. Here long & short coarse & fine fair & foul name & form are all brought to an end. With the cessation of [the activity of] consciousness each is here brought to an end.'"

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, Kevatta the householder delighted in the Blessed One's words.

Notes

1.

Viññanam anidassanam. This term is nowhere explained in the Canon, although MN 49 mentions that it "does not partake in the allness of the All" — the "All" meaning the six internal and six external sense media (see SN 35.23). In this it differs from the consciousness factor in dependent co-arising, which is defined in terms of the six sense media. Lying outside of time and space, it would also not come under the consciousness-aggregate, which covers all consciousness near and far; past, present, and future. However, the fact that it is outside of time and space — in a dimension where there is no here, there, or in between (Ud 1.10), no coming, no going, or staying (Ud 8.1) — means that it cannot be described as permanent or omnipresent, terms that have meaning only within space and time. The standard description of nibbana after death is, "All that is sensed, not being relished, will grow cold right here." (See MN 140 and Iti 44.) Again, as "all" is defined as the sense media, this raises the question as to whether consciousness without feature is not covered by this "all." However, AN 4.174 warns that any speculation as to whether anything does or doesn't remain after the remainderless stopping of the six sense media is to "objectify non-objectification," which gets in the way of attaining the

non-objectified. Thus this is a question that is best put aside.

2.

This passage also appears at AN 6.54. — Ed.