



His Holiness Somdet Phra Ariyavongsagatayana

His Holiness Somdet Phra Ariyavongsagatayana, the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand, has been serving as the spiritual leader of the Thai Buddhist community since his appointment in 2017. His unwavering commitment to promoting peace, harmony, and compassion has earned him widespread admiration and respect throughout the country. As a testament to his contributions, the Thai government has planned a celebration in honor of His Holiness's 96th birthday anniversary on June 26, 2023. The "Celebrations on the Occasion of His Holiness Somdet Phra Ariyavongsagatayana, the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand's 96th Birthday Anniversary" is a national celebration that will highlight his enduring impact on the spiritual and cultural heritage of Thailand.

Born in 1927 in Bang Pa, Ratchaburi Province, His Holiness was raised in a family of Chinese descent who ran a local family business. His spiritual journey began at the age of 13 when he was ordained as a samanera at Wat Sattanarth Parivatara, where he continued his Buddhist studies with Phra-Athikan Sotthi Sumitto and excelled academically, attaining several qualifications in Dhamma and Pali language studies.

In 1947, His Holiness moved to Bangkok to continue his Buddhist studies at Wat Rajabopit Sathitmahasimaram under the patronage of His Holiness Somdet Phra Ariyavongsagatayana. A year later, he was ordained as a monk and received the Pali monastic name "Ambaro." His profound knowledge and vast interests in various disciplines led him to enroll at Mahamakut Educational Council, where he received a Bachelor of Arts in Buddhist Studies in 1957. He became a member of the first generation of Buddhist monks trained to be religious ambassadors and received a Master of Arts degree in History and Archeology from Banaras Hindu University in 1969. His Holiness is the first Supreme Patriarch of the Rattanakosin Era to have received university education from a foreign institution.

His linguistic abilities in Thai, various Chinese dialects, English, and Hindi have enabled him to communicate with people of different nationalities and carry out foreign religious affairs without language barriers. As part of his dhammaduta duty, he was assigned as the leader of the pioneering team stationed in Sydney, Australia, and met and engaged in religious dialogues with His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn, who was then the Crown Prince of Thailand and studying at the Royal Military College in Canberra.

His Holiness has a remarkable record of ecclesiastical and educational administration, holding several positions with profound insight and meticulousness. He chaired the Executive Committee of the Training Institute for Dhammaduta and served as a member of the Sangha Supreme Council of Thailand. He is an advocate of education for both monks and laypeople, devoting himself to teaching Buddhist principles and disciplines to bhikkhus and samaneras at Wat Rajabopit and its affiliates for many years. He is currently serving as the incumbent President of the University Council at Mahamakut Buddhist University.

His Holiness is an eloquent and shrewd preacher of wisdom who delivers Buddhist sermons to templegoers and promotes Buddhist teachings in foreign lands. He continues to play an active role in the dissemination of dharma, having initiated efforts to do so in Australia in 1973. His advocacy and close monitoring have enabled the flourishing of these efforts. His Holiness has also represented the Sangha

Supreme Council of Thailand on several occasions regarding international matters, including the international celebrations of Vesak at the headquarters of the United Nations in New York.

Despite his strict commitment to monastic disciplines, His Holiness is congenial and affable. He converses with people regardless of their age or socioeconomic backgrounds, always with a smile on his face. He believes that the development of good relationships between monastic communities and the lay public is crucial in the perpetuation of Buddhism. He regularly engages with the community through outreach programs and public talks, demonstrating his concern for their spiritual and material well-being. His compassionate demeanor and steadfast commitment to his monastic duties have earned him the respect and admiration of many, both within and outside the monastic community.

Since his investiture as the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand, His Holiness has continued to serve as a spiritual leader with many commitments. He has maintained his involvement in various religious and philanthropic activities, promoting Buddhism and improving the welfare of people from all walks of life. He has also been a strong advocate for interfaith dialogue and cooperation, recognizing the importance of building bridges across religious boundaries.

His Holiness has received world leaders at Wat Rajabopit, which serves as a testament to his international reputation as a spiritual leader. In 2019, Pope Francis visited Wat Rajabopit and met with His Holiness, acknowledging the importance of interfaith dialogue and cooperation. Additionally, in 2022, Kamala Harris, the Vice President of the United States, visited Wat Rajabopit and paid her respects to His Holiness, recognizing the significance of his spiritual leadership and the important role of Buddhism in promoting peace and compassion in the world.

Throughout his life, His Holiness has demonstrated a deep commitment to the Buddhist faith and to the welfare of all beings. His profound knowledge, linguistic abilities, and compassionate demeanor have enabled him to serve as a bridge between different cultures and traditions, promoting understanding and cooperation. His unwavering dedication to his monastic duties has earned him the respect and admiration of many, both in Thailand and around the world. As the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand, His Holiness continues to inspire and guide countless individuals on the path of spiritual awakening and compassionate action.

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