

Venerable Nauyane Ariyadhamma Maha Thera

Theravada – Sri Lankan

Ven. Ariyadhamma Mahathera was born on 24 April 1939 to a traditional Buddhist family in Kurunegala and was educated at the Government School of Nilagama. His father was a supporter of Ven. Wigoda Bodhirakkhita Thera, who was resident at the nearby Na Uyana forest monastery. The close relationship with the monks from childhood inspired his decision to ordain, and he trained under Ven. Wigoda Bodhirakkhita Thera in 1956 as an upasaka. He went forth on 27 March 1957 with Ven. Matara Sri Nanarama Mahathera as his upajjhaya and received upasampada on 15 July 1959 with Ven. Madawala Dhammatilaka Mahathera as the upajjhaya.

Ven Ariyadhamma thero studied under several learned elders, including Getamane Sri Vimalavamsa Mahathera, Ven. Kadawedduwe Sri Jinavamsa Mahathera, Ven. Devagoda Mangalasiri Mahathera and Ven. Matara Sri Nanarama Mahathera. He studied the Burmese language from Ven. Nyaninda Sayadaw while he was in Sri Lanka in 1964.

Ven. Ariyadhamma thero was proficient in Pali and Sanskrit and had extensive knowledge of the Pali Canon and the Pali commentaries. He was a teacher at the Gunawardena Yogasrama (the headquarters of Sri Kalyani Yogasrama Samstha) from 1965 to 1995. Ven Ariyadhamma thero was appointed the registrar of Sri Kalyani Yogasrama Samstha in 1969, a position he held until being appointed the spiritual advisor and head of the organization in 2003. In this capacity, Ariyadhamma led about 1,500 forest monks in 193 branch monasteries

During the 1960s, Ven. Ariyadhamma thero studied the Mahasi meditation system under Ven. Matara Sri Nanarama Mahathera, and was guided in traditional Sri Lankan meditation methods by Ven. Matale Silarakkhita Mahathera of Ruwangirikanda Aranya. He did retreats at Mahasi centres in Burma in 1992 and 1993.

In 1996, Ariyadhamma practiced under Ven. Sayadaw U Āciṇṇa (Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw) at Pa-Auk Meditation Centre in Mawlamyine, Burma. On returning to Sri Lanka in the beginning of 1997, he introduced the method to the Sri Kalyani Yogasrama Samstha, and there are several monasteries in the organization now practicing the Pa-Auk method. Ariyadhamma did further retreats at the same centre in 1997, 2001 and 2010.

Ariyadhamma taught meditation to monks and lay practitioners since 1977. In 2006, he was awarded the 'Mahākammaṭṭhānācariya' ('Great Meditation Teacher') title by the Government of the Burma in recognition of his services in teaching Dhamma and meditation.