



Tourism in Paradise



Autumn

Autumn is the season in the Northern Hemisphere between summer and winter, when the temperature falls and many plants go dormant; it lasts from the autumnal equinox to the winter solstice and is generally recognized to cover the months of September, October, and November. March, April, and May are the months of autumn in the Southern Hemisphere.



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Editorial

Seasons are reasons for tourism. Winter and summer vacations push Western tourists to fulfil their quest to escape unauthentic life. In my eastern Buddhist ontological view, seasons are the truth that we need to understand—the whole world changes. In a day, we encounter many such changes. Replica of the smile on the face of a Jamaican lady who accepts your flowers too is a sudden change like the salty white waves of the South Kingstown beach. It comes to us, kisses our souls, and goes back far away in the North Atlantic Ocean.

Change always brings a feeling of sorrow but nature, I think, does it differently. Leaves that leave the tree during the autumn become the fertilizer to rise and shine next summer. For me, four autumns are heavy to bear. Now, I must leave the tree. My departure may make space for a new branch to grow. This thought reminds me of the song I love the most sung by Harry Belafonte. I just took some verses here.

“ Down the way
Where the nights are gay
And the sun shines daily on the mountaintop
I took a trip on a sailing ship
And when I reached Jamaica, I made a stop

But I'm sad to say I'm on my way
I won't be back for many a day
My heart is down
My head is turning around
I had to leave a little girl in Kingston town...”

The TiP is my pretty treasury. But, we have to leave the destination for another better or bitter place until realizing a justification for the truth for ourselves. Sometimes we may meet again or maybe not. But, I can have hope. I dream of reading the TiP Vol. 40 on a sailing ship in the Caribbean ocean. Till that, goodbye!

Hiran Dinusha



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Down the way
Where the nights are gay
And the sun shines daily on the mountaintop
I took a trip on a sailing ship
And when I reached Jamaica I made a stop

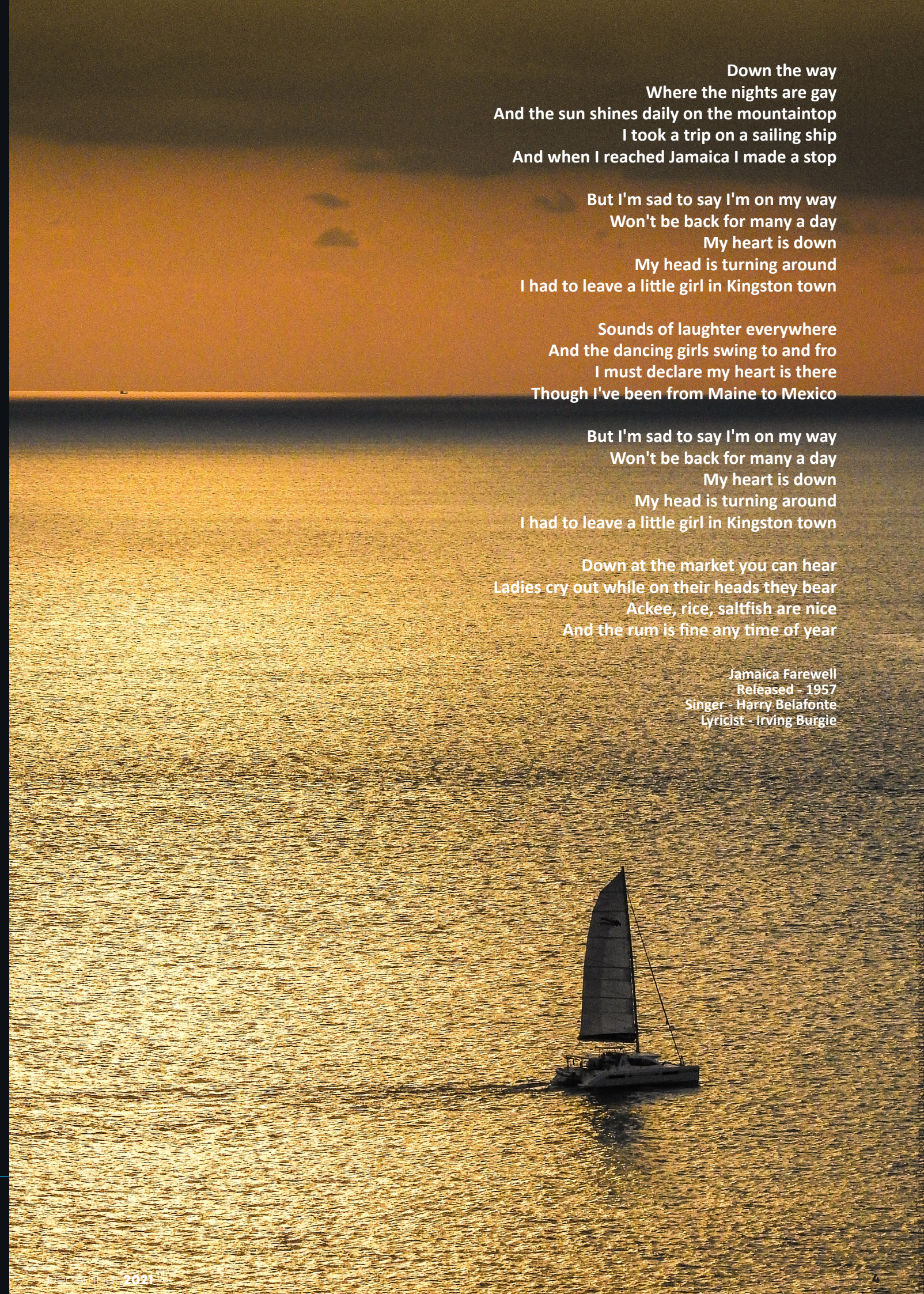
But I'm sad to say I'm on my way
Won't be back for many a day
My heart is down
My head is turning around
I had to leave a little girl in Kingston town

Sounds of laughter everywhere
And the dancing girls swing to and fro
I must declare my heart is there
Though I've been from Maine to Mexico

But I'm sad to say I'm on my way
Won't be back for many a day
My heart is down
My head is turning around
I had to leave a little girl in Kingston town

Down at the market you can hear
Ladies cry out while on their heads they bear
Ackee, rice, saltfish are nice
And the rum is fine any time of year

Jamaica Farewell
Released - 1957
Singer - Harry Belafonte
Lyricist - Irving Burgie



CONTENTS

13



OVER TOURISM

A Real Threat To Destination Sustainability

17

SPA

INDUSTRY

CREATING AN OPPORTUNITY FOR WOM-
EN EMPOWERMENT



19

Q&A

Dr.Surandi Dissanayake



24

CLOTHES COLOURS CULTURE



| December 2021 |

27

EXPERIENTIAL

TRAVEL

A New Form of Travel



29



HOSPITALITY

TO

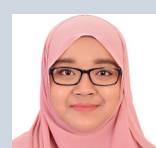
PRINCE PHILIP

33



A crisis
is a
terrible
THING TO MISS!

35



Rendang Tok

The Treasure Cuisine of Perak, Malaysia

39

#Metourism, Travel Selfies,
And Destination Marketing
An Insight



43



A touristy place

I visited in the world

45

Environmental Sustainability

A pressing Agenda in Tourism and Hospitality in
Sri Lanka



55



POETIC MEMORIES OF CHINA - I THE SLEEPING LION

61



CREATIVE TOURISM

A new cultural melting pot

63

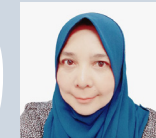
Q&A

Gayangi Wirasinha



| December 2021 |

69



Discover the Exotic Taste of Sambal Pijat

75



DARK SKY TOURISM AND STAR GAZING DESTINATION

79



Have we practiced Ecotourism operations at National Parks in Sri Lanka?

87



Once in Blue ballon



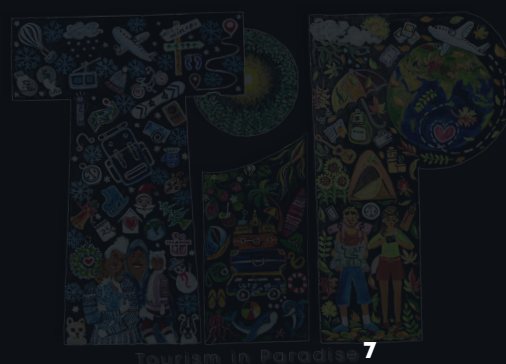
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It gives me immense pride and honour to write this message for the fourth issue of the Tourism in Paradise (TiP) Magazine published by the Department of Tourism Management, Faculty of Management Studies of the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. First, I warmly extend my heartiest congratulations and gratitude to the editorial board for using all the talents to publish this issue.

As the third-largest global industry, tourism has experienced continued expansion and diversification. It has become one of the fastest-growing and most important economic sectors globally, benefiting destinations and communities worldwide. International tourist arrivals have grown from 25 million in 1950 to nearly 1.5 billion in 2019. Similarly, the tourism revenues earned by destinations around the world have grown from US\$ 2 billion in 1950 to US\$ 1.7 trillion in 2019. The sector represents an estimated 10.3% of the world's GDP and every ten jobs globally. However, the tourism industry has been badly affected due to the COVID-19 pandemic globally since early 2020. The destinations suffer from all economic ills due to the absence of tourist arrivals. Therefore, it is vitally important to have possible measures to manage the tourism operations following all the necessary health guidelines during this pandemic. At the same time, it needs to have viable policies, planning, and strategies to have a rapid boom of tourism in the new normal, which should benefit all the vulnerable and marginalized groups to have inclusive growth while addressing the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Faculty of Management Studies is an 'A Grade' Faculty declared by the Quality Assurance Council of the University Grants Commission. The Faculty is dedicated to pursuing an excellent teaching and research culture to deliver high-quality education in a picturesque and peaceful environment for our students and other stakeholders. As a state university of Sri Lanka, our prime responsibility is to produce quality able-graduates who can contribute to uplift the socio-economic standard of the Island. While the rewarding indicators of our efforts are the quality of our graduates, the scholarly works we published and the support we provided to our partners in the industry, we also have recognition and reputation as the pioneer tourism and hospitality higher educational institute by our stakeholders. With this magazine too, we can show the world what we do. The magazine will publish periodically to enlighten the scholars, industry and the general public with quality, accurate, and timely needed information.

I wish the Department of Tourism Management all the best to continue its valuable services forever.



(Dr) Sarath Munasinghe
Head, Department of Tourism Management
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With immense pleasure, I am sending this message to the 4th volume of Tourism in Paradise (TiP) and witnessing how TiP continues to mark its place in tourism and hospitality readership. TiP of the Department of Tourism Management exists to create a space for tourism and hospitality conversations, bringing together scholars, practitioners, and well-wishers of tourism in this space. TiP also continues to be a source of current and exciting knowledge and insights into tourism and hospitality in particular and related other fields in general. Congratulations to the editorial team for completing another issue of this exciting piece of work, even during hard times like a pandemic. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the editorial team, students and staff of DTM, authors, and the broader readership for bringing TiP to this level of success.

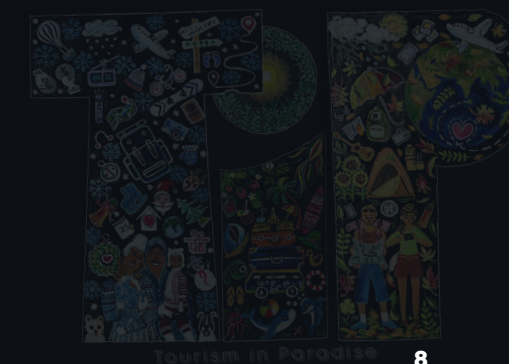




Image courtesy: Iraj Ratnayake

INCLUSIVE GROWTH A POSITIVE APPROACH THROUGH TOURISM

Being a panacea for numerous economic obstacles in developing countries, the tourism industry has been widely recognized as a treasure trove over the past decades. Especially with the industry's potential for foreign exchange earnings, employment generation, revenue generation, and regional development, it has ushered proliferating benefits even for the incipient destinations. Yet, the success of such untamed mass development through tourism has been controversial over the past few years due to the underlying negative impacts caused. Mass tourism, dominated by the hands of capitalist enterprises, has paved the way for foreign-controlled enclaves in destinations, resulting in the exclusion of their local community in development.

With such considerations, the tourism industry is seeing numerous changes in its approach to development, thereby drifting from the enclave masses towards inclusive niche segments. Especially, a recent trend is visible by which sustainable tourism and associated responsible practices are gaining increased attention from both the parties of service providers and demanders, rather than focusing solely on economic benefits. In contrast to the

exploitation of resources to cater to the demand, such practices focus more on generating demand for sustainable potentials, which is pivotal in assuring the best benefits with all three pillars of sustainability. Yet, the decisive question remains; how such sustainable practices can be utilized as strategies for inclusive growth?

Before discussing inclusive growth through tourism, it is vital to recognize inclusive growth. It is seen as sustainable growth that (i) will create and expand economic opportunities and (ii) ensure broad access to these opportunities so that members of society can participate in and benefit from growth (Lee, 2019; McKinley, 2010). It should essentially incorporate all the parties in economic development, benefitting even the marginalized. Hence, if inclusive growth is to be attained through tourism, all relevant sectors, including fisheries, agriculture, the rural industry, cultural industries, etc., should be incorporated in tourism development. The benefits of tourism should flow into those. Most significantly, the local community at destinations, even non-tourism service providers, should essentially be benefited through tourism.



<https://ij-travels.com/media/experience/>

With the rising trend of alternative forms in tourism, a great potential can be identified for such marginalized parties to be benefitted. Emerging niche segments such as community-based tourism (CBT), rural tourism, and culinary tourism, mainly being locally owned and controlled, provide vital opportunities for sustainable development. Therefore, introducing such tourism forms for the marginalized rural communities would be an essential strategy for inclusive growth. Being a multicultural country with a considerable local heritage, Sri Lankans are gifted with high potentials for CBT. For example, communities practicing authentic livelihoods such as traditional agricultural practices, culinary practices, local cultural industries, including laksha, reed, traditional drum making, etc., are still available on the island. Hence, these novel tourism forms can be utilized to revitalize local heritage while catering to such marginalized communities through tourism development.

Nevertheless, implementing such strategies is more challenging than ever in the face of the covid-19 pandemic. Being underdeveloped rural areas, marketing such destinations and indigenous communities through online platforms is challenging due to their lack of technological know-how. In contrast, even the lack of awareness on positive tourism impacts further worsens such concerns. Therefore, the government should focus more on

sustainable tourism strategies and facilitate these communities while emphasizing inclusive growth. When the world reopens the gates for traveling in the new normal, more authentic travel experiences should be made available safer and sound. Let's join hands to prioritize innovative strategies for inclusive growth through tourism!



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“Attention please the express train from Colombo to Kandy may be delayed.”

It is so usual to hear this announcement even in the central railway hub of Sri Lanka, in the largest commercial city of the country, Colombo. Yes! As soon as I entered the railway station of Colombo, I remembered how much this delay statement had been familiarized to us. Colombo city has changed with giant buildings and urbanization over the last decades, though this “attentions please” delay statement has not yet received enough attention over many generations!

So I was hurrying to find a seat on a platform to pass my time like everyone else. While counting my steps from the ticket counter to platform number 4, I noticed platform numbers 1, 2 & 3 were tidy and charming in silence. However, platform number 4 seemed to be in a hurry and messy. My exploring eyes stopped near the corner on a seat next to a mother and her little daughter. The mother was jumbled like others on the stage, yet her daughter was pretty enough to enjoy her surroundings. I explored what this little girl had on stage to have fun with while having a seat next to her.

Wow! I was amazed when I saw a foreigner with a simple outfit on the platform buying some snacks from a poor local cart. Eventually, I was really proud that he was a gentle white man instead of a dirty Indian or a messy Chinese. I also felt hungry, but I didn't need to buy anything from that cart since I knew how dirty they were. Some sound broke my attention to the foreigner on the platform. As soon as I turned my head, I saw an older adult selling some storybooks, and the girl next to me asked her mom to buy a book of the story named *Snow White and Seven Dwarfs*! I closed my eyes with a silent mocking laugh on my lips when I heard the bookseller ask from that little girl, “Baby, would you want to be like *Snow White*?”

How could the children be like *Snow White* when they lived with their parents who spent their childhood with *Amalbiso*, where strong family bonds were customized? *Amalbiso* was advised to keep inside the room with a well-locked door while *Snow White* and other thousands of princes in western lands learned to challenge their fate. So *Snow White* traveled in the dark amidst loneliness and black magic; however enjoyed the shine of the love of *Dwarfs*, birds, and a handsome prince during her life journey. In contrast to the story of *Snow White*, *Amalbiso* was hurried to come safely to her dwelling with fire to light her stove.

I thought that was why tourism and its majorities are centralized in the hands of western minds. Still, suddenly, I found a spotlight in my mind about many explorers in Eastern lands traveling to resolve their destiny to find peace in mind. Even our ancestors believed that walking was worth more than thousands of gold coins. Sometimes, our ancients' walking experience might be the reason behind their beautiful creations and civilization, which we sell today as a tourism attraction. Yes, Easterners might travel not with the purpose of recreation but with the intention of something more than recreation. What was it?

Then again, my mind started to wonder why we still depend on our past rich heritage and sell them to earn a living rather than creating something new using our ancestors' technology, courage, and pride. I thought about it repeatedly. Then my soul ached with pain, and I felt silly since I felt my wow - mind when I saw the white man on the platform was the answer! We as a nation lost our real values by adopting a copping attitude instead of practicing our inherited learning attitude. So that, from a moment in our history, we are living a confined and caged life while our shores are wide open, just as elephants that roam around our lush lands have no clue on their real size until the end their lives. So I realized we were looking in wow-mind at white men who reap rich fruits from the seeds of our ancestors with arrogance.

Then, when I opened my eyes, I saw beautiful scenery. There was a herd of pigeons on the platform, and the foreigner was feeding them. Her mother also copied the white man and fed the same birds the same snack. But the little angel, who thought of owning the book of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, neither followed her mother nor the white man; instead, she was laughing loudly and enjoying her merry moment in the middle of the pigeons. Yes, she had kept some steps forward to find her own way of joy!

Yasiru Dinuka

| December 2021 TTP



OVER-TOURISM : A Real Threat To Destination Sustainability

“Tourism destinations carry with them the seeds of their own destruction”
Butler (1980).



Recreation as a human activity is usually experienced in social and environmental settings while establishing strong links with cultural and physical environments. Recreation promotes consumption and generates impacts. Tourism, one of the recreational activities, is mainly responsible for this heavy consumption of resources of all forms. Hence, the impact of tourism is a cumulative result of the activities of individuals and as well as industry operators.

The scale of the tourism industry varies in different nations and communities all over the world. Irrespective of the emphasis on tourism in different economies, the nature of impacts is the same and more often they are too ambiguous. Such impacts not only confine to destination communities but also could be seen in generating regions and tourist transit zones. These impacts or consequences are either positive or negative. However, the dialogue on tourism growth and development agenda has gained wider attention than ever before. It seems that profit-oriented market-driven forces have heavily influenced the existing development model of tourism. This experience of nations may vary in cases where some degree of government intervention is involved. The intense desire for growth and optimisation has further been stressed in the backdrop of the increase in global tourist traffic.

Researchers have given considerable attention to understanding and assessing the impacts of tourism. The consequences of tourism development have widely been criticised. These have been witnessed from many destinations irrespective of their level of development. The magnitude of impacts is subject to the growth and development of tourism which is predominantly demand-driven. This demand is stimulated by numerous factors such as social, physiological, psychological, cultural, geographical, economic, political, and technological. Besides these, growth in the world population is too responsible for the expansion of consumptive industries, including tourism.

SOME FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS ABOUT TOURISM

1. Tourism consumes resources and creates waste.
2. Tourism has the ability to over-consume resources.
3. Tourism competes with other resource users and needs to do this to survive.
4. Tourism is dominated by the private sector.
5. Tourism is multi-faceted and is therefore almost impossible to control.
6. Tourists are consumers, not anthropologists.
7. Tourism is entertainment.
8. Unlike other industrial activities, tourism imports the clients rather than export a product.

Source: (McKercher, 1993: 7)



In this critique, I would like to bring your attention to the concept of over-tourism. Over-tourism is a phenomenon that results from the over-consumption of tourist resources— facilities and attractions in destinations. Tourist facilities and amenities comprise the built environment of the tourist plant, while tourist attractions are mainly based on cultural and physical attributes. As a result of in-situ nature, both production and the consumption of the tourist product take place in the same location. However, the impacts resulting from this are visible not only in destinations but also in tourist generating areas and transit zones. As McKercher (1993) observes, mass tourism is like other 'capitalised industries, especially in the search for economies of scale' and where industries' expansion of operational capacities, including tourism, is pertinent to the growing demand (7). Further, he explains that private sector dominance in tourism, such investors are customary with a profit motive resulting in over-commercialisation.

The market-driven neoliberal economic policies adopted in advanced and emerging economies are struggling paradoxically to contain their economic activities within acceptable limits. After the 1960s, de-regulation was evident on many fronts mainly due to economic, political, and technological reasons, and globalisation has accelerated the situation further. These forces collectively lead the way to aggravate the stress on economic, social, cultural, and environmental resources. Mass consumption further stressing the depletion of resources is the other side of the coin. Unfortunately, our concern and response to these challenges remain primarily questionable. The aspect of sustainability in the global development agenda is always at the forefront for more than 40 years. Many efforts have been taken from policy interventions to specific measures to manage, control or minimise these adverse impacts experienced by the world nations. However, the forces against these efforts are apparent. There is a question about the effectiveness of our interventions that have been adapted so far. We are at a very crucial juncture and need to cross-check, where are we heading?

Exponential tourism growth in a destination potentially can lead to over-dependent on tourism. There is always a risk of relying on few economic options for development rather than working strategically towards a diversified and integrated economy. Heavy reliance on

tourism can be disastrous for many reasons, including the risk of continuous investments both foreign and local. Over-tourism is not only witnessed in major tourist cities and small island nations; it has been witnessed in national parks, heritage sites, and places like remote rural or tribal communities. The travel and tourism industry, like many others, focuses almost exclusively on growth, with little or no concern for the impacts. After several decades of virtually uncontrolled growth, it has crossed a threshold; tourism now demonstrably creates more costs than benefits in many destinations.

Destinations may start suffering from tourists' temporary stays, especially when there are too many tourists at a time. We need to understand the implications of over-tourism than ever before clearly. There is a myriad of documentary evidence highlighting the cases of over-tourism from all over the world. Many tourism destinations are now suffering from the repercussions of the same. Pragmatically, this has resulted from greatly exceeded carrying capacity. The concern about better tourism management is the need of the hour to help destinations not to exceed their carrying capacities for safeguarding sensitive cultures and fragile tourism sites. In this background, volume versus value proposition is of greater importance. Thus, managing tourism within the acceptable limits is a shared responsibility of all stakeholders. So, we need to act before it is too late.

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Big Picture

Nuwara Eliya

Nuwara Eliya is a city in central Sri Lanka's tea country hills. Blooms and tree ferns abound in the naturally landscaped Hakgala Botanical Gardens, which also serve as a home for monkeys and blue magpies. A beautiful Hindu shrine nearby, Seetha Amman Temple, is adorned with sacred figures. Galway's Land National Park, which is densely forested, is a haven for indigenous and migratory bird species including bulbuls and flycatchers.

Photographer | [Subodha Karunaratne](#)

SPA INDUSTRY

CREATING AN OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Women's economic empowerment has become an integral focus for global policies such as Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Women's economic empowerment can be described as the ability for women to participate equally in existing markets; to have access and control of productive resources; to decide on their own time, lives, and bodies; to represent their voice confidently without fear; and to participate significantly in economic decision-making at all levels. Women's empowerment in the financial sector is essential for attaining gender equality and balance. In addition, it can also increase women's competitiveness and increase their self-worth. Many sectors encourage women's participation in employment; one of them is the wellness sector. The wellness sector includes the industries of Personal Care, Beauty and Anti-Aging, Healthy Eating, Nutrition and Weight Loss, Wellness Tourism, Fitness and Mind-Body, Preventative and Personalised Medicine and Public Health, Traditional and Complementary Medicine, Wellness Lifestyle Real Estate, Spa Economy, Thermal/Mineral Springs, and Workplace Wellness. This sector contributes to the economic income; as of 2018, the value of the global wellness sector has grown to \$ 4.5 trillion (Global Wellness Institute). This sector continues to grow and has excellent potential for economic output. The spa industry is one of the many industries projected to have great potential and growth, as seen from its high growth trend of 9.8 percent. This situation provides a good indicator of women's economic empowerment since the industry has received high involvement and participation from women as service providers or service recipients. The wellness industry has been dominated by women, as the activities in this industry are directed at the beauty-loving nature of females.

There is no doubt that men are also involved in this field, but women's involvement is more emphasized

in this industry, which has a higher potential to increase women's empowerment. Most spa owners in the industry are women. In contrast, companies in the beauty industry, such as cosmetics, are founded by women passionate about providing the best services to other women out there. Hence, the engagement and participation of women in business ventures stimulate entrepreneurial values, which may generate countless benefits such as the creation of job opportunities and the empowerment of women's ability and creativity. This entrepreneurial orientation has cultivated innovative elements to make businesses appear more attractive and appealing. A company must be attractive and possess unique features than other competitors, as the industry is overgrowing based on its potential. Consequently, many women view this industry as a lucrative prospect and intend to establish new businesses.

Involvement in this industry is not limited to entrepreneurs or operators alone; it creates employment opportunities for many local women. It directly provides added value in improving women's financial capability and self-skills to those involved in this field. Workers are trained to be therapists or beauticians and various other skills on demand. Several such employees become committed to opening their businesses once they are confident enough. They are unafraid of managing a new business due to their employee experience. It is not surprising to see how this industry has grown at a breakneck speed. The growth of this industry will not be successful without consumer demands, which mainly come from women. Naturally, women tend to be attracted to beauty, elegance, and health, so the need for services related to the wellness and beauty industry will remain consistent. For customers and service recipients, wellness-based services can improve the quality of women's health in managing their daily tasks and routines that consume a lot of their energy. Hence, they must always be healthy, fit, and energetic to undertake such tasks and assignments. In terms of beauty, spa or beauty services can increase women's confidence, particularly those who may have previously felt insecure about their looks and appearances. This will directly increase their ability to be more competitive due to their potential.

In conclusion, the wellness industry is ideal for women based on customers' health, beauty, and elegance. This industry provides many advantages to women entrepreneurs. Women's involvement as entrepreneurs or employees can increase their economic capability and provide additional self-values from their skills. Female customers also attain the advantages of this industry because their health and looks will improve, increasing women's confidence for better days ahead. Therefore, the government should also emphasize the wellness industry to increase women's involvement and participation in employment, based on the prospects offered by this sector. The benefits are limited to women at a micro-level and generate an extrinsic value in monetary terms to the national income on a macro level.



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Dr. Surandi Dissanayake

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Ayurvie Sigiriya Retreat

Q How do you introduce yourself and your career journey in wellness tourism?

A I'm Dr. Surandi Dissanayake, resident Ayurveda Doctor of Ayurvie Sigiriya Retreat. I have completed my Post Graduate Diploma in Public Health from the University of Kelaniya after completing my first degree from the same university in Bachelor of Ayurveda Medicine and Surgery. Soon after my studies, I directly joined with a private Ayurveda Panchakarma & Beauty Center and I worked in the position of Chief Ayurveda Physician. Then, I had the opportunity to join Gampaha Wickramarachchi Ayurveda Institute as a Temporary Demonstrator. I was promoted to a Temporary Lecturer, and I worked three years there. After that, I decided to join with the government sector, which was also a one of my dreams. I worked for about one year there regarding the health issues of the general public on their requirements according to traditional Ayurveda medicine.

I was dreaming to work in tourism sector since my first year at the university. When I was studying in the first year at Gampaha Wickramaarchchi Ayurveda Institute, there was a field trip where we visited a hotel with Ayurveda spa. Since that day, I have been dreaming of any opportunity to work in such a place. I'm talking about 10-12 years back. When I was doing my job in the government sector, I felt that it was not what I wanted to do, and I wanted to do something more. That's the point I turned to the tourism sector. Fortunately, I met Mr. Chandra Wikramasingha, Chairman of Theme Resorts and Spas, and I joined with Ayurvie Sigiriya Retreat that owned by himself. Because he also has a vision of developing Wellness tourism in Sri Lanka to an international level. According to the Sri Lankan village theme, he decided to make Ayurveda retreat bound with nature. He always wanted human resources to promote this. He started the journey of Ayurveda retreats from Ayurvie Weligama; then, he decided to build another resort, as Ayurvie Sigiriya. There is a difference between themes of these two resorts. Ayurvie Weligama is near the sea, but Ayurvie Sigiriya is in the mid-country. Mr. Chandra Wickamasingha wanted to take the power of nature through our traditional architectural knowledge into the treatments. Therefore, he designed Ayurvie Sigiriya Retreat and I was appointed as the first doctor. For around two years, I have been working here. That's how I entered to the wellness tourism sector.

Q As an Ayurveda doctor and a practitioner in tourism, how do you explain wellness tourism?

A As you already know, the Global Wellness Institute defines wellness tourism as associated with the pursuit of maintaining or enhancing one's personal wellbeing. That's their definition, which is what we usually believe. If someone asks me what wellness tourism is, I always try to give this definition. Suppose, you ask me what the definition of wellness tourism is as a practitioner. In that case, I give this meaning from the definition I have taken from the Global Wellness Institute because they said that wellness means physical health and holistic health. They define wellness with these two words. WHO explains health as physical, mental, spiritual, and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of diseases. Wellness tourism definition begins with the definition of health, and then it is advanced with wellness. As an Ayurveda physician, Ayurveda means combining the two words; 'Ayu' means life, and 'Veda' means science or philosophy. So, the science of life is Ayurveda. According to Ayurveda, we define "*Sama dosha samaagnishcha sama dhatu malakriyaa, Prasanna atmendriyamanah swastha itiabhideyate*" as a Sanskrit verse. *Sama dosha* means the balance of your *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* which are the fundamentals of your body. *Sama dathu* means the total balance of your body tissues. *Sama Agni* implies that your metabolic power. There should be a metabolic power to digest the food when we eat. If not, the micronutrients are not formed, and your body can't absorb them. *Sama Agni* means your metabolic power should be in balance, and the other is *Mala*, which means excretory products. If your urination is not in a proper way, it's not good. If your defecation is not good, if you can't defecate early in the morning after you get off the bed, there's a problem, that is not healthy. Ayurveda defines that physical health should be covered by all four components. Not only that, but also there's another phrase as "*Prasannātmendriyamanah*". *Athma* means soul. However, Buddhism does not believe in a soul; though many other religions do. The *athma* should be pleasant, and sensory organs should be fine. When you look at me, you make an image of me. Then, when I smile so you feel comfortable to talk to me. That's how the sensory organs work. "*Manah* means your mind. Though we are not suffering of any kind of physical disease, if your mind is not in balance, if you are in anxiety, if you are in stress, then you are not a healthy person. Wellness tourism means the thing which we want to do in Ayurveda. There are two objectives in Ayurveda; one is curative care, and the other is palliative care. Curative means if you come to me with a disease, I should treat you. I should try to give internal and external medicine, and I try to relieve you from your illness. If someone comes to me asking, "doctor, I want to enhance my health, what can you do for me?" Then there are other treatment procedures to improve health. Though the person is not suffering from a disease, I have to treat him to enhance his health. For example, someone comes to me saying that I want to do a facial for my face, so what is it? It is not a disease, but they want to enhance their skin color. So, in my view, wellness tourism is Ayurveda. Same philosophy in Ayurveda, but we are doing this in a global sector, that's all. If a government doctor working in the rural Ayurveda hospital, he or she treats the patients with a regular local instruction and I am also doing all these things the same way, but in global health sector. More than the typical rural Ayurveda doctor, I consider all the hospitality techniques. I have to be well groomed. I have to keep my attention on the guests. I have to always listen to the guests. Such advanced things come together and make the global wellness sector. So in my view, again, I'm saying I'm doing Ayurveda. In my opinion, I'm doing the job I have to do with the global industry, that's wellness tourism.

Q What's the nature and magnitude of wellness tourism practices in Sri Lanka, and how is Theme Resorts and Spas contributing to wellness tourism?

A I went through the Wellness Tourism Strategy in National Export Strategy of Sri Lanka (2018 - 2022). They have already researched the state of Sri Lanka in Wellness tourism, and they have done some studies and gathered some data. They prepared this strategy to overcome most of the weak points of wellness tourism to change those positively. I got some information from that. In Sri Lanka, wellness tourism is practiced in spas. Some spas are interconnected with Ayurveda hotels and Ayurveda retreat separately, so wellness tourism is practiced like this. In our Theme Resorts and Spas, we have hotel range that are 10 in number. Among those hotels, we have Ayurveda spas only in five hotels. The uniqueness in Theme Resorts and Spas that we always practice only Ayurveda treatments. There are several kinds of spas in Sri Lanka and in the world. Still, Theme Resorts and Spas only focus on Ayurveda treatments because, our founder Mr. Chandra Wickramasinghe always wants to give our traditional knowledge to the world. When I'm talking about this conventional health system, I have to say that Ayurveda originated from India. However, like Chinese medicine and Korean medicine, Sri Lanka also has its authentic medical system existing from the era of King Ravana. We had that traditional medical system though some people do not believe it. They always want to take Ayurveda treatments but not the traditional treatments. You know, in a village, if you are suffering from a fracture due to trauma, the initial thing that comes into your mind is to go to a 'Wedha Mahaththaya'. Even though you are very young, you may feel that if you want to resolve this fracture very quickly, you always seek 'Horiwila Wedha Mahaththaya'. Isn't it? What are we doing normally? Though we get admitted to the hospital and get treated with that plaster of *paris* bandage, in our mind, we always think, if there is anything that I can do to cure this without staying three months. That's the thing. That's the traditional medical system inherited in Sri Lanka. Even for the fracture treatments, it's 'Bagnachikista.' Now, cancer is a significant problem in Sri Lanka. Western Allopathic doctors working in Apeksha hospital sometimes ask their patients



to try for a traditional treatment, go to a 'Wedha Mahathaya' and seek any traditional treatments they can use for this. The recent thing is COVID 19 pandemic. The people who are not taking coriander or ginger have started taking them. People who don't even look at *Venivalgeta* tried to take it. Isn't it? So that's the traditional medical system inherited in Sri Lanka. I know that my mother started to feed me with '*Rathakalka*', which is customary. Theme Resorts and Spas trying to spread this traditional medical system. Though we want to upgrade this traditional medical system in wellness tourism, we can't do that at once. Because Ayurveda is also a significant part of Sri Lanka. Ayurveda is the central part, besides there's the traditional medical system. We are trying to bring this together and make our identical medical system inherited to Sri Lanka and a unique place for wellness tourism.

You asked me how Theme Resorts and Spas contribute to Wellness tourism. Therefore, I'm going to talk mainly about Ayurveda spas and the Ayurveda retreats which we have. We have two retreats at Weligama and Sigiriya. Typically, we are practicing panchakarma treatments and wellness treatments as two main categories. What's the difference between these two? *Panchakarma*; *Pancha* means five and *karma* means actions. There are five main treatment procedures called *Vamana*, *Virechana*, *Nasya*, *Vasti* & *Raktamokshana* which are using for the purpose of purification. There are other treatments which can be used for *palliative* care called wellness treatments. When a guest comes to Ayurveda Weligama or Ayurveda Sigiriya retreat, usually, Ayurveda doctors do the consultation and decide a treatment plan according to the guest's body constitution and diseases which they are suffering from. Meal plan is prepared according to that. As per my view, pure Ayurveda treatments can be taken from Ayurveda Weligama retreat and also in Ayurveda Sigiriya Retreat. Other important fact is we always try to include unique treatments which are inherited to Sri Lankan traditional medical system into our treatment plans. We directly focus on physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Before starting the treatments, the doctor and the therapist bless the client by using Buddhist verses or Sanskrit verses to take the blessing from the gods. We start by offering a flower bouquet to the Lord Buddha or the God we believe in. We light the oil lamp to absorb the spiritual health we are taking from the universe. We start the day with yoga with the sunrise at the *yoga mandapa*. Then the universal energy automatically comes into the guest's body, then the spiritual health comes, and it makes a bond.

In my view, that's how we treat the clients in a particular manner. I have to mention this, in our retreats, especially in our Ayurveda Sigiriya retreat, as the resident Ayurveda doctor; I'm the person who is responsible for preparing meal plans. It's essential because we pick our organic vegetables from our home garden. We prepare it according to traditional cuisine, not only as the Ayurveda cuisine. The techniques are taken from the traditional medicine. So the guest connect to nature through these food. We can use all those things in our treatments and enhance the positivity of the treatment because nature is always with us. In Sri Lanka, we can see the green everywhere, we can see the sunlight everywhere and all the year we have rain. In simple, the climate is a blessing for us. Then the concept of Ayurveda retreats under Theme Resorts and Spas always deals with nature and the traditional techniques.

When Sri Lankan mother cooks, she adds things that she picks from the garden. This nature and she also adds something more. What is it? She adds love to the dish. So, as Sri Lankans, we are warm-hearted people, full of love in our hearts. We can market wellness tourism with little concepts like our smiles, kindness etc. We are rich in natural things like green earth, fresh air, spring water and all those things. So, I believe that we can provide a better service in tourism industry without spending much money by using human and natural resources. For example, here we are only serving vegetarian dishes. It's very beneficial for the health. We can pluck things like curry leaves, make some grated coconut, add some chilies, and ground them using a mortar and pestle. Just with nature, we can make a good dish without spending much money. I think this concept should come to wellness tourism. It is not just doing head massage or Ayurveda treatments but also about the traditional knowledge we have. We can raise it and give the best wellness tourism service to the world.

“Ayurveda is not only the physical health ; the science of life is Ayurveda.”

Q What are the wellness tourism industry's significant challenges, and what suggestions would you like to propose to overcome them?

A Yeah, as I said, the first thing is we have to do a scientific study to identify the level of Sri Lankan wellness tourism. However, they did some researches to develop a strategy to enhance wellness tourism so far. But we have no accurate data with us. Even we don't know how many Ayurveda spas are there in Sri Lanka. No one collects data even from us. I went to the website of the Department of Ayurveda to find how many Ayurveda spas are in Sri Lanka, but I couldn't find anything. When I searched again in the website of tourism authority, relevant information was not available. First, there should be a database with how many hotels in Sri Lanka provide Ayurveda services to the guests and how many treatment centers in Sri Lanka that offer facilities to the tourists. Not only the number of spas but also the facilities that they have, how many doctors are working in the tourism sector etc. Then, what are the educational qualifications of doctors and other staff should have, to work in this sector; is there any certification that they need to take before working as professional therapist? I think it's a challenge for us. Most of the tourists who visit Sri Lanka are well educated, and if they ask any question from our therapists, they should be able to answer the clients. The other thing is the qualifications of Ayurveda doctors. There are a lot of Ayurveda doctors and traditional doctors who are registered as Ayurveda physicians in the Sri Lankan Ayurveda Council. As a graduate Ayurvedic doctor, I know this, some doctors get their registration under his father's name. They are also working with us in the hotel sector. When a hotel starts a spa center, they go to the village and find someone. They would ask the *Weda Mahaththaya* to come once a week and they pay him. They start the treatment center, but there's no responsible person for the treatments. Who is the person responsible if there is an adverse effect? If you want to work in a spa or Ayurveda spa or wellness tourism sector, you should have certificates. We can do that easily. Even from the Tourist Board or the external education sector, certifications can be offered for therapists, wellness spa managers, and Ayurveda doctors to be qualified. Then there will be a standardization. The first one is, there should be a database and the second one is there will be a standardization of these facilities. Then definitely wellness tourism will upgrade because we are in the scientific base. Though the traditional medicine system can't be explained through scientific methods, we can explain our education qualification through scientific methods.

The other thing is, to improve wellness tourism; we should integrate the traditional Sri Lankan medical knowledge to this. Why can't we open a spa called Sri Lankan Traditional Medical Spa? Up to date, we are not even thinking about this. Ayurveda is from India, and India is marketing Ayurveda perfectly. If we hear the name Kerala, it's for *Panchakarma*. If you search Ayurveda, all the websites come from India. If you want to take a qualified Ayurveda doctor, all the lists come from Indian Ayurveda physicians. So, there's no place for us. We have to make this a critical location for the traditional medical system. I believe that even a doctor who graduated from an Ayurveda university should seek this knowledge. They should grab this knowledge. They can go to the traditional medical practitioners and capture this knowledge. If not, we can take the conventional doctor, *Weda Mahaththaya*, to the hotel. Then, there will be an Ayurveda doctor and traditional health practitioner at the hotel. That combination will take wellness tourism in Sri Lanka to a higher level. As you see, *Gal Oruwa* treatment is ours. We have an incredible traditional medical system in Sri Lanka.

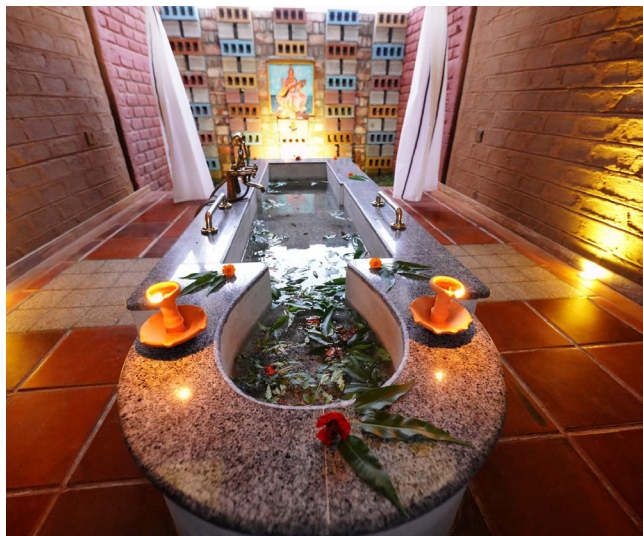
The third one is incorporating the traditional medical into the Ayurveda spas and developing our category in wellness tourism. These are the three main things I want to say. If these three factors are there, wellness tourism will be at a significant level in Sri Lanka.

Q According to your field expertise, what would be the future direction of wellness tourism in Sri Lanka? What are the forcing opportunities in the wellness tourism branch for tourism and graduates to come?

A The market is now open. Tourists come to Sri Lanka to take Ayurveda treatments. They can go to India, but they're coming here. What's the miracle of this? It's the location of Sri Lanka; it's the nature of Sri Lanka, it's the smile of Sri Lanka, it's the way we treat them. The field is now open, for the question you asked, we should gather the knowledge. As graduates, you should study the things we had in history, what we can get from the past, and how we incorporate those things into wellness tourism. If a client comes to us and tells us that he or she has a disease related to joints and wants to take treatment, we can't directly apply *paththuwa* as *Game Weda Mahaththaya* does. Guest may refuse, saying no, I can't do this. So, we can't do that. From my experience most of the guests who are coming to do wellness treatments want to use the pool. We have to understand their minds, and we have to make a plan for them. My technique is when I do the consultation, I'm asking them, certain day we have planned the *Nasya karma* (Nasal treatment), what are your plans for the evening? Then they may say, I want to go to the pool in the evening. If I said no, you can't do that; he would never accept it. I use a trick. I say, shall we do an evening discussion about your diseases. The knowledge is with us, the *Paththu* is with us, but we have to make a system. We can't directly take the traditional medical knowledge into wellness tourism. We have to do some more activities. For example, I showed you our stone bath. If we fill it with the herbal decoctions only, they would not want to do the treatment, but if we decorate the place with some flowers and with lighting oil lamps and prepare an enchanting environment, they will prefer the treatment. As a graduate, you

have to be creative. We have the knowledge in tourism in one side and we have the traditional medicine system on the other side. We have to keep those together and create new things. It's not the conventional medicine system; it's not the tour; it's not Ayurveda but the innovative thing we make. I believe that traditional knowledge should improve to make a relationship between tourism and traditional knowledge. As graduates, you have to create this knowledge, you have to gather this knowledge, and you have to seek what are the foreseen opportunities in the world. Sri Lanka is at the same level. For example, we have bookings up to the next year, May. The world is open, so we have to try to find the markets we can perform.

For example, we have several kinds of herbs here. As you can see, many *Iramusu* plants are there, and *Hathawariya* plants are there. We have the space to cultivate these things; then the client has that idea, "oh, this is very fresh." It is good if we use these kinds of strategies. We know Chinese medicine, Korean medicine, and Ayurveda, but we don't use our own traditional medical system. I want to add this also. Parapsychology is an upcoming aspect of the world. In the Sri Lankan traditional medical system, it's a regular thing that in use. In *Daha Ata Sanniya* we already have this knowledge, It's parapsychology. Though the parapsychology subject starts from Western countries, we have had that since the early days of Sri Lankan civilization, No one is interested to study the application of psychological & parapsychological aspect of *Daha Ata Sanniya*. *Daha ata Sanniya* represents traditional medical system. There are eighteen diseases which they treat. These eighteen diseases are healed without any oral medication, only just by dancing and playing drums. Who does market this? We can perform this ritual that when the client is here and when we start our treatments by using even one *Sanni*. Then they might know how it is done. Parapsychology is one aspect that graduates should study because, as I mentioned at the beginning, Ayurveda is not only the physical health but also the mental, spiritual and social wellbeing. We have these unique things; we have the blessing of Lord Buddha; we have the blessing of *Bodhi Tree*. Who use *Bodhi pooja* as a blessing in wellness tourism? We can take the clients to the temple and can do a *Bodhi pooja* with the assistance of reverend, where the reverend will also bless the clients. These are unique techniques that we can market easily. I think there should be a combination. We should try to identify how we can combine these with the existing knowledge in tourism. That's how I feel.



Clothes Colours Culture

It was the winter of 2019 which Christmas cold surrounded my body and the soul. Yunnan province, a blend of 25 minorities, being *Yi* minority the largest population owns a culture full of colors awaited and welcomed me to China broadening friendlier hands to us. Few young girls and boys from Honghe University guided us not only to the cultural and historical sites but also to the cinema, pottery, and tea ceremonies, and so many. As a student who studies Chinese as a Foreign Language and a teacher who teaches Chinese as a Foreign Language, I was lucky to have firsthand cultural, social, educational, and traditional experiences grabbing the opportunity to visit Kunming, Mengzi, and Mile cities in Yunnan Province, China. Of all the places I visited, the Honghe Prefecture Museum, which exhibits a variety of ethnic minorities, holds a prominent place in my memories. *Yi* and *Hani* minorities dominate Honghe *Hani* and *Yi* Autonomous Prefecture, located in South-East Central Yunnan. 'Wuman' was ancestors of both *Hani* and *Yi* during the *Shui* and *Tang* Dynasties. *Hani* began to separate from 'Wuman' at the beginning of the *Tang* dynasty. Clothes, one of the primary necessities of humans, have owned a prominent place in the culture of the *Hani* and *Yi* Autonomous Prefecture as they reflect the diversity of the *Hani* and *Yi* ethnic groups and the unique features of the Yunnan region.

Hani is well known to tourists for *Hani* women's distinctive traditional costume designs. They are splendid for their ornate accessories and costumes. *Hani's* clothes are decorated with patterns, symbols, and colours in a way they trot out their emotions and history. *Hani*-styled coats trait the legend of the human beings' origin. They are in a belief that goddess. 'Pipimi' used three red stones to create the sky and rubbed three black stones to create the land. Therefore, it is seen that red and black colours are dominant in *Hani* costumes and adored by people as an auspicious colour. Black is believed to be a protective color that safeguards people from evil spirits. Red represents sun and fire and symbolizes brightness, hope, and energy. White, which stands for peace and harmony, can often be seen in the costumes. Fish is embroidered in the costumes and embedded in accessories to have blessings from gods and regarded as a prayer to gods. *Hani* people associate fish with life and believe that fish is the origin of everything and it gave birth to everything in the world. Butterflies, flowers are usually carved on wedding dresses as a token of love which symbolizes pure love and happiness in marriage life. 'Wuba' hat is worn for funerals believing it leads the dead people to the afterlife. Red patterns on the hat stand for god while black for the homeland. White and blue embroidered patterns in the costumes symbolize the afterlife. It is considered that the *Hani* people primarily live on terraced paddy fields in mountainous regions, which has led them to their colourful and distinctive clothing culture.

The traditional clothing culture of the *Yi* minority never seconds to the distinctive traditional clothes of *Hani*. The silver embroidered magnificent dresses are varied from place to place, gender, age, identity, and occasion. Among the diversification of the costumes

depending on the places, *Liangshan Yi* Autonomous Prefecture holds a critical representation. Plain but dignified men's styles range from colourful and exquisite women's styles. Unlike other countries, *Yi* men wear a lock of hair in a blue or black colour called "Buddha Lock," which symbolizes the dignity and holiness of men while their counterparts, who are well known for stylish hair, wear a tie-shaped blue headdress. Mothers of the *Yi* ethnic group wear a black lotus leaf hat, and young girls wear braids decorated with red ribbons, hairpins, and combs. The younger generation of *Yi* ethnicity is more concerned about the bright colours, whereas the elderly age is attentive to their comfortableness.

Linen and wool fabrics, dyed most preferably in red, yellow, and black colours, are used mainly for designing traditional *Yi* costumes. Embroidering and inlaying are the most common techniques used in designing and, sheep's horns, plants, and curved blade patterns can often be seen among exquisitely decorated costumes. 'Ca'erwa' is the most preferred blouse for men and women made of green, grey, and white wool either with fringes or without fringes. *Yi* ladies wear pleated skirts, which usually reach the ground and end in a wide hem. The traditional *Yi* attire is highlighted as it is cross-stitched embroidered, and young girls are taught and trained domestically how to sew. Therefore, almost every woman is an excellent embroider, and it shows the handiness of *Yi* women. Embroidering in one piece of work consists of more than one technique, and a single embroider is equipped with about a dozen designs.

The rich and colorful traditional textiles of the Yunnan ethnic minority groups exhibit their beauty and reflect their abstruse multi-cultural connotation, unique customs, and aesthetic psychology. This traditional clothing culture serves as a transmitter of inheritance in particular. Tourists who visit Honghe prefer to journey around the Honghe Prefecture Museum to sense the culture and history of the people raised by water and soil.



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Image Courtesy : Sri Lankan Gypsy Culture ©Dilmah Ceylon Tea Company PLC



Lives that foresight the future

Sunsets across the horizon, wind breeze refreshes the soul, ravens fly back to their nests and perfect Sunday evening starts with a hot cup of freshly brewed coffee. A twinkling voice hears afar, and it's getting closer and closer. Who sounds like that? Curiosity arises, and all eyes point to the corner of the sea street. That blurred human image is getting more apparent, and a dark-skinned lady is walking towards with a side cloth bag and a thin wooden stick in her hands. Pierced nose, set of bangles, tassel earrings, the silver necklace is quite noticeable from afar, and she wrapped in a colorful south Indian sari and chewing a beetle nut. Her voice opened again and said, "Sassthare Sassthare" (who wants to hear the future? Let me read your palm). "Is she an Asian representative from Delphi temple?"

She is not. She belongs to one of the nomadic ethnic groups in Sri Lanka. Simply everyone in the world knows them as "Gypsy people" or as Ahikuntaka.

Historians believe Gypsy people have south Indian origin; they are descendants from an ancient nomadic group who

migrated to Sri Lanka from Andhra Pradesh in India many centuries ago. These gypsy people speak Telugu and live as a clan with fifty or sixty families together. Mostly their population is scattered in both rural and urban areas across the island, such as Anuradhapura, Chilaw, Moratuwa, Galle, and Colombo. Typically their dwellings take a circular shape, and most of them are made of Palmyra fronds. Males of this tribe can build up this temporary shelter within an hour while their females are clever enough to fill it neatly with the essential equipment for daily life. Same as Gypsy ladies, the attire of the typical Gypsy man is also quite impressive. Males usually grab themselves in a sarong. A turban on their head, multi-color chain around the neck, and snakes in the wicker basket hanging by a hand make a man more traditional among the tribe. The livelihood of the Gypsy community makes this set of people a potential tourism attraction. Mostly women and men are involved with their livelihood. Usually, their males are concerned with snake charming, taming monkeys for performance purposes. Women are engaged with fortune-telling and do chores daily. Most of their children also learn and practice their traditional earning methods with their elders.

They have unique cultural values for each stage of their lives, from birth to death. Since they believe children symbolize nature, women can always be seen with children, coming behind them and infants, hugged to them. When they are getting married, they prioritize their akin proposals, and unlike Sinhalese culture, their groom offers a dowry to the bride. A married woman wears bangles in her right hand to symbolize her marriage. This

community is always against prostitution and rape. Females will be left out in the cold by their tribe and considered black sheep for the family if she becomes a woman before their marriage. *Arachchila* is the one who makes decisions on behalf of all the community. When it comes to the law, they have an identical stringent law that prevents their people from wrongdoings, and if they are caught doing such kind of heinous act, they will gain the most severe punishments at the drop of a hat. Depending on Cooperation, respect to the leadership, unity, a system of law and order, mental bond, and mutual understanding, they have ensured their sign on this land for centuries.

The world is changing, and the Gypsy community has to move with the flow. The present Gypsy generation, named by modern names, is no longer engaged only in their traditional livelihoods. They equally receive formal education instead of practicing their traditional inherits. Unlike in the past, the young gypsy generation tends to do impermanent jobs like selling books in buses, manual labor, and selling fish. Yet, each family must engage at least one of their male and female kids in traditional livings to protect their legacy. Though the modern lifestyle has hardened the destiny of a poor Gypsy lady in a dusty lane, this transformation affects the rich traditional values of their tribes. According to the research of Colombo University, over 80% of young gypsy people do not know their mother tongue, Telugu and it is such a heartbreaking situation. Sometimes, prostitution, drug addiction, illicit liquor, and Cannabis turn this scenario into a tragedy.

Gypsies are an essential community in our country. We have to take measures to save their traditions, uplift their living standards and look after them without letting their legacy fade away from society. If so, on a one fine Sunday evening, we lean on to our couch, sipping a good coffee and our grandchildren play in the yard. That twinkle rhythm appears in the distance, "Sassthare Saasthare Kaatado" and seeing the kids rush into the gate and the nostalgic memories refresh with a humble smile on our face.

Thathsarani Wijesundara
Rohith Thambawita

EXPERIENTIAL TRAVEL

A New Form of Travel



"I had such an amazing experience in Thailand. I took an authentic Thai cuisine cooking class, rode a motorbike-taxi, attended Muay Thai class, haggled at night markets, stayed in a Thai village, and made new friends. I experience Thailand just like a true local." This is an example of a new type of consumerism known as experiential travel.

What Is Experiential Travel ?

Experiential travel is more than just regular travel. It is a form of tourism where people travel to experience a particular tourist destination by connecting and engaging with its history, people, culture, and environment. An experiential traveler wants greater customization and deeper immersion from their trips.

Although many people argue that travel is innately experience-based and that the term 'experiential travel' is overused, experiential travel has become a popular market trend in recent years. The current travel pattern is now shifting from ordinary travel experience seekers to authentic experience seekers. Instead of having typical sunbathing at the beach area, the experiential traveler will go beyond and try something different rather than just sunbathing, sightseeing, relaxing, and lounging. Today travelers want to travel better and look for packages beyond package travel. Travelers wish for a personalized trip, greater flexibility, and more choices. They want an enriched experience by participating in immersive activities and learning. For instance, they seek to interact with local communities, visit schools, orphanages, attend cooking classes, and perform adventure activities such as skydiving, rafting, and paragliding.

Factors Driving Experiential Travel

The demand for experiential travel is overgrowing. A report of Skift Research revealed this emerging experience-rich travel is growing by +9% in 2018 with a value of \$150 billion. Classes and workshops, family-friendly activities, and wellness experiences are among the fastest-growing experience categories in 2019 reported by TripAdvisor. Moreover, Skift Research and Booking.com revealed that around 60% of travelers in 2019 prefer to spend their money on experiential tours rather than on a pleasant hotel stay or material possessions. Likewise, a report by TripAdvisor discovers that travelers are harmonizing their itineraries with a mixture of local experiences and standard sightseeing. This indicated that travelers are indeed looking for an authentic and memorable experience to enhance their travel journey. Globalization is the key reason for the rise of experiential travel. Globalization has led to the homogenization or "McDonaldization" of a tourism product. These uniformities across destinations have pushed travelers to seek locally made and authentic experiences. This is because travelers don't want to visit and be confronted with the same cultural experience; instead, they want to look for a unique experience.



Another factor fueling travelers' craving for experience is the "effect of social media". Social media platforms such as Instagram, travel blog, and Facebook have caused the rise of experiential travel. A person's holiday photos and videos posted on social media can easily circulate between followers and friends. The fascinating, wonderful picture will trigger friends and followers to want to be there too and try new things. But social media isn't the only factor that has pushed the growth of experiential travel. Movies and TV series like "Game of Thrones" and "Crazy Rich Asians" has also drawn traveler to visit filming sites just to experience "the moment," just like in a film. The rise in travel and culinary documentaries on Netflix and YouTube channels has also inspired travelers to go beyond their comfort zones and seek other authentic experiences. This experiential travel trend shows no signs of slowing down. All tourism suppliers have to take this opportunity to tap and keep up with the changing market preference. They should be able to offer and sell more experience to their clients. A tourism supplier who can create experiences that can be easily accessed and more organized will definitely win potential travelers' hearts. The experiential traveler will be pleased as they can easily find out and prearrange those experiences.



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HOSPITALITY TO PRINCE PHILIP



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In my previous career as a hotelier, I was fortunate to get opportunities to host 35 heads of state/government, as well as many other well-known VIP personalities. I met and provided hospitality services twice, in the UK in 1984 and in Jamaica in 1998, to such a VVIP. Philip Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg was born 100 years ago (on 10 June 1921) in Greece into Greek and Danish royal families. He was not English but had a rich continental European mix - German, Greek, Danish, Hungarian, French, Swiss, Bohemian, Lithuanian, Russian, Swedish, Belgian, and Dutch. His family was exiled from Greece when he was an infant. After being educated in France, Germany and the United Kingdom (UK), he joined the British Royal Navy as an officer in 1939.

Philip became a British subject in 1947, changed his family name to Mountbatten and married Princess Elizabeth, who became the Queen of the United Kingdom in 1952. He was named a British Prince in 1957, and over the years many other titles and honours were bestowed to him. I will refer to him as Prince Philip. He was unique in that he was the longest-lived male member ever in the British royal family.

Two VIP visitors from UK

From 1995 to 1998 I was the General Manager of the largest hotel in the capital city of Jamaica - Kingston. Le Meridien Jamaica Pegasus Hotel (Pegasus) was operated by the largest British hotel company at that time - Forte PLC, and I represented that company in Jamaica. Along with two sister hotels - Guyana Pegasus Hotel and Pegasus Reef Hotel in Sri Lanka, Jamaica Pegasus was planned and developed in late 1960s and early 1970s by British Overseas Airways Corporation or BOAC (now British Airways) and Trust House Forte (later Forte PLC).

Because of the hotel's British connections, we had a large percentage of British travellers coming to Kingston staying at the Pegasus. Thirty rooms of the Pegasus were booked on back-to-back basis for the crews of British Airways over many years. The English cricket team always stayed at the Pegasus, during all their matches played in Jamaica.

The British High Commissioner in Jamaica at that time had become a friend of mine. One day in early 1998, while attending a private party at my apartment at the Pegasus with his wife, the High Commissioner confided to me about two upcoming visits by VIPs from the UK. They were former (1990-1997) Prime Minister John Major (now Sir John) and Prince Philip.

I lived in the UK when John Major became the surprise successor of Margret Thatcher in 1990, after the famous cabinet revolt. I was glued to the TV every evening in my London home, wondering how a person with such humble beginnings and no post-secondary education became the most powerful person in the UK. I became an admirer of John Major, and was excited about the opportunity to meet and greet him.

On the other hand, having read and heard about Prince Philip's greatest legacy (apart from his marathon marriage to Elizabeth II) - a lifetime of controversial, cringe-worthy and sometimes outright appalling comments or insensitive jokes, I was not an admirer of Prince Philip. However, I was happy that he would be staying at the Pegasus for two days.



Pegasus - my home in Jamaica from 1995 to 1998

"Welcome to Le Meridien Jamaica Pegasus Hotel!"



For someone who just arrived in the Caribbean after a cross-Atlantic flight, he did not appear to be tired. His suite and the adjoining room for his Secretary were on the 15th floor furthest from the elevators. While walking towards his suite he told me jokingly, "Hotels forget that I am an old man when they always allocate me a suite which requires the longest walk from the lift." When I apologised, he said: "That is alright, I need the exercise."

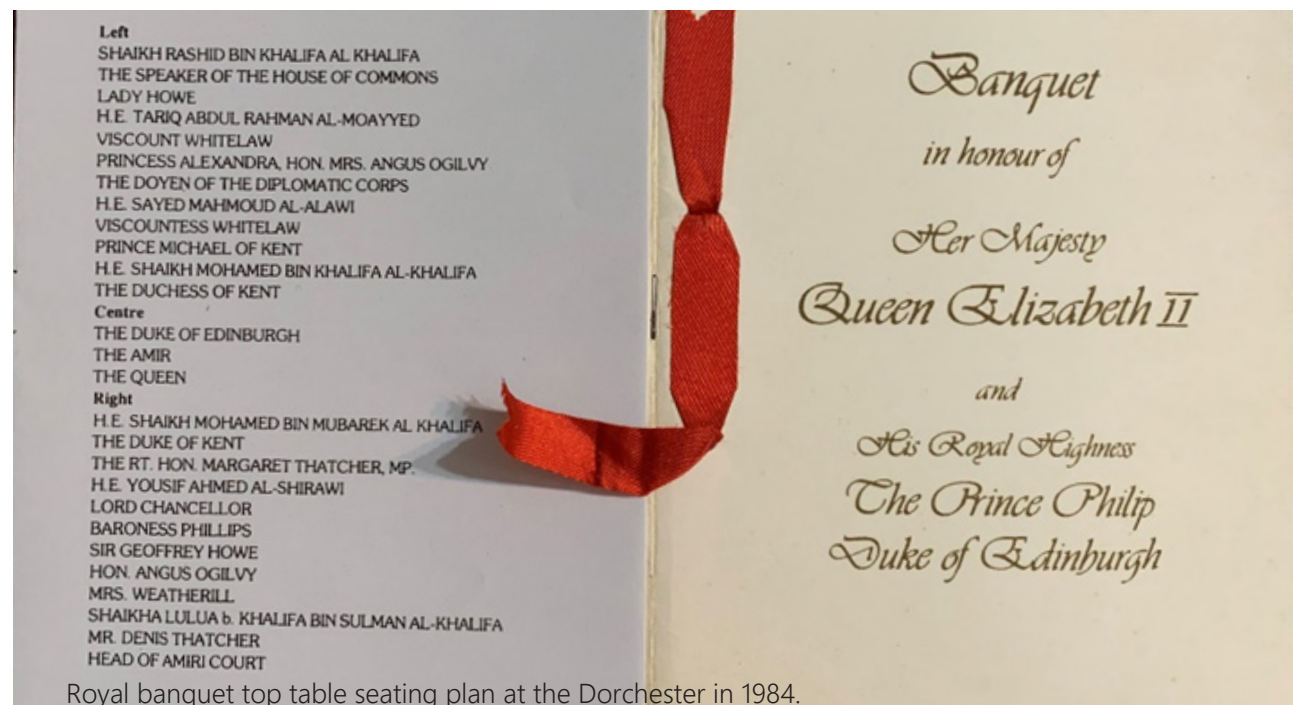
Chat about the past

The next day, during his breakfast at the suite, I met Prince Philip again. I inquired how his first night at the Pegasus was, and he was happy with all arrangements. He looked well rested. We chatted briefly about the weather and his previous visits to Jamaica, as well as about his stay with Queen Elizabeth at Guyana Pegasus Hotel a few years ago and visits to Sri Lanka.

Then I walked with him, on his way out to a meeting scheduled at the British High Commission. While walking he surprised me by asking, "Have we met before?" Assuming that this is his dry sense of humour he is famous for, I replied, "Yes, Your Royal Highness, we met last evening." He laughed and said, "No, no, I mean before, years ago. I remember your face and your afro hair style." I then said, "Yes, I served you once at the Dorchester Hotel, but that was 14 years ago, when I was a banquet waiter. I cannot imagine you remembering all Waiters who served you at numerous royal banquets, Sir." Prince Philip looked straight into my eyes for a few seconds and said, "I think that I remember you from the Dorchester."

A royal banquet at the Dorchester, London in 1984

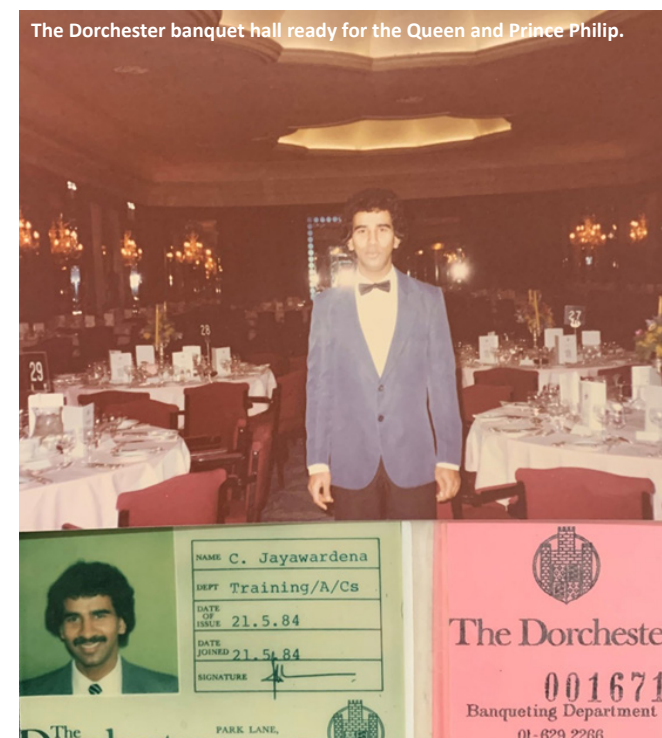
When I was a graduate student at the University of Surrey, UK in 1983 and 1984, to make sufficient money to pay the rent and university fees, I worked at the Dorchester in Park Lane, London, as a part-time Banquet Waiter. Although it was the best five-star hotel in the UK at that time, most Waiters who served in banquets were part-time employees. Traditionally most royal banquets in London were held at the Buckingham Palace. Some royal banquets were held at a historic hotel with long-standing connections with the Buckingham Palace - The Claridge's in Mayfair, London. In early 1984, after many efforts by the top management team, the Dorchester secured a prestigious booking for the first royal banquet in honour of the Queen ever to be held at the Dorchester, since its opening in 1931.



Royal banquet top table seating plan at the Dorchester in 1984.

As this banquet would enhance the image of the Dorchester further, the management decided to re-train the full banquet service team of full-time and part-time employees. It was a two week fully-paid special training. We were told by the Banquet Manager that the five waiters who perform the best in the practical test and the exam at the end of the special training session, will be given the opportunity of serving the 27 VVIPs who would sit at the head table. These VVIPs included the Queen and Prince Philip, King of Bahrain, The Lord Chancellor of the UK and the Prime Minister of the UK (Margret Thatcher).

Thanks to my practical training I received from German and Swiss food and beverage service experts at the Ceylon Hotel School in the early 1970s, I managed to do well at this training session and became one of the best five waiters. As a result I was chosen to serve the Queen and Prince Philip and the King of Bahrain at the royal banquet held on 12th April 1984. I was one of the two non-white waiters among a service brigade of 50 who worked at that royal banquet. Perhaps that may be the reason for Prince Philip to remember me after 14 long years.



A fundraiser private dinner in Kingston in 1998

In 1998, the Chairman of the Pegasus Board and the individual shareholder with the largest percentage of shares, was Mr. John Issa. He was also the Chairman of his family-owned resort chain - SuperClubs. Mr. Issa's family were the pioneers of tourism in Jamaica for a few generations. His wife, son and twin daughters were all well-qualified and held senior positions within the family business. I was very close to the Issa family.

Towards the end of 1997, Mr. Issa had a chat with me and said that he and his family will need two suites at the Pegasus for six months, as their beautiful home in an exclusive area of Kingston would be fully renovated to host an important event. As their house was already well-appointed and well-maintained, to me it sounded strange, but I did not ask too many questions from the Chairman of the Board.

A few days before the visit of Prince Philip to Jamaica, the Issa family returned to their upgraded house. At that point Mr. Issa informed me that his family would be hosting Prince Philip for a private dinner in their house, the day after Prince Philip's arrival. As it was a fundraiser event the invitees for the dinner were rich and famous Jamaicans. Mr. Issa disliked wearing a tie and jacket and therefore, the dress code was informal. A six-course menu with matching wines was planned. Pegasus was asked to look after some of the logistics, while SuperClubs looked after catering.



The Issa family welcoming Prince Philip to their home, in 1998.

The event was a success in terms of quality, satisfaction and fundraising. It was like musical chairs, when those invitees who sat next to and in front of Prince Philip, were rotated from course to course. After the event was over, jokingly I asked Mr. Issa: "Would there be an opportunity for me to address you as SIR JOHN in the near future?" He laughed and said: "Chandi, I need to do much more than one fundraiser to earn a title such as that". I think that I read Mr. Issa's mind, correctly!

Prince Philip served as a patron, president, or member of over 780 organisations, and his key legacy will be his work as the Chairman of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, a self-improvement program for young people aged 14 to 24 founded by Prince Philip in the UK in 1956 and expanded to 144 nations, over the decades. He was a good man and I was pleased to get to meet and talk with him.

The Goodbye

The next morning, I handled Prince Philip's departure from Pegasus. When he saw me at his suite, he asked, "You, again?" By then I have gotten used to his dry sense of humour. I think that he joked often with the intention to put people at ease, but at times was misunderstood as being sarcastic. After a firm hand shake and exchange of smiles, I said goodbye and bon voyage to Prince Philip.

Years later I watched four seasons of the award-winning Netflix series 'The Crown' with my wife. Only then, I realized how complex and at times, how difficult it was for him to have a supportive ceremonial role for 69 years from the time his wife became the Queen of the UK and the Commonwealth in 1952. He was fully dedicated to the institution and had a deep sense of duty, perhaps stemmed from his naval officer training and distinguished military career. He was a stalwart husband of 73 long years enriched with a good sense of humour.



A crisis is a terrible THING TO MISS!

A crisis like the Covid 19 pandemic can be thought of as having some lessons, although its downside is apparent. In the early pandemic, our personal and professional lives underwent dramatic changes, and economic and social consequences were devastating for many. Confining ourselves to homes was challenging initially, despite many changes being normalized along the way. Reflecting on the life in the pandemic and the changes we were compelled to make to the way we lived, even without notice and willingness, I feel that the biggest ever crisis we faced in our lifetime has some good lessons too. In that sense, a crisis is a terrible thing to miss.

A crisis is a terrible thing to miss because it may get us to rethink and redefine so-called 'development.' Among many negative impacts of development, air pollution alone has long been one of the severe forms of environmental damage. World Health Organization (WHO) estimate that air pollution kills seven million people globally each year, and 9 out of 10 people breathe air that exceeds WHO guideline limits on high levels of pollutants. We are evident how the natural world was recovering itself in the absence of human interferences. The degraded, polluted water and other natural resources were recovering fast and becoming clearer and greener. Parallel to the worldwide lockdown, World Meteorological Organization (WMO)'s Air Quality and Climate Bulletin report that Southeast Asia saw a 40 percent reduction in the level of harmful airborne particles caused by traffic and energy production in 2020. Meanwhile, China, Europe, and North America saw emissions reductions and improved air quality during the pandemic's first year¹. Animals flocked in cities and the places that men and women previously occupied. How happy would the natural world have been with minimal human interferences on it? These changes give us a glimpse of what would have happened if our definition of development was more balanced and sustainable?

A crisis is a terrible thing to miss because it prompts us to revisit and reflect on our previous decisions. Regarding tourism, we may question many areas such as our dependency on tourism as an economy, the emphasis we had given to domestic tourism in our country, and local value addition to tourism products. Beyond tourism, why not reflect on local value addition to other exports and see how we can increase dollar income? I think that crises of this nature prompt us to reconsider the importance we attach to the locally produced items, at least the things that matter in surviving as a country, food and agricultural products, for example. Overall, we can reflect on our economic strategy.

A crisis is a terrible thing to miss because it creates opportunities. We expect health and wellness tourism to be an excellent opportunity for Sri Lanka Tourism and some Asian destinations. Potentially, tourists will seek places for healing while they can be more concerned about being safe from pandemic-related health threats. Indigenous precautions and treatments for Coronavirus and immune-enhancing products can be of great use for tourism and other sectors in the future.

¹ (<https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/09/1099092>)

A crisis is a terrible thing to miss because it may show us the new ways of doing the same old things. We realized the possibilities of doing many things online. This includes at least some segments of employment, teaching, and learning, for example. It is already evident that some (private) teachers have decided to continue the online teaching mode. Interestingly, educational opportunities have been created and expanded; we now see children and adults learn from physically far away teachers, including teachers from overseas. Although online teaching and learning had been there before the pandemic, many realized its potentials and the benefits of time and money-saving only after the pandemic occurred.

Finally, the crisis is a terrible thing to miss because it may help us experience and realize what is more important in making our lives meaningful. Reflect on the simplest life we spent at homes considering fast phased lifestyles we used to live. We managed to live with the minimum of what we had, and still, most were happy that they enjoyed their time together with family and loved ones. Kids enjoyed their parents' presence at home, and elderly parents received much care, attention, and presence of their grown sons and daughters. Didn't we have those close-to-heart things? The things that matter most are giving us peace of mind and improving family relations and bonds. Doesn't living in a crisis help us realize the core and the periphery of life? I think the current crisis is a terrible thing to miss because it may help us decide whether to return to the same old lifestyle or redefine a post-pandemic lifestyle.



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Rendang Tok

The Treasure Cuisine of Perak, Malaysia

Rendang, a spicy Malaysian meat dish, slowly stewed for hours in coconut milk and aromatic spices carried on and perfected over hundreds of years and passed down through generations. *Rendang* is a traditional food originating from West Sumatra and prepared by Minangkabau people. It was brought to Malaysia when Minangkabau immigrants came to the southern part of the Malay Peninsula during the Melaka Sultanate's reign. Minangkabau people traditionally made *Rendang* in such a way that it had a long shelf life and could be kept for lengthy travels. The long shelf life of *Rendang* is contributed by the spices used during the cooking process.

Figure 1: Some of the ingredients' preparation for *Rendang Tok*

Nowadays, there are many various types of *Rendang* available in Malaysia, each with its distinct flavour. The Perakians are proud of their *Rendang Tok*, a "luxury" spicy beef dish amongst the Malay community, which is a darker version of the usual *Rendang* due to the use of palm sugar. *Rendang Tok* said to be originated from Kampung Pisang Batu Gajah, Perak which later spread to most districts in Perak. It was food for the royals in the old days, and this delicious *rendang* is literally food befitting the kings. It has the most extensive list of ingredients and is believed to be created by royal cooks who had the means to acquire spices generally out of the reach of the general populace. More uniquely, this *Rendang Tok* cuisine is still prepared using the traditional method, namely on a wood stove. This dish has been brought down for generations because of the cooking methods involving spices and traditional ingredients. The name of *Rendang Tok* is said to have been used in ancient times because the elders cooked it at that time.



Figure 2: Early-stage preparation making *Rendang Tok*

Rendang Tok is traditionally much drier than many other *Rendang* varieties. For instance, the chunks of beef are stewed in a rich and spicy sauce known as "*Kuah*," with the gravy being significantly reduced from prolonged simmering until all that left a thick layer that coats and adheres to each piece of meat. The meat is gently simmered in coconut milk and some 20 different herbs and spices for 4- 6 hours until it is scorched and deeply infused with the flavors of the seasoning. As a consequence of the sauce reduction, every bite of beef bursts with flavor, as the spices and condiments used become concentrated and compressed.



Figure 3: *Rendang Tok* ready to serve!

One of the unique characteristics among all the different types of *Rendang* is its very dark and dry texture. It can keep at room temperature for two days. After that, it can be kept in a freezer and best eaten within three months. To reheat, best to steam *Rendang Tok* to keep it moist. It is usually eaten with rice, Lemang (glutinous rice cooked in a hollowed bamboo stick), or Ketupat. As a heritage signature dish of Perak state, *Rendang Tok* is traditionally served at ceremonial occasions to honor guests during festive events, such as wedding feasts and Hari Raya celebrations. Cooking this *rendang* may be long and arduous, but it will be rewarded with an irresistible dish at the end of the laborious process



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The in the spring winter

Winter games hold the topmost rank in the bucket list of snow lovers since these games are full of adventuresome. Regardless of the danger it causes, people love to experience snow games due to the joy added by whitey snow. Cuddling on this charming snow is a must experience at least once in a lifetime. In the winter season, each country with an apparent seasonal lag is covered with gentle snows like brides on her wedding day, with the beauty second to none. Among them, the youngest bride in Europe, the *Alps*, is charming enough to gather playful snow-loving pedophiles around her to celebrate her moment with the hell of joy.

With chills of the Christmas season and the New Year, the Swiss turn winter into spring by spending months in the snow instead of staying in the home bundled up next to a heater. Being one of the top mountainous countries and the origin of *Sledding*, Switzerland has been renowned for *Alpine Skiing* since the ancient days. Even now, there is somewhere to ski or snowboard in Switzerland all around the year. When the snowflakes start to fall, you can get ready to do these thrilling and fun activities while breathing the fresh air from the snowy mountains peaks. Cold new climate, low altitudes, spectacular views, and snow-covered hills, even dreaming about them might make you feel like you are having an adrenaline rush in your body.

Switzerland offers the best *Snowboarding* experience in the world. Travelers worldwide plan to visit these magnificent sites as this is not something one should miss in their lifetime. Even if you are new to *Snowboarding*, that will not be an issue since this land consists of easy slopes ideal for beginners and are hospitable enough to teach you from the basics. It will undoubtedly be a memorable experience with the beautiful picturesque countryside view and the stunning mountainous vibes.

The line arts drawn on the slippery snow at the places like Flims Laax Falera, Saas-Fee, Samnaun/Ischgl, Zermatt, and Adelboden prove that Switzerland is a happy hunting ground for snowboarders. Due to its most exciting and challenging trails and view, 'Zermatt' crowned to be the golden apple among the snowboarders.

Every skier has dreamt of *Skiing* in the Swiss *Alps* Mountain. The *Alps* are about as close to heaven as a ski fanatic can get with their 6,000-foot drops and challenging runs. Any enthusiastic player can enjoy *Skiing* until his knees start creaking and he loses the sense of the nerve system yet has a broad smile on his face. A gorgeous traditional Swiss meal of *Fondue* and *Raclette* provides the best energy to a frozen body, and this snow land owns ideal resorts for ski lovers around the globe. A vacation in Swiss is genuinely an once-in-a-lifetime prize that makes you a rock 'n' roller with the best combination of games and appetizer.

Someone who steps into Switzerland for snow sports will learn a life-lasting lesson; if you are not falling, you are not learning. This lesson makes them nurtured enough to create a spring in frozen winter without any skip or escape.

Manushi Anuradha
Pasindu Weerasinghe





#Metourism, Travel Selfies, And Destination Marketing: An Insight

Amazing Sri Lanka & finally, I am here! #srilanka

Says a travel selfie post by a Malaysian tourist after making his first footstep at the Bandaranaike International Airport will create excitement for the peers who view the travel selfie post on Instagram. Selfies tourism or #metourism is indeed a 21st-century social phenomenon popularized by the mass media worldwide and less by academia. Selfie tourism resembles selfie tourists who travel to a particular destination to take selfies and post them on social media platforms. People at once used to travel to a specific tourism destination for various purposes. Now, tourists, or primarily selfie tourists, are traveling to take selfies and post them on social media just because their peers have done it. Though the motivation for taking travel selfies sounds quite bizarre, this group of travelers is led by generation Z, primarily teenagers and active on social media. Instead of carrying a camera, selfie tourist prefers to have their smartphone with a selfie stick or Go-Pro camera while traveling. Aligned with the trend, this type of photography genre is known as travel selfies. Selfie tourists take travel selfies. They portray their travel journey and their specific interest in a particular destination, which could vary depending on how they are assembled. Travel selfies categories captured by selfie tourists throughout their travel journey vary depending on destination types. To highlight a few categories: travel selfies backgrounded to nature & landscapes; buildings & architectures, flora & fauna; outdoor & adventure; signage and tourism facilities. Each image category remarks their own choice of the spot at a particular destination that captures their interest the most. Precisely, this is what the destination manager might want to look into when it comes to identifying their unique selling point.

The world is now eyeing the next level of technological advancement with improved lifestyles and how we see things. Similarly, regular communication, which once used to be based on our physical expression and verbal cues, has now seen a transformation with the advent of online computer-mediated communication. Likewise, in marketing, electronic word of mouth (eWOM) has replaced the conventional word of mouth technique with the dawn of social media platforms. Vocalizing the actual perception of tourists, travel selfies of tourists could be the next effective tool for destination marketing due to its nature. It comes with three layers of metadata, namely, image (the travel selfie), hashtags & caption (short review), and geotags (location). Indeed the proper use of this emergence will undoubtedly serve as a boon to the destination managers in tourism planning and marketing.

Generally, imageries are known to have the capacity to educate, persuade and inform the viewers much faster than words. Travel selfies have great potential to be made as a tool to promote a particular destination both positively and negatively, providing the essence of marketing is utilized exclusively. In contrast to what is being promoted by the destination managers, travel selfie posts come with bulks of real-time information that truly capture the viewer's eye. In fact, tourists are much keener on viewing the travel selfies posted by actual tourists with a short caption than those from destination managers, which is flourished with irrelevant promises at times. On the one hand, being part of big data, travel selfies also provides information about recent tourists' travel routes, location, and interests as reflected in Instagram hashtags and timestamps. This is expected to help the tourism service providers track the tourists' interests and provide the necessary infrastructures based on demand.

On the other hand, travel selfie posts on social media have also created room for both actual and prospective tourists to communicate and share their real experiences. As computer-mediated communication is now a norm, people feel comfortable reading reviews and comments before making any purchase decisions being the review is authentic or fabricated. Experiences shared through their travel selfie posts could at times be harsh and defame the image of a particular destination. Still, prospective tourists will always look for honest opinions to serve as their decision-making points. However, placing the role of destination managers within this frame of conversation could entirely improvise the service offering of a particular destination near future.

As much as travel selfies sound helpful to destination marketing, the context of information authenticity should not be overlooked by the entire stakeholders. Information authenticity within travel selfies context covers the idea of sharing false information to the public view via social media. Though beautified incorrect information sounds attractive and reaches the viewer much faster, it indeed can tarnish the image of a particular destination. The destination managers and tourism policymakers should attend to the context attentively to avoid unwanted issues.



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A touristy place I visited in the world



It's my great pleasure to write an article to the TiP Magazine published annually by the Department of Tourism Management. As I have traveled to some destinations in the world, I decided to write something about a touristy place I visited.

I was appointed as the counselor of labor & welfare (A diplomatic post) to the Sri Lanka Embassy in Rome, Italy, for three years with effect from the beginning of 2004. The Vesak festival in 2004 was organized by the Sri Lankans living in the city of Naples (Italians call it Napoli). Our head of mission and some officials, including me, were invited to that Buddhist festival. Some Sri Lankans in Naples was very friendly with us. We used that close relationship to arrange a trip to visit the volcano of Vesuvius (Italians call Vesuvio). As you know, that is the most giant volcano in the world.

Mount Vesuvius is located on the east coast of the Gulf of Naples in Southern Italy, at 1281 meters. The violent eruption in 79 A.D. destroyed the ancient cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum nearby. The volcano and the old town have become famous tourist attractions in Italy. Mount Vesuvius erupted many times after its principal eruption until its last outbreak, recorded in 1944, formed a substantial volcanic cone. The crater was 600 meters in diameter and about 300 meters deep, in a semi-dormant state. To visit the volcano, it takes half an hour to climb from the bottom of the mountain to the crater. There is a fence around the hole that visitors can watch. The plank road is only built half a distance from the cavity. The crater is charred black with white smoke at the bottom.

The history of Vesuvius is generally divided into four eruptive periods: primitive Somma, ancient Somma, recent Somma, and Vesuvius. Geologists and volcanologists have reconstructed these eruptive periods by researching volcanic products, stratigraphic positions, and correlations with products from other volcanoes in Campania. The latest instruments and methods have been used to measure these products' radioactivity and the fragments contained within. Such practices have made it possible to determine the exact dates of the eruptions and study their evolution from a chemical and micro-chemical point-of-view. The Somma-Vesuvius complex comprises concentric volcanic structures of different sizes, shapes, and ages, rising from a joint base. The Romans called the external one, formed in an earlier period, "Vesuvius" (or Vesuvio, Besvio, Besobio, Besivio, etc.). During the first century A.D., the inside cone became famous for its volcanic activity and was known as "Vesuvio" (or Great Cone). The other was called "Somma," a name that perhaps derived from an ancient village on its slopes.

Mount Somma's activity ceased about 17,000 years ago with a spectacular Plinian-type eruption. This caused the subsequent collapse of the upper edge of the volcanic structure and the formation of a caldera, the highest part of which is today's "Punta Nasone" (1,131 m). Later, Vesuvius was formed precisely in the center of this caldera and is ringed by it for the most part. The southern side, destroyed to a greater extent and then covered by ejecta from subsequent eruptions, is joined to the Great Cone except for one level area called "Piano Delle Ginestre" (Broom Plain) or simply "La Piana" (The Plain). Vesuvius proper has a truncated cone shape with the



Image Courtesy: Janith Hirushan

present-day crater at the top. The valley which links the sides of the ancient hole Somma with the base of the Great Cone is called "Valle del Gigante" (Giant's Valley). It is about 5 km long. On the west side, it is called "Atrio del Cavallo" (Atrium of the Horse), and on the other side "Valle dell' Inferno" (The Valley of Hell). The oldest picture of the volcano can be found in some frescoes discovered at Herculaneum and Pompei; it is shown as a single peak covered with trees and wild vineyards. In a later fresco, this one dated 7th century A.D. and found in the Catacombs of St. Januarius (S. Gennaro) in Naples on the saint's tomb, the volcano has two distinct peaks.

One of the questions debated at length is Vesuvius's appearance in ancient times. The absence of lava flows for the past 17,000 years on that slope of Mount Somma, which faces Pomigliano d'Arco and Ottaviano, has been pointed out by Giovan Battista Alfano (1924), by Alfredo Rittmann (1925) in his Active Volcanoes of the Earth and, more recently (1979), by G. Delibrias and others.

This can be explained only by the existence of the caldera Somma (today's Valle del Gigante), which formed a natural barrier as early as then. This observation concludes that Somma's caldera was not created by the Plinian eruption of Pompei in 79 A.D. When it was believed that the Great Cone was formed, both these formations should be greatly back-dated to between 17,050 and 14,420 years ago. From 79 A.D. on, the Great Cone changed shape and height with each eruption, and its present

appearance is the result of its most recent activity, from 1631 to 1944. The typical "little cone" inside, from which a plume of smoke issued, disappeared with the eruption of 1944. Today the crater consists of a vast chasm, an estimated 300m depth, with a maximum opening of about 600m at the upper edge.

Actually, the history of Vesuvius is a very long story. This is only summarized information.

I can remember a hilarious incident that occurred during this trip. At the beginning of the climbing, a middle-aged guy gave us walking sticks. Essentially, it was beneficial to climb the Vesuvius because we had to climb the higher slope. As Sri Lankans, we never forgot our tradition, that's to say him "Grazie" (thanks). However, just after getting down the volcano, he asked for one euro per walking stick when we returned the walking sticks. Strategically, he didn't tell us the fee for the walking stick; he gave it like a "dansela" (free of charge). However, we paid him his price. Since the TiP magazine is a tourism-related publication, I think my visit to Vesuvius and the information, especially the history of Vesuvius, will significantly contribute to this volume.



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ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

A PRESSING AGENDA IN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY IN SRI LANKA

The hospitality industry is the world's largest and one of the emerging industries. The interest in sustainability and eco-friendly business operations has increased dramatically during the past decade. Society and customers were also more attentive to the fragile environment. Responsible customers are willing to spend more money on services and products that seem to help protect the environment. Every hospitality organization now has its sustainability plan for the business, and this industry has become the leader and the most prominent example of sustainable practices. Nowadays, hotels in Sri Lanka have been implementing different innovative sustainable practices in their daily operations. Establishing the green culture in the workplace and donating funds for eco-friendly initiations were highlighted as the most performing best practices among other sustainable practices. They follow sustainable ways because energy, water, and other resources cost continuously rise. Hotels and other lodging establishments are more concerned about acting environmentally and socially responsible. Switching to the best environmentally sustainable practices will contribute to the long-term existence of hotels in Sri Lanka and global markets. Furthermore, hotels can build a positive public relationship by communicating their eco-friendly sustainable practices to the general public. It will help attract new market proportion such as green customers, increase the demand, and think about the repeat customer base.

Increasing awareness about the global environmental crisis has become essential for the Sri Lankan hospitality sector to implement appropriate energy, water, and waste management systems and adapt the best ecological practices. So, by following the sustainability agenda, the industry is trying to encourage tourists to practice responsible tourism and hospitality by conserving natural resources; and to increase the market acceptance of Sri Lankan hotels by promoting them as green hotels. The COVID-19 global pandemic may have ruined the country's hospitality industry, but it has also provided the sector with a one-of-a-kind opportunity to press the reset button. Capitalizing on this opportunity, Sri Lanka Tourism is charting a new environmentally-friendly way forward for the industry to navigate the future sustainably (The Sunday Reader, 2021). Most hospitality organizations in Sri Lanka have already developed guidelines to mandate new hospitality projects to have sustainability requirements, including renewable energy, recycling, zero single-use plastic. In terms of sustainability, boutique hotels take a leading position in Sri Lanka, so these types of hotels currently in operation will need to be given a timeframe to be compliant with sustainability goals in the future.

Most commonly identified environmentally friendly practices in the hospitality industry are,

- ✓ Minimizing the availability and use of single-use plastics,
- ✓ Encouraging and practicing recycling,
- ✓ Using water-wise fittings, from low-flow showerheads to low-flow toilets
- ✓ Installing energy-efficient lighting or using solar power
- ✓ Making use of local, organic products in the kitchen
- ✓ Installing energy-efficient appliances
- ✓ Using eco-friendly cleaning products
- ✓ Use of low energy lighting
- ✓ Limited paper-based marketing and promotional materials
- ✓ Purchase from local suppliers
- ✓ Recruit and hire local people for jobs and more

Some practices can be explained as follows.

Eliminating single-use plastics - by removing access to single-use plastics, the hotel sector drastically reduces their business's plastic waste and carbon emissions. They use paper-made straws, paper cups instead of plastic bottles and paper bags, etc., to eliminate the use of plastics, including plastic straws, water bottles, excessive packaging, disposal of plastic key cards, and plastic bags.

Eco-friendly amenities - Offering recyclable packagings of amenities, like shampoo and conditioner, or using bulk dispenser presentation because some recyclable amenities are too costly to implement. Similarly, offering loose leaf teas and a tea infuser in each room (instead of individually packaged tea bags, which are often full of bleach and other chemicals) not only reduces packing wasting, it minimizes carbon emissions by association and discourages guests from removing unused products from the room, so it will help to reduce overhead costs.

“ We have to make sustainable living convenient, sustainable business profitable and sustainable change fashionable. ”

- Wayne Visser -



Eco-friendly cleaning products – In hospitality organizations cleaning is happening so much more frequently due to the high guest turnover rate in the industry and new stringent guidelines. These organizations' environmentally friendly cleaning products are costlier than their conventional counterparts. Still, many are even more effective than traditional cleaning chemicals and present less health risk to your staff and guests than conventional cleaners.

Eco-friendly food – Most of the food waste created from the hospitality industry is a huge problem all over the world. Some organizations following best sustainable practices have a clear plan for this, and they donate leftover foods to feeding schemes and shelters rather than ending up in a landfill. The organizations that want to focus on being part of the sustainability movement in Sri Lanka's hospitality industry limit their menu options to only a handful of fresh, local options, which will help reduce their carbon footprint and food wastage in one fell swoop.

Integrating sustainability into the organization's architecture - There is a "three-zero-concept" approach in building new properties: using local construction materials and skills, prioritizing energy management and lower emissions, and introducing lifecycle management into the building process that means zero waste. These are just a few green footsteps that hospitality and tourism organizations are currently following to minimize their environmental impact. Environment sustainability is not just a rising hospitality trend. It's also quickly becoming a priority, if not a moral imperative, for hospitality leaders and hotel businesses in Sri Lanka and worldwide. The current pandemic has demonstrated that customers now have different and evolving priorities, so all companies should be prepared

to adapt. Most guests will watch how hospitality businesses manage safety and hygiene during their stay in Sri Lanka. Hospitality organizations definitely will change their services and facilities according to new customer expectations, and companies will realize the potentiality of the opportunities in sustainability and environmentally-friendly designs. The relationship between this sustainability and rebounding hospitality businesses will likely become increasingly important. The rise in environmental awareness emphasizes the low-carbon era today. It can be a sense that this sustainable or green hospitality will be the new direction for the future development of our industry. This sustainable agenda of the industry will protect the green environment with concepts of green consumption activities to achieve social responsibility. Hence, to build a quality environment and a brighter hospitality industry for our future generation and work towards sustainable development while traveling around the world, it's our responsibility to combine with the latest trends and create the right path for the betterment of the country and the world.

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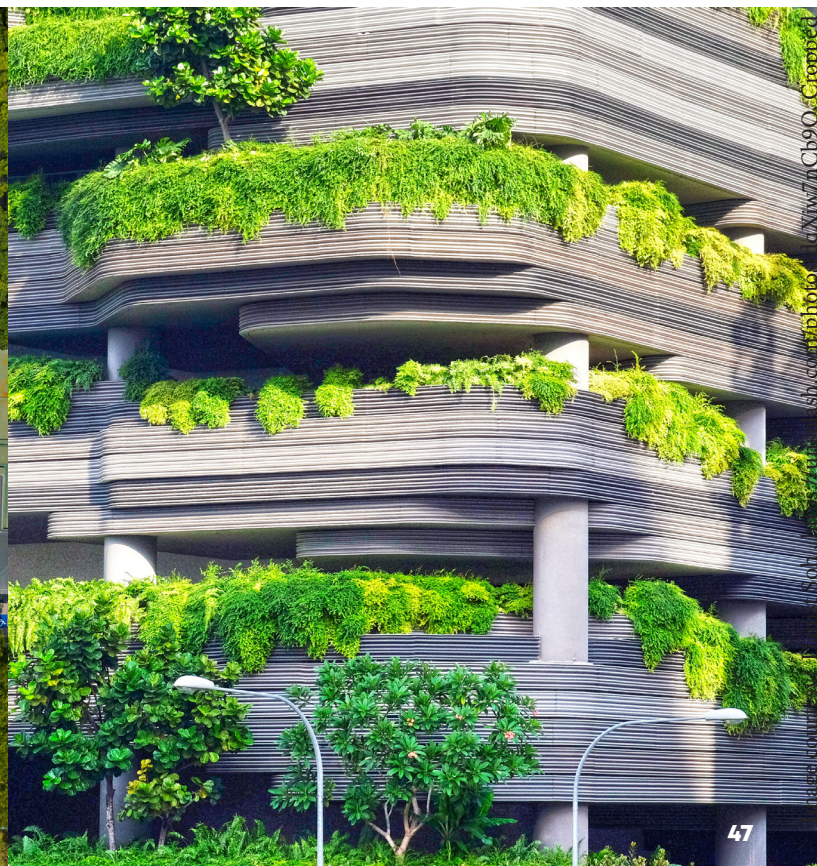
Rangana Shalika, PhD
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Gigantic Tuskers..
the remarkable symbol of our nation!
Do you feel the same about this
gigantic sculpture of **plastic tusker** ?

sculpture Created by Lalith Senanayake

Uswetakeiyawa, Wattala



Dining amid JingleBells

Image courtesy: LAMR / 359 Images / Christmas Dinner / https://pixabay.com/ cropped
m/photos/_ePpYZiOe0, Cropped
Matt Se... unsplash
Image co...



Image courtesy: Casey Chae / gingerbread man / www.unsplash.com/ cropped

When the jingle bells ring its *tilang* sound, cookbooks around the world know it's their time for a tour de force in kitchens. The bliss of Christmas sprinkles its ritual charm to make the different taste in the dish by dish, but every dining table holding hands together with the message of Messiah. If you are a person who truly believes in the season, memories of family reunions, shopping sprees, gift exchanges, and snow-covered postcards will bring a smile to your face. Out of all these, sharing foods may take precedence in Christmas since it celebrates the born of Jesus, who asked to remind his sacrifice on the salvation of human beings through bread and wine. So, sharing cookies and desserts as gifts is a reminder that there are still people all over the world who deliver the actual Christmas message of this prince of peace, which is to believe in hope, love, light, and life. So let us all gather around the round tables, holding hands, to embrace the ultimate inspiration!

The crafting tradition dates back to the *pagan era*, but the *Victorian era* gave it a new shape. Every British lady keeps their best talents in *Christmas puddings* since the traditional Christmas table would not be complete without this centuries-old dessert. According to the tradition, *Christmas pudding* consists of 13 ingredients like raisins, suet, currants, brown sugar, citron, breadcrumbs, orange peel, lemon peel, mixed spices, flour, eggs, milk, and brandy. These ingredients represent Jesus and his 12 disciples. Another exciting tradition of this plum pudding is hiding a silver sixpence inside it. Who found the sixpence in their portion on Christmas day is believed to enjoy prosperity and good luck for the following year. Before being served, a fire sets on this expensive food. It is believed that flaming brandy represents the passion of Christ for the salvation of his followers. Today, the practice of cooking *Christmas pudding*, which was brought to the United States by British and Irish immigrants, has now spread to many countries due to its religious values.

Gingerbread is another most popular Christmas dessert. It is traditionally shaped into miniature stylized men and other shapes used to decorate the Christmas dining table. In fact,

"*Gingerbread men*" have become one of the most well-known Christmas decorations. Miniature houses made of *Gingerbread* have an elegant look with icing and candy frosting. To become a splendid creation, the less attractive *Gingerbread man* has to burn in an oven. So that, Westerners believe the stove is a symbol of birth or life transformation. The *Gingerbread men* on the Christmas dining table recall getting ready to be reborn again within the message of Christmas every winter.

Bûche de Noël, we all know as *Yule Log*, is a French chef who used one of the delicious and beautiful desserts to decorate the Christmas table. This mouthwatering dessert represents the *Yule Log* that burns on Christmas Eve to bring good luck to the family. The most frequent combination of this cake is the primary yellow sponge cake and chocolate buttercream. However, there are numerous variants, such as chocolate cake, ganache, and frosting with espresso or liqueur flavors. A *Yule Log* is sometimes served with one end cut off and placed atop the cake or protruding from its side to represent a chopped-off branch. The bark-like texture is frequently achieved by running a fork through the icing, and powdered sugar dust means snow. So, this delicious dessert blends the feeling of a snow-complete Christmas into the bite by bite whether you appear that falling snowflakes outside the window or not.

Today these Christmas desserts have become popular worldwide as these delicious foods prove that Christmas is about more than just feasting and enjoying the holidays. It is also about the underlying essence of unity as one human being and the significance of charity and goodwill towards all people. It's the time of year to share with others about old recipe books and Christmas secrets passed down from generation by generation. The minor things that people share indeed make a big difference. This is the lesson of Jesus that wanted to give when he blessed one small loaf of bread and a few fish to quench the hunger of fifty thousand people. Of course, Christmas dinner is more about sharing it. May you share the real Christmas message of joy and peace!

Senuri Jayaweera

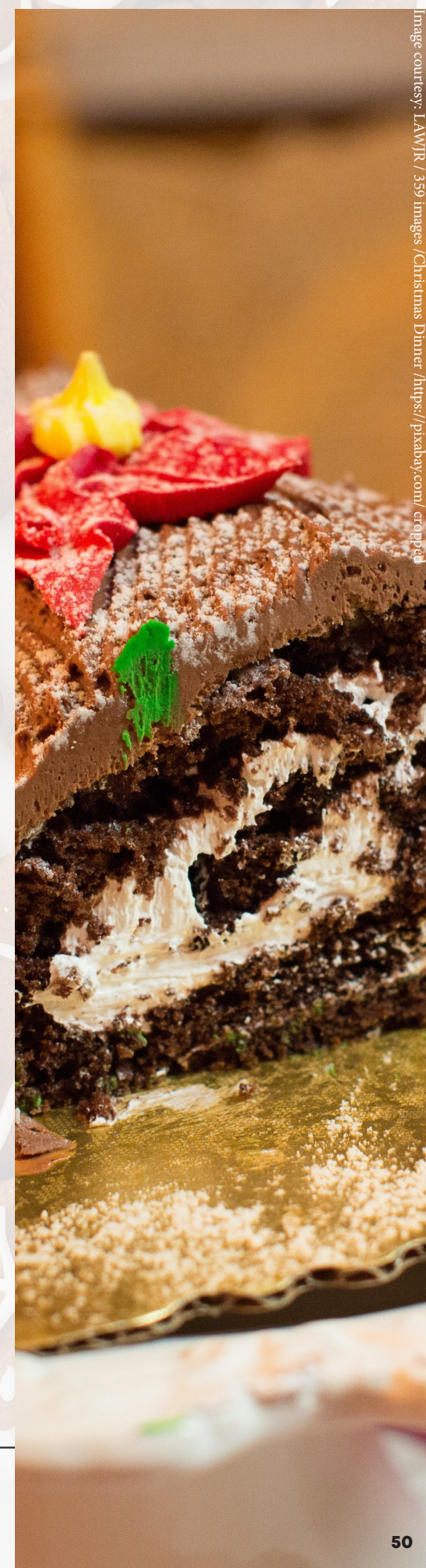
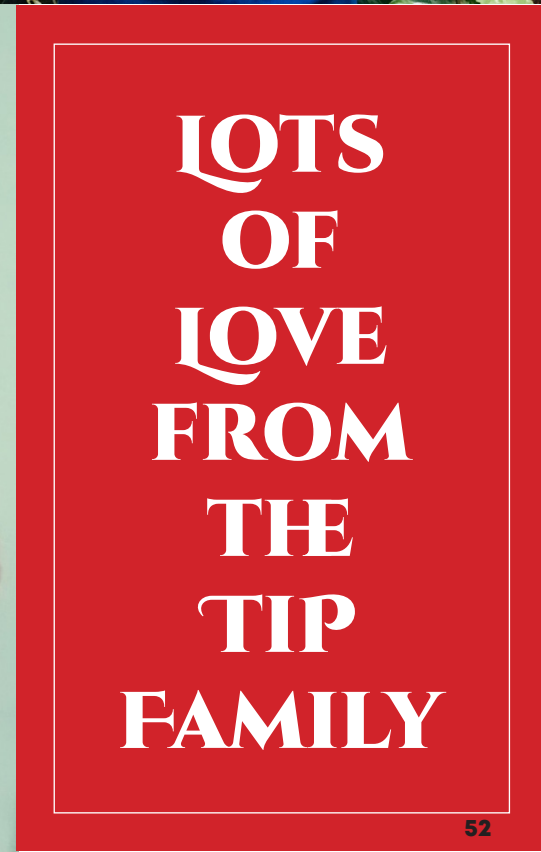
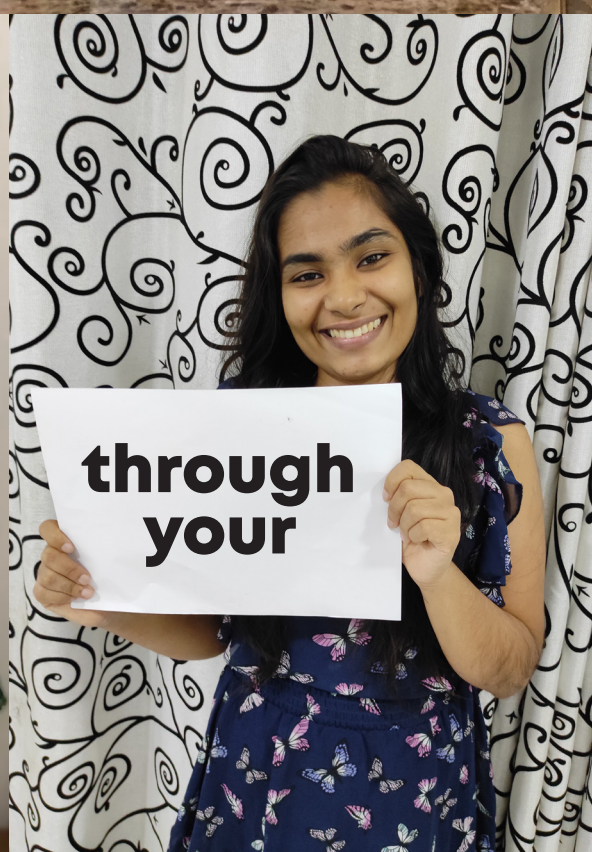
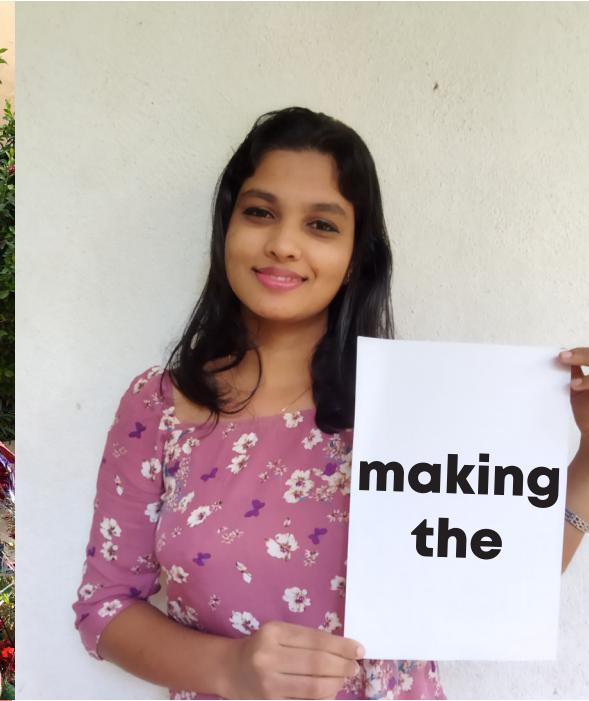


Image courtesy: LAMR / 359 Images / Christmas Dinner / https://pixabay.com/ cropped



Professor Emeritus Dean MacCannell

Professor Emeritus Dean MacCannell, born in Washington, United States, in 1940, was a unique scholar who has breathed a new life into the field of tourism. In addition, he signed his name in gold in many areas through his research and teaching interesting on landscapes of film, agriculture, and the future—Lacanian and post structural theory and urban cultural theory. Professor Emeritus Dean MacCannell earned his Bachelor's degree in anthropology from the University of California at Berkeley and specially presented his thesis in rural sociology for his doctorate. As a Professor in different fields such as environmental design, applied behavioural science, sociology, and geography, his studies were widely influenced by the blend of sociology and anthropology. Most of them were based on the multidisciplinary connection with the semiotics and mythological structuralism of social imaginaries. His long-term research on "landscaping the unconscious" and his classic book, "**The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class**," earned an honoured place in tourism academia, out of his many particular kinds of research. He examined the tourism phenomenon through a sociological lens, covering the construction of social reality, authenticity, and high and low culture. This prominent scholar has also extended his valuable contribution even as a great program chair by becoming a Founding Officer of Research Group 50 "Sociology of Tourism" of the International Sociological Association. Many honours, awards, and achievements such as Hilliard Distinguished Professor and University of Nevada, Reno, March 2004 and, Distinguished Achievement Award, U.C. San Diego, African and African American Studies Program, 2001 has proved the excellence of this sophisticated scholar as a researcher, writer, program chair and a lecturer in different fields. Due to his sincere effort on the evolution of tourism and sociology, Professor Emeritus Dean MacCannell is considered a tremendous classic voice in the tourism and hospitality academia.

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POETIC MEMORIES OF CHINA - I THE SLEEPING LION



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Founder & Administrator – Global Hospitality Forum

Why China?

Whether one likes Chinese Communism or not, fascination with the People's Republic of China (PRC or China) in terms of the good, the bad and the ugly, is universal. My curiosity about China stems from historic facts, my father's personal connections in China from 1958 and my travels to China and Hong Kong, since 1981.

A country with a recorded history of 3,271 years, China has made rich contributions to human civilization. The myths, legends, history and record of innovations of China never cease to amaze me. One of the greatest philosophers in the world, Confucius, a contemporary of Gautama Buddha and Socrates, lived in China between 551–479 BC. His ideas became central to the Chinese culture over time and endorsed by the government. Chinese philosophy and art had an influence on my paintings and poetry, for some time.

Simple Wisdom

When times are hard, go where the wind blow
When times are good, simply go with the flow
Obsessive desires, greed for possessions, let go
Written overnight on some slips of bamboo

Until struck by an arrow, some birds fly freely
Until trapped by a net, some fish swim happily
Until hunted down, some animals run fearlessly
Only mighty dragons, ride on clouds, effortlessly

Be free, live free, love elements with deep compassion
Earth, mountain, water, lake; treat with care and passion
Thunder, fire, wind, heaven; view with a mission
Love within, internally, balance externally; the vision

(Chandi Jayawardena, 2022, p. 76, Emotions, 10-10-10 Publishing
Markham, Canada)

One hundred years ago, a historic meeting in Shanghai among a dozen young Chinese revolutionary intellectuals, laid the foundation to seize absolute power of their country within 28 years, and gradually over 100 years, to influence the whole world. This article coincides with the 100th anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party.

Napoleon Bonaparte allegedly once likened China to a sleeping lion, saying that “when China wakes up, the world will shake.” The Chinese president Xi Jinping alluded to it in 2014, commenting that “Today, the lion has woken up. But it is peaceful, pleasant and civilized.” That statement sums up what modern day China wants the rest of the world to describe the most populous nation in our planet – ACTIVE, POWERFUL, PEACEFUL, PLEASANT, CIVILIZED AND RESPECTED.

1958 – A Call from Tokyo

My father always got opportunities to participate in interesting official overseas trips. When I was four years old, I remember him being away on an official trip to Japan. Sometime in September 1958, my mother told me that my father will be back home soon, and I was impatiently awaiting to enjoy the gifts he would bring for me. An unexpected (and at that time, uncommon) international call from my father to my mother disappointed me. My father's trip had been extended by a month. At the time of that telephone call, my mother was seven months pregnant with my younger sister, and therefore, was eager to have our father by her side, as soon as possible.



My painting Go with the Flow

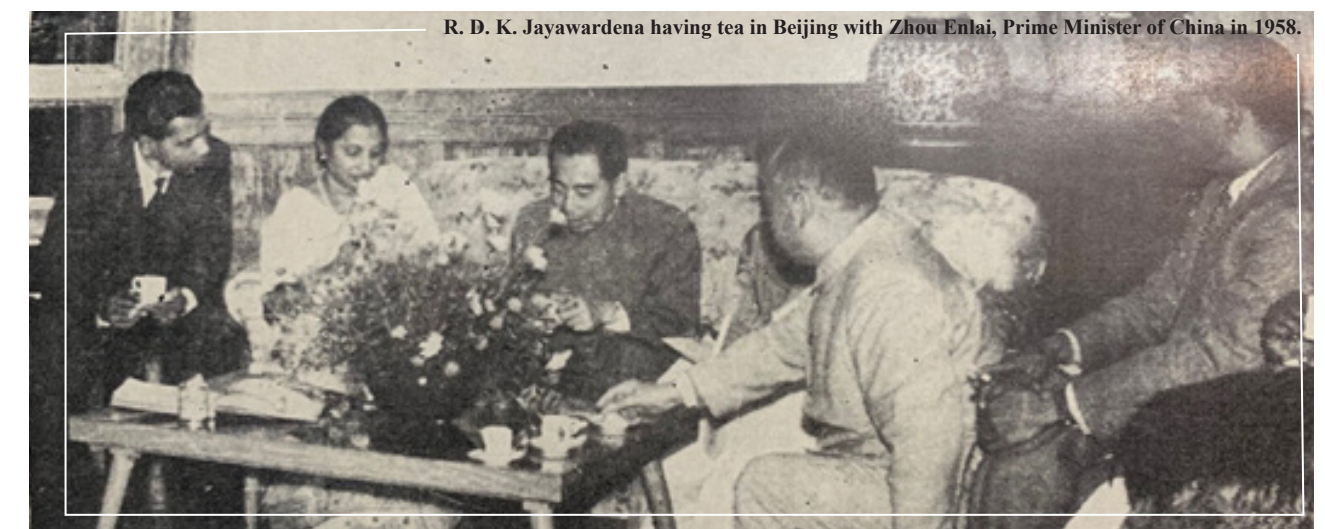
As one of the few countries friendly with the Communist China at that time, Mr. S. W. R. D. Banadaranaiké's socialist government in Ceylon, had received an invitation to attend the ninth anniversary of PRC celebration on 1st October, 1958 in Beijing. The Prime Minister of Ceylon had requested the first and only female cabinet minister of the country, Mrs. Vimala Wijewardene, Minister of Health to attend the event. Owing to a previously confirmed engagement, she was not available to travel to China. She then delegated the duty to her secretary (my father), who was in Japan on government business in September, 1958. My father happily followed the instructions. He shortened his stay in Japan and immediately proceed to Hong Kong for further directions.

A Foreign Delegate turned Tourist in China in 1958

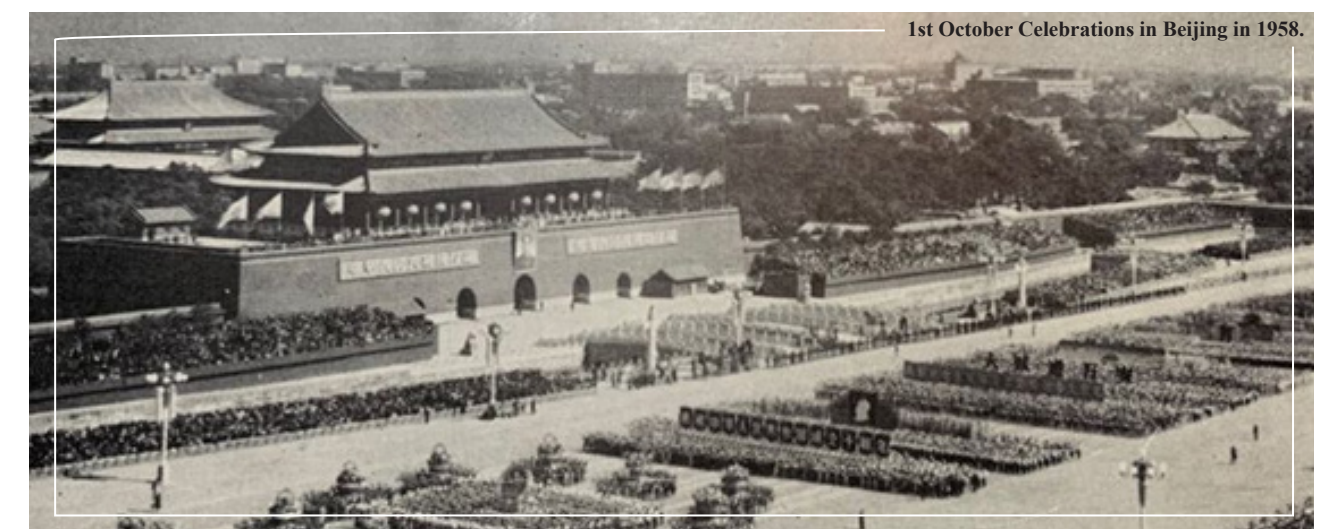
The authorities of PRC in Hong Kong wanted my father to fly to Beijing. The touristic curiosity of my father prompted him to request a long train journey, instead. There was no international tourism in PRC at that time, and trains serviced only local travellers. The officials of PRC did not want to disappoint a foreign delegate invited to attend the national day celebrations. My father travelled to Beijing, as well as all over, PRC by train, accompanied by Chinese translators. My father became one of the earliest tourists to PRC.

My father was also a published author, an award-winning dramatist, a newspaper columnist and a visual artist. These interests prompted him to record his travels, from the time he left Japan to travel to Hong Kong. His intention was to write a book about his unique personal experience in the post-revolution China. On his arrival in Beijing, my father was hosted by William Gopallawa, Ambassador for Ceylon in PRC (who later became the Governor General of Ceylon as well as the first and only 'non-executive' President of Sri Lanka).

My father was fascinated to experience the innovations, culture, arts and long-term developmental strategies of China. The highlight of his trip was having tea and a long conversation with the Head of the Government and the Prime Minister of PRC, Zhou Enlai and sitting on stage with the President of PRC, Mao Zedong, during the national day celebrations.



R. D. K. Jayawardena having tea in Beijing with Zhou Enlai, Prime Minister of China in 1958.



1st October Celebrations in Beijing in 1958.

Long after that memorable meeting with Zhou Enlai, my father wrote this poem:

Saga of the Long March

An autographed ‘Long March’ presented by Zhou Enlai is among my treasured mementos.

It was at a luncheon in Beijing hosted by Ambassador Gopallawa that I had a long conversation with China’s charismatic helmsman.

*Recounting the famous battles
“You will get a fuller picture when you read this book” he added and I was surprised that he showed no reproach or rancour even about deaths, hunger, and defeats they had suffered during years of the Long March while about their exploits and victories he spoke with no excitement or a trace of pride in a most self-effacing manner with admirable equanimity.*



(R.D.K. Jayawardena, 2008, p. 43, Fingerprint, Sarasavi Bookshop (pvt) Ltd, Nugegoda)

My father’s poetic expression of his experience meeting Chairman Mao:

The Man Called Mao

*Bugles and drums!
The Red Militia marched
through Beijing’s Tiananmen
and a million cheers rent the air
hailing Mao Zedong
whose invincible spirit
Vision and martial skill
made China a World Power.*

*Standing on the historic
“Gate of the Heavenly Peace”
Mao took the nation’s salute
and even we the foreign delegates
felt proud to be on the same rostrum
admiring the incomparable pageantry
of China’s Ninth National Day.*

*And when the dazzling feast of fireworks
set ablaze the night sky
there was Mao happily watching
the jubilant crowd
celebrating freedom.*

(R. D. K. Jayawardena, 2008, p. 41, Fingerprint, Sarasavi Bookshop (pvt) Ltd, Nugegoda)

Rewarding Loyalty in the Chinese Way

After returning to Ceylon from PRC in 1958, my father became extremely busy with work. Around that time, there had been a disagreement between the Prime Minister (PM) of Ceylon and the Minister of Health / (from mid-1959) the Minister for Local Government and Housing (my father’s superior). As a result, the two leaders ceased to have direct communication. Therefore, the Minister had requested my father to interact with PM frequently, on her behalf, to get approvals on matters related to her portfolio. She had instructed, “RDK, deal with the old man directly, until further notice.”

The PM in 1921, he had been the first non-white Secretary of the Oxford Union. Due to his leadership qualities, eloquence, intellectual capacity and quick wit, my father liked these opportunities to communicate directly with PM. My father occasionally wrote PMs speeches related to the work done by the Ministry of Health/Local Government and Housing. At times my father had to visit PM’s second residence in Horagolla (where PM spent most of his weekends, communicating with his voters of his electorate).

It had been a time the government was considering to increase the number of members of the parliament from 50 to 100. Given the political shrewdness of Mr. S.W.R.D. Banadaranaiké, my father was not surprised that the PM was planning to break down electoral seats his party held with high majorities, to two or three. The PM was looking for new blood for these parliamentary seats. Impressed with my father, PM posed a quick question one day, “Young man, would you like to get into politics and contest Divulapitiya seat for the parliament?”

A year after my father’s trip to PRC, we were on a family vacation sponsored by his Minister at her holiday bungalow, the Adisham Hall in Haputale. On 26th September, 1959, during a relaxing walk to the town, we wondered the reason for many white flags covering most of the buildings in the town. Then we heard the shockingly sad news; the Prime Minister had been assassinated!

PRC was one of the first countries to express their sympathies to Ceylon and the Banadaranaiké family. In addition, PRC offered many kind gestures to commemorate the legacy of the late socialist leader and a friend of China. The most significant gesture was building the national convention center - Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH) as a gift from the PRC. The construction of the hall was carried out by a joint Sri Lankan and Chinese workforce with a considerable portion of the building materials being imported from China. More than 50 years later BMICH is still Sri Lanka’s largest convention center. BMICH is South Asia’s very first purpose-built convention center with ultra-modern facilities.

My father sharing some of his presents from Japan and China with the family on his return to Ceylon in November, 1958.



At the Adisham Hall in Haputale, during a family vacation in 1959.

I felt honoured to receive the opportunity to manage the entire catering operation at BMICH for three years as the General Manager of the Mount Lavinia Hotel Catering Services Limited. In that role I was involved with probably, the largest wedding held in Sri Lanka, a dual wedding with a sit-down service of Buriyani dinner for 2,400 persons. To accommodate that record-breaking number, my teams even used corridors of the banqueting areas of BMICH. In 1992 and 1993 I produced the annual Island Music Awards events at BMICH. With help of my team, we were able to fill all 1,506 seats in the BMICH main auditorium for this prestigious show, on both occasions.

BMICH has been crowned as the Gold Award Winner in the Leading Convention Center category of the prestigious 2020 South Asia Travel Awards (SATA) competition, bringing recognition to Sri Lanka as the premium convention destination in the South Asian Region. Unlike the recent massive development projects handled by PRC in Sri Lanka with 99-year lease arrangements, BMICH was purely a gift to Sri Lanka. Thank you, China!

The first major Chinese Gift to Sri Lanka, BMICH.



Managing the Catering Operations at the BMICH – 1990-1993.



1963 – The first Sinhala Book on China

My father eventually published a ground-breaking book on China in 1963. Cheena Charika (Travels in China) was an instant best-seller in Ceylon. It was recognized by the Ministry of Education in Ceylon as a 'Recommended Reading' book for high schools. Decades later the Government of PRC, invited my father back to China on a fully-sponsored official trip, and honoured him for writing one of the earliest books on PRC, by a foreigner.

The Part II of 'POETIC MEMORIES OF CHINA' will appear in Tourism in Paradise 2022 Volume with the theme of 'THE FLYING DRAGON'. It will capture memories of two more trips to PRC by my father in the 1980s. It will also narrate some fun stories from my two trips to PRC in 1981 and 2010, as well as four trips I made to Hong Kong, before and after being taken over by PRC.



Book cover of R. D. K. Jayawardena's Cheena Charika (Travels in China) published by M. D. Gunasena Publishers, in 1963.

Bogala Mine

The story behind the glittering stones

*"Rassawak soya awemi Bogalata
Bessa waje bamba heththe deka yata
Messek witharawath nopeneyi goda ayata
Wishwasayak ne api enathuru godata"*

*(Came in search of a job in Bogala
Crawled through 72 fathoms down there
Cannot even take a glimpse like a fly does to the mines out there
No assurance until we be back to the ground)*

Mining is a duel between luck and risk. Minors risk their lives on behalf of their family and their dreams. These tough-hearted miners melt their grief and loneliness away into poems. It is so sensitive to recall the challenging experiences of the graphite miners that one might think the Bogala Bo tree is shaking its leaves as an honour to them.

The finest iconic graphite mine, "Bogala", got its name because of a Bo tree on a rocky plain. This remarkable property is located about 75km away from Colombo, in Kegalle district in Sabaragamuwa province. According to ancient records, the Bogala graphite mining industry started in the early 19th century by discovering glittering stone found from the misty Bogala hills. The story of the "Bogala Graphite Mine", which surrounds the villages of Halloluwa, Araggammana, Pahalagama, and Karagala is as old and interesting as the history of graphite in Sri Lanka. It is said that there were three mines in the past named Mahabogala, Karadawatta, and Punchi Bogala, which are considered to be Bogala at present due to sticking together while digging underground for more than 150 years.

The Bogala mine has been uncovered as one of the world's best-preserved and largest crystalline vein graphite (pure-graphite) mines. As a pioneer in graphite exports in Sri Lanka, Bogala mine has handled the graphite requirements of the top of the industrial giants since its initiation. Looking back at history, the ownership of this source of wealth has shifted from private to public sectors from time to time. Unfortunately, today, a foreign hand is benefiting from the nation's treasure.

The beauty that glitters behind Bogala graphite has been polished up with the sweat of its miners. They start their daily hunting of graphite after handing over their lives to a tiny iron plate. This small iron plate shows the number of the minor, and the plate owner holds it on a board, keeping a long-standing custom alive. That witnesses the owner's life who solves the fate at the underground until he reaches the ground

again. Absolute darkness that lamps on the miners' helmets can only penetrate warns that a single mistake can cost one's own life along with the lives of others.

Bogala mine is an ideal place for a visitor who is curious about the underground life of a local miner. The dark tunnels and donas hundreds of feet below ground level, the sound of explosions and the smell of graphite mixed with damp soil bring a revolutionary spirit to the mine lovers. Though, without special permission, nobody can reach at least the level of 540 feet of the Bogala mine. Mines in different parts of the world welcome mine lovers to these impressive man-made structures as a niche tourism attraction. Also, the Bogala mine; a giant of the graphite mine family in Sri Lanka, will mark a milestone in the mine-tourism industry if it opens its doors to tourism.

Jinendra Madushanka
Malsha Abeyrathna



Creativity has been the forte of every civilization. From the ancient cities in ruins to the skyscrapers in many modern day cities prove the point. Since the inception of hunting and gathering bands to the contemporary, postmodern societies, it is nothing but creativity that brought man so far in his journey that satisfied his entire quench for achievements. Creativity knows no bounds. The inherent nature of creativity in us makes us special and stands out from the others. As we observe different cultures, we can understand that each culture has its own unique features. Modern-day tourists are lured towards these specialties rather than just spending a few days on foreign soil.

The lifestyle of contemporary tourists is diverse in that they seek ultra-special experience in the host destination to which they are attracted. Many countries in the world have offered their prospective tourists a multitude of experiences to get engaged while they are staying so that those countries have become the most sought-after destinations by present-day creative tourists (Richards, 2020). Thus from the 1980s, creative tourism has become the buzzword among tourists and the host nations. During the holidays, the tourists can engage in a specialized activity to learn something new in the host culture. Creative tourism can combine many types of tourism as cultural tourism, heritage tourism, eco-tourism, religious tourism, and even medical tourism.

The UNESCO (2006) defines creative tourism as 'travel directed toward an engaged and authentic experience, with participative learning in the arts, heritage, or special character of a place. It provides a connection with

those who reside in this place and create this living culture'. The new generation of tourists is not merely tourists in the traditional sense. So we can view creative tourism from many perspectives; rather than 'just seeing' or 'viewing', these tourists want 'to do' and 'feel'. In one sense, it can allow both the locals and the tourists to get together and co-create the cultural products that have the traits of one culture or both. In another sense, the visitor can learn the host culture's diverse and unique cultural characteristics in relation to one of its arts and crafts – a phenomenon experienced as 'learning or practicing while staying'.

Tourists related to photography, aesthetics, leisure and entertainment, adventure, food and beverages, health and well-being, sports, literature, and ornithology are some categories that have ample opportunities in Sri Lanka to learn, engage, share, create and enjoy. Sri Lanka, having a vibrant multicultural community of its own with numerous arts and crafts, could utilize creative tourism to achieve many goals using the highly neglected older generation of artists at the village level as the main resource of propagating this idea. Places like Colombo, Galle, Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, Sigiriya, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, and Trincomalee with high historical and archaeological legacies can be developed as creative spaces. The exotic beauty of the country's nature has not yet been converted as a cultural capital.

One of the foremost aspects of promoting creative tourism is preserving its dying tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Since the Sri Lankans are ignoring their own creative arts due to the influence of westernization and globalization, this is a great opportunity as a nation to get its financial malady solved through sustainable livelihoods. Since the days



of colonial rule, the glory and the grandeur of Sri Lankan arts and crafts have been fading. With the influence of westernization, the Sri Lankans have preferred the Western culture and its elements, foregoing their highly valued native culture.

Second, Sri Lanka can boost its economy by drawing many tourists and generating direct and indirect employment to curb the nation's unemployment rate. As the youth have been moving away from traditional arts and crafts, this would be an opportunity to get their attitudes reverted. The areas like literature, pottery, traditional music, dancing, sports, folklore, agriculture, food, dress, leisure, and entertainment can provide an impetus to rejuvenate and regenerate their enthusiasm. With the assistance of the local community representatives, the authorities have to design activities for all age groups considering the diversity of visitors' interests.

Third, creative tourism can enhance the capabilities of the rural community since most of these traditional cultural expressions are rooted in rural villages (Somnuxpong, 2020). They can be trained to be the local cultural ambassadors at the regional and global levels. The government can develop partnerships with the private sector to establish cultural clusters, centres promoting herbal medicine, local food outlets, places to study ritual and magic, and model farms and villages in these centres of attraction. Sri Lanka can follow the guidelines related to Thriving Places of Index (TPI) in designing these activities. Based on this, the Sri Lankans can instil their traditional knowledge in these creative spaces. This community-based approach can foster harmony among the different ethnic groups of Sri Lanka as well because the ethnic-specific cultural elements can be commodified in the creative tourism market in a lucrative manner.

As creative tourists are becoming 'engaged', they also have many benefits to their character and personality. Irrespective of the sector in which they are employed, the tourists will feel that they are relaxed during this short period of time. When they return to their countries, they are equipped with a new set of skills and a refreshing approach

to life that makes them perform better in their workplaces than they were earlier. At the global level, the inter-cultural exchange propagated through creative tourism would make many people learn the 'other' that would help minimize the ideological clashes based on culture, race, ethnicity, religion, and language (Duxbury et al., 2021). If the programs are designed to teach/learn with high-quality output, then the visitors can either begin a new trade in their own countries or a joint venture combining the participants of host and home cultures.



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Gayangi Wirasinha

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Q To start things off, we would love to hear your story; why & how have you come through this successful journey in the tourism industry?

A Well, I'm a person who believes that no one can define success because it's a journey and it's subjective to each individual. You can have successful moments in life. Because life is all about moments, and the decisions you take at different moments define your success. If you take ten good decisions and three bad decisions, your ratio would be your success there. And that's how I would see success. My undivided commitments, dedication towards my carrier, and all results of my decision-making have brought me to where I am.

Once I was a university student like you guys; I did my A/Ls in the foreign language stream at 'Visakha Vidyalaya.' Soon after A/Ls, I thought of becoming independent. That does not mean that my family was not supporting me. They were supportive, but I wanted to be independent as a young individual. At present, young people wish for independence at the cost of their parents, guardian, or even the government, and I never believed in that. During my era, studying foreign languages would open up job opportunities as embassy staff, foreign language teachers, or translators. Yet, I felt there should be more scope than that even though information to carrier guidance was minimal.

I also had an interest in computer science. Soon after my Advanced Levels, DP Aides in Colombo 4 (known as IDM currently) offered me a job opportunity as a computer instructor. They then promoted me as a Lecturer for Diploma

level students of Computer studies who were perusing soon after O/L's and A/L's. I did this job for one year and taught two batches of students. With my earnings, I barely managed my personal expenses, yet I had to be patient as I wanted to add skills along with experience to find my carrier path. As much as I loved Computer studies, I felt teaching was not my destiny in life.



Soon after, I got another job opportunity to join Mobitel (then managed by Telstra, Australia). At the interview, the Manager of Human Resources (then), Ms. Jean Fernandez, asked me my expected remuneration. However, I felt I should learn the work with this opportunity, and then I would know my worth to quote my price, yet she surprised me and taught me my worth. I feel this is a good example to the youth now who usually overestimate them at the time being an apprentice when entering a job.

After six months, I received a notice from the university grants commission enabling university entrance under the stream of foreign languages to the University of Kelaniya. My parents were very keen that I took this opportunity as only about 5% of the students who sit for A/L's would get this chance. But my heart was to pursuit my carrier. The norm in Sri Lanka was full-time universities would deprive one of doing a job. I prepared my resignation with a heavy heart and took it to my manager HR, yet ended up at the CEO (then), Ms. Cathy Aston, for a personal chat. It was a Friday. She reminded me that the university students in the world do jobs and study in the 20th century (then). She challenged me to find out if I had what it takes to do a full-time job and pursuit a full-time university degree and to see her on Monday morning with my well thought and articulated action plan. Even though I was often trained at Mobitel to "Think out of the box", I felt I was at a dead-end, being utterly helpless with mixed feelings as a young girl. Yet my attitude suggested that I should find some solution to this problem. So, I created an algorithm chart for a week of seven days, 24 hours a day. It had to fit in 40+ hours of work and my hours of lectures to fulfill 80% of attendance to sit for my exams and accommodate my semester exams. The chart suggests that I will not have weekends or a single day for leisure holidays for the rest of the 3-4 years, and with this sacrifice, this task is doable. To cover up the university time, I had to undertake work during all weekends, most evening shifts till 8 pm or 10 pm throughout the year, and my annual leaves for semester exams. To date, I am most thankful to the management for granting me this special opportunity to pursue my studies and my carrier. During the last year of my university, I resigned from Mobitel and wanted to experience a "life of a normal university student", yet worked part-time at Nihonbashi and taught English to Japanese teachers who came to teach at the Moratuwa University through JAICA. By the time I graduated, I had already learned the challenges in doing a job, the worth of every rupee that I had earned, and the value of formal education, for which I was so grateful.

Soon after university, I stayed home for a couple of months and traveled overseas with my family for about a month on leisure. Since my school education, those were a couple of months I took time off from doing a job. I guess my next time off will be at my retirement. They say, "When you rest when you have to work, one will have to work when one should rest," and I believe in this saying.

Then after a few weeks, I joined the travel trade by coincidence through a request of a university batchmate. I joined United Holidays as a tour executive in 2002. Since I have studied the Japanese language, I was asked to make suitable business proposals and source businesses from Japanese principals. My chairman Mr. Afghar Mohideen inculcated the idea that "success is not measured by efforts but only results". This was a whole new chapter in my life, and I felt I was back at the drawing board, as Tourism was an entirely new business field for me to learn from scratch. This is the moment I felt the real definition of education, which means in simple "learning the art to learn." I joined the tourism trade for a much lesser remuneration than I used to earn from doing the above-mentioned part-time job. Yet I was not irrational to think that I should be paid more with a hard-earned degree in my hand. I knew that I had to perform and show results in the new job at hand and prove my worthiness for a suitable remuneration. I feel this is a message to many degree holders who fail to understand the above statement these days.

The tourism trade does not discriminate for gender or age. One needs the commitment and the skill to achieve a goal, and that's all that matters. As much as females ask for gender equality, they should know to work hand in hand with any man. I failed many times in making my business contacts as much as I succeeded. Some days were full of sweat, tension, disappointments, and peer pressure from work. There were days I was almost convinced that I had to quit to maintain sanity. Yet I survived with my past work experience and education, and proper upbringing owing to my parents. Such are the demands of the travel trade; either one loves it or hates it, and 'no' in-between.

Starting my first business visit to Japan to-date I have traveled to many countries by my self-sourcing for business with many successes. Let it be winter or summer, early morning, or midnight, in all types of cities, rail stations, airports mapping myself in every travel I have done. I was never taught through handholding, even though I was a young girl then. Not

“Focus on the job in hand right now, it takes you to where you want to be after one or five- year time.”

even to learn how to apply for visas. Yet whenever I proposed my business plan with an ROI specified and earned my trust, my management fully supported me to pursue the business goals. During the journey, there were key moments where commitment to the job and corporate decision-making was judged. E.g., I received the notice of my University convocation, and also I had a pre-arranged overseas sales visit during the same week. I wanted to enjoy that day with my batch mates. After all, that was such a hard earn degree while working 365 days during the first few years. My chairman asked me to decide the most important thing I had to do, either the corporate carrier that I have embarked on and to make it a success or enjoy a moment of an achievement that is already in my hand. And I made the hardest decision then to go on the overseas sales visit and miss a once-in-a-lifetime moment of my life. A few years later, I took a year of sabbatical leave and left for Japan, and had the opportunity to experience the work

from the tour operators’ side while studying aboard. Also, I managed to find some time to pursue a diploma in business administration at the University of Colombo before this venture.

During almost 20 years, there were moments when I was pushed to the deep end to lead the company when the company was facing difficult moments. These moments involved human resource challenges, business threats, financial difficulties, and absolute difficulty in promoting the country during the last years of the civil war in Sri Lanka. We worked technically 24 x 7 proactively to do what was needed and not wait for instructions from the board of directors. Even to date, I have seen many people holding the company on ransom in these situations and negotiating higher remunerations and positions. This was far from my mind being goal oriented for the responsibility that I have undertaken on behalf of the company. Later it all proved to be well worth it.

I became a company director at United Holidays at the age of 32 and Managing Director of Abercrombie & Kent at the age of 35. By then, there were only two lady Managing Directors in the A&K group, and the rest were all gentlemen who were more mature with age and experience than I was. I thank the confidence our CEO (then) Mr. Ian Coghlan placed on me when offering the position. To deliver what I have committed to the company and prove that women, irrespective of age, can deliver what is needed to the international corporate business community, I had to be self-motivated and self-inspired to reach out to my targets. This was involved multi-tasking in running the office and having to travel more than 30 weeks for a year when needed. When you set your targets to achieve excellence, ideally, you need to benchmark your work to the internationally accepted standards rather than be a local icon or a leader for a smaller audience.

So, success doesn’t come just by one decision. It is a collection of timely decision-making. Pay undivided attention, commit to the job at hand, and achieve a collection of small victories that will eventually take you to the place you ought to be.

Abercrombie & Kent is a global brand well knowing for delivering luxury tourism. So, what is luxury tourism as per your definition?

Pioneering a new style of luxury adventure travel in 1962, Abercrombie & Kent was founded by Mr. Geoffrey Kent and his parents, Valerie and Colonel John Kent, on Africa’s plains. From modest beginnings, A&K grew into a globe-spanning network of companies, opening destinations previously not easily accessible to visitors and establishing a new benchmark for experiential travel making Sri Lanka their 51st office in 2013.

Mr. Kent was a founding member of the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC). He has served as Chairman for six years. In 2021, he was awarded the WTTC Global Icon Award and named as an Honorary Member. He was named to the British Travel and Hospitality Industry Hall of Fame in 2012 for inventing the concept of experiential travel by bringing the same sense of adventure found on safari to destinations around the world.

To answer your question on luxury tourism, I would say people define ‘luxury’ in various ways these days. If a person or a traveler is served with what they want, when they want and where & how they want through a service or a commodity, it can be considered as luxury. Luxury is generally a subjective term. E.g., Do you think water is a luxury? Will you be thrilled to have a chilled bottle of water? What do you think? Getting a bottle of water is not a luxury at any hotel. Right? It’s a basic essential thing. But to get a chilled bottle of water after a long hike on top of Pidurangala would be refreshing. Luxury is something that you crave. If you go on a safari to the Sahara Desert, having your luxury tented camp and your plunge pool with hot or cold water is that luxury? Yes, it is a useful facility yet unusual to expect in a desert. That’s why I say it is subjective. It depends on the person and where they are from. At times when the hoteliers say, “we have invested a lot of money, and now we have 75 inches TVs in all the guest rooms.” I could only say, “I’m very happy for you.”

People or passengers traveling with us would have five or six such TVs in their own houses. Having plunge pools in some of their homes is something common. Having yachts or helicopters for themselves would be common too. If I tell them, “You come to Sri Lanka, and I’ll put you in a yacht and send you around,” they would say, “That’s what I do every day. Tell me something different”. Doing a luxury itinerary is not just including the most expensive things. The purpose of the travel needs to be fulfilled by making them feel home away from home with the expected desires seamlessly arranged. Imagine that you go to a village and are offered a cup of tea. The villagers love you so much, and because of that love, they give you a cup of tea with five spoons of sugar. Is that how you want it? You might want a hot cup of tea, but with no sugar. If one puts that much sugar, the luxurious feeling is no longer in quenching your thirst.

So, that’s the difference between A&K and most other companies that aspire to do luxury tourism. We need to identify where guests are coming from, their background, their needs, and the purpose of their visit. A guest can consume a \$2000 bottle of wine for dinner and stay at a \$200 Eco resort by choice. Or else a guest can travel by local train paying \$15 and charter a helicopter for the next day paying \$1500. Similarly, a guest can pay \$1000 per night at an all-inclusive resort such as Relais & Châteaux, tea trails, consuming two meals a day only, and being a vegetarian and nonalcoholic. Fifteen years ago, a hotel sold at \$250 a night in Sri Lanka was considered expensive, yet these days there are hotel facilities sold at \$5000 a night, yet having to secure fast as possible before it gets sold up. So the idea in luxury tourism is “Money is not a deciding factor matching their expectation”.

But the fact is that 90% of Sri Lanka’s hotel infrastructure is catered to the mass market: 3-star, 4-star market. Then we have barely 10% of room inventories to cater to the niche luxury market. So, why don’t you do your math to understand why Sri Lanka is not attracting so-called luxury tourism? At present, in Sri Lanka, per tourist, a receipt per night indicates \$187. But, if you develop Sri Lanka as a niche product luxury destination in a planned and focused manner, you can easily earn a minimum of around \$500 per tourist per night in another five years. General tours are sold at \$350, \$550, \$650 for six or seven nights. We are not used to attracting luxury. We have so much potential for luxury tourism in Sri Lanka, but we have a long way to go.

Sri Lanka is world-renowned for its vibrant culture and its heritage. So how do you see embedding cultural authenticity to luxury tourism?

What would inspire a niche luxury traveler to globe-trot? Do they seek a different/novel experience than what they already have? If we also have another Disneyland here in Sri Lanka, will they be inspired to travel all the way here? No! Sri Lanka is a melting pot of unique experiences in a compact land. Some exceptional tourist destinations are diverse. But we are not just diverse; we are a compact island yet diverse. So, that’s what people would love to visit Sri Lanka for. It’s not a challenge to showcase our culture, history, or nature. But we also need to have the infrastructure ready to attract such people to Sri Lanka.

For example, let us try to understand the development of the Maldives Islands. So many years ago, the native Maldivians operated tourism with minimum facilities. They even didn’t have a proper airport or other basic facilities. However, the Maldivian government had great initiatives backed by policies to boost tourism as their primary source of income. They protected the rights of the natives yet invited all foreign direct investments that would represent the most sought-after luxury brand of hotels/ resorts in the world into the Maldives (e.g., Soneva, Four Seasons, Ritz-Carlton, etc.). The seasoned niche luxury travelers just flocked around the idea, and soon the Maldives became a sellers’ market, the right product at the right location could decide the price they wanted to have.

We don’t have to go for the number of tourists, because we are a compacted and diverse destination. We can go for the actual wealth brought by tourists by giving what we have at the moment with improved infrastructure. It’s not possible, but what happened was that we have not focused on improving infrastructure well. Therefore, it still shows us the growth rate as very slow or very low.



Q When high-end travelers come to Sri Lanka to spend their vacations, are we ready to cater to this segment, and what aspects should we focus on?

A We are not yet fully ready as of now. Can we be ready? Yes, we can. What do we need to do to get these guests into Sri Lanka? We need to have their familiar resort brands here embedded in our culture. Eg: Amangalle, Amanwella, all Relais & Châteaux properties etc. The distinct difference you can see at a glance with these properties would be the fact that they are very well blended with the locality, culture and so unique to the country, rather than a concrete building erected from nowhere with a European style in our own local village.

If you have been to Paris or London, almost all hotels and resorts are built without destroying the authentic charms of the country. When you look at it from the outside, you see the same facade, but from the inside, you will find many renowned hotels/resorts with their unique characteristics. We should encourage foreign or local niche high-end brands to be established in all parts of the country. Yet there should be a very well thought destination planning, policies spelled out yet to be user-friendly, and standards established for any investments in tourism to be in line with a master plan. E.g., the Queen's Hotel in Kandy can be turned into a raffle in Sri Lanka, similar to how the Oriental hotel turned into Amangalle.

We already have so many domestic airports in the country that are not best suited for high-end tourism. Yet, they all can be converted to domestic airports to handle schedule travels with a minimum investment. Since the British era, we were well connected through our railroads. Yet again, with planned investment, we can arrange luxury train carriages to cover the island by train. Like maharaja express in India.

We all have seen how the rural areas have organically yet developed rapidly owing to the expressways built thus far. The above infrastructure development will take Sri Lanka to the next level we all expect it to be while preserving the land's authenticity.



Lesser known facts of well-known Christmas

Christmas, the glorious celebration of the birth of the prince of peace, traditionally binging from the midnight of 24th of December. However, The Holy Bible didn't mention the exact born day of Jesus. It is believed that Pope Julius – I (AD337 – AD352) set the 25th of December as the official birthdate of Jesus.

The end of December was the festival season in the west zone even before customized this season with the birth of Jesus. The Norse in Scandinavia celebrated Yule in hopes of returning the sun after the winter. They brought large logs and set them on fire since the Norse believed each spark from the fire presented them a new piggy or calf within their herd during the coming year. The people in Germany celebrated the power of god Oden during this season. They believed god Oden made nighttime sky-flights to observe them and decide who would prosper or perish. In Rome, people honored Saturn, the god of agriculture, during this mid-winter season. So that, they gave temporary freedom to slaves and closed every business and school as everyone could participate in the festival of Saturnalia.

The recent Christmas season begins with the midnight Holy Mass on the 24th of December, and it ends on the 06th of January with Epiphany; the Feast of three kings. The Christmas tree decorated on the 24th of December is removed on the 06th of January to symbolize this.

The Roman Catholic Church expects every catholic to attend Holy Mass and avoid unnecessary servile work, including recreation and shopping, since Christmas day considers as one of the feasts of obligation. However, the Christmas season fills with lots of joys and entertainment. It is believed this fun and recreation basement has absorbed Christmas through the traditions of the pagan Saturnalia festival.

Dark clouds covered the English glory of Christmas with the cancelation of celebrating Christmas by Oliver Cromwell and his Puritan in 1645. This famous holiday season has come back to the fore in England with the restoration of the monarchy of Charles II.

Many people have known about Kelantan, and generally, it is famous for its distinctive local food. But not only that, each region in Kelantan has its authentic cuisine, which you should not miss off. Jeli is another region in Kelantan that you should visit and experience gastronomic tourism. Jeli town is located 98km away from Kota Bharu, and geographically, it is hilly, forested, and surrounded by rivers. The green land and peaceful Kampung (village) area are this region's main attractions. Due to the damp and humid shady place, it is not startling that many unique herbs used in cooking can be found here. At a glance, this plant looks like ginger; it is leafy and has a white rhizome or root. Not only that, it has the strange stink bug odour known as *Kesing* or *Pijat* among people in the East Coast area, especially in Kelantan. It is well known as a culinary and medical herb, the scientific name for this plant is *Elettariopsis curtisi*, but locals called it *Pokok Pepijat* or *Pijat*. Almost all parts of this plant are useful, especially in cooking. The previously mentioned *Pokok Pepijat* or *Pijat*, is used throughout Jeli local food and adds a subtle flavour to the dish. To name a few, *Masak Lemak Cili Api Ayam*, *Gulai Asam Rong* and *Sayur Keladi*, is a dish that uses the *Pokok Pepijat* as the essential ingredients. Thus, *Sambal Gian* or *Sambal Pijat* is another culinary uniqueness that should be listed on your bucket list. What makes it more interesting is it only can be found in Jeli. This *Sambal Pijat* is a signature dish served daily or during a feast such as a wedding, *Aqiqah* (the sacrifice of an animal after the child's birth), and *Cukur Jambul* (the newborn baby's first haircut in Malay tradition). With effortless preparation, it is made out of the root of *Pokok Pepijat*, and mixed with *Lada Burung* (bird eyes chilies), *Asam Keping* (tamarind sliced), and seasoning. The exotic taste makes it very fascinating to try.

This simple and classic dish is perfect as a dip and a side dish. Usually, it is eaten with *Nasi Putih* (plain rice); however, some are enjoyed it with *Pulut* (glutinous rice). The stink bug aroma from the *Sambal Pijat* mixture is not appealing to most people who are not used to eating it, but it is an absolute delight to almost all local people in Jeli. Don't let this dish scare you; it is prepared tastefully to add a delicate flavour rather than assaulting your sense. Many Kelantanese dishes require an entire day's preparation, but to make this dish, you need mortar and pestle and spend your time for at least five minutes. A perfect *Sambal Pijat* should be spicy, a little bit sour, and not too salty. *Sambal Pijat* recipes vary; every grandma, every mom, or household's version is slightly different. Some will put *Ikan Tawar* (flesh of grill fish) or *Manga Muda* (young mango that is unripe and sour) combined with *Sambal Pijat*. While dining folks, remember, it is not a dish to be rushed-relax and enjoy the exotic taste of Jeli region cooking. Once you fall in love with the taste, you will definitely want to enjoy it again and again. So, if this guide has been helpful and you're ready to dive into this dish, we recommend visiting the *Pasar pagi* (morning market) in Jeli town and buying the ready-made *Sambal Pijat*,

which costs RM 3.00 per packaging, or you can buy the *Pepijat* roots through locals and try your hand at making this. Therefore, here is the fast and easy recipe for you; we hope you enjoy it!



SAMBAL PIJAT

5 minutes/serve 6/EASY

Pepijat roots 10 roots
Bird eyes chilies 6 nos
Tamarind slices 1 piece
Salt to taste

Clean and slice the Pepijat roots thinly, and by using the mortar and pestle, pound all the ingredients into a coarse mixture.

Lastly, salt to taste and it is ready to serve.

To longer the shelf life, keep the Sambal Pijat in the refrigerator.



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The message of the tiny **teardrops**

Land and sea have entirely different features as they are two distinct worlds. But when we closely observe, we can identify that some unique factors create some connection between these two 'worlds.' Sea turtles are one of the most popular species that make this astonishing connection. These creatures connect the deep ocean and the wide shore in hopes of a new generation. Yes, they come to the land from the sea for nesting! The mother animal spends around three hours digging her nest and finishing laying eggs. During this process, her eyes start to cry. These tears prevent her from poisoning her with a salt build-up in a scientific eye. But these tears might raise a strong voice against the human race because of the hardships that she is forced to face.

Sea Turtles are ancient mariners who witnessed even Dinosaurs on earth. These magnificent creatures belong to a sub-group of reptiles called *Testudines*. A baby Sea Turtle begins its journey of life on the seashore. Adult female turtles come to a shore for reproduction, and

The adult females of each species make a long journey from the deep sea to ashore for nesting and laying eggs during their seasons. The hatching of sea turtles is genuinely fascinating. When the right time comes for laying eggs, she comes to the same ashore where she was born. Their brain consists of magnetic minerals which act as an internal GPS. This helps them to find the exact magnetic signature of their birthplace. Usually, she prefers dead of night for nesting. She fills her clutch with 150 eggs grossly in the nest, which was dug by her flippers. Once the process is over, the mother turtle returns to her dwelling sea, leaving her hatchling to fend for themselves. The nest's temperature plays a significant role as it decides the sexual identity of these defenceless unborn babies. Male babies are born in about 280C, while about 310C leads for female babies. However, the infant turtles who were lucky enough to feel the sun's warmth would not be lucky enough to roam around the deep sea as only 1% of them can survive.

otherwise, the entire life of a turtle is being spent at sea. They are well adapted in the sea to survive in the warm Indian Ocean as well as in the cold Pacific Ocean. However, occasionally they make short visits to the sea surface for their breathing purposes. It does not matter for a turtle to make a long journey in the sea since they are swimming champions. The Skeleton of their body and their unique flippers are vital features of their talent in swimming. Turtles can either be *carnivores*, *herbivores*, or *omnivores*. Usually, they munch beetles, fruits, grasses, algae, squid, and jellyfish. Many turtles spend their babyhood as *carnivores*; they depend more on plants when becoming mature. The life span of this reptilian sea creature typically depends on the species it belongs to. Some survive around a quarter-century while the other spends more than a century. They hold a significant role in the marine eco system regardless of their years in the sea.

The prehistoric ancestor of turtles, *Desmatochelys padil-lai*, was 6 feet long and evolved up to today's largest, *Leatherback*. Except for this 8 feet long giant species, other six species can be seen as well. *Kemp's Ridley*, *Olive Ridley*, *Hawksbill*, *Flatback*, *Loggerhead*, and *Green* hold their positions in size, respectively, in the turtle's family.

Sri Lanka, a tropical island in the Indian Ocean, is well-reputed as a hotspot for the global oceanic routes of these innocent sailors. The country's coastal belt is a well-preferred nesting place for five species of turtles except for *Flatback* and *Kemp's Ridley*. Due to the high hatching rate, sites like Kosgoda, Induruwa, Rekawa, Bundala, and Ahungalla have become popular among International turtle lovers. Since all seven turtle species are threatened, Sri Lanka also tends to protect these ancient lives through in-situ conservation at Rekawa and ex-situ conservation at Kosgoda. Rekawa has become a paradise for turtle lovers as it is a perfect conservation

method. However, the sea turtle population on this earth has dramatically diminished in the past centuries. Various human activities mainly cause this pathetic destruction. The recent tragedy of X-Press Pearl even also questions the meaning of the human voice for these voiceless creatures. Yes, all the tears she shed while laying eggs was real! Each teardrop reminds us of the responsibility on our hands to protect the future of her unborns. Still, unfortunately, our supreme brain is not sensitive enough to grab the message of these tiny teardrops.

Chethana Patabandige





image courtesy of Ash Edmonds <https://unsplash.com/photos/MZV14ioUAll> , Cropped

Dear little black panther,
We do **not deserve** to say you
goodbye or wish you rest in peace...

DARK SKY TOURISM AND STAR GAZING DESTINATION

Conventional unsustainable tourism practices led the industry to seek a scientific and planned approach to ensure sustainability in tourism development since the later 20th century. Sustainable tourism development was ensured through various alternative concepts of tourism, which are often integrated with daytime biodiversity conservation and sustainability. This means most destinations and tourism industries are more focused on the day while metropolitan or urban-cantered tourism expands the day into night with entertainment and nightlife. Yet, naturally, the existence of all life relied on Earth's predictable rhythm of day and night circadian. This is encoded in all plants and animals' DNA, even though humans have radically disrupted this cycle by lighting up the night. Although sustainability has been well-recognized, artificial lighting and over urbanizations in many destinations and countries have ignored biodiversity and sustainability at night. Scientific evidence suggests that artificial light at night has adverse and deadly effects on many creatures, including amphibians, birds, mammals, insects, and plants. Light pollution radically alters the environment and habitats of nocturnal animals and birds by turning night into day. The misconception of human society's dark and existing mental models engendered the artificially lighted environment. It causes devastation to biodiversity at night, over energy consumption, unhealthy environment for all creatures, including plants. Research suggests that artificial light at night can negatively affect human health, increasing risks for obesity, depression, sleep disorders, diabetes, breast cancer, and more. Further, shifting between diurnal and nocturnal species causes harmful reactions to pollination and food productions in the world. Recognizing the importance of night biodiversity, energy conservation, the health risk of artificial lighting, loss of night heritage, and fascinating and complementary astronomic attractions led the world to rediscover dark sky tourism and stargazing destinations. This comprises numerous alternative tourism concepts that can emerge through dark sky tourism and star gazing destination. This helps to conserve night biodiversity, energy and enhance the healthy habitat and environment for all lives while energizing sustainable alternative dark tourism and star gazing destination. Prevalently developing countries or emerging less developed destinations accrue more potentials and resources to capitalize through dark sky tourism and star gazing destination. Sri Lanka can also be stepped into a double folded sustainable destination by capitalizing on day and night's rhythm.

Tourism is one of the most extensive industries overarching environment, socio-culture, and economy of the contemporary world. Yet, the conventional mass tourism industry encountered various challenges and dilemmas due to overwhelming negative impacts and uncontrollable

resources utilization. Environmental destructions, socio-cultural degradations, and over resources and energy utilization are highly criticized outgrowths of tourism development. Rectifying the shortfalls and overcoming the challenges led the world to develop sustainable tourism through diverse alternative tourism perspectives. However, most alternative tourism concepts generally pay attention to the conservation of biodiversity, energy, and socio-culture in the day. Seldom, night biodiversity, light pollution, changes in night habitat and environment, and health risk of all life have been paid sufficient attention. Plants and animals depend on Earth's daily light and dark circadian rhythm to govern life-sustaining behaviours such as reproduction, nourishment, sleep, and protection from predators. Although the widespread use of artificial light at night has enhanced the quality of human life and is positively associated with security, wealth, and modernity, the rapid global increase of artificial light has fundamentally transformed nightscapes over the past six decades (Holker et al., 2017). Yet, increasing impacts of artificial light on the biosphere are observed negatives very much and seldom paid sufficient attention. Artificial light can cause nocturnal birds and mammals to wander off course and toward the dangerous night-time landscapes of cities. Every year millions of birds die colliding with needlessly illuminated buildings and towers. Changing night habitat through light pollution threatens biodiversity (such as reproduction and migration) of insects, amphibians, fish, birds, bats, and other animals. It can disrupt plants by distorting their natural day-night cycle (Rich and Longcore, 2006), even human bodies. Predominant mental model and misconception night induce countries and cities to light artificially to transform the night into day, increasing energy consumption. Although the world is undergoing an energy crisis, artificial lighting has not been identified as one of the causes. On the one hand, artificial lighting increases the burden over energy; on the other hand, it disrupts biodiversity at night.

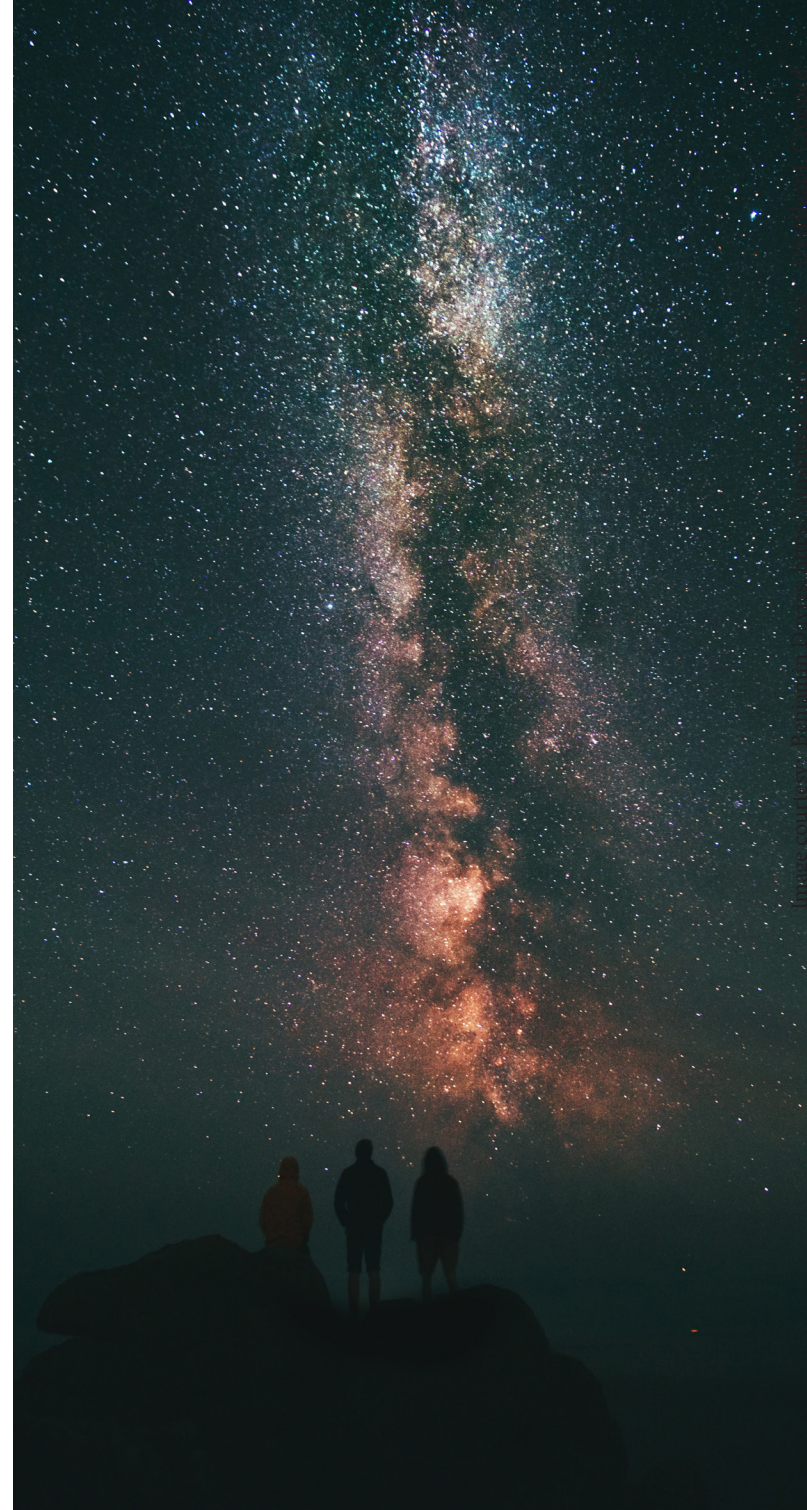
Like most life on Earth, humans adhere to a circadian rhythm — our biological clock — a sleep-wake pattern governed by the day-night cycle. Artificial light at night can disrupt that cycle. Our bodies produce the hormone melatonin in response to circadian rhythm. Melatonin helps keep us healthy. It has antioxidant properties, induces sleep, boosts the immune system, lowers cholesterol, and helps the functioning of the thyroid, pancreas, ovaries, testes, and adrenal glands. Night-time exposure to artificial light suppresses melatonin production. This has led to the deterioration of the long and healthy lives of humans on this Earth. In addition to human health, food productions of humans and other species will also be declined through changes in the behaviour and habitat of diurnal

and nocturnal mammals, birds, insects, and reptiles.

In view of tourism, neglecting the night or changing the nightscape has led the tourism industry to ignore or overlook a substantial natural and human geographic resource or potentials underpinned by night and dark sky. Until recently, our ancestors experienced a sky brimming with stars for all of human history. This night sky inspired science, religion, philosophy, art, and literature, including some of Shakespeare's most famous sonnets. Many literal and spiritual social fabrics are found through the dark sky and nightscapes in the West, even in the East, particularly in Sri Lanka. Many profound attractions of night heritages that are tangible and intangible are being ignored and overlooked by the existing conventional tourism industry. Further, the natural night sky is our common and universal heritage, yet it's rapidly becoming unknown to the newest generations. Ignoring the nightscapes and artificial lighting lead to losing the diverse dark sky tourism and star gazing destination.

Dark sky tourism and star gaze destination embrace numerous concepts and alternative tourism products that comprise nocturnal biodiversity observation, night heritage, dark sky parks and sanctuaries, and dark sky rural tourism. Dark sky tourism (DST) uses unpolluted nightscapes as its free and unlimited resource. In response to rising light pollution, people are seeking dark sky oases to experience the awe and rediscover a piece of their ancestral heritage. Experiencing the night sky provides perspective and inspiration and lets us reflect on our humanity and place in the universe. The history of scientific discovery and human curiosity is indebted to the natural night sky.

Conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem is a preliminary requirement of sustainable development, whether day or night. Learning of nocturnal ecology will inevitably conserve biodiversity. This can be inherently exemplified through many natural phenomena "predators use light for hunting, and prey species use darkness



as cover.” In wetland habitats home to amphibians like frogs and toads, night-time croaking is part of the breeding ritual. Sea turtles live in the ocean but hatch at night on the beach. Hatchlings find the sea by detecting the bright horizon over the ocean. Birds that migrate or hunt at night navigate by moonlight and starlight. Many insects are drawn to light then predators exploit this attraction to their advantage, affecting food webs unanticipated ways. Preventing artificial lighting enhances the conservation of profound biodiversity and nocturnal ecology while providing unique nightscapes for dark sky tourism.

The night-time environment is a precious natural resource for all lives on Earth. This led to building and finding many tangible and intangible heritages that empower human life through ritual, spiritual, literature, anthropology, entertainment, and amusement. Dark sky tourism enables the host communities, especially rural folks, to rediscover or repurpose their ancestral and traditional rituals, healings, spiritual, livelihood, and other anthropological values and practices. Rather than polluting the night with artificial lighting, nightscapes and dark tourism can support sustainable development through many responsible nocturnal tourism activities that are environmentally friendly.

Perspectives on dark sky tourism and star gazing destinations lead the world to find and establish dark sky sanctuaries and parks to enhance sustainable destinations through diversified tourism. Viewing the night sky and the Milky Way has become popular tourist activity. Megan Lane (2011) describes, “The moon is but a sliver. The nights are long. A partial eclipse of the Sun is due. The Quadrantids meteor shower will be visible to the naked eye. And Jupiter, Uranus, and Saturn are all closer than usual. Little wonder this is an ideal time to look to the heavens. While light pollution means those in towns and cities have restricted views, many have spent the festive break in more remote parts - and may have been struck by just how many stars prick across the night sky.” Many unlighted landscapes are away from urbanites such as national parks, rural landscapes, and grounds are highly chosen places for dark sky parks and sanctuaries to experience and enjoy naturally gifted nightscapes and nocturnal ecology. Parks and school grounds tend to be away from street lights and tall buildings, giving a clearer view of the night sky. For an example of sowing seeds of interest, Dark Sky Wales helps local businesses to make the most of the area’s night skies, visits schools with a mobile planetarium, and runs sidewalk astronomy sessions throughout Wales.

The focus makes sense. Night-sky tourism, which typically necessitates one or more overnight stays, can increase travel spending. Dark sky advocates are hopeful that new hospitality developments don’t further contribute to light pollution. Being a certified dark sky place can attract more travellers. The biggest challenge is meeting the rigorous criteria to globally accepted nightscapes or dark sky places. Yet quality lighting design reduces energy use and, therefore, energy dependence. It also reduces carbon emissions, saves money, and allows us to enjoy the night sky. Emerging trends of dark sky tourism and stargazing

destination engender new enthusiasms for the shared protection of dark skies and nocturnal ecology while expanding the tourism value chain that create double folded destinations. Existing energy crisis, health issues, declining biodiversity conservation, and emerging trends in dark sky tourism, night heritage, and nocturnal ecosystem compels Sri Lanka to be a double-fold sustainable destination to capitalize on human and natural geographical resources found in day and night

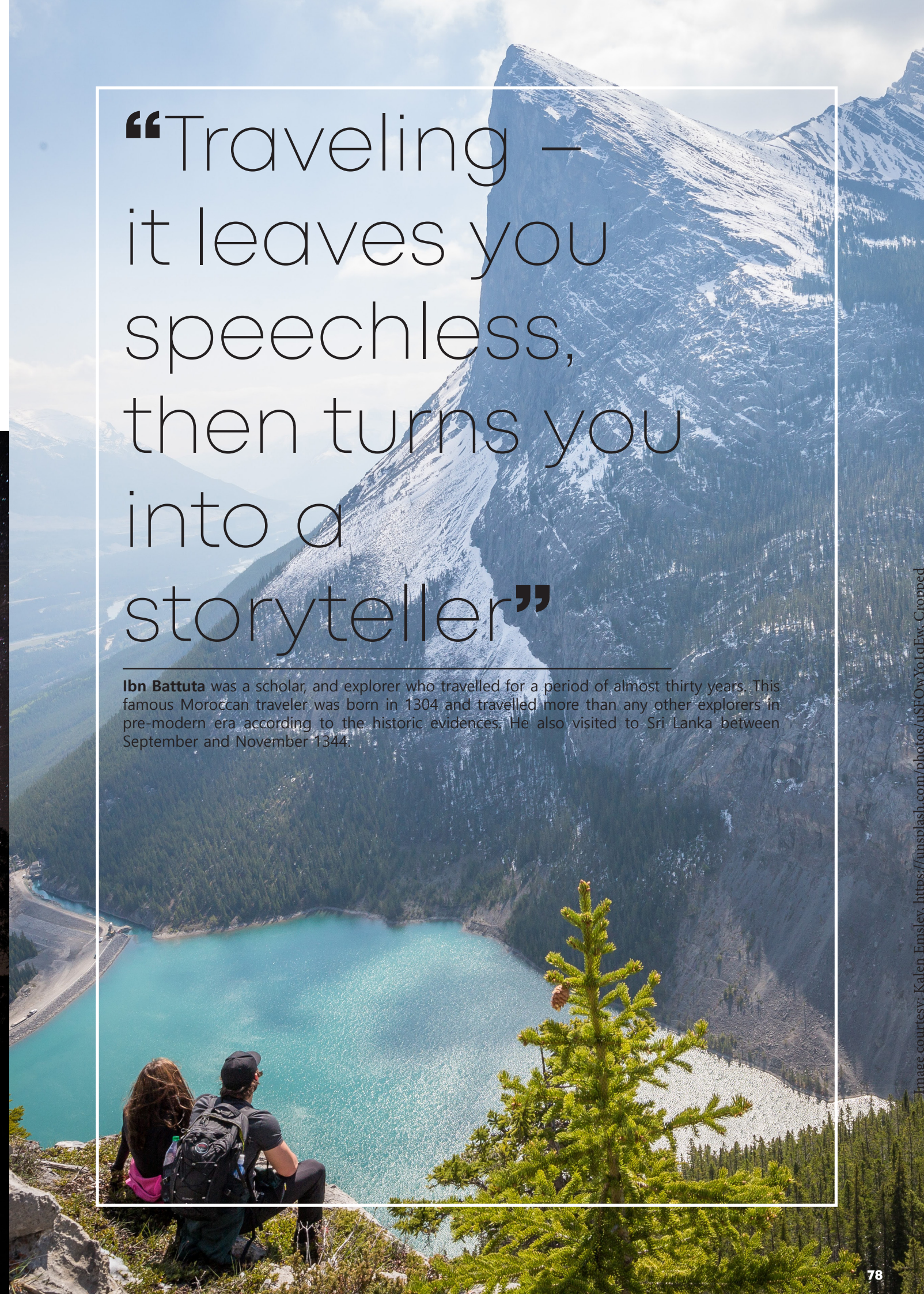


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Department of Tourism Management
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“Traveling – it leaves you speechless, then turns you into a storyteller”

Ibn Battuta was a scholar, and explorer who travelled for a period of almost thirty years. This famous Moroccan traveler was born in 1304 and travelled more than any other explorers in pre-modern era according to the historic evidences. He also visited to Sri Lanka between September and November 1344.



Have we practiced Ecotourism operations at National Parks in Sri Lanka?

The challenges/barriers to success in Ecotourism operations can be discussed under two aspects, under-utilization of the Ecotourism potential at all national parks and the dearth of opportunities at present to develop Ecotourism concessions to get local community involvement in Ecotourism development.

The National Wildlife Policy of Sri Lanka lays down the policy directions for wildlife management, including tourism in protected areas. There are adequate provisions in the policy for collaborative management of protected areas with the local community and the Department of Wildlife Conservation and benefit-sharing. The policy objectives are (1) to conserve wildlife resources through protection, research, education, sustainable use, and benefit-sharing for the benefit of present and future generations, (2) to encourage the private sector and communities to join as full partners in all aspects of the wildlife-conservation process and (3) to facilitate Ecotourism in protected areas, to the extent that it provides benefits to local people and does not damage the ecosystem concerned.

However, the absence or deficiency of good communication channels is a challenge to Ecotourism development in national parks. These communication gaps are evident between the government and private sector and between various Government Institutions, with each Government Institution working alone within their own territory. This article argues for the need to address this woeful situation, including a suggestion for the Department of Wildlife Conservation to host the Ecotourism Forums annually and the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority to form a Multi-sectoral Task Force on Ecotourism.

Substantive changes are also needed in legislation, policies, and regulations. Perhaps the most fundamental change is one of attitude towards each other. It is also a fact that the relationship between the Department of Wildlife Conservation and local communities is often characterized by hostility due to disputes over boundaries, encroachments, illegal use of resources, and a general lack of understanding between the two parties. This has been the pattern

in many parts of the world. So, park agencies are now required by law to include local communities in their planning activities. In the case of Sri Lanka, the main legislation is the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance (FFPO), although provisions for such collaboration are not clearly mentioned in it. But directions are given in the National Wildlife Policy.

The National Wildlife Policy of Sri Lanka also requires that local people be consulted in the process of decision-making, active participation in implementation, and receiving direct benefits from the management of protected areas. The direct benefits could accrue to them by promoting visitor services and Ecotourism at protected areas. All activities within protected areas (national parks) administered by the Department of Wildlife Conservation are legally bound by the FFPO. The Ordinance poses no legal impediments to the development of recreation concessions within the protected areas as long as they have obtained prior clearance from the Department. Given the solid regulatory powers accorded the Department of Wildlife Conservation by the Ordinance, there is strong legislative support for control of the activities of concessionaires were they to overstep the bounds of what is legally permissible.

In our study, a semi-structured questionnaire was administered to obtain the views of the local communities on Ecotourism development and sustaining the local community's well-being at Minneriya, Udawalawe, and Wasgomuwa national parks. Through the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques, the local communities' perceptions on Ecotourism and sustainability were elicited under the aspects of accommodation, sale of crafts/local products, cycle renting, sale of local food, and provision of guide services. The study was also able to identify the challenges facing such involvement of the community.

The community group for providing local food items

All members of the local community interviewed were in favour of Ecotourism initiatives to attract more visitors to the area. They stated that their income would increase from the provision of local food items to visitors, such as fruits,

vegetables, jaggery, honey, and spices. However, the arrival of visitors to the area is seasonal, which would lead to fluctuations in business prospects that could pose a barrier for Ecotourism development at national parks. Seasonal Ecotourism could also create competition within the community as regards business ventures. Though Ecotourism encourages the production and sale of quality traditional arts and crafts, some visitors may not appreciate or place much emphasis on quality items, which may, in turn, lead to the sale of low-quality items at low prices. This would again drive a wedge between community members due to business rivalries.

The community group for providing accommodation

All local community members stated that they favour Ecotourism initiatives and would like to attract more visitors to the area. They stated that they would provide accommodation to visitors to generate extra income. Further, local and foreign tourists visit the area only seasonally so that there are no visitors at all during certain periods of the year. This would pose a challenge to those willing to provide overnight accommodation to augment personal income through Ecotourism. However, during some spans, there are no visitors. This would pose a barrier to augmenting local community income through sustainable initiatives.

The community group for providing professional guide services

All members of the local community interviewed were in favour of Ecotourism initiatives to attract more visitors to the area. They said they could do so by providing guide services for a fee. The lack of professional knowledge and training on nature interpretation and its principles and the availability of a sufficient number of guides at the national parks are some of the stated barriers to serving as nature guides.

The community group for providing handicrafts

All group members like to attract more visitors to the national parks. They stated that they would supply handicrafts

to the visitors to earn an income. However, the production cost for such endeavours is high, and it may be difficult to find raw materials from the area, which would pose a challenge to such endeavours.

The community group for operating cafeteria and maintenance of clean restroom facilities

All members of the local community interviewed favoured initiatives to attract more visitors to the area and said that they would be able to maintain clean restroom facilities for visitors to generate additional income. However, there are no clear provisions for hiring a particular group for operating cafeteria and maintenance of clean restroom facilities

Safari jeep service operation

A particular jeep owner or jeep owner association is involved in safari jeep operation in a national park. Only local residents can work as drivers for the jeeps mentioned above, and few people will only benefit from this business. Accordingly, the community benefits could not be obtained, and the local community stated that the operation of the safari jeep should be handed over to a local community organization. In addition, the safety and standards of vehicles have to be monitored.

Based on the findings, for practicing Ecotourism with the local community's participation, Ecotourism concessions have to be established. Concessions are contracts with the government that give the contract holder (the concessionaire) the right to provide services to tourists visiting protected areas. At the moment, such involvement is not allowed under the FFPO. A concessions policy is also required to create a framework for such agreements. The Department of Wildlife Conservation should draft a comprehensive concessions policy through a new policy on Ecotourism and visitor services.

According to the existing legislation relevant to wildlife conservation, establishing a suitable regulatory framework is the key to ensuring that benefits are optimized,



Image Courtesy: J-T

and costs minimized. Hence, the Department of Wildlife Conservation would need to pay attention, in particular, to the following issues with Ecotourism concession development:

Licensing

Will concessionaires have to obtain a license, and how will they do so? Will there be conditions attached to the license, and if so, what would they be? It is strongly recommended that some form of a licensing system be developed, which requires periodic renewal. This would allow the Department of Wildlife Conservation to exert strong control over the concessions and for non-renewal of licenses of those who have not performed adequately. License contracts often outline the rights and responsibilities of each party and would include details on minimum or compulsory trading hours, standards for consumer service, environmental practices, pricing policy, public access to facilities, infrastructure maintenance responsibilities, signage of advertising, staff, and operations accreditation standards and design of facilities.

Revenue

How much should be charged, and who decides? Who will sell the tickets? How will revenue be shared between the park and the concessionaire?, Who will pay for and maintain facilities? For concessionaires to become involved in service provision, there must be a financial inducement and ways for them to generate enough profits to recover costs.

Safety and liability issues:

Who will establish and monitor safety standards? Who should be responsible for an accident occurs? Will the participating concessionaires, sign a waiver on liability, although lease arrangements might be useful in some circumstances (e.g., Community Based Organizations)?

Operations:

How will operations be monitored on a day-to-day basis? Although concessions will have formal reporting requirements (see below), provisions must also be made to

ensure that there is some regular contact with park staff to monitor day-to-day operations.

Reporting:

What will be the reporting requirements for the concessionaire? It is important to specify performance management targets for the concessionaires and ensure that these are independently monitored. The FFPO does not currently allow for the involvement of the private sector in many aspects of park management. Therefore, the FFPO needs to be revised to permit such public-private partnerships in the case of national parks, in particular national parks.

The present study only considers the necessary clauses in the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance to make Ecotourism development in national parks. The study reviewed the clauses and provisions in the legislation based on the Ecotourism principles.



Prof. Wasantha Rathnayake
Vice Chancellor
Ocean University of Sri Lanka



There is an island that is surrounded by bluish crystal water in the Indian Ocean with so many names given by travelers around the world and today we call it Sri Lanka. It is a biodiversity hotspot that adds real beauty to the world. The hospitality skills were shown by the residents over the past years was able to attract the tourists most and they always welcome the guests with a warm smile without any discrimination. There were a lot of hurdles during this journey and also there were some situations Sri Lanka was back against the wall but still it was able to remember in the people's mind as "So Sri Lanka" a country that filled with an authentic flavor that no one can defeat.

"Taprobane sends great amounts of ivory, tortoise-shell and other merchandise to the markets of India."

(during the era of Augustus, Greek geographer Strabo, 27 BC-AD 14)

1

2

"Temperate and attractive land without any difference of summer and winter. The vegetation is always luxurious; cultivation proceeds whenever men think fit: there are no fixed seasons for it"

(Fa-Hsien, 337 CE – c. 422 CE)

5

" They are a people proper and very well favored, beyond all people that I have seen in India, wearing a cloth about their Loyns, and a doublet after the English fashion, with little skirts buttoned at the wrists, and gathered at the shoulders like a shirt, on their heads a red Tunnis Cap, or if they have none, another Cap with flaps of the fashion of their Country, with a handsome short hanger by their side, and a knife sticking in their bosom on the right side."

(Robert Knox 1681 - An Historical Relation of the Island Ceylon)

4

"Sri Lanka was the finest island in the whole world."

Marco Polo (1254-1324)

3

"Here we neither possess the commentaries, nor the traditions coming down from the various teachers. But in Lanka there are commentaries originally brought down by the wise Mahinda and later translated into the language of the island. Go there and study them, so that they may be beneficial to all."

(The Mahavamsa, Ch XXXVII, verses 228-30, 5th century CE).

9

"Big things come in small packages; Sri Lanka has the variety of attractions to offer, from culture and tea plantations to its beaches"

(Conde Nast Traveler -2021)

8

"Already notable to intrepid travellers for its mix of religions and cultures, its timeless temples, its rich and accessible wildlife, its growing surf scene and its people who defy all odds by their welcome and friendliness after decades of civil conflict, this is a country revived,"

(Lonely Planet author Ethan Gelber in the Best in Travel 2019 book)

7

"An economically peaceful and prosperous Sri Lanka is the dream of youth of the nation. My message for the youth is to collectively work for an inclusively developed Sri Lanka."

A. P. J. Abdul Kalam

6

"I fell in love with the country, the people and the way of life. [...] To understand the people and the way they lived in the villages of West Giruwa Pattu and the jungles of Magampattu became a passion with me. [...] I did not idealize or romanticize the people or the country; I just liked them aesthetically and humanly and socially."

(Leonard Woolf 1913 - The Village in the Jungle)



Once in a Blue Balloon



Ciara Mandulee Mendis

Assistant Director
Department of Cultural Affairs

Shwetha always wanted to fly. To escape into the sky.

On a Tuesday afternoon like this, when there is no one else in the house, she would always go to the big cane chair with her tea and imagine herself in a cockpit. Deciding which clouds to avoid and which clouds to pass through. She wonders what it feels like – to have control. Of what to do. Where to go. What to say.

Shwetha goes to the mirror and examines her face. She thinks about the time her wrinkles first started appearing. Five years go? No, must be at least eight. And the eye bags. They must have been there forever. She did not get them by studying under a kerosene lamp as you hear in success stories, she was born that way. She did not have a success story when it comes to studies. But to be a pilot you need brains. Also, you need money. But Shwetha did not have either.

So she got married. Because, if you really don't have anything else to do, you go get married.

And then you have kids. Lots and lots of them.

That is how Shwetha became a mother of six children.

And now, she stares into the sky, imagining herself in front of a control panel. One that has lights of various colours, like during Wesak.

The telephone rings and she immediately lands on the ground.

'Hello?'

'Here's a chance to get 50% off Once in a Balloon, our hot air balloon adventure! The ultimate experience of a holiday in paradise island'. It is one of those nuisance commercials. As she is going to disconnect the line, she hears the recording saying, 'if you have always dreamed about flying through the clouds, send a simple text message with your name and address to 4040, and stand a chance to fly above and beyond for just 25,000 rupees. Not to mention a Flight Certificate!'

Something pinches her heart. To fly through the clouds. To escape in to the air. But twenty-five thousand rupees? The sum of monthly tuition fees of her children. All six of them.

She sighs and goes to the kitchen to start cooking dinner.

She peels the onions and cuts the green chillies. She crushes ginger and garlic in the mortar and pestle. She soaks the frozen fish in water. Then she cracks a coconut. As she scrapes the coconut, she thinks about how much rotis she needs to prepare. Then about the fish curry. And then about a soaring hot air balloon. She shakes her head and tries to think about today's episode of her favourite tele drama. But it's nothing like flying through the clouds. So she starts visualizing herself amidst clouds. In her mind, the balloon is blue so she feels like she is a part of the sky. Flying above everything. Floating against the direction of the wind.

In a little while, everyone comes home but the dinner is not yet ready. Her husband's face is crimson coloured. She puts more and more wood into the hearth but you can't control a curry with your fire. At last, the dinner is ready and she quickly dishes it up. She spills some fish curry on the floor but quickly covers it with a rug before anyone sees.

'I was chosen to be in the primary band!' exclaims her youngest daughter during dinner and everyone congratulates her. 'I need a melodica, a pretty one.' she adds and the husband looks at Shwetha.

'Will be at least four thousand rupees' he says, breaking the roti into two main parts. 'We have to repair the gate also. It's broken' he adds, 'may cost at least six or seven thousand'.

They eat in silence.

Shwetha is doing the dishes in the kitchen. Her youngest daughter comes to her and starts playing with her frilled skirt. The left-over curry has dissolved in water and has created oil bubbles in the zinc. Bubbles. Like balloons.

'Amma, can I have a light blue melodica?' she says.

Shwetha looks at her daughter for some time and replies, 'of course, blue'.

She walks straight to her wardrobe, pulls out a small silk pouch, takes out a few notes and counts. Her savings from groceries – the money she put away hundred by hundred without telling her husband, just to use during an emergency. Twenty-six thousand

rupees. She feels music in her heart. But the melodica? And the gate. Those would cost at least ten thousand. She knows her husband doesn't have any thousands left after the usual monthly expenses. She will have to step in for extra expenses like these, the way she has always done. So she puts the pouch back into the wardrobe. Unless – unless they don't attend the monthly dinner with the families of her husband's workmates and buy the melodica. But, that is just not possible. So she goes to sleep.

In her dreams Shwetha is floating in the air. She is wearing a light blue saree and her fall is making patterns in the sky. And as she looks down, she sees lights from sky-high signal towers – red, blue and yellow. She floats through a cluster of clouds towards the lighter most part of the sky. And little by little, she blends into the sky. She starts feeling her hands and they feel like air. She feels light. She is free. And she is happy. She wakes up. It is two thirty in the morning. She drinks water and looks at her snoring husband. She climbs out of the bed, wears her blue housecoat and walks to the living room to get her mobile.



Spring

often known as springtime, is a temperate season that follows winter and precedes summer. However, there are many technical explanations of spring, local usage differs depending on climate, culture, and customs.





Tourism in Paradise