

Royal Virtues

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(P. A. Payutto)

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Foreword

On the 13th October 2016 His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the ninth monarch of his line, passed away. This was a cause of great grief to the people of Thailand. Before long his subjects were queuing in huge numbers to pay their respects to his body, a phenomenon that has continued for the many succeeding months. Now, with just over a year having passed, the Royal Cremation Ceremony is to take place on 26th October 2017.

On such a momentous occasion it is important that the admirable demonstration of gratitude for all that His Majesty has given to the nation, should be supplemented by the effort to express that gratitude by carrying on his good works for the long-lasting benefit of our country. Last year I delivered a Dhamma discourse which encouraged this effort, and it has now been published as *ธรรมของพระราชา*; this book is its English translation.

I would like to express my appreciation for all the people with the faith and devotion to Dhamma, and with the best of wishes for the nation in mind, who have contributed to the publication of this book for free distribution. May the Dhamma be propagated and may wisdom be spread far and wide, for the long-lasting fulfilment of His Majesty the King's fundamental goals: the welfare and happiness of all.

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Royal Virtues

This evening in the Observance Hall at Wat Nyanavesakavan, we have conducted a Dedication of Merit ceremony for our recently deceased monarch, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the Ninth King of the Cakri dynasty. The chanting of the Paritta verses followed by a period of meditation has been dedicated as an offering of merit.

This is part of a program arranged by the Sangha of Sam Pran district and coordinated with local community leaders. These chanting sessions have been rotating from one monastery to another in the district, and today has been the turn of Wat Nyanavesakavan. It is a meritorious activity in which the goodness of both the organisers and all the participants is worthy of appreciation.

Apart from the dedication of merit which allows for the expression of goodness and harmony, the ceremony is, at the same time, a way of nourishing the hearts of the people who are feeling sorrow and grief at the passing away of His Majesty the King. It refreshes their hearts and gives them joy that they have made merit for the king whom they loved and revered and whom they fondly remember. It gives them new resolve, and for this I express my appreciation.

Whenever an important event occurs, be it good or bad, there is a tradition, initiated by the Buddha himself, in which

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the event is made the grounds or the topic of a Dhamma discourse. It became customary that whenever something important occurred or when a certain topic was on everyone's lips, the Buddha would deliver a discourse concerning the event that would provide people with some understanding of the event, including a more profound Dhamma perspective, so that the audience gained some wise guidance on how they should respond to it.

In addition to being inherently meritorious, organising events where people are able to express themselves through activities such as chanting, is a means by which people can come together in harmony and then hear the Dhamma in large numbers, so that they gain benefit, understanding, useful reflections, and wisdom.

In the present case, with everyone wanting to express their deep gratitude for the great compassion showed to them by His Majesty the King, and feeling grief at his passing away, it is also the time for the teaching of Dhamma. In recalling all of His Majesty's many activities, the one giving the discourse can encourage his audience to consider on a more profound level His Majesty's objectives: how he applied himself untiringly to such hard work in so many areas, in order that his subjects would have the means to be free of suffering and lead a good and happy life, and for the nation to enjoy stable progress.

At the same time, His Majesty had the wish that his subjects would be diligent and industrious, determined to make their livelihood honestly, to gain the knowledge and understanding to help each other solve their problems and do good things in harmony, to make their communities good places to live. This can be seen from the content of the many public talks that he delivered.

On this kind of occasion the important thing for the monk giving the Dhamma talk is to get his audience to start thinking about what they can do to express their gratitude to His Majesty, in order to honour his wishes and aspirations, rather than just sitting idly by while all of his sacrifices go to waste. That would be like abandoning His Majesty without kindness or care.

Sons and daughters who are aware of the debt of gratitude they owe to their parents, reflect on their parents' actions and their good wishes for their children. They seek to understand and to honour them as best they can. Similarly we should recollect His Majesty's wishes, plans and projects and try to honour them. This is the important point. It's not just a matter of feeling sorrowful until the feeling eventually passes away and letting that be the end of the matter. The most essential thing in recollecting His Majesty the King is to seek to repay our debt of gratitude to him by carrying on with his good works.

The Thirty One dhammas of a king to be clearly understood.

His Majesty the Ninth King performed numerous royal acts in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha, and gave talks expounding on Buddhist teachings on many occasions

In Thailand we venerate the Buddha's teachings regarding the virtues of a monarch and have referred to them and quoted them so often that they have become included in our customs. For example, reference is made to the Buddha's teachings on kingship during the Royal Coronation Ceremonies. Four main groups of virtues are mentioned, some of which are explained in detail. They are as follows:

1. The twelve observances of the 'Wheel Turning' Monarch (*Cakkavatti-Vatta*)
2. The four means of sustaining constructive relationships (*Rāja-Sangahavatthu*)
3. The five strengths of the khattiya (*Khattiya-Bala*)
4. The ten Rājadhammas (*Dasavidha-Rājadhamma*)

Of these four headings, Thai people will often have heard of the fourth, the Ten Rājadhammas. But although this group of virtues is spoken of so frequently, many people merely know that it concerns qualities that a good king should possess, without knowing exactly what they are.

The teachings need to be studied. And not only the Ten Rājadharmas, which list personal qualities. There are other important teachings which provide the basic principles of good governance. Let us look at these now.

**Any system of government will only work well
when people are ‘Dhammocrats’.**

We will begin with the first set of Dhammas: the twelve observances of the Wheel-Turning Monarch¹. When you first hear that there are twelve observances you may feel a bit intimidated. It sounds heavy going. The ten virtues of a monarch is already a lot; this group sounds as if it will be even harder. However, looking to the Buddha’s words on the topic in the suttas, we can take the main principles and divide these observances into two: qualities and practices.

To begin with the most important of the qualities, the Wheel-Turning Monarch (cakkavatti) is one who respects the Dhamma, reveres the Dhamma, worships the Dhamma, has Dhamma as his victory flag, has Dhamma as his highest value, is a Dhammocrat (i.e. gives precedence to Dhamma).

This last quality is the most important. The Wheel-Turning Monarch i.e. the great king is a Dhammocrat (*Dhammādhipateyya*).

¹ Cakkavatti Sutta D.; A 3. 453/138; A. 5.133/168; D.A. 3.34; S.A. 1.263;

Dhammocracy is the fundamental principle, the heart of the matter. The Buddha himself was a Dhammocrat. This tells us that those who are role models for humanity, pillars of society, leaders of their communities, must be Dhammocrats.

May I digress here. In Thailand, in later times we have come to use the term ‘adhipateyya’ to refer to systems of government². But in its original formulation the term referred to an individual quality.

People who are ‘Dhammādhipeyya’ (Dhammocrats), hold Dhamma as their highest value, use Dhamma as their criterion, whether in thinking, making decisions, or reflecting on anything, Dhamma takes precedence, it is the measuring stick, the leading principle.

Whatever the system of government, a good ruler needs to be a ‘Dhammocrat’. In the best possible form of government—these days we consider that to be democracy—if the leader in that system, the prime minister, is a Dhammocrat, if he holds to Dhamma, the truth of things, correctness, goodness and virtue, true and legitimate benefits as his guiding criteria, we will have a good leader, and a good democracy.

Leaders, in their personal qualities must be Dhammocrats. The Buddha was a Dhammocrat, one who gave precedence to Dhamma. The Great King is a Dhammocrat, relies on Dhamma

² For example, the Thai word for ‘democracy’ is ‘prajādhipeyya’

as his guiding principle. The first virtue of the Wheel-Turning Monarch is that he is a Dhammocrat. Leaders must first establish themselves in this principle.

A Wheel-Turning Monarch upholding the Dhamma is superior to an emperor.

I have said that this group of dhammas is called the Twelve Observances of a Wheel-Turning monarch. So what exactly does that mean?

Vatta means the daily observances, responsibilities, or regular activities. *Cakkavattivatta* means those practices or responsibilities of the great monarch that must be fulfilled on a regular basis.

Who is the ‘Wheel-Turning Monarch?’ These days in Thailand the Pali word ‘cakkavatti’ is used to translate the English word ‘emperor’. In fact, the meanings are different. An emperor is the ruler of an empire; the meaning of a cakkavatti is something else. Although some Western scholars translating the Cakkavatti Sutta in Dīgha Nikāya have rendered the term as ‘World Monarch’, let us look at the original meaning given to the term by the Buddha.

The word cakkavatti (Sanskrit: cakravartin) may be translated in the following manner: cakka means ‘wheel’; vatti means ‘turner’. So literally, cakkavatti means ‘Wheel Turner’.

But why is this term used to describe a great ruler?

This matter of the turning wheel or the turning of a wheel is of great significance. The appearance of the wheel was a great advance in civilisation. With wheels there came vehicles. Wheels allowed human beings to travel swiftly and far. This was particularly true of kings wishing to extend their power. Consequently, the wheel became a symbol of power.

The Thai word for kingdom is ‘āṇācakra’ (อาณาจักร). ‘Āṇā’ means power, and ‘cakra’ is the Sanskrit for ‘wheel’. Āṇācakra is thus the land reached by the wheel of power’.

The Wheel-Turning Monarch is so-called because he extends his power through the wheel. Possession of the wheel here stands for vehicles. Although the only vehicles at the time of the Buddha were drawn by horses and oxen, they brought a new age of great developments in military matters, in commerce, and in the transport of goods. Communication was extended far with greatly increased convenience. War and commerce expanded over continents.

There are many other meanings given for the term *cakkavatti*, one of which is ‘the Wheel-Jewel Turner’ The ‘Wheel-Jewel’ was reputed to revolve according to its owner’s wishes and transport him through the air at great speed to wherever he desired. The important point in the explanation is that the Wheel-Jewel turning monarch doesn’t use

the wheel-jewel to go to conquer foreign lands or defeat its inhabitants by the use of force, but to integrate them into a world free of violence and oppression. Put simply he goes to make the world into a peaceful and happy place.

The meaning of this point might be a little obscure; it may be taken as the expression of an ideal. To simplify, it could be said the Wheel-Turning Monarch referred to here, is a great king, a ruler of the world who rules without bloodshed and oppression, but is able to govern justly, for the true welfare and happiness of his people, fully in accordance with the meaning of the word governance: allowing all to live in a stable peace and happiness.

Now to turn to another less obscure commentarial explanation that may be quickly understood, it says that the monarch is someone who literally turns a wheel, defining 'a wheel' as that which moves us around in various ways. All lay Buddhists have one set of 'wheels', which are called 'life wheels'. Most people are unaware of this or don't pay it much attention. But if these wheels come to harm then all other wheels are rendered almost meaningless. Let us look at these wheels.

The Buddha taught that we lead our life by means of 'wheels', that is to say the wheels of the vehicle of life, called 'the four wheels of posture' (*iriyāpathacakka*): standing, walking,

sitting and lying down. Without these four wheels we are prevented from accomplishing anything. Anyone desiring a good life, must bear in mind the importance of these four wheels, and take care of physical health by exercising all four postures, until they are in balance. This will lead to fluency and ease in conducting one's affairs.

The texts say that the Wheel-Turning Monarch is also one who 'turns wheels' in this meaning of the term. They explain by this that the monarch turns the wheels of his life i.e. the four postures of standing, walking, sitting and lying down, for the welfare of others. Monarchs conduct all their lives, whatever posture they adopt, in order to think, to speak, to work for the welfare and happiness of their subjects.

The observances of the Wheel-Turning Monarch: from virtues to practice

I have said that there are twelve observances (*vatta*)—duties or practices—which must be regularly and consistently performed by a great monarch. In fact, that number originates in the commentaries. The Buddha himself did not give an exact number. We can reduce them to two main principles:

a) **Qualities:** He is a Dhammocrat as I have already explained. This is the foundation, the axle that must be first in place,

because without being established in Dhamma, everything will be in error. That is to say that monarchs, whatever they are doing, must take Dhamma as their main principle, as their standard and their criterion.

b) **Practices:** As a Dhammocrat, with that as their fundamental abiding support, monarchs begin the work of governance by dealing with the following important points.

1) **Dhammikārakkhā:** He provides a just caring and protection for all of his subjects, who are divided by the texts into eight groups. Let us look at these groups, bearing in mind that the division was made with regard to the society of the Buddha's time, which is not the same as our own. We can, however, compare the groups with those of today in order to get the general outline or gist.

i) *Antojana:* This may be most simply translated as the inner circle, meaning members of the royal family and the monarch's personal staff.

ii) *Balakāya:* The armed forces.

iii) *Khattiya:* All those members of the ruling class below that of the monarch himself. Khattiyas might be compared today with administrators and people wielding power on the second rung, from government ministers to provincial governors.³

³ The meaning of 'khattiya' would differ in the case of a king who is not a great emperor. In that case 'khattiya' would refer to other monarchs, and they would be offered friendship rather than protection.

- iv) *Anuyanta*: All those who work to implement the policies of the monarch (cf. civil servants).
- v) *Brāhmaṇa-gaḥapati*: All the self-employed, merchants, business people, the independently wealthy, teachers, academics. Most of these people lived in the capital city or in more developed urban areas (at the time the texts were compiled all the intellectual leaders of society were included in the single term 'brahmin').
- vi) *Negamaḥjanapada*: All those living outside the capital city, beginning in the surrounding countryside and extending to the borders of the country. It is worthy of note that His Majesty the Ninth King gave much attention to the villagers in the countryside and remote areas, and considered it very important to do so.
- vii) *Samaṇas and brāhmins*: The Buddhist monastics and the clergy of other religions, who instruct in morality and the tenets of their religions to give the people inner values.
- viii) *Migapakshī*: Simply put: all living beings in land and air. The righteous monarch, the Wheel-Turner, must also care for the lives of all the other living beings.

It is worthy of note that in the old days, although there were a great number of creatures of all kinds, including many kinds of birds, large and small, that

would be singing raucously around him, the Buddha still held it to be the duty of the good king, or Wheel-Turning monarch, to protect them. Look at the present time. Are we looking after them well? Today, the situation is terrible. There are very few creatures remaining in land and air. Many species have become extinct.

2) **Adhammakāra-nisedhanā**: This means the monarch should deter and guard against *adhamma*. Whether those responsible are robbers or corrupt officials, he should prevent adhammic—wrong and unjust—activities by providing deterrents, protection and, when necessary, suppression. He should prevent ‘adhamma’ from occurring in the first place.

3) **Dhanānupradāna**: He should create, distribute and increase the wealth of the general population, preventing poverty. This point is very important. The duty of a great ruler in its full formulation is ‘Adhanānaṃ dhanānupadānaṃ’. Adhanānaṃ means ‘to those without wealth’; dhanānupadānaṃ means ‘to increase, share fairly, distribute, create for all’.

4) **Paripucchā**: This means to thoroughly inquire. The monarch does not neglect the quest for Dhamma and wisdom. He goes to meet and converse with members of the Sangha and other wise people, those who lead moral lives, live with Dhamma and are wise. He regularly requests advice and asks

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questions whether or not actions are good and correct; what is Dhamma and what is not; what is wholesome and what is unwholesome. He converses, consults, inquires on a regular basis.

Being heedful of the search for Dhamma and wisdom is very important. It allows the monarch to keep abreast of what wise and learned people know about the issues of the day, how they see them, what they think about them.

(The words used in the texts are *samana* meaning Buddhist monastics and renunciants of other religions; and *brahmins* meant religious scholars who, at that time, were all members of the brahmin caste.)

The Buddha wanted the Wheel-Turning Monarch to be free of complacency, by regularly going to converse, inquire, consult with wise people, so as to know that what the intellectual leaders of society are thinking about things; what they say, what do they think about matters in light of the Dhamma or according to academic principles. The monarch can keep up with this. This is why leaders, the most powerful rulers, must not neglect the constant cultivation of wisdom.

And that ends the practices of the Wheel-Turning Monarch, divided into two main categories of personal qualities and practices.

The good leader of a community knows how to unite it.

We have now reached the *Sangahavatthu* (Four Means of Sustaining Constructive Relationships)⁴, which is a very important group, and is compared to the brahmins' conception of the supreme sacrifices.

There is a group of virtues that all Buddhists should already be practising: the *Sangahavatthu* (the Four Means of Sustaining Constructive Relationships). It forms a pair with the group called the *Brahmavihāras* or Four Divine Abidings. These Four Divine Abidings (loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity) are virtues within the heart, while the *sangahavatthu* are practises undertaken in society which express those inner virtues.

Leaders of communities, in particular, and beginning with family leaders—the mother and father—must make regular use of the four *sangahavatthu*. This is especially true with the leader of a country, and the Buddha saw the practice of these four *sangahavatthu* to be the defining features or the essence of kingship. This may be seen from the analysis of the word 'sangahavattu' in the Pali passage

'Catūhi sangahavatthūhi janaṃ rañjetīti rājā'

⁴ Bhikkhu Bodhi: 'The means by which one can attract others and sustain a relationship with them characterised by friendliness and respect'. Other translations include 'the Four Bases of Popularity' and the 'Four Bonds of Fellowship'.

‘He is called a king because he pleases his subjects and makes them happy through the four means of sustaining constructive relationships.’⁵

The Buddha taught the four *sangahavatthu* as a way of encapsulating his teachings for the laity, saying

Giving (*dāna*), endearing speech (*piyavācā*), beneficent conduct (*atthacariyā*) and maintaining a correct and consistent impartiality in every situation (*samānattatā*) : these four things provide assistance and unite people in the world, like the linchpin of a moving vehicle.

If this sangaha (support and unifying) is absent, parents will not receive respect and honour from their children, but because wise people show regard for these sangaha dhammas they achieve greatness, and are praised by all.⁶

The Buddha gave much emphasis to the importance of binding communities together harmoniously with the *sangahavatthu*, as can be seen in his declaration of one of his disciples, Prince Hatthaka of Ālavi to be the one foremost in supporting communities with the four *sangahavatthu*.⁷

⁵ A. 2.27

⁶ A. 4.32

⁷ A.1.20/151/33

It is worthy of notice that now there are hardly any Thais familiar with these four social virtues. People remember only the internal qualities of loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. People's memories are imprecise. When attention turns to the *sangahavatthu* their recall is patchy—this one is forgotten, that one overlooked—and they are not remembered as a group.

It is probably because we Thais only refer to the Divine Abidings—saying merely that we should have kindness and compassion—without explaining clearly and in detail how to put them into practice in detail in society, that has led Westerners who have studied Buddhism on a superficial level, to be critical. For example, Albert Schweitzer, a famous Western scholar, and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952, wrote that 'doing good' in Buddhism means merely 'not doing evil' and such a cultivation of kindness and compassion without practical application in society, renders it fruitless. It is like thinking that spreading thoughts of loving kindness from under a mosquito net is all the good that is needed.

Dr. Albert Schweitzer was writing almost a century ago. Some time later, a Professor Joseph L. Sutton, who was working here to help establish the Department of Public Administration (which subsequently became NIDA) at Thammasat University, wrote a book called '*Problems of Politics and Administration in Thailand*'. In it he criticised Buddhism,

quoting Albert Schweitzer. In this book he said that Buddhism is one of the things obstructing the development of Thailand. People studying Public Administration at the time most likely read this book.

It is probably because we practise the Dhamma in a piecemeal way, that we give the opportunity for foreigners to criticise us. We need to examine ourselves on this point.

To repeat, the inner virtues of the Divine Abidings such as loving kindness and compassion, need to be supplemented by the practice of the ‘four means of sustaining constructive relationships’. Time has come to put serious effort into reviving the practical teachings. It is not just a matter of having loving kindness and compassion in our hearts, but we must translate them into social action. There must be a concerted effort to emphasise and repeatedly assert the four *sangahavatthu—dāna, piyavāca, atthacariyā* and *samānattatā*—as an integrated group.

Let the inner virtues of the Divine Abidings be coordinated with the outer social practices of the four means of sustaining constructive relationships. Let inner virtues manifest as specific practices in society, and let social practices issue from an inner sincerity of heart. The Thai people should make a sincere effort to study and revise this matter so as to gain a clear understanding of it and a self-confidence in applying it.

A good leader is able to unite his people

As I have mentioned, everybody up to and including the monarch needs to practise the four means of sustaining constructive relationships, because it is necessary to integrate everybody into a society in which all of its members can have a good life. But for the king, the leader who unites the whole of the nation, there are four *sangahavatthu* specific to him. These are called the *Rāja-sangahavatthu*.

In the brahmin period, these *Rāja-sangahavatthu* was the name given to great ceremonies involving sacrifice. I will list them in brief:

1. *Assamedha*: The killing of horses as a sacrifice.
2. *Purisamedha*: the killing of human beings as sacrifice.
3. *Sammāpāsa*: A sacrifice of seventeen kinds of animal at a place determined by ‘throwing the peg through the net’.
4. *Vājapeyya*: The sacrifice in which a fortifying drink is imbibed.
5. *Niraggaḷa*: Sacrifice involving indiscriminate killing.

The sacrificial killing of horses was particularly popular with monarchs as a means to demonstrate their supreme power, and many accounts of it survive in the chronicles. The ceremony would begin with the choice of an excellent horse of the best breed, called an *upakāra* horse. The horse would be

let free and a hundred princes would follow it wherever it wandered. Any land into which it passed had to accept the authority of the monarch. If any local leader refused the horse passage, there would be a battle and the resisters would be crushed. This would go on for a year. At the end of that year, returning to its home, the horse would be killed as a sacrifice.

In Buddhist texts, it is stated that the five great sacrifices were originally principles of good governance. But over the course of time their meaning was redefined by the brahmin priests in an effort to enrich themselves, and eventually they came to mean forms of sacrifice as explained above. The Buddha advocated the abolition of all forms of sacrifice, and completely changed the meaning of the five kinds of sacrifice, making them means of supporting and unifying members of society. These are the four *Rāja-sangahavatthu*.⁸

1. *Sassamedha*: Wise and capable in the promotion of arable farming.

This is the new version of *assamedha* or the sacrifice of horses. Buddhism changes the syllable ‘*assa*’ meaning ‘horse’ to ‘*sassa*’ meaning crops. In the brahmin formulation ‘*medha*’ means ‘to kill’, whereas in Buddhism it is translated as ‘wisdom’. (a sage is referred to as one who possesses *medhā* or

⁸ A. 8. 91/152; SA. 1/138; A.A 3/213; Iti.A. 106

‘*medhī*’). The monarch, rather than being one accomplished in organizing the killing of horses as a sacrifice, is changed into one who is wise and capable in the promotion of arable farming.

2. *Purisamedha*: Wise and capable in taking care of those who work under him, both military personnel and civilians. He encourages good, capable and intelligent people, those who possess integrity, and are honest and hard-working.
3. *Sammāpāsa*: Wise and capable in binding the hearts of his subjects, as if snaring them in a trap, by encouraging right livelihood. For instance, by providing loans to establish businesses, and by creating various programs to enable the poor to stand on their own feet, and to help those who have fallen on hard times to make a fresh start.
4. *Vājapeyya*: His speech is persuasive. He is wise and capable in his discussions and conversations with the people, demonstrating that he is interested in them and concerned for their welfare. He listens to and acknowledges their problems, listens to their wisdom; he speaks in a way that encourages people to want to act accordingly, want to co-operate in every way. He teaches and advises his subjects on how to help and assist each, how to communicate so as to give the gift of

Dhamma to each other and encourage wise conduct. He urges people in every community to apply themselves to fulfilling their responsibilities with sincerity and integrity, so as to achieve good results that will enable the nation to develop stable happiness and peace, in which each individual is able to develop themselves personally.

It may be seen by His Majesty, the Ninth King's many public talks and homilies to what considerable extent he practised 'Vājapeyya'.

The brahmins also had a fifth and final kind of great sacrifice: *niraggaḷam*, which translates literally as 'without a door bolt', meaning without limit, taking everything without exception. It was a sacrifice involving an indiscriminate killing of living beings, including humans.

In Buddhism, the name of this fifth kind of ultimate sacrifice, *nirraggaḷam* is used to refer to the benefits of good actions. The meaning of 'without a door bolt', is changed from indiscriminate killing, to the good results of the *Rāja-Sangaha-vatthu*. When the monarch undertakes these four practices the kingdom becomes stable and prosperous, people live together happily in peace and without fear to the extent that they don't have to lock their doors when they go out; they need no bolt for their lock.

In addition, apart from the meaning of ‘house needing no door bolt’ he said ‘let children dance on the breast’ meaning that within the family—the smallest social unit—people are joyous and happy. If there are small children then it means they have fun, dancing and playing on their mothers’ breast. Altogether this means that the people are happy, the country is at peace.

In other words, Buddhism changes the first four of the five great sacrifices into the four kinds of *Rāja-Sangahavatthu*, and the fifth into the beneficial results of those undertakings. The great monarch performs many kinds of good actions to make people happy, without having to get caught up in the so-called great sacrifices like slaughtering horses, which are nothing other than the infliction of suffering and harm.

If you look at the Buddha’s discourses, you will see that some of them deal specifically with the great sacrifices. You will find that the Buddha travelled to places specifically in order to teach people to abandon sacrifice, and turn to actions that are nourishing and aimed at looking after and helping each other. On some occasions he went to big ceremonies where they tied up cattle, goats and sheep in preparation for a sacrifice of 500 or 700 of each species. The Buddha met with the organisers, conversed with them, and as a result the owners freed all the animals and cancelled the sacrifice.

These are the four *Rāja-Sangahavatthu* that a monarch, a supreme ruler, must undertake in addition to the four *sangahavatthus* which are general Dhamma principles. It is very clear that if a monarch upholds only these two main groups of dhammas—the observances of the Wheel-turning Monarch and the monarch's *sanghavatthu*—then the kingdom will be happy, peaceful, prosperous and stable. But there are many more principles for him to give attention to.

The strengths of a great monarch

The next group of dhammas is the five powers of the *khattiya* (*khattiyabala*) or the powers of a great person who is capable of ruling a country. This group consists of qualities on which the monarch draws. Merely listing the names will give a good idea of their meaning; there is no need for a great deal of explanation.

1. *Bāhābalaṃ* or *Kāyabalaṃ*: The power of the arm, or the power of the body. The ruler is strong, in good health and powerful. He is capable and skilled in using his hands, arms and weapons, together with being fully equipped with all necessary military equipment.

2. *Bhogabalaṃ*: The power of wealth. He has plentiful funds, a big treasury, sufficient to nourish and support the people, and to conduct programs without hindrance.

3. *Amaccabalaṃ*: The power of ministers, or of civil servants. He has confidants, ministers, and high-level civil servants both in branches of governance and administration who are experienced, adept and capable, loyal and honest.

4. *Abhijaccabalaṃ*: The power of a high birth. He has been born into a high family, one that receives popular support and regard. He has received a good training appropriate to his status.

5. *Paññābalaṃ*: the power of wisdom. He is clever, capable, has insight into causality, right and wrong, beneficial and unbeneficial. He is able to analyse events both in their coarse and subtle aspects. He is effective in planning, management and implementation of policies.⁹

The power of the arm i.e. physical and military power, although important, is considered the least of the group. Without the other kinds of power governing and upholding them it can become extremely dangerous. The power of wisdom is the most excellent of the different kinds of power, because it is the governor, the overseer and the guide in ensuring success for all the others.

Without wisdom, even if all the other powers are fully developed, they will collapse and fall apart. For this reason the power of wisdom must steer them from behind, and the leader must never neglect further cultivation of wisdom.

⁹ Khu.Ja.2444/532; Ja.A. 7/347

Dasavidha-Rājadhammas

There is still another group of virtues for monarchs. It is the one most familiar to Thai people (that is to say, they know the name, but not necessarily understand the meaning) and it is often spoken of. It is called the *Dasavidha Rājadhammas* or the Ten Kingly Virtues. These are the virtues of a monarch. Although there are a lot of headings and are difficult to remember and pronounce, they have been rendered in verse form to aid memorisation, and so it's not too difficult. First, I will give the verse.

*Dānaṃ sīlaṃ pariccāgaṃ ājjavaṃ maddavaṃ tapaṃ
Akkodhaṃ avihiṃsaṅca khantiṅca avirodhanaṃ*¹⁰

Once the meaning of the words has been understood this verse can be revised and memorised, thus allowing all ten points to be recalled at one time.

Now I will give a basic explanation of the ten points.

1. **Dāna:** He makes financial and material donations to ensure the well-being of his subjects, and the public welfare.

2. **Sīla:** He is restrained in actions and speech, acts well and honestly, acts in exemplary ways befitting his station. By doing so he earns the respect of his subjects, never giving grounds for scorn.

¹⁰ Kh.J. 240/86

3 **Pariccāga:** He sacrifices his own pleasure and ease, is even willing to sacrifice his life, for the welfare and happiness of his subjects, and the peace and order of his kingdom.

4. **Ājjava:** He possesses integrity, is without deceit, and performs his duties honestly. He is sincere and does not cheat his subjects.

5. **Maddava:** His manner is without arrogance, coarseness and pride. He is dignified. His behaviour is polite, gentle and mild, inspiring loyalty and devotion, without permitting an inappropriate familiarity.

6. **Tapa:** He burns up his defilements; he does not allow them to envelop him and oppress his heart. He can restrain and suppress his appetites. He does not allow himself to indulge too much in the comfort and ease and the services he receives. He lives in a consistent manner, simply and without excess, mind focused on his efforts to fulfil his duties completely.

7. **Akkodha:** He does not indulge in fits of temper, or give way to the power of anger to the extent that it compromises his analysis and actions, making them incorrect and unjust. He has loving kindness in his heart to arrest irritation. He is able to analyse and act with an even mind, without upset and distraction.

8. **Avihimsā**: He does not oppress or tyrannise. He does not levy taxation or requisition labour excessively. He does not become intoxicated by his power and losing his compassion, look for justifications to harm and punish subjects through hatred or spite.

9. **Khanti**: He exercises forbearance with regards to his work, to difficulties and hardships, and to hurtful words. However weary he might be he does not become discouraged. Even if he is taunted by sarcastic words he does not lose his determination. He does not give up on the tasks that he has undertaken.

10. **Avirodhana**: He establishes himself firmly and unchangingly in Dhamma. He does not waver because of the others' words, good or bad, because of gain and repute, or pleasant and unpleasant experiences. He stands firm in the realms of justice (*Yutti-Dhamma*), and in the protocols and principles of governance, extending to good and beautiful customs and traditions (*Nīti-Dhamma*). He does not allow these to become corrupted or disappear.¹¹

To review, these ten virtues are the possessions of a monarch that are referred to in the texts most often.

The king who possesses the ten kingly virtues is firmly established as a Dhammocrat; he executes his royal duties

¹¹ J.V.378

with the Wheel Turner's Observances as fundamental principles. He expands his royal activities through the four sangahavatthu with the power provided by the four khattiyabalas. These provide the capital fund which give him the necessary supports and back up for his efforts.

These then are the four groups of dhammas traditionally prescribed in Thailand for their monarchs. They are extracted from the teachings given by the Buddha, which all Thai people should know, review and pass on to others, so that the virtues of governance will remain firmly established for the continuing welfare and happiness of the nation and all its people.

There are many other teachings on the virtues of a monarch to be found in the Buddhist scriptures, but here I have dealt only with the main principles found in specific groups, and which have been considered important traditions of the Thai monarchy. There are also a great number of teachings appearing as short homilies of five, ten or twenty lines which are distributed throughout the Buddha's discourses, principles of good governance which had been passed on since antiquity. These the Buddha related for those who were interested to further their studies of the matter.

Remembering His Majesty the King entails recollecting his virtues by recalling his many royal activities, too many to

describe. When we recollect his activities we bring to mind the aims which both provided his initial inspiration and then drove him in all those activities. Then we can use those recollections to remind ourselves of how we should conduct ourselves, and what actions we should perform in order to honour his wishes.

His Majesty's activities grew from certain aims regarding his subjects: how he wanted the country to be, how he wanted his subjects to live together, to conduct themselves and to lead their lives. He was concerned with what his subjects needed to do to live well, to prosper, to have sufficient for their needs, and to be happy. These were the king's objectives which we should recall and try to honour.

From the King's aims emerged the King's plans that were then implemented in various projects, giving rise to various kinds of work and activities. Whatever our walk of life, we should not be passive and indifferent, but should learn about these projects and use them to remind ourselves to not let life slip by in a heedless manner. We should consider how His Majesty was an example of heedfulness. We should all follow his example. We should work sincerely, we should take up the study of these interconnecting Dhamma teachings, and then put them into practice ourselves, encourage and support each other to practise them as a community and continually expand their influence.

If Thai people act in this way, Thailand will flourish and prosper and be stable, happy and at peace, in line with the King's aspirations for the country.

The Thai people, both those living in the countryside and those in the cities should act to perpetuate the various good works of His Majesty in order to honour his vows.

This then is the benefit of arranging all of these ceremonies. As I have mentioned, the Buddha never let such occasions pass by without giving Dhamma reflections. Everyone should at least be informed as to what should be known and understood regarding the reasons for the event, what should be studied at greater length, and what needs to be done in future.

It is the matter of what work there is for us to do that is the important point. A true sense of gratitude will be expressed right here, in our actions. Otherwise, the King's aims, his plans, his vows and so on will fade away and disappear, while all we do is weep and express our sorrow, before, after no great time has passed, stop doing so and fall silent.

But if we are alert and interested in studying His Majesty's plans, look into his vows and understand his wishes, and then encourage each other to carry on the work, then the fruits of his wishes, plans and vows will be enjoyed for a long time. The Thai people will be able to live well in a sustainable fashion in a society, in a nation, that is secure, flourishing, at peace and happy.

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