Guest Editor's Note:

The duties and obligations of kings and professionals

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Millions of people in Thailand and throughout the world recently witnessed by means of television an ancient rite: the coronation of a king. It was splendid, historic and full of symbolism – symbols which represent the duties and obligations of kings. This Editor's Note reviews the significance of this auspicious event but draws attention to the duties of citizens, particularly parents, and teachers, and, those among us who have received special training in professional fields of service.

Coronation rites and ceremonies spell out, in a very public way, the obligations and duties of a king (or a president) as head of state. Such rites often include re-enactments of significant events in a country's history. (Bone, A., 2016).

Confucius. It was Confucius who argued that rituals had the power to solidify human social bonds. And, that participation in rituals, particularly by the elite, can help to unify a nation. He also stressed the importance of correctness in social relationships, and the strict observance of formalities in the performance of certain rites (Richey, n.d.).

Ashoka (304-232 B.C.E.). Ashoka, was an early convert to Buddhism and a key figure in the transition of Buddhism from a local religion to a major force that transformed Asia, according to a number of historians. He was emperor of the Indian subcontinent for 41 years. He promoted wildlife protection, banning hunting for sport, built universities, hospitals for people and animals, and constructed irrigation systems for trade and agriculture (Voss, 2016).

Actually, Buddhist scholars have a set of guidelines for kings. They are called the ten duties of a king, *rajadhamma*. Some historians believe that these 10 duties were taught by the Buddha over two thousand years ago, and that they are as valid now as they were many centuries ago. (Buddhist Broadcasting Network, 2019).

1. *Dana* – charity – having a willingness to sacrifice one's interests for the people.
2. *Sila* – morality – maintaining a high moral order in one's personal conduct.
3. *Pariccaga* – altruism – being generous towards the people, avoiding selfishness.
4. *Ajjava* – honesty – fulfilling one's duties with loyalty and integrity.
5. *Maddava* – gentleness – being kind and gentle, never arrogant.
6. *Tapa* – self-control – to perform one's duties with dispassion.
7. *Akkhoda* – non-anger – remaining calm in the midst of confusion.
8. *Avihimsa* – non-violence – being non-violent, not persecuting the people.
9. *Khanti* – forbearance – practicing patience in one's duties.
10. *Avirodhana* – uprightness – respecting public opinion, promoting harmony.

In the first eight years of his reign, Ashoka was a much honoured warrior general during which time he expanded the Indian empire. After one particular campaign, he visited the sight of his army's victory, and

seeing the carnage all around him, cried out, "What have I done?" He is said to have announced that from then on he would undertake 'conquest by righteousness' instead of war. He also encouraged tolerance and understanding between different creeds and ethnic groups (Tanakasempipat & Thepgumpanat, 2019).

Similarly, Rama IX, the late King of Thailand, was widely hailed as epitomizing those same kingly ideals (Power, 2016).

Symbols of kingship. In the Thai ceremony earlier this year, there were five: the crown, sword, staff, slippers, fan and flywhisk. The crown, of course, is the most significant, representing kingship; the sword represents the role of warrior with a duty to defend the kingdom; the staff is the symbol of royal authority; and, the fan and flywhisk are to 'repel and maleficent forces that might bring discomfort to [the] people' (Wikipedia, 2019a; Bangkok Post, 2019).

Duties and obligations of professionals. By at least the year 1675, the term 'professionals' had expanded to include the three learned professions: Divinity, Law, and Medicine, as well as the military profession. Because professionals are trained to exercise specialist knowledge and skill, their work can affect people's lives in profound ways, and malpractice, for example, is a possibility.

They are capable of making judgments, applying their skills, and reaching informed decisions in situations that the general public cannot because they have not attained the necessary knowledge and skills. Thus, the need to require such persons to affirm that they will serve their clients honestly and to the best of their ability. One of the earliest examples of professional ethics is the Hippocratic Oath to which medical doctors still adhere to this day (Wikipedia, 2019b).

Philosophers, like Plato in *Politics,* have pointed out that the efficient and effective operation of nation-states can lead to an improved life for everyone: *the city-state comes into being for the sake of life but exists for the sake of the good life* [The theme that the good life or happiness is the proper end of the city-state recurs throughout the *Politics*]. (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2017). However, that 'good life' can best happen when there is a head of state who is able to model the same set of duties epitomised in the life of kings such as Ashoka and Rama IX.

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