

A short Biography and Services of

Kurunegoda Piyatissa Nayaka Maha Thero

Early life, Education, and Ordination:

Kurunegoda Piyatissa Nayaka Maha Thero was born in Kegalle district (Hatara korale), Kurunegoda of Sri Lanka on December 29th 1928. He was ordained on November 16th 1941 and received Theravada Higher ordination on June 22nd 1950. He obtained his primary education (as a monk) at the Bodhigupta Pirivena in Denagamuwa, and higher education at Vidyodaya Pirivena, Colombo 10, Sri Lanka. He completed his monastic education with honors and awards. Rev. Piyatissa received the Prachina Pandit Diploma with awards from the department of education of Sri Lanka, a Bachelor of Arts General Degree from Vidyodaya University of Sri Lanka, a B.A. with honors from the University of London, and a Master of Arts from Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA..

Service in Sri Lanka and Europe:

Before coming to England as a Dhammaduta Monk, he was a teacher at the Bodhigupta Pirivena in Denagamuwa, Polgahawela, deputy principle at the Sri Gnaneswara Pirivena in Hunupitiya, in Colombo, deputy principle at the Government Central College in Polgahawela, and a teacher at the Ananda College, Colombo 10. His career in the field of education lasted over 21 years. During this time, he wrote and published many articles in newspapers and magazines in Sinhala and English. He won the title of "Radio Poet" in 1953, and the Pali essay prize in island-wide contest held by the department of cultural affairs. Also, he acted as an examiner of books at the Education Publication Board of the department of education.

After he came to England, he was the first meditation master in charge of the Oxford Buddhist Meditation Center in Oxford from 1972 to 1974. From 1974 to 1981 he was the deputy head of the London Buddhist Vihara. During this time he has propagated the Buddha Dhamma in England and Europe. Cambridge University, Oxford University, Manchester University, Lancaster University, Nottingham University, London University and many other Buddhist associations, churches, and synagogues frequently invited him to deliver talks, and to teach Buddhist meditation. Also, he visited many high schools to teach Buddhism in England.

Service in USA:

In 1981 he was invited to New York by the American Sri Lanka Buddhist Association. Since then he remained as the incumbent and abbot of the New York Buddhist Vihara. During last 32 years in New York, he had done a great service to Buddhist community and all living beings. He was a vice president of the American Buddhist Congress, a vice president of the World Buddhist Sangha Council, and an executive council member of the World Conference of Religion and Peace (WCRP), president of the Sri Lanka Sangha Council of America, president of the Buddhist Literature Society, and a faculty member of the New School University for Social Research in New York. He was the founder of Buddhist Council of New York. He was appointed as *Chief Sangha Nayaka Maha Thero* of USA in Jan. 1998. He brought the proposal to the United Nations, to declare the Vesak (the Buddha's Birth, Enlightenment and Passing away day) as a World Holyday through Sri Lankan government. He has served as a committee member of "Temple of Truth" that recognized the H.H. Dalai Lama for his worldwide service. In recognition to his service worldwide, President Bill Clinton has invited Rev. Piyatissa to The White House in 1998 for the One America Meeting which includes many religious and political leaders. He also was honored by the City Council of New York in 2003. In the year 2004, he was honored by Vidyodaya Pirivena (College) conferring the title of "*Sri Sumangala Vidyavatamsa*". In the year of 2005, Sri Lankan government issued a postal stamp on Vesak day with a picture of New York Buddhist Vihara to honor the Nayaka thero. Third volume of English translation of five hundred fifty Jataka stories was published in Taiwan in 2006. In 2009, Maharagama Sri Wajiragnana Dharmayathanaya honored the Nayaka Thero by conferring the honorary degree "*Wishwa Keerthi Sri Sasana Shabana Pravachana Visharadha*". In 2011, Vidyalanakara Pirivena (College) conferred the Nayaka Thero with "*Sri Saddharma Siromini*" honorary degree. He is the most senior Theravada Buddhist monk now in the Eastern USA. He has written over 20 books in Sinhala, English, Pali, and Sanskrit and some of these books were translated to other languages like Chinese and Bengali.

The present New York Buddhist Vihara in Queens, New York is the largest Sri Lankan Buddhist Vihara in the USA. With help of the community and the donors, Rev, Piyatissa Nayaka Thero has built this marvelous Vihara for everybody to visit, learn, and practice Buddhism. Rev Piyatissa has expanded the service by establishing five Buddhist temples in Staten Island, Long Island, New Jersey, Boston, and South Carolina. In December 2004 tsunami, Nayaka Thero led everybody in the community to help Sri Lankans who suffered from one of the worst natural disasters in the history of Sri Lanka. Under the leadership of Nayaka Thero, The New York Village with 51 houses in Ambalangoda, Sri Lanka was built and donated to the families who lost their houses from the tsunami. This village includes playground, technical college with computers to learn English and Information Technology.