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A festival of literature in Galle

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Libbly Southwell: Festival director



Ashok Ferrey: Architect immersed in beauty of literature



Elmo Jayawardana: Captain sailing down history



Kiran Desai: 2006 Man Booker prize winner

Literature is not just writing. It's more. Cookery, history, architecture, photography, travelling, murals, religion, publishing, cricket and theatre, it's all within literature. If all these blended into a single entity - that's what you are yet to experience - the Galle Literary Festival 2008 from January 16 to 20.

The Literary Festival is to be experienced in magnificent historic UN World Heritage Fort - Galle, with writing workshops and competitions, panel discussions, topical debates on issues such as climate change, poetry readings, theatre and children's activities.

The day sees the session start at 9.30 in the morning till 5.30 in the evening. Every session talks about a unique literary work - it can be either cooking or cricket, or something completely different. The writers

are expected from the UK, India, Australia, North America, Pakistan, Germany and France.

The whole package is available at Rs. 10,000, and if you feel it's too much, you can choose a day's event at a reasonable price of Rs. 3,500. If this is too much as well, well, separate Session Passes are available at Rs. 800.

Lunches, dinners and private affairs are available at separate prices starting from Rs. 5000. If you are a student under 21 with a student card, you hear the good news! You get the whole package for just Rs. 1,750, with full day passes at Rs. 500 and individual event passes at Rs. 150 each. A number of events are free of charge.

All tickets are available at Barefoot Gallery in Colombo and Galle. All information on the festival is available at the website www.galleliteraryfestival.com, or you can just drop them an email at info@galleliteraryfestival.com.

The contribution by many of Sri Lanka's finest authors to English Literature is also celebrated with appearances by Yasmine Gooneratne, Carl Muller, Punyakante Wijenaike, Karen Roberts, Shyam Selvadurai, Elmo Jayawardana, Timothy Seneviratne and Ashok Ferrey among them. Let's listen to Ashok Ferrey.



Timothy Seneviratne: Literature is common man's language.

"The Galle Literary Festival is creating a real buzz around Sri Lanka, Asia and the world. For lovers of literature, it's a wonderful chance to meet their favourite international and Sri Lankan authors, but it's also a chance for us to promote what's great about Sri Lanka to the rest of the world - its beauty, its history, its culture and, of course its literature."

This is something more than just about reading books; the event also looks to celebrate the use of the English Language in its all forms of written, heard or spoken media. Festival Director Libbly Southwell emphasized the need of improving

educational opportunity.

"The Festival has been set up to act not just as a platform for writers, but as a forum for ideas, creativity, sharing of perspective, knowledge and experiences." Southwell said.

"The Festival has a stronger community focus this year with local school children involved in preparing for a debating competition, a number of teachers from the Southern Province invited to attend and then share their experiences with other teaching professionals and pupils and 60 university students being given complementary passes to attend." Southwell added.

Sri Lanka Tourism Promotions Bureau and Festival Host Chairman Renton de Alwis, himself a writer, said that the Festival is quite resourceful for the writers as well as the tourism industry.

"But I do not like the word 'tourist'. They are travellers coming to feel Sri Lanka. Many travellers are here to study the Sri Lankan culture and the related areas. So this Literary Festival no doubt attracts such crowd." Alwis said. Alwis brought a beautiful metaphor comparing literature into a mirror. "You see yourself looking into this mirror of literature. It helps you make yourself a good human being."

Following on from the success and significant amount of international publicity achieved in 2007 the festival organisers estimate that the 2008 festival will attract a larger number of international visitors, journalists, and authors to Sri Lanka.

The Festival has already attracted the attention of many more journalists and authors since its conception this year. However Seetha Chinnappa-Sarwal, Festival Manager emphasized on the quality rather than the quantity.

Since Robert Knox's book 'An Historical Relation of Ceylon' first appeared in 1681, the English speaking world has been captivated by this resplendent island in the Indian Ocean. In recent decades Sri Lankan writers have further contributed to the English literature, and are now regularly nominated for leading literary awards.

In addition there have been many art and lifestyle books produced on Sri Lankan culture and way of life. Pablo Neruda touched the beach sand while Anton Chekhov wrote about the heaven he was in, and the candles did cost more than the cake on the well-known scientist Arthur C. Clark's birthday in this land like no other.

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PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION BY MARC BLANCHET (FRANCE):

Sri Lanka through French lense

The Alliance française network in Sri Lanka and the Embassy of France presents this month a photographic exhibition by Marc Blanchet, a French photographer and a writer. Marc Blanchet comments on his exhibition: "All these pictures were made during my travels two years ago. I was helped back then as a writer by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs through a programme called Mission Stendhal.

The project was to cover Sri Lanka as much as it is possible within one month. I started by visiting the ancient cities and captured images of the daily life of ordinary Sri Lankan

people. The main focus of this black and white photographic exhibition was to demonstrate the tension between past and modern societies of Sri Lanka.

These photographs were captured with a Leica camera but printed using modern technology."

Marc Blanchet's work will be exhibited at the Alliance française Colombo auditorium from January 7 to 10. The French artist will also have a conference about his exhibition on Thursday 10 at 6.30 p.m. at Alliance française, 11, Barnes Place, Colombo 7. The exhibition will then be held at Alliance française de Kandy from January 12 to 14 and at the Lighthouse Hotel in Galle on the 16 and 17 along with the Galle Literary Festival.