

Aye, Yan (1938–2014)

SAXON SHWE

Saxon Shwe, M.A. in religion (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, the United States), B.A.A. (Spicer Memorial College, Puna, India), is president of Ayeayawaddy Mission in Myanmar Union Mission. He is married to Salome Tin with a son and a daughter.

Yan Aye was an instructor, principal, union education director, and president of Myanmar Union Adventist Seminary, Myaungmya, Myanmar.

Early Life

Yan Aye was born on March 15, 1938, in Pathein, Ayeyarwady Region, Myanmar.¹ His parents, Aung Thein and Daw Ma Aye, were Buddhist adherents, so he was raised in a Buddhist environment and lifestyle.² He had two siblings, Than Aung and Saw Yee, but he was the only one to study and learn to read and write in a Buddhist monastery.³ In those days, there were no formal schools where they lived. Yan Aye heard about a Seventh-day Adventist mission school that had opened at Myaungmya. In 1951, he bravely walked from his home to the school, which he fully relied on for education.⁴ He never wanted to rely on someone to support his studies, so he worked to pay for his secondary education. Although it took longer to finish his studies, he was happy with the education he attained.⁵

Education and Marriage

Yan Aye attended the Seventh-day Adventist high school at Kyauktaing, Taungngu, in 1958.⁶ During his studies at Myaungmya, he embraced the Christian faith. His years in the mission school strengthened his faith, and, eventually, he accepted Jesus Christ and became a Seventh-day Adventist. He attended Spicer Memorial College from 1961-1968 for higher education and pursued a major in history. Yan Aye worked eight hours a day at Spicer Memorial College and, although struggling for a longer period of time, finished his first degree. He continued his studies at the University of Poona, India, in 1968⁷ and graduated with an MA in history in 1970.⁸ On May 15, 1978, Yan Aye married Khin Than Yee, a medical doctor.⁹ They were blessed with three children, Kyaw Than, S' Myo, and Shwe Zin; and four grandchildren, Nichole, Caithlin, S' Blessed, and S' Cyrus.¹⁰

Career and Ministry

Yan Aye was a purposeful gentleman. He was a patient, humble, quiet, kind, tender, and thoughtful person with higher aims and objectives in life. Knowing that education is a fundamental part of service, he pursued higher

education, becoming the first master's degree holder among Adventist youths in Myanmar Union Mission.¹¹ Right after he completed his studies at the University of Poona, India, Yan Aye was called by Burma Union Mission (now Myanmar Union Mission) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to serve as an instructor and lecturer at Burma Union Bible Seminary, where he worked from 1970-1979.¹²

Due to Yan Aye's aims, goals, and objectives in life, he married late to Dr. Khin Than Yee, who was very supportive of his ministry. They both dedicated their lives to the mission of the church.¹³ She left her job in a government medical institute and dedicated her life to God's mission alongside her husband.¹⁴ In 1980, Yan Aye was elected to serve as principal of Myanmar Union Adventist Seminary, where he worked from 1980-1991.¹⁵ On December 13, 1980, Yan Aye was ordained to the gospel ministry.¹⁶

After long years of dedicated work at the Bible Seminary, Pastor Yan Aye was appointed education director of Myanmar Union Mission, where he served from 1992-1995.¹⁷ He was sponsored to study a postgraduate degree at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Philippines, beginning in 1996 and graduating in 1998 with an Education Specialist (Ed.S.) degree.¹⁸ Soon after completing his postgraduate degree, Pastor Yan Aye was appointed president of Myanmar Union Adventist Seminary, where he served from 1998-2006.¹⁹

Later Life

Although Pastor Yan Aye retired from organizational responsibilities in 2006, he continued serving God and His church in various capacities since he was still physically, mentally, and spiritually strong, serving as a good example for the next generation of workers.²⁰ He was still enthusiastic, active, and strong enough to work for the Lord at age 76. However, for unknown reasons, Pastor Yan Aye died unexpectedly on June 23, 2014.²¹

Contribution and Legacy

Pastor Yan Aye was a hardworking, good, humble servant leader as he presided over Myanmar Union Adventist Seminary. During his time at the seminary, enrollment continued to increase,²² and programs of study for Adventist youth were added.²³ He aimed high and encouraged the people to send their children to the only higher learning center for Adventist education that existed in Myanmar. He advocated for preschools to be opened in different parts of Myanmar to approach and minister to non-Adventist parents in hopes they would accept the gospel message. The preschools would also motivate parents to send their children to Adventist elementary and high schools. He assisted with Adventist high school students' financial obligations and provided for a work-study program through funds received from donors. He contacted and sought donors to provide funds for high schools that were feeding schools to Myanmar Union Adventist Seminary. As he worked on his academic paper about the link between the preschool and higher education levels, Pastor Yan Aye implemented his dream for the Myanmar Union Adventist education system.²⁴

Pastor Yan Aye raised funds to help poor students and establish work-study programs at Myanmar Union Adventist Seminary. He encouraged students to engage in manual labor and to develop their characters through lifestyle changes as part of the Adventist education system.²⁵ He left tangible as well as intangible contributions for Myanmar Union Adventist Seminary. His interest was in expanding school properties and possessions with land, gardens, and paddy fields to generate income and allow students to work and earn their tuition and school fees.²⁶

Because of his memorable contributions to the church, Pastor Yan Aye will always be remembered and appreciated. The church will never forget his selfless administrative skills of servant leadership. Pastor Yan Aye awaits the voice of Jesus Christ to rise up on the morning of His Second Coming.

SOURCES

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3. Ibid.

4. Saw De, interview by author, Innma, August 10, 2018.
5. Notes on Muller Kyaw's sermon at Yan Aye's funeral service, June 25, 2014.
6. Ba Hla Thein, interview by author, Yangon, January 11, 2008.
7. Saxon Shwe, interview by author, Myaungmya, April 4, 2001.
8. "Yan Aye," Workers Service Record, Myanmar Union Mission archives, Dagon, Myanmar.
9. Ibid.
10. S' Myo Aye, interview by author, Yangon, August 20, 2018.
11. Kyaw Tun, interview by author, February 10, 2002.
12. "Yan Aye," Workers Service Record.
13. Personal knowledge of author through conversation with Yan Aye, December 10, 2001.
14. Ibid.
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16. Burma Union Committee, Action No. 80 – 184.
17. Ibid., Action No. 91 – 161.
18. "Yan Aye," Workers Service Record.
19. Ibid.
20. Notes on Muller Kyaw's sermon at Yan Aye's funeral service, 2014.
21. Biographical sketch of Yan Aye, funeral service, June 25, 2014.
22. Enrollment statistics for AAA, 2001-2006, Myanmar Union Adventist Seminary archives, Myaungmya, Myanmar.
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25. Work Program, Myanmar Union Adventist Seminary archives, Myaungmya, Myanmar.
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