

Honouring the Claim
'We Love the King'

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(Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacariya)

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Preface

On the 13th October 2016 His Majesty Somdet Barom Raja Sambhara Somdet Phra Paramindra Maha Bhumibol Adulyadej King Rama IX passed away, causing great sorrow and grief for the Thai people across the entire country.¹ Ever since the government first began allowing people the opportunity to pay respects to the royal remains, they have been thronging in large numbers to the palace day after day, without any noticeable decrease in numbers.

The Thai people's expressions of kind recollection and gratitude for His Majesty's goodness and numerous royal initiatives performed over a long period of time for the wellbeing of his subjects is praiseworthy.

Having said this, on this momentous occasion, the expression of gratitude (*kataññū*) should generate the additional fruit of repaying kindness (*kataveditā*) through earnest and resolute action. Thai people should be vigilant and committed to engaging in those actions answering to His Majesty's royal pledge and fulfilling his heartfelt desire. By doing this the people themselves will improve their lives, cultivate virtue, and practise the Dhamma. The end result will be greater stability and prosperity for the nation. This booklet is aimed to assist people in this development of truth and virtue.

I offer my thanks to the faithful and devoted laypeople who have given the gift of Dhamma by publishing and distributing this discourse with goodwill towards the country and all its citizens. May the Dhamma spread far and wide, extending the reach of wisdom for the consummate welfare of all people at all times in the future.

P. A. Payutto (Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacariya)

¹ Trans.: King Bhumibol Adulyadej Rama IX: reign: 9 June 1946 – 13 October 2016.

Honouring the Claim 'We Love the King'

For many decades, December 5th has been an auspicious occasion marking the anniversary of the King's birthday, celebrated with joy and delight by the Thai people across the nation.²

About one and a half months ago, on 13th October 2016, His Majesty Somdet Barom Raja Sambhara Somdet Phra Paramindra Maha Bhumibol Adulyadej King Rama IX passed away, causing immense sorrow and grief for Thai people throughout the kingdom as well as for those Thais living abroad. Yet due to the king's myriad royal initiatives that he performed for the wellbeing of his subjects, although he has departed, it is as if he resides within the hearts of the people.

Today, the 5th of December 2016, is the anniversary of His Majesty King Bhumibol's birthday, an historic royal commemoration for the late king. His Majesty Somdet Phra Maha Vajiralongkorn Bodindradebayavarangkun King Rama X has been performing meritorious deeds in dedication of the deceased, acting as a leader for the Thai people in recollecting the goodness of King Bhumibol and in cultivating spiritual virtue so as to carry on the late king's royal pledge in an enduring way into the future.³

² Trans.: In Thailand, the king's birthday is set as Father's Day.

³ Trans.: King Maha Vajiralongkorn Bodindradebayavarangkun Rama X. He accepted the throne on 1st December 2016 but will not be crowned formally until after the cremation of his father.

Although His Majesty King Bhumibol has passed away, it is as if he still dwells in the heavens above Thailand. He is greatly beloved by his subjects for the royal acts he performed extending over the entire kingdom, corresponding to the first royal decree he proclaimed on the day of his coronation:

*I will rule righteously, for the benefit and wellbeing
of the Siamese people.*

This first royal decree was indeed his royal pledge, which he maintained throughout his entire reign.

His Majesty King Bhumibol devoted himself to performing acts of service across the entire nation. I have heard farmers from remote parts of the country recount how they would be driving to the market to sell their crops and from afar they would see their monarch standing in a vast arid and parched landscape, exposed to the scorching sun. His Majesty would traverse the entire area on foot, organizing and directing work projects, and building reservoirs so that the local people could escape the affliction of barrenness, drought, and water shortages.

Having completed the construction of a reservoir in one location His Majesty would then travel to a new location to build another reservoir.

His Majesty occasionally introduced and proposed new methods of growing crops, leading to developments and adaptations to solve problems in the field of agriculture.

He would travel on foot to desolate and wilderness areas, and to mountainous areas, where no roads existed for any vehicle to pass, visiting and aiding poor and destitute villagers in places almost impossible to access.

He travelled from one place to another, from one region to another, across the entire country, endeavouring to ensure that his subjects had lands flourishing in agricultural crops, fertile fields, and an adequate water supply.

In times of drought he implemented the Royal Rain-Making Project.⁴ In times of flooding he introduced the idea of detention basins to drain off excess water; whenever floods threatened parts of the country he would take stock of the situation and lead in attending to the problem meticulously.

In places where flooding created the risk of erosion or mud slides, he devised and recommended means for villagers to plant vegetation whose stems and roots can preserve the soil, for instance by planting vetiver grass in order to retain and fasten the ground surface.

⁴ Trans.: the Thailand Royal Rainmaking Project was initiated in 1955 by King Bhumibol. To resolve the effects of drought he implemented the technique of artificial rainmaking, or cloud seeding.

He did everything in his power to guarantee that his subjects could live in comfort and at ease, endowed with sufficient and adequate resources.

In rural and remote areas, beside undertaking various development projects, His Majesty would meet with the local people—in particular the elderly—and inquire about their wellbeing, encouraging and delighting them with his great compassion. In these remote areas he also visited with distinguished elder monks venerated by the local people. He had a natural disposition of aspiring to truth and being keen on Dhamma. By having these meetings and conversations he also learned more about the thoughts and feelings, the beliefs, and the ways of life of the inhabitants of these districts.

It was not only in rural and remote frontier regions that His Majesty extended his royal grace and kindness. He also attended to the capital Bangkok and to other cities by initiating and directing building projects, urban development strategies, and the organization of roads and highways. Marking special occasions, he initiated the construction of prominent bridges over the Chao Phraya River, linking key city districts and facilitating commuting and transportation.

On an occasion when the government informed His Majesty of their plan to build a monument in his honour, he directed the government officials to construct a road in the capital instead, an important thoroughfare used by the citizens of the city to this day.

In the Pali Canon there is a teaching by the Buddha on the subject of governing a nation, beginning with the following line:

*Upassutiṃ mahārāja raṭṭhe janapade cara...*⁵

This teaching can be paraphrased as: ‘May the king travel around the realm learning about the way of life and the affairs of his subjects. Having observed and listened, he should then attend to his royal responsibilities.’

2,300 years ago in India, Emperor Asoka—a mighty Buddhist ‘righteous monarch’ (*dhamma-rājā*) who sent out nine missions of religious emissaries (*sāsana-dūta*) to promulgate the Buddhist teachings, including to Suvaṇṇabhūmi, the location of present-day Thailand—set down proclamations on stone inscriptions. The eighth such stone inscription contains the following passages:

Since ancient times, the kings of the past set out touring for recreation and amusement (vihāra-yātrā), travelling in search of pleasure and delight, e.g. by going hunting and pursuing other forms of entertainment.

Having reached the time of His Majesty (i.e. Emperor Asoka), ten years after the accession to the throne a tour was made to Sambodhi (i.e. to the place of the Buddha’s awakening, now called Bodh Gaya). As a result of this event, the tradition of ‘Dhamma pilgrimage’ (dhamma-yātrā) was born.

⁵ JA. 520.

During Dhamma pilgrimage the following activities are undertaken: visiting monks, renunciants, and brahmins, and providing them with offerings; visiting the elderly; making royal financial donations and providing other forms of assistance; visiting citizens in rural areas; teaching the Dhamma; and engaging in Dhamma inquiry.

Whether in relation to the Buddha's words mentioned above, or in relation to Emperor Asoka's code of practice, it is clear that His Majesty King Bhumibol was endowed with royal conduct in harmony with Buddhist teachings and with Buddhist historical tradition. Due to this fact, all Thai citizens should rejoice and all Buddhists should derive great satisfaction and delight.

During the coronation ceremony, at which time His Majesty declared his principal royal edict: 'I will rule righteously, for the benefit and wellbeing of the Siamese people,' he also followed the royal custom of quoting the Lord Buddha's fourfold teaching on governing a nation, namely:

1. *Dasa-rājadhamma*: the ten royal virtues, frequently mentioned in relation to state leaders.⁶

2. *Khattiya-bala*: the five royal powers.⁷

⁶ Trans.: 1. generosity (*dāna*); 2. moral conduct (*sīla*); 3. self-sacrifice (*pariccāga*); 4. integrity (*ājjava*); 5. gentleness (*maddava*); 6. self-control (*tapa*); 7. non-anger (*akkodha*); 8. non-violence (*avihiṃsā*); 9. patience (*khanti*); 10. non-deviation from righteousness (*avirodhana*). J. V. 378.

⁷ Trans.: 1. strength of arms (*bāhā-bala*; *kāya-bala*); 2. strength of wealth (*bhoga-bala*); 3. strength of ministers (*amacca-bala*); 4. strength of high birth (*abhijacca-bala*); 5. strength of wisdom (*paññā-bala*). J. V. 120.

3. *Cakkavatti-vatta*: the twelve constantly practiced observances of a great ruler.⁸

4. *Rāja-saṅgahavatthu*: the four royal acts of service making for national integration.⁹

His Majesty King Bhumibol cultivated spiritual qualities, followed a code of conduct, and performed his royal responsibilities in accord with the thirty-one principles contained in the fourfold teachings on righteous sovereignty referred to above.

Here, the focus will be limited to the teaching on the four royal acts of service, or the four virtues making for national integration (*rāja-saṅgahavatthu*), namely:

1. *Sassa-medha*: insight, proficiency, and skill in agricultural promotion. Due to the aptness of agricultural promotion in light of Thailand's natural features and the traditional customs of Thai society, His Majesty gave special emphasis to this important work.

2. *Purisa-medha*: insight, proficiency, and skill in the promotion of government officials—both members of the military and civil servants—by supporting those virtuous individuals who perform their work with integrity and thus instil confidence in the general public.

3. *Sammā-pāsa*: insight, proficiency, and skill in uniting and creating solidarity in people, by promoting right livelihood; for instance, by helping poorer citizens to establish themselves financially.

⁸ Trans.: 1. supporting the royal households and the armed forces (*antojanasmiṃ balakāyasmim*); 2. supporting rulers of vassal states (*khattiyesu*); 3. supporting nobles and members of the royal entourage (*anuyantesu*); 4. protecting priests and royal ministers (*brāhmaṇagahapatikesu*); 5. protecting the nation's citizens and residents (*negama-jānapadesu*); 6. protecting renunciants and brahmans (*samaṇabrāhmaṇesu*); 7. protecting wild animals (*migapakkhīsu*); 8. preventing corrupt, unrighteous behaviour (*adhammā-kārapāṭikkhepo*); 9. caring for the poor and deprived (*adhanānaṃ dhanānuppādānaṃ*); 10. seeking out and asking questions from renunciants and brahmans (*samaṇabrāhmaṇe upasaṅkamitvā pañhāpucchanaṃ*); 11. refraining from iniquitous sexual cravings (*adhammā-rāgassa pahānaṃ*); 12. refraining from unbridled greed (*visamaḷobhassa pahānaṃ*). DA. III. 851.

⁹ Trans.: E.g.: S. I. 76; A. II. 42; A. IV. 151; It 21; Sn. 303. See below.

4. *Vāja-peya*: being endowed with kind and convincing speech, which promotes justice and fosters wisdom. This quality is clearly evident in the late king's many royal exhortations, conveying his heartfelt concern for his subjects, urging all people to fulfil their duties and responsibilities honestly, attentively, and resolutely, in order to achieve true success and prosperity.

His Majesty King Bhumibol's behaviour and conduct was full of splendour and beauty. He performed his royal affairs for the wellbeing of his subjects, with continual care and consideration. He sacrificed his time and energy without concern over personal fatigue or discomfort, and he put his heart into alleviating suffering and increasing happiness for people everywhere.

For decades the Thai people have felt constant devotion and inspiration for the goodness and compassion of His Most Gracious Majesty. His impeccable conduct left them with an indelible mental impression and a profound sense of loyalty and allegiance, overflowing in their hearts. When the time came for his passing away, they thus experienced great sorrow and lamentation, and they have discovered myriad ways to express their love, appreciation, and gratitude.¹⁰

¹⁰ Trans.: e.g.: providing volunteer medical care, free food, and free shelter to mourners at the Grand Palace, singing the Royal Anthem in unison, waiving entrance fees to museums and historical parks, organizing musical tributes, etc.

It is not only the Thai people who have acknowledged and shown respect for His Majesty King Bhumibol's goodness and eminence. When the news spread of His Majesty's passing away, monarchs and government leaders of various countries sent their words of high praise and admiration for his kindness and merits. This was an almost unprecedented occurrence. Some monarchs even venerated him to the extent of saying that they will take him as a standard of righteous sovereignty. This is a great honour for the Thai nation and its people, conforming to the Buddha's adage: *Rājā raṭṭhassa paññāṇaṃ*—'The king represents the dignity of the land.'

Through the power of the goodness performed by His Majesty King Bhumibol, the popular photograph of him with his magnificent royal regalia is not merely a sign of kingship and regal authority. It has become a symbol conveying his excellence and virtue extending throughout the nation of Thailand.

When Thai people bring up the image of their king in their minds, they can clearly perceive him travelling across the entire country, in regions both near and far, visiting his subjects and undertaking various royal projects. By generating this mental image of His Majesty they can visualize him as abiding throughout the kingdom, worthy of the designation 'King of Thailand.'

His Majesty exercised great self-sacrifice and applied all his strength and energy—physical, emotional, and intellectual, as well as the power of his insight—in performing his royal acts of service for the welfare of all Thai people. He was the force of the country—building the nation and acting as its shelter and foundation—and thus deserving the royal title 'Bhumibol.'¹¹

His Majesty King Bhumibol was overflowing with goodness and virtue. Thai people from all walks of life were thus deeply moved by and intensely loyal to their king. And from a wider, international perspective, Thai people are very proud that their king has been extolled and honoured by nations across the globe.

Both personal gratitude, devotion, and reverence for His Majesty's virtue and excellence, and the pride felt by witnessing admiration and respect expressed by the international community, can be a source of joy and self-dignity for the Thai people, reducing their grief and sadness.

Yet although these forms of joy and pride are virtuous and to be treasured, they are still limited to the domain of emotions.

In regard to reciprocating His Majesty King Rama IX's goodness and virtue, Thai people should not rest content with these emotions. Rather, they should progress to the level of wisdom and active engagement.

¹¹ Trans.: from the Pali *bhūmibala*, literally 'power of the earth.'

With wisdom one discerns and understands the true value, significance, and purpose of the king's goodness and virtue. One recognizes that the king's royal deeds were performed with the intention to solve people's problems, to ease their suffering, to eliminate afflictions like poverty, and to enable people to live happily. In sum, he acted for the people's welfare and benefit, according to his royal pledge—the essential guideline for his conduct and behaviour.

Having understood the value, significance, and purpose of the king's inherent virtue, one elevates to the next stage of wisdom that urges one to participate in carrying out good deeds in order to reach the goal of true happiness. By recognizing the value and objective of goodness, one aspires to carry out personal responsibilities; this in turn produces collective results. One's actions are effective at rectifying personal and social problems, and they lead to the benefit and welfare of all.

The king's royal pledge for the benefit of all Thai people has a collective goal and objective. It can be seen as a cardinal tenet lying at the heart of his performance of royal duties, bestowing blessings on everyone without exception.

The king's royal duties can be divided into separate projects and activities, organized into more than 4,000 Royal Initiative Projects established throughout the country.

Members of each local community directly affected by and benefiting from an individual Royal Initiative Project should recognize and understand the rationale, value, and advantages of the project. This is precisely the wisdom referred to above. Furthermore, they should work together to manage the project so that it reaches completion and meets its objectives, bearing wholesome fruit for everyone involved.

Another matter to take into account is that, for the work to be achievable, and for it to be done skilfully, effectively, and properly, the individuals performing the work need to be fully endowed with the correct qualifications and attributes.

People should engage in self-inquiry and self-improvement to ensure that they possess these qualifications and are thus, by definition, individuals of virtuous quality. These qualifications include: the power of sincere cooperation, the power of perseverance, and the power of proficiency and knowledge. Possessing these attributes, they will be accomplished at working together to perform and supervise these activities, and share in their rewards and blessings.

His Majesty King Bhumibol composed a Buddhist literary work titled 'The Story of Mahajanaka,' based on an original story in the Jataka Tales.¹²

¹² Trans.: the previous life stories of the Buddha.

This story describes the cultivation of the perfection of effort (*virīya pāramī*) in a previous life by the Bodhisatta, who would later be awakened as the Perfectly Enlightened Buddha.

This royal composition clearly portrays the importance that His Majesty gave to encouraging people to be diligent—to persevere and devote themselves to accomplishing and fulfilling their work and activities, undaunted and undeterred.

Mahajanaka uttered the maxim: ‘Any activity carried out without effort is fruitless. We should endeavour unremittingly, not succumbing to despondency.’

As Thai citizens who love the king, we should develop ourselves in these superior qualities, e.g. determined effort, so as to conform with His Majesty’s royal wishes and instructions.

Everywhere you go you hear the slogan ‘We Love the King.’ If we truly love the king, we will endeavour to fulfil His Majesty’s wishes in the way described above. In this context, people can clearly express their love for the king by cultivating the following four qualities:

1. **Expressing gratitude** (*kataññū*): experiencing deep appreciation for His Majesty’s countless virtuous undertakings, corresponding to his royal pledge: *I will rule righteously, for the benefit and wellbeing of the Siamese people.*

2. **Understanding the rationale** (*atthaññū*): discerning the value, significance, and purpose of His Majesty’s undertakings; recognizing the aims and objectives of His Majesty’s royal pledge—the chief principle guiding his actions—and of his intentions behind each Royal Initiative Project or each special activity, and knowing how these principles have a bearing on one’s own personal life.

3. **Applying devoted effort** (*paṭipatti-pūjā*): wishing out of love to honour His Majesty, one follows the teaching practised by monks in regard to the Buddha, namely, one venerates him through one's conduct and behaviour, by working together to fulfil one's responsibilities in order to reach desired success. Whatever fruits reaped by this success one bestows as a devotional offering to His Majesty.

4. **Endeavouring to cultivate wholesome qualities** (*bhāvanā-padhāna*): finally, in order to accomplish one's tasks, one needs to beware of indifference and apathy. Instead, one makes effort to improve oneself by developing virtue, moral conduct, self-discipline, determination, and discernment. By doing this one becomes a mature and honourable person.

By cultivating these four qualities, people's expressions of grief, devotion, and loyalty will be valid and meaningful—flawless and genuine.

In sum, His Majesty King Bhumibol undertook his royal responsibilities by setting up numerous Royal Initiative Projects with a resolute and unwavering goal, namely, to solve people's problems and alleviate their hardship, and to generate wellbeing and blessings for all.

After His Majesty put forth determined effort to solve specific difficulties and helped people to develop self-reliance, he would visit the regions and districts involved and rejoice when he saw how much the people's lives had improved. In Buddhism this is called experiencing appreciative joy (*muditā*).

If Thai people follow in His Majesty's footsteps by generating this quality of appreciative joy, they can already be recognized as applying devoted effort. They will be honouring him through their conduct and behaviour and leading the country of Thailand to prosperity.

Let us look at an easy method for cultivating appreciative joy with a lighthearted and cheerful attitude. When one climbs a mountain or enters a forest one may encounter a large sturdy tree, abounding in fresh leaves, blossoms, and fruit, with wide branches casting refreshing shade. Seeing this tree one experiences delight and satisfaction, and one harbours the wish: 'May this tree remain healthy and continue to thrive!' One then considers how gratifying and fortunate it would be to have such healthy and flourishing trees growing over the entire land. Here, one's appreciation turns to direct action and conservation. If there is a shortage of such trees one aims to plant more, and one persuades others to participate in planting and protecting the woodlands and forests. If people need to use these trees for timber, then one does so in a reasonable and sustainable way, ensuring that one is not exploiting the country's natural resources.

By joining forces to nurture woodlands and forests, the entire country will become more prosperous and bountiful. Everyone can then delight in the growth and prosperity of his or her local district and share in the collective peace and wellbeing. This is what it means to generate appreciative joy.

Such methods of cultivating appreciative joy generate abundance and plenty for Thailand, fostering sufficiency in agriculture and forestry and promoting a life of balance and moderation.

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If Thai people cultivate this appreciation for the kingdom of Thailand, delighting in the abundance and shared wellbeing of their own local communities, they will as a matter of course be making an offering of devoted effort. This will lead to the boon and good fortune for every region of the nation, fulfilling His Majesty's heartfelt wishes and desires.

By acting in this way, i.e. by carrying out His Majesty's royal pledge, people can validly maintain that they are performing a supreme meritorious deed in honour of His Majesty, and their actions will justify the claim: 'We love the king.'

Author

Venerable P. A. Payutto (Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacariya)¹³ is one of Thailand's most revered monks. Besides being acknowledged as one of Thailand's outstanding scholar monks, with a profound knowledge of the scriptures, he is venerated by many as embodying the teachings: as having assimilated them and made them practically accessible to others. He is a prolific writer, having composed more than 300 literary works. In December 2016 he was elevated to one of the nine most senior positions in the Thai ecclesiastical order. His previous ecclesiastical titles include:

- Phra Srivissuddhimoli
- Phra Rajavaramuni
- Phra Debvedi
- Phra Dhammapitaka
- Phra Brahmaganabhorn

For many years his monastery of residence was Wat Nyanavesakavan in Nakhon Pathom province, but for health reasons he now spends most of his time in smaller monastic residences further away from Bangkok.

¹³ Please note that transliterating the Thai ecclesiastical title พุทธโฆษาจารย์ into the Roman alphabet can be done in different ways, including: Buddhaghosacariya, Buddhaghosacharya, and Phutthakosajarn.

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Phra Brahmaganubhorn (P. A. Payutto)

November 7, 2009



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