

## **Dīgha Nikāya - The Long Discourses**

### **About Kevaddha What Brahma Didn't Know (Kevaddha Sutta)**

1. **THUS I HAVE HEARD.** Once the Lord was staying at Naḷāṇḍā, in Pāvārika's mango grove. And the householder Kevaddha came to the Lord, prostrated himself before him, and sat down to one side. He then said: 'Lord, this Naḷāṇḍā is rich, prosperous, populous, and full of people who have faith in the Lord. It would be well if the Lord were to cause some monk to perform superhuman feats and miracles. In this way Naḷāṇḍā would come to have even more faith in the Lord.'

The Lord replied: 'Kevaddha, this is not the way I teach Dhamma to the monks, by saying: "Go monks, and perform superhuman feats and miracles for the white-clothed lay people!"

2. For a second time Kevaddha said: 'Lord, I would not be importunate, but I still say: "This Naḷāṇḍā is rich, prosperous... and would come to have even more faith in the Lord.'" And the Lord replied as before.

3. When Kevaddha repeated his request for a third time, the Lord said: 'Kevaddha, there are three kind of miracles that I have declared, having realized them by my own insight. Which three? The miracle of psychic power, the miracle of telepathy, the miracle of instruction.

4. 'What is the miracle of psychic power? Here, Kevaddha, a monk displays various psychic powers in different ways. Being one he becomes many, being many he becomes one... (as Sutta 2, Verse 87) and he travels in the body as far as the Brahma world. Then someone who has faith and trust sees him doing these things.

5. 'He tells this to someone else who is skeptical and unbelieving saying: "It is wonderful, sir, it is marvelous, the great power and skill of the ascetic..." And that man might say: "Sir, there is something called the Gandhāra charm. It is by means of this that that monk becomes many..." What do you think, Kevaddha, would not a sceptic say that to a believer?' 'He would, Lord.' 'And that is why, Kevaddha, seeing the danger of such miracles, I dislike, reject and despise them.

6. 'And what is the miracle of telepathy? Here, a monk reads the minds of other beings, of other people, reads their mental states, their thoughts and ponderings, and says: 'That is how your mind

is, that is how it inclines, that is in your heart.” Then someone who has faith and trust sees him doing those things.

7. ‘He tells this to someone else who is skeptical and unbelieving, saying: “It is wonderful, sir, it is marvelous, the great power and skills of that ascetic...” And that man might say: “Sir, there is someone called the Maṇika charm. It is by means of this that that monk can read the minds of others...” And that is why, seeing the danger of such miracles, I... despise them.

8. ‘And what is the miracle of instruction? Here, Kevaddha, a monk gives instruction as follows: “Consider in this way, don’t consider in this way, give up that, gain this and persevere in it”. That, Kevaddha, is called the miracle of instruction.

9-66. ‘Again, Kevaddha, a Tathāgata arises in the world, an Arahant, fully-enlightened Buddha, endowed with wisdom and conduct, Well-Farer, Knower of the worlds, incomparable Trainer of men to be tamed, Teacher of gods and humans, enlightened and blessed. He, having realized it by his own super-knowledge, proclaims this world with its devas, māras and Brahmās, its princes and peoples. He preaches the Dhamma, which is lovely in its beginning, lovely in its middle, lovely in its ending, in the spirit and in the letter, and displays the fully-perfected and purified holy life. A disciple goes forth and practices the moralities (Sutta 2, verses 41-63). He guards the sense-doors and attains the four jhānas (Sutta 2. Verses 64-82); he attains various insights (Sutta 2, verses 83-84); he realizes the Four Noble Truths, the path and the cessation of the corruptions (Sutta 2, verses 85-97) and he knows: “...There is nothing further here”. That, Kevaddha, is called the miracle of instruction.

67. ‘And I, Kevaddha, have experienced these three miracles by my own super-knowledge. Once, Kevaddha, in this order of monks the thought occurred to a certain monk: “I wonder where the four great elements —the earth element, the water element, the fire element, the air element — cease without remainder.” And that monk attained such a state of mental concentration that the way to the deva-realms appeared before him.

68. ‘Then, coming to the Realm of the devas of the Four Great Kings, he asked those devas: “Friends, where do the four great elements —earth, water, fire and air—cease without remainder?” At this question the devas of the Four Great Kings said to him: “Monk, we don’t know where the

four great elements cease without remainder. But the Four Great Kings are loftier and wiser than we are. They may know where the four great elements cease...”

69. ‘So the monk went to the Four Great Kings and asked the same question, but they replied: “We don’t know, but the Thirty-Three Gods may know...”

70. ‘So the monk went to the Thirty-Three Gods, who said: “We don’t know, but Sakkha, lord of the gods, may know...”

71. ‘Sakkha, lord of the gods, said: “The Yāma devas may know...”

72. ‘The Yāma devas said: “Suyāma, son of the devas, may know...”

73. ‘Suyāma said: “The Tusita devas may know ...”

74. ‘The Tusita devas said: “Santusita, son of the devas, may know ...”

75. ‘Santusita said: “the Nimmānarati devas may know ...”

76. ‘The Nimmānarati devas said: “Sunimmita, son of the devas, may know...”

77. ‘Sunimmita said: “The Paranimmita-Vasavatti devas may know...”

78. ‘The Paranimmita-Vasavatti devas said: “Vasavatti, son of the devas, may know...”

79. ‘Vasavatti said: “The devas of Brahmā’s retinue may know ...”

80. ‘Then that monk, by the appropriate concentration, may the way of the Brahmā’s world appear before him. He went to the devas of Brahmā’s retinue and asked them. They said: “We don’t know. But there is Brahmā, Great Brahmā, the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the All-Seeing, All-Powerful, the Lord, the Maker and Creator, the Ruler, Appointer and Orderer, Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be. He is loftier and wiser than we are. He would know where the four great elements cease without remainder.” “And where, friends, is this Great Brahmā now?” “Monk, we do not know when, how and where Brahmā will appear. But when the signs are seen—when a light appears and a radiance shines forth—then Brahmā will appear. Such signs are an indication that he will appear.”

81. ‘Then it was not long before the Great Brahmā appeared. And that monk went up to him and said: “Friend, where do the four great elements—earth, water, fire, air—cease without remainder?” to which the Great Brahmā replied: “Monk, I am Brahmā, Great Brahmā, the Conqueror, the

Unconquered, the All-Seeing, All-Powerful, the Lord, the Maker and Creator, the Ruler, Appointer and Orderer, Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be.”

82. ‘A second time the monk said: “Friend, I did not ask you if you are Brahmā, the Great Brahmā... I asked you where the four great elements cease without remainder.” And a second time the Great Brahmā replied as before.

83. ‘And a third time the monk said: “Friend, I did not ask you that, I asked where the four great elements—earth, water, fire, air—cease without remainder.” Then, Kevaddha, the Great Brahmā took that monk by the arm, led him aside and said: “Monk, these devas believe there is nothing Brahmā does not see, there is nothing he does not know, there is nothing he is unaware of. That is why I did not speak in front of them. But, monk, I don’t know where the four great elements cease without remainder. And therefore, monk, you have acted wrongly, you have acted incorrectly by going beyond the Blessed Lord and going in search of an answer to this question elsewhere. Now, monk, you just go to the Blessed Lord and put this question to him, and whatever answer he gives, accept it.”

84. ‘So that monk, as swiftly as a strong man might flex or unflex his arm, vanished from the Brahmā world and appeared in my presence. He prostrated himself before me, then sat down to one side and said: “Lord, where do the four great elements—the earth element, the water element, the fire element and the air element—cease without remainder?”

85. ‘I replied: “Monk, once upon a time seafaring merchants, when they set sail on the ocean, took in their ship a land sighting bird. When they could not see the land themselves, they released this bird. The bird flew to the east, to the south, to the west, to the north, it flew to the zenith and to the intermediate points of the compass. If it saw land anywhere, it flew there. But if it saw no land, it returned to the ship. In the same way, monk, you have been as far as the Brahmā world searching for an answer to your question and not finding it, and now you come back to me. But, monk, you should not ask your question in this way: “Where do the four great elements—the earth element, the water element, the fire element, the air element—cease without remainder?” Instead, this is how the question should have been put:

‘Where do earth, water, fire and air no footing find?

Where are long and short, small and great, fair and four –

Where are “name and form” wholly destroyed?

And the answer is:

‘Where consciousness is signless, boundless, all-luminous,

That’s where earth, water, fire and air find no footing,

There both long and short, small and great, fair and foul –

There “name and form” are wholly destroyed.

With the cessation of consciousness this is all destroyed.’”

Thus the Lord spoke, and the householder Kevaddha delighted, rejoiced at his words.

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*Dīgha Nikāya 11*

*Division One – The Moralities*

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