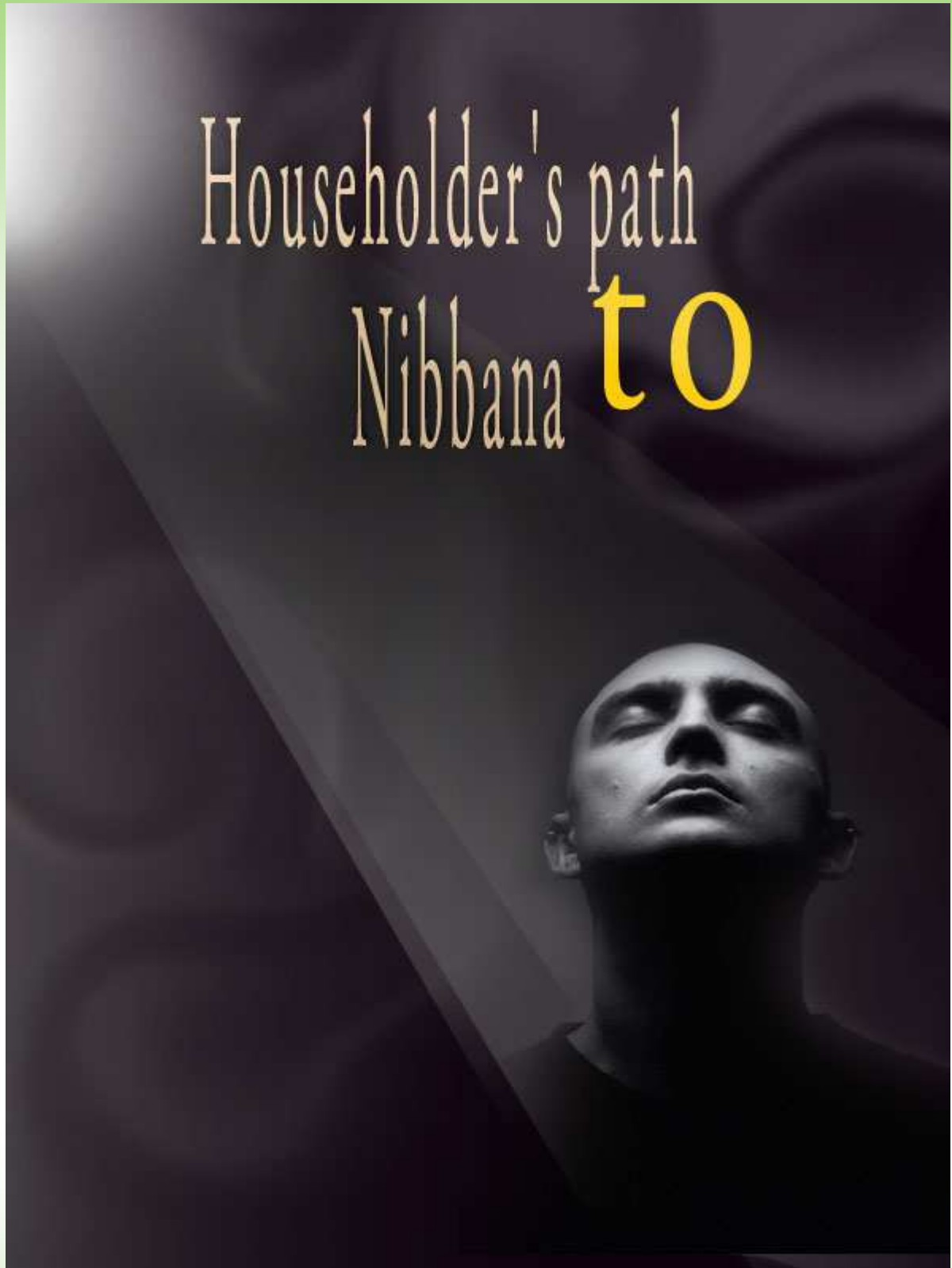


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The Householder's Path to

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Dear Friends,

Today we are going to discuss *Mahanama Sutta* in *Anguttara Nikaya*. The Buddha expounded this discourse when he visited the *Sakayan* capital of Kapilavattu. There the *Sakyan* chief Mahanama approached the Enlightened One and invited him to stay in a hermitage called the “Nigrodha Asapuwa”

The Noble disciple's View about Lord Buddha

One day Mahanama visited the Enlightened One, and having venerated him asked a question.

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"Venerable Sir, the Noble disciple (Arya Savaka) who has fully understood teachings of Buddha and attained its fruits, with what thought does he frequently abide?"

The Buddha replied...

"Mahanama, the Noble disciple who has understood the dispensation of the Teacher and entered the path to liberation abides his time recollecting the Supreme qualities of the Tathagatha (The Enlightened One) in this way.

"The Blessed One is accomplished (Araham); fully Enlightened (Samma Sambuddha); perfect in true knowledge and conduct (Vijja Charana Sampanna); sublime (Sugata); Knower of the worlds (Lokavidu); Incomparable leader of persons to be tamed (Anuttaro purisa damma sarathi); Teacher of gods and humans (Sattha deva manussanam); Enlightened (Buddha) and Blessed (Bhagava)"

Why do I contemplate the qualities of the Buddha...?

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Here the refuge is not on one's own intelligence but on the intelligence and qualities of a Supreme Being who was self-enlightened and therefore incomparable. One who recognizes the exceptional qualities and the greatness of his Teacher takes refuge in the Triple Gem (Three Jewells) - the Buddha, Dhamma (**the doctrine of the Buddha**) and the Sangha (**the monastic community of disciples of the Buddha**) with full understanding.

The Buddha said

"Mahanama, when the Noble disciple recollects the qualities of the Tathagatha, his mind is not afflicted with sensual desire (Raga) with hatred (Dosa) with delusion (Moha). His mind becomes steadfast and unshaken towards the Teacher. When he has perfect confidence in the Tathagatha he gains inspiration in the true idea and meaning of the Dhamma. He then gains gladness connected with the Dhamma. When he is gladdened, rapture and joy is born in him. When he is joyous his body becomes tranquil. The one whose body is tranquil feels pleasure. When he has pleasure his mind becomes concentrated."

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"He abides calm among people holding conflicting views. He abides untroubled among distressed people. He enters the path of the Dhamma. He abides contemplating the supreme qualities of the Buddha."

These benefits are possible if one is mindful because then there is no delusion. We too can develop these by being mindful and taking refuge in the Triple Gem and on other external factors.

The sweetest doctrine which ever preached

The Noble disciple recollects the Supreme qualities of the Dhamma or the doctrine expounded by the Enlightened One.

This Dhamma has been well proclaimed by the Enlightened One (***Swakkhato bhagavata dammo***). To reflect on the Dhamma one has to have a good knowledge of it. If he has not learned it he would not know that it has been well explained and is capable of being missed by various theories he hears.

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Contemporary man tries to prop up the Dhamma with modern psychology and see if they are compatible. There is a stanza in the '*Ratana sutta*' explained by the Buddha.

*“ Khayam viragam amatham panitam
yadajjhaga sakyamuni samahito
Natena dhammena samatthi kinci....”*

“There is nothing in the world that could be compared to this Dhamma proclaimed by the sakyam Sage. Which destroys all defilements and leads to the deathless state of Nibbana”

Four Noble Truths...!

The Buddha's doctrine is the Four Noble Truths. A Buddha appears in this world to make known and explain the four Noble Truths. If one talks about the Dhamma of the Awakened One, it is the four Noble truths that are spoken of...

The Buddha explains the Noble Truth that has to be fully understood, namely the Noble Truth of suffering - *dukkha*

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arya satya. The **pali** word **dukkha** covers a range of meanings it incorporates suffering, both mental and physical dissatisfaction, unpleasant, unsatisfactory and many others.

The Noble Truth that should be abandoned, namely the Noble Truth of the origin of suffering – **Dukkha Samudaya Ariya Satya.**

The noble truth that has to be realized namely The Noble Truth of cessation of suffering – **dukkha nirodha ariya sachcha.**

The noble truth that has to be cultivated, namely The Noble Truth of the path leading to cessation of suffering is the noble eightfold path – **dukkha nirodha gamini patipada ariya sachcha.** The validity of these Truths cannot change with time, therefore they are Noble Truths.

The reality of our life and the truth of suffering...!

The Buddha points out that Birth is painful and problematic and therefore is unsatisfactory; aging is

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unpleasant; illness is suffering; death is unpleasant and is suffering; association with the disliked and parting from the loved ones is unsatisfactory; not getting what one wants causes grief. In this context not getting what one wants does not mean the ordinary day to day things we like to possess. The being subject to ill health and sickness wishes to be free of these but it does not happen so. That is unsatisfactory. No one likes to grow old or die. No one wishes to be parted from loved ones or to associate with the disliked. Those who understand the unsatisfactory nature of life do not want to face the hazards of another birth and wish not to be born again, but this does not happen by mere wishing. Not getting what one wants is this un-satisfactoriness of not being able to keep away the various forms of suffering that he encounters in life.

This ***dukkha*** cannot be understood merely by experiencing suffering. The Buddha before his enlightenment, while he was still seeking the truth, practiced severe austerities, giving unbearable pain and suffering to the body if the truth of suffering could be penetrated and understood by mere suffering he would have become

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enlightened then. But he gave it up as it did not produce useful results.

Like to escape from this suffering...?

It is through the Noble Eightfold Path that a penetrative understanding of this suffering. Un-satisfactoriness, the ***dukkha*** is possible, and that is the only way leading to the cessation of suffering. The Awakened One has given us a doctrine, a method for this, which is clear with right meaning and phrasing, well explained, perfect and pure. In this doctrine the Buddha has shown the cause of suffering to be craving (***tanha***), and that this craving being about a fresh birth, or a re-becoming (***ponobhavika***). It conditions another existence. Everyone has craving inherent in him or her, and it is not easy get rid of, but unless it is overcome a renewal of existence is a certainty. If we get killed suddenly in a road accident, there will be an immediate birth somewhere. This is because we have not abandoned craving. Once there is a birth, dissatisfaction, sorrow, lamentation, pain grief fold despair the whole mass of suffering arises.

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Sometimes when we are disenchanted with life, we say “Death would end all these.....all troubles would be over”, but it does not happen so. Troubles come twofold with death and an immediate birth. This suffering incorporates a phenomenon by which the cause desire (**tanha**) always conditions an effect another existence. It was this way in the past, it is the same today, and in the future too this same law will be effective. Therefore, this cause for suffering is a Noble Truth.

The Danger of travelling of life to life....!

In the time of the future **Maitriya** Buddha too it is this same doctrine which will be heard. Seen and practiced. Before, the Maitriya Buddha appears, life in this world system comes to near extinction. With evolution again life spans go up to mere than a hundred thousand years before gradually coming down again. As ordinary worldlings or uninstructed persons there is no certainty where one will exist. If by some chance a heinous crime (**anantharya papa kamma**) is committed during this period, by the time the inevitable periods in the hell worlds is paid and finished, that Buddha **sasana** or the time of dispensation of that Buddha

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will also be at an end. This is how we have travelled the round of births and deaths or *samsara*. There is no one who has not had a birth in the hell world, or the realm of ghosts or the animal realm. In between due to some great good fortune, a result of a good wholesome act, there is now a human birth for us, but the danger of going down to the lower realms in a next birth is still very much alive. Only chance to escape this danger is while we are human beings where we can work to go beyond being an ordinary worldling and enter the path to liberation (*sotapanna*)

Realizes the unsatisfactory nature of this life...

For this, penetrative understanding of the four Noble Truths in this very life is essential. Craving is present due to ignorance, delusion and lack of understanding. There is craving for sensual pleasures, craving for existence and craving for non-existence. If there is any remnant of any of these, the cycle of births and deaths continues unabated. This means the continuation of the unsatisfactory states. If we develop true understanding, knowledge and vision of reality, we will not retain any craving within us. We will

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realize that it is a delusion and abandon it completely. It is something that can be abandoned and the method of doing so is found in the Noble Eightfold Path.

One who realizes the unsatisfactory nature of this life will try to find the cause for it. Through the doctrine of the Supreme Buddha he understands that the cause is desire and craving. He accepts the teaching that this unsatisfactory status could be overcome and investigates the method of doing so. He then finds out the Noble Eightfold Path, which is the practical course of action set out in the doctrine to achieve this.

THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH IS:-

Right Understanding – (samma Ditti)

It is the penetrative knowledge of the Four Noble Truths.

Right Intention – (Samma Sankappa)

Direction of the mind towards understanding and realization of the Truth.

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Right Speech – (Samma vacha)

Abstaining from false, harsh and malicious speech and indulge only in speech that is conducive to right understanding.

Right Action – (Samma kammantha)

Abstaining from wrong bodily action and act for the benefit of others.

Right Livelihood – (Samma Ajiva)

Abstaining from actions, which defile and lead a blameless and beneficial life.

Right Effort – (Samma Vayama)

The effort to overcome defilements and the unwholesome, and effort to cultivate and maintain the wholesome.

Right Mindfulness – (Samma sathi)

Developing the Four Foundations of Mindfulness - mindfulness in contemplating the body, mindfulness in contemplating feelings, mindfulness

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in contemplating mind and mindfulness in contemplating mind object.

Right Concentration – (Samma Samadhi)

Developing the concentration of the mind associated with the wholesome leading right up to the fourth absorption or *jhana*.

This is the path leading to the realization of Nibbana and has to be understood well. One who becomes proficient in this Path will undoubtedly end all suffering. This is a Noble Truth.

He accepts the Qualities of Dhamma...

The Noble disciple who is skilled in the Enlightened One's Dhamma recollects that this Dhamma has been well proclaimed (***Swakkhato Bhagavata Dhammo***) It is good in the beginning, good in the middle and good in the end, there is no confusion, and it is perfect and pure. He establishes his confidence in the Dhamma.

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Skilled in the Dhamma he recollects with confidence that this Dhamma which is perfect and pure when practiced diligently gives results in this lifetime – ***Sanditthiko***.

Having accepted that this Dhamma has been well proclaimed he recollects with confidence that it is indeed a true Dhamma which does not change with time, and is equally relevant in the past, present and the future – ***Akaliko***.

He recollects with that this Dhamma with invites investigation and should be investigated - ***Ehi Passiko***.

He understands that this Dhamma should be examined by himself and its benefits seen within him - ***Opaniko***.

A growing mind...

He recollects that if he accepts this Dhamma which has been well explained. Visible in this very life and does not change with time, and seeing its progress within himself, he can experience it according to his wisdom and attain the fruits of ***Sotapanna*** – a stream enterer, a ***Sakadagami*** – a

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once returner, ***an Anagami*** – a non returner, ***an Arahant***- a fully accomplished one.

When the noble disciple understands and recollects the Dhamma wisely he becomes established in the Truth. As he keeps recollecting joy arises in him. His mind becomes free of greed, hatred and delusion. The Buddha explains that with joy his mind and body becomes tranquil, and happiness arises in him. He becomes peaceful. He is the one who is peaceful and patient in a crowd. In a turbulent world he abides calm and untroubled. We too can avail of all these benefits by developing wise reflection on the supreme qualities of the Dhamma.

Noble monastic disciples...

Next the Buddha explains that the Noble disciple recollects the supreme qualities of the ***sangha*** – his monastic community of disciple who practice the doctrine. The word ***sangha*** means community. This community is comprised of the Noble disciples (***Arya Sangha***) led by the Arahants **Sariputta** and **Moggallana**, who were the chief disciples of

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the Buddha the fully accomplished ones, the non-returners, the once - returners and those who have entered the Path. This community of ***Sangha*** existed in the Buddha's time; it exists now and will exist in the future.

The Noble disciple knows that these states can be attained if the Dhamma is practiced well. He recollects the supreme qualities of the ***sangha***.

Greatest disciples who ever lived and are living...

He recollects that;

The Blessed one's disciples practice to rid themselves of greed hatred and delusion (***Supatipanno***),

They follow a direct path which is the Noble Eightfold Path (***Ujupatipanno***),

They follow a practice which lead them to a fully understanding of the Four Noble Truths (***Nayapatipanno***),

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They spread this Dhamma and its method of practice to the entire world (*samichipatipanno*).

The community of *sangha* following this Path to liberation is worthy of gifts brought from near and far. They are worthy of hospitality. They are worthy of offerings for the gaining of merit. They are worthy of respect and worship. This community is an incomparable field of goodness for the world.

During the time of the Buddha, a lay disciple **Suppavasa** had very agonizing labour pains due to a delayed childbirth. She practiced the recollection of the qualities of the Buddha to ease her pain. On hearing this from the lady's husband the Master blessed the mother and the child, and a healthy baby boy was born. This boy later entered the order and became **Arahant Sivali**. To celebrate the joy of having a son the parents wanted to offer alms to the Buddha and the community of *sangha* for seven days. As the **Arahant Moggallana** already accepted an invitation for the Buddha, he went to his supporter to request a change of date. The supporter was willing if the **Arahant Moggallana** could guarantee that the raw material he had already purchased

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would not perish and his confidence in the Triple gem would not change. The Arahant, replied that he could use his high spiritual powers to prevent the material things from perishing, but as to his confidence the Arahant could do nothing. The supporter himself had to be responsible to see that his confidence is well established. This shows that unshakable confidence is the responsibility of the individual.

A String Immediately became a Gold Necklace....!

One time when **Arahant Pilindavachcha** was walking he saw a little girl sobbing beside a very poor mother. The mother said that a salesman had gone by but she did not have any money to buy the girl a gold chain. The Arhant picked up a piece of string from the roadside, tied the ends together and asked the woman to put it round the girl's neck. It immediately became a shining gold necklace. The girl showed off her possession and the people around, suspicious of how she got it, reported to the king who imprisoned the whole family. Next day the Arahant finding the house closed, learned of the outcome and visited the king. The king explained the reasons for arresting the family. The Arahant

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asked the king to look round the pillars of his palace which had turned to gem studded gold. The king realized what had happened and not only released the family but also offered a whole village in the name of the Arahant to his supporters. This is the first recorded model village in the world and the king was **Bimbisara**.

These stories illustrate the supreme qualities of the **Sangha** and when one reflects of these with confidence one is filled with wonder and admiration about the lives of the great Arahants like **Sariputta**, **Moggallana** and **Pilindavachacha**. The Noble disciple establishes himself in confidence recollecting these qualities of the **Sangha**.

The Five Precepts...

Next the noble disciple recollects the qualities of his own virtue and Morality (**Sila**) which is the conscious and intentional restraint from unwholesome bodily and verbal actions. The Exalted One has shown that purity of **sila** or a high moral standard is helpful in gaining concentration (**Samadhi**)

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The Noble disciple establishes himself in the five precepts, and if there is a lapse he re-establishes himself in it. He understands the value of morality and respects it. He abstains from killing, abstains from taking what is not given, abstains from sexual misconduct, abstains from wrong speech and abstains from taking intoxicants. These precepts must be guarded with great care and not half heartedly with allowance for loopholes.

The Art of Giving and Liberality

In addition, Buddhists observe the full-moon day as a day of fasting when meals are not taken after mid day. On that day they abstain from sensual pleasures and the use of high and luxurious seats and beds. Time is spent on the practice of the Dhamma this has to be developed as an inner strength.

The Enlightened One's disciple is one who values the giving of alms (***dana***). The Buddha shows that stinginess should be abandoned. This incorporates jealousy too. If one shares what he has with others he gets rid of stinginess and develops generosity (***chaga***). In helping others and seeing

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them happy in their gains helps to get rid of jealousy. Greed is very dangerous and can give birth in animal realms and as reptiles. The Noble disciple understands these dangers and develops the art of giving and liberality; and thereby practices giving up or detachment. He can recollect the benefits by wisely reflecting on his deeds.

The way, to go to the Heaven....!

The Buddha explains how the Noble disciple reflects on the realm of *Deva* or heavenly beings. Having listened to the Blessed one's teachings he knows that there are heavenly beings in the higher realms. He recollect that these beings are born in divine abodes due to their practices of confidence in the Triple Gem, their virtue, generosity, knowledge of the Dhamma and wisdom developed in the human world. He reflects with wisdom that he too is developing these practices and therefore has these divine qualities in him. He is confident that he too can be born in these heavenly realms. He recollects the qualities of heavenly beings in the way. He lives with generosity, virtuous, with a high moral code of conduct, frequently reflecting on the supreme qualities of the Buddha, his doctrine and his

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community of Noble disciple, and qualities of the heavenly beings. The mind of the Noble disciple at the time of death gets fixed on the higher realms and is born in the heavenly abodes as a **Devata** who is on the path to **Nibbana**. Such a person having lived in the doctrine of the Awakened one, although born in the heavens does not get attached to divine pleasures. He continues his practice of the Dhamma, reflecting on the qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha more ardently. Ultimately he can liberate himself from all suffering in that same abode.

Even householders can realize the Nibbana

The Buddha shows that disciples who lead a householder's life can realize Nibbana by following this practice intelligently. By developing the recollections of the supreme qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, the benefits of **sila** or morality, generosity and the qualities of the heavenly beings, he could be born in the heavenly abodes and by continuing the practices there he could realize Nibbana.

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Birth as a human being is a rare occurrence. Therefore, it must be appreciated that this is the only opportunity to understand the Dhamma. The six recollections explained by the fully enlightened Buddha should be practiced and developed without delay. One who cultivates this will have a clear, untroubled, mind at the time of death, thereby gaining birth in a happy existence from where he could realize the Ultimate Truth Nibbana...!

