

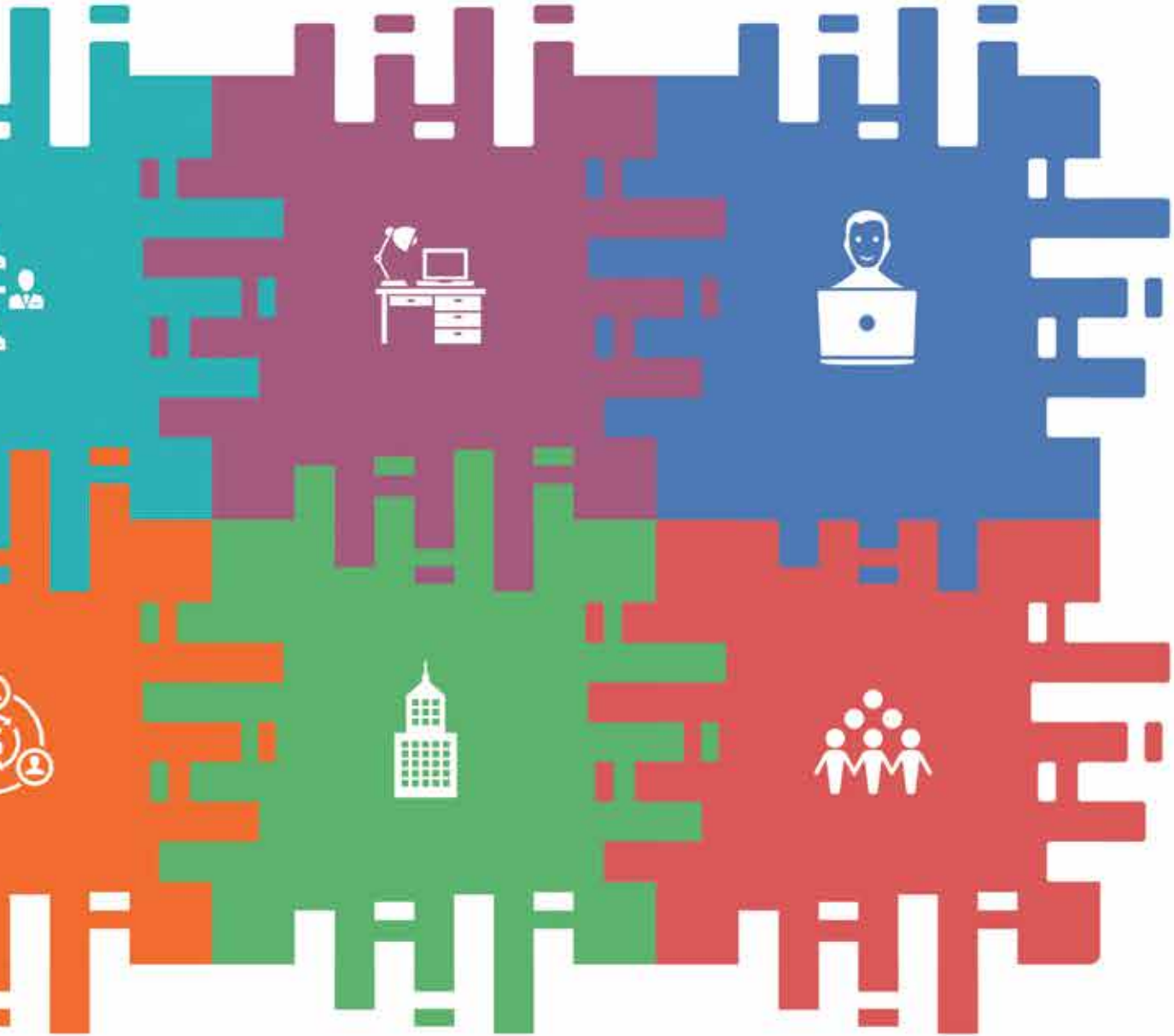


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Navigating Sri Lanka's Creative Economy



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Navigating Sri Lanka's Creative Economy

'Creative Economy' is vital as it provides employment to many people and contributes towards sustainable economic growth.

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Ayubowan!

Welcome to the vibrant creative economy of the tech-driven 21st century. The UN General Assembly in 2019 declared 2021 as the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development. In keeping with this declaration, Business Lanka magazine's current issue spotlights the 'Creative Economy' of Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka, through the centuries, has prospered on creativity; from painting, crafts making, literature, architecture to a diverse platform of performing arts, they have remained powerful expressions of social values and culture and promoted social integration. The creative industries were the mainstay of sustainable economic growth. Today, steered by technology and innovation, the creative economy is growing in intrinsic value. Driving for inclusive and sustainable development engenders socio-economic progress, job creation, and the earth's longevity.

Supporting the thrust for greater expression and contribution of the cultural and creative industries in Sri Lanka is the British Council, deriving experience from Britain's journey in developing its creative economy. Maarya Rehman, British Council Sri Lanka Country Director, said it is one of the fastest-growing economic sectors globally and is considered as Generating the 'oil of the 21st century.' Prof Nalin Abeysekera, Professor in Management Studies at the Open University of Sri Lanka, said that given the unpredictability created by the economic fallout from the pandemic the Sri Lankan economy requires a paradigm shift. Internationally published writers Ashok Ferrey and Pramudith Rupasinghe reveal the abundance of opportunities for Sri Lankan writers who have the talent and the skill to take Sri Lanka to the world of readers. International movie-maker, Chandran Rutnam, believes that Sri Lanka could use its location, expertise, and equipment to be part of the technological revolution that has swept the industry. Singers Bathiya and Santhush, speak of a bright future for entertainers amid the pandemic with growth in the music streaming market in Sri Lanka, which could boost revenue and catapult our music beyond the shores. Irvin Weerackody, Chairman, Ogilvy Sri Lanka, considers ingenuity, innovation, and creativity the best assets of a nation and the global currency of the 21st century. Leveraging what Sri Lanka can offer to a global landscape using design while improving and building livelihoods is the mission of the Academy of Design. Environmental architect Sunela Jayewardene believes that environmental architecture should be a nation's strategic shift to achieve multiple environmental benefits and a catalyst for responsible investment. Cyber Illusions founder, Lalindra Amarasekara, uses his design and production studio to produce live sensory experiences in physical spaces with technology. Fair Trade certified handloom specialist Selyn is a local fashion brand that exports unique, handmade educational toys to over 40 countries worldwide. Demonstrating the value of innovation, the environmentally-friendly Respirone Nano AV99 face mask by the University of Peradeniya receives the spotlight on this issue.

Sri Lanka focuses on developing its creative economy to stimulate more significant trade opportunities and make it an essential contributor to GDP growth.

Sri Lanka Export Development Board

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Prof Nalin Abeysekera, Professor in Management Studies at the Open University of Sri Lanka states, “We must understand the importance of moving away from traditional markets such as manufacturing and seeing the creative industries as a key strategy in a new knowledge economy. Policymakers and intellectuals should understand the importance of this. COVID-19 has created an opportunity to “stop and see” our policies in the long run. We should have a paradigm shift in the Sri Lankan economy.

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Although often clichéd, Irvin Weerackody is indeed a doyen in Sri Lanka's advertising industry, launching one of the first home-grown creative agencies – Phoenix in the halcyon days of the 1970s. Today, as Chairman, Ogilvy Sri Lanka, diversified and robust, he continues to create value for the industry, changing and challenging and inspiring the sensory feel by channeling the three pillars of advertising – ideas, creativity, and strategy.



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Environmental architect Sunela Jayewardene has achieved remarkable success through her work. Many iconic sites bear testament to her practices benefitting local health, economy, and the environment. She believes that environmental architecture is inevitable today and should be a nation's strategic shift to achieve multiple benefits for the greater environment to which, humans belong.

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Cyber Illusions, a new media, design and production studio housing a group of Artists, Technologists, Engineers and Designers was created with the vision of producing live sensory experiences in physical spaces with the aid of technology. With clients locally and in the Asian, European and Middle Eastern markets, Cyber Illusions strives to create extraordinary experiences and change the experiential industry in Sri Lanka.

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Selyn, a handloom business that was created to provide a sustainable livelihood to 15 rural women in 1991 has grown today into a social enterprise that supports over 1,000 creative women and their families. Fair Trade certified and having carved out a name for themselves as a fashion brand locally and a toy brand globally, Selyn exports unique, handmade educational toys to over 40 countries worldwide.

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INTERVIEW

Generating the “Oil of the 21st Century”

Acknowledging the potential of the creative and cultural industries for the future as one of the fastest-growing economic sectors globally, the British Council has been engaging with many countries through its creative economy development program to support their growth and generate quality jobs. There is great opportunity to develop Sri Lanka as a sustainable and ethical creative hub, facilitated by creative and cultural organizations in the UK. Maarya Rehman, Country Director of British Council Sri Lanka spoke with Business Lanka about their engagement with Sri Lanka’s creative economy and its future role in the program.



Jetwing Vil Uyana Hotel and environment, designed by Sunela Jayawardena, open since 2006.



Maarya Rehman, Country Director, British Council Sri Lanka.

With 2021 being the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development, can you provide us with an overview of the British Council’s Creative Economy Program and its objectives?

The British Council is excited to be part of the work of the creative

economy in Sri Lanka. We released a report titled Creative and Cultural Industries in Sri Lanka – a baseline study conducted by the Institute of Policy Studies in Sri Lanka and commissioned by the British Council in 2019. It was an exploratory mapping exercise of the state of cultural and

creative industries in Sri Lanka. The intention of commissioning the study was to gain an insight into the shape of Sri Lanka’s creative economy, and stemming from its findings, shape our own approach and next steps.

It concluded that the creative and cultural industries in Sri Lanka have



Preparing the warp to be set into the handloom for weaving, Wayamba province, 2017.

© Salya Sri Lanka.

The British Council's role is that of a facilitator, and we are working on bringing in its expertise from the UK to help develop local professional networks.

Academy of Design (AOD) international award-winning alumnus Amesh Wijesekera showcases at Berlin Fashion Week, January 2019.



© Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week, Berlin, 2019.

considerable potential to contribute to the economy, demonstrating exponential growth in its contribution to the GDP.

Additionally, because of its enormous potential to contribute to the GDP, the United Nations and other countries have recognized the creative economy as an essential sector. Sri Lanka's creative and cultural industries' significant economic footprint and employment potential became evident through this nationwide research. The study revealed that Sri Lanka's creative economy had shown steady growth of 95 percent, raising its GDP contribution from 433.62 million dollars to 845.41 million dollars within four years.

The mapping exercise also demonstrated that 2.9 percent of the economically active workforce was involved in the creative and cultural industries, including the highly educated and least educated in the labor force of Sri Lanka. However, the study also revealed the lack of data around the creative industry. We think there is greater participation of creative and cultural industries in the economy. However, that data is not available or not formulated in a way we can extract it.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, the British Council has already, together with policy drivers, industry leaders, and stakeholders, formed a Creative Economy Steering Group to take forward the development of the program.

The British Council is now facilitating the next steps for growing the network and enabling the local subsectors in the creative economy to advocate for public policy interventions to realize the power and potential of the creative and cultural industries island-wide. The top recommendation from that report was the necessity to position Sri Lanka as an ethical and sustainable hub.

The British Council's role is that of a facilitator, and we are working on bringing in its expertise from the UK to help develop local professional networks. Another objective is to create value, education, and strengthen teaching and awareness of the creative skills across the

curriculum. The British Council will be working with policy drivers and educators to raise awareness to make it a significant source of employment. Other actions, such as data and data collection on cultural and creative industries, need to be initiated while strengthening weak areas like intellectual property rights.

Our next steps are to gather leaders from creative and cultural industries to create a network of industry leaders who can lobby with the government and raise the profile of the subsectors in the creative economy. We are currently involved in awareness-raising programs to foster dialogue about this industry and its subsectors. Bringing all of them together will help fully understand the industry and its subsectors and contribution and help create an environment to unleash its potential.

We recognize the potential in cultural and creative industries from looking at examples from around the



Body Earth – Earth Body, 2015. Mixed media on paper, by Anoma Wijewardene. This work was shown in the exhibition EarthLines, 2016, Galle. Conceptualised as a response to the historic 2015 UN climate change convention in Paris, the works in EarthLines depicted the precarious fluidity of the earth's delicate ecosystem, under attack. Private collection, Colombo.



Baliphonics – contemporary western improvisation meets the ecstatic and transcendental healing ritual of Bali.

© Shehan Obeyesekera.

world, the UK, Indonesia, Singapore, and others. Moreover, there's a marriage between industry tech and the traditional artistic sectors taking place, one which needs to be quantified and measured. Global figures of creative economies' contribution to GDP is a testament that it is a future-proof economy. It relies on individual creativity rather than automation. The fact that it involves women and traditions is a positive. It comes from culture-specific places.

As a part of this initiative, in the beginning of 2021, the British Council hosted a virtual session at the Sri Lanka Design Festival to focus attention on the evolution of Sri Lanka's creative and cultural industries towards adopting sustainable development goals to drive post-pandemic revival. John Newbiggin, ambassador for creative industries at the Mayor of London and the voice of creative economy on behalf of the British Council, was

a part of this international panel as was Dr. Tita Laresati of the Indonesian Creative economy. This forum helped draw lessons and actionable insights from the UK, Indonesia, and local creative industry advocates. It explored Sri Lanka's potential to position itself as a sustainable and ethical creative hub.

Why is there a Johnny-come-lately attitude towards the creative and cultural industries?

Even in the UK, it was only in 1997 that the government took an interest in what we now call the creative economy. There was resistance even from within these industries on what they are and who their stakeholders are. Only when we started seeing the economic evidence of its impact did we take it seriously.

Engaging in conversations on the creative and cultural industries for 20 years has resulted in the declaration of 2021 as the international year of the creative economy for sustainable

development. Policy drivers, industry leaders, and businesses are starting to take a keener interest. As we emerge from the pandemic, we will be looking at recovery and economic revival. I think these dynamic future-proof creative and cultural industries will be part of the answer. It's slow in Sri Lanka because its economic potential is not fully appreciated. There are many reasons for that. Possibly because, in a country that values more formal established professions, the creative sectors are not seen as viable, income-generating sources of employment. Interestingly, the report mentions that the way the creative economy works can influence the more traditional sectors and help them look at how they deliver and what they do.

How do you plan to expand the program into the future?

Given the somewhat insubstantial recognition of the creative economy in Sri Lanka, bringing all sectors together and building networks is essential, as the practitioners in the creative and cultural industries don't see themselves as a bigger whole. The practitioners have considerable potential. Essentially they have to drive for greater awareness and cross-sector conversations. Most practitioners and artisans are small and medium enterprises of lone freelancers and sole traders, which means the connectivity is not as good as it should be. The British Council will be working with an organization with experience in empowering SMEs, developing their entrepreneurial skills, and with interest in the circular economy combined with technology and innovation. We will also work with organizations to promote the creativity of the professionals, practitioners, thought leaders, associations to enhance their contribution to the creative economy in Sri Lanka. We also want to increase sustainable and regenerative practices across the Sri Lankan creative and cultural industries. In that, we will also be utilizing the experience and the learning from the UK.



© Cyber Illusions.

Graduation Ceremony at Military Technical College, Muscat, Oman, 2015.

To begin with, we will initiate a series of conversations to bring the creative sector together under different topics, where we will talk about issues that affect the creative and cultural industries. Then hopefully, organize a physical get-together depending on how the pandemic spans out. We hope to bring out the creative entrepreneurs to share skills and knowledge and create a network where people see themselves as part of a bigger whole. Within the subsectors, they will look at themselves more strategically advocating for an industry rather than for a particular art form or profession. For instance, bring digital designers together with craftspeople and artisans.

And some of the conversations that we hope to have will be in Sinhala and Tamil, and the organization that we are hoping to work with has a network of young creative entrepreneurs and SMEs. This series of conversations will gather a relatively small number of people together and build a network from that point, and they, in turn, would link with their smaller networks. Through this strategy, we are hoping for a cascading effect. Although it's not easy to plan in this climate, it will be good to have, when it's possible,

a combination of a physical hybrid event where we will bring more of the industry players together, organize events, exhibitions, talks, and conferences. We can facilitate, but they need to take ownership and advocate to obtain the support of agencies and professional bodies that are interested in giving a step-up to the creative sector by helping them in any way they can. As the state sector is also demonstrating an interest in the creative economy, we will advocate to state officials and decision-makers on the importance of giving due recognition to this industry. We're still in the process of working on the program.

What are the best practices that the British Council intends to bring into this program – from other countries?

While regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa, South East Asia, and South America drive innovation and transform market potential in the global creative economy, there's also massive potential for learning and collaboration in the region. Especially in South East Asia, which is doing a lot to elevate creative and cultural industries. The British Council has, in the past decade, been doing significant work in Indonesia.

The British Council partners with Indonesia's creative industries and government stakeholders to share the UK's experience and practice within the creative economy sectors. Our programs in Indonesia aim to strengthen creative entrepreneurship and global competitiveness. In 2012, the UK's Ministry of Culture, Communications and Creative Industries, and the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of Indonesia signed a memorandum of understanding to develop the latter's creative industries by strengthening the exchange of information and best practices between the two countries. The British Council led the program by formulating programs and events as per the objectives of the agreement. Such as enabling improved understanding of the value of the creative economy, facilitating awareness-raising visits to the UK, and delivering programs for support of young creative entrepreneurs in design, fashion, and music and screen industries. Also, professionals like Dr. Tita Larasati, an industrial designer, the Bandung Creative City Forum co-chair, and the Indonesia Creative Cities Network chair can provide a great deal of insight into Indonesia's transformation.

Again in Malaysia, for instance, the British Council helped conduct a Situational Analysis of Creative Hubs in Malaysia. It intended to look at creative hubs and community-based collectives across Malaysia to understand who they are, what they do, share their successes and challenges, and imagine what a preferable future could be. Malaysia has a very dynamic creative economy development program through its National Strategic Program of the Creative Industry. It aims to bridge the information gaps in the industry and create more social capital to make the creative industry be more globally competitive as an economic sector.

Equally, in the Philippines, the British Council commissioned the City-Wide Mapping and Growth Opportunities research project managed by the Creative Economic



Thaji, Principal Dancer, Chitrasena Dance Company, performs in Samhara,

© Luxshaman Madaraja.

Council of the Philippines to provide a deeper understanding of the creative economy of Makati and Baguio. The Philippines aims at making the country's creative economy matter not just in the country but also in the region.

From new participatory platforms to world-renowned training programs in cultural diversity and management, Brazil has one of the more innovative creative economies in the world. The situational analysis and evaluation that the British Council initiated in Brazil focused on supporting creative entrepreneurs and developing the mechanisms that encourage a more diverse, inclusive, and confident creative economy. I think there's much learning we can take from these countries in the future. The British Council's work in the creative economy is what it has been doing globally in other countries. Sri Lanka, too can relate to those countries.

Our role is to build on those connections, such as drawing on the UK's strength in creativity and innovation through partnerships and collaboration between UK and local organizations and influencers, providing opportunities for exchanging knowledge and skills development. We have matched Sri Lanka to the Singaporean model to use the wealth of our work to support this program to make connections within Sri Lanka

and internationally. Further, building on our experience in Sri Lanka and the research we have done, if Sri Lanka wants to develop strategy and focus strategically on the creative industry, the British Council has resources at its disposal and expertise to assist on long-term projects.

In terms of visibility and economic benefits, how attractive are creative and cultural industries when compared with what we in Sri Lanka term as professions considered secure and much-admired, especially in promoting their potential for greater involvement, pull of talent, and to attract capital and investment from public-private entities for education and training? What stimulus is required to attract young talented workers to participate in the current workforce in the creative and cultural industries?

One of our stakeholders, a digital creative, said that Sri Lanka has no shortage of talent. But he said there comes the point where creative thinking is not encouraged and taught in schools. Hence, it becomes difficult for people to go beyond because they have been taught not to think creatively. He said there needed to be an educational shift from the practice of rote learning—an education revolution. Countries as

diverse as China are good examples to learn from, and it's incumbent upon Sri Lanka to very much do the same. John Newbiggin, Ambassador for the creative industries, at Mayor of London, said that the creative economies "could be the oil of the 21st century," and that could have enormous implications on how we live, work, and learn. Indeed, creativity could be the fuel of the 21st century. Although that may be ideal, it doesn't seem completely untrue if you look at the sector's exponential growth.

Just like the pandemic has made digitization more acceptable to people who would not consider it before, the younger generation in the craft sector, traditionally not digitized, can be encouraged to marry digital trends with artisan skills. That would make it more attractive for those whose families are already in them to continue or those who have an inkling to step into that particular creative sector. The artisan sector is well recorded and documented compared to the others in that most participants are mature in age, maybe over 40 or 45 years, and very few young people are stepping into those crafts. Specific crafts being caste-based also could be a barrier to entry. If it can be re-packaged in other ways and made exciting and a more viable profession for young people to enter, I think there's opportunity.

I believe attracting young people into the creative and cultural industries is a concern across the board. Indeed, the digital sector is more attractive. Some initiatives are focusing on retaining particular craft-based industries in the country lest they die out.

The National Crafts Council, an influential body in the country, could do quite a lot in that sector. But we need to bring the crafts into the 21st century in terms of what the market requires. Artisans need to work with designers, where designers don't use artisans as part of their supply chain, but more as a partnership between designers and artisans to be on an equal playing field. A few initiatives are trying to do that so that

craftspeople receive the recognition they deserve for their skill and artistry unless we take it out of the caste level to transform it into an art that can attract money. The reality is that if it's felt to be a reasonably high income generating sector, there'll be more value to it, and more young people will step into it. The perception of specific arts as low status-occupations needs to be negated and elevated to a professional level. We have to break down perceptions. The state and the National Crafts Council have a significant role in altering perceptions and promoting statuses. Those who are trying to work with craftspeople on more equitable terms are private or small initiatives. While non-state actors will drive it, the state has the most significant role in attracting and retaining young people in the more traditional and old creative and cultural industries considered a heritage of Sri Lanka.

Through its social media campaigns with the education sector, the British Council is to widen the career opportunities for young people, including their understanding of careers, sustainable careers, green careers, and the green economy. We have to connect the different strands of work when raising awareness of modern 21st-century jobs and the skill-set young people need in this environment. There's a combined effort needed through industry, government, and organizations like the British Council to tell young people about the changing workforce and the changing requirements, the skill sets, and the benefits of the creative economy. Creative jobs are less at risk of automation. It's fascinating, and I feel young people are aware of this to a certain extent. But policy drivers and industry leaders can certainly be doing more. They can establish high-level qualifications and industry standards. Professionalize some of them so that there's respectability and security in these jobs. Such an outcome will come about through what we are doing right now of creating awareness, bringing people together,

and lobbying. The government plays an enormous role in this, and that's what we want to do by lobbying the government to incentivize this sector to make it a viable choice, to create better intellectual property rights laws to protect people's creativity.

Given their size and scope, what challenges do creative and cultural industries face regarding accessing capital, credit, and other financial services and sourcing raw material?

While we know that Sri Lanka's creative entrepreneurs are good at what they do, they face insurmountable obstacles in accessing capital, raw material, and markets. As recommended by the study, a robust professional association for cultural and creative industries can facilitate industry practitioners when they face difficulty in raising capital. The association can work with banks and other financial institutions or investors, government departments, and trade bodies to identify issues and barriers in looking for the sector or market-specific solutions, such as grants, micro-loans, venture philanthropy, or long-term capital. To address the challenge of raw material acquisition and processing, the group can spur the creation of supply clusters or cooperatives to create a more streamlined, reliable, and sustainable supply of processed raw materials. The group can commission work on trends in consumer segmentation, competition analysis, and foreign market environments analysis to address the challenge in identifying markets, such as regulatory changes and market sizes. It can offer access to business planning workshops. We can do more to identify and support supply chain connectivity to establish the role of Sri Lanka's creative and cultural industries in global value chains.

Specific sectors are very small-scale and dependent on certain seasonal trends for survival. How can they be brought into the mainstream?

An important step would be professionalization and creating recognition of the industry and forging networks. When times are tough, there will be protection for the industry in the same way other industries have through the pandemic and other events. There's a lot to be done through professionalization and recognition of all the subsectors in the industry. When the industry recognizes its strength and all subsectors work together to contribute as a whole, from which will emerge prioritizing, without which any enterprise will not protect itself from the uncertainties and vulnerabilities of seasonal trends. Sometimes some of the most vulnerable people in this sector, such as women and marginalized communities, don't even know what they are part of. The story of the creative economy is that it's rooted in diverse populations, part of which is giving opportunities to marginalized groups. However, until all industry subsectors come together and effectively lobby for recognition and rights and better working conditions, standards and vulnerabilities would continue. As I said before, the British Council is trying to convene networks, raise awareness and empower people in the creative and cultural professions. Unless people see themselves as part of a bigger whole, they will work as small disparate groups. There needs to be more collective action to lobby for themselves. Hopefully, in time the industry practitioners will see themselves as a part of something bigger than the visitor economy, which is seasonal and vulnerable.

What is the thrust towards ensuring registration and intellectual property rights over creations?

One of the recommendations in the study is to strengthen knowledge about and access to intellectual property rights. As we see it, it's a prevalent issue that requires lobbying from the industry. While litigation on formal intellectual property rights may

prove challenging even for those who have them, we can instead promote a culture of the need to recognize and respect personal intellectual property rights across the board. Clients and consumers must realize the value of an intellectual property that creates these products and understand why there is a premium on them, rather than expecting mass-production costs. Likewise, the business world that uses stock photography and requires digital creative services needs to recognize the intangible value of work that goes into creative production.

Additionally, the country can also strengthen intellectual property rights by adopting a unique legal framework for protecting traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, which are ultimately the foundation from which Sri Lanka creates its unique designs. This local recognition and inclusion in trade agreements will uplift local production while protecting it against unfair commercial adoption by foreign competitors.

That is a work in progress and requires an extensive commitment by all stakeholders and lobbying by the industry. As part of its commitment to uplift the creative industries, the British Council hopes to work with the Creative Economy Steering Group, to organize awareness-raising programs and lobby, and work with policy drivers and industry leaders for change. We acknowledge that intellectual property rights are an enormous issue across South Asia. It's a key recommendation in our report as well. But it's never going to happen overnight.

Given the limitations in the home country, how can young talent be retained from moving abroad to find more expression and better income?

As I said earlier, there's much work the state needs to do supporting and investing in the creative and cultural industries, helping to create attractive alternative career paths for young people. The good thing is that the government of Sri Lanka recognizes the creative economy and

its importance in its flagship policy document – Vistas of Prosperity and Splendor. That will make way for much opportunity to contribute and help create change.

On the other hand, as we move towards greater digitalization in a post-pandemic world, the physical workspace is not as important when it's digital. So you can create international linkages, create global markets from your home. For instance, Sri Lanka is quite a big market for transnational education, so a student doesn't necessarily have to go to the UK to get a UK qualification. Retaining talent through digital-led professions and exploring opportunities in the creative industries through a marriage between creativity and technology will be attractive to young people looking at the future. But there's much work to be done, awareness-raising to move from traditional mindsets and teaching methods. I think the components are all there to create desirable opportunities for young people in Sri Lanka. The creative economy is all about heritage, music, art, design, and culture, and it's about your roots. It's about your home and your story. While young people go overseas for education, they will return if they deem that they can do more from Sri Lanka.

The pandemic has exposed the vulnerability and impermanence of many sectors in the creative industry. How best do you think Sri Lanka and the world can rebuild the creative and cultural industries – hopefully in a post-COVID era shortly and have a plan to ensure a sustainable future?

I reiterate that what will give practitioners in the creative and cultural industries the security they deserve in good times and in bad is organizing a cohesive group that speaks in collective unison. I believe what is vital in earning that protection is recognition and an industry's contribution to the economy. The problem with the SMEs in the creative and cultural industries is that they don't receive the same degree of protection afforded to other industries

despite contributing to the economy. The power of convening will give these different industries a platform. In other words, empowering them will provide them with the vocabulary and the skills to lobby and advocate for themselves.

The British Council espouses a sustainable approach. Quite often, people can't get to the next level because of financial constraints or legislative issues, and that's why SMEs need to form a network to support each other. And also, lobby for areas such as procuring raw material and enabling payment gateways, improving exposure opportunities and professional exchanges by providing funding or connect Sri Lankan creative entrepreneurs, craftspeople, and artisans to targeted countries through bilateral and multilateral trade agreements or countries that are currently in the list of high exporting countries. Such measures are essential as even the minutest reason can bring small businesses to a halt because they don't know where to find redress. But collectively, they can achieve so much more.

As we plan our intervention with the country's policy drivers, creative industry leaders, and other stakeholders, we must draw insights from the study's results that the British Council commissioned. The study has shown that participants in the research desired a coherent, collective set of policies and an administrative body that would promote and support their sector throughout each subsector. That calls for an all-encompassing council or a joint body for the creative and cultural industries that can voice overall sector concerns, monitor growth, and steer development. Leading organizations in the creative subsectors now have the opportunity to group together and proactively create this group. The group can act as a collective bargaining body to represent industry interests while also stimulating intra-sector collaboration. The group can work with private, public, and international stakeholders to redress some of the challenges detailed through this report. ☐

CREATIVE ECONOMY

Creative Economy, COVID-19 and Paradigm Shift in Sri Lankan Economy

The economic consequences of the corona pandemic are unpredictable. As per a recent media report, the rupee has come under pressure in recent days. Trading in the spot market has been low amid global volatility and liquidity injections from the Central Bank. Experts believed that the effect would last for months. “So the time has come to think of “Paradigm Shift” in the Sri Lankan economy. COVID-19 has sent us a message, which we need to read with insight,” states Prof Nalin Abeysekera, Professor in Management Studies at the Open University of Sri Lanka.



Research and Development are vital in Creative Economy.

We have to study the success story of 'Nollywood' to see whether we can apply that to our Ranminithanna Film Village, which also has more potential. University undergraduates in Sri Lanka can study 'Nollywood' and see the Successive Key Factors (KSF) and uniqueness in the film industry.



Prof Nalin Abeysekera, Professor in Management Studies at Open University of Sri Lanka.

In Sri Lanka, we are still concentrating on traditional exports like tea, rubber, coconut with garments, and something 'out of the box' is required to compete globally – even if it will utilize the resources in total capacity. This article focuses on how the concept of 'Creative Economy' can be used as a new strategy for the country to achieve sustainable economic development.

What is Creative Economy?

The concept of 'Creative Economy' is a new development for Western countries and in world trade. It is better to discuss the creative economy with Nollywood. The emergence of 'Nollywood' is remarkable, and it came into the world picture within 20 years. According to PwC.co, "The Nigerian Film Industry (Nollywood) is globally recognized as the second largest film producer in the world. The industry is a significant part of the Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation Sector, which contributed 2.3 percent (NGN 239 billion) to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2016. It is one of the priority sectors identified in the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan of the Federal Government of Nigeria with a planned USD one billion in export revenue by 2020".

We have to study the success story of 'Nollywood' to see whether we can apply that to our Ranminithanna Film Village, which also has more potential.

University undergraduates in Sri Lanka can study 'Nollywood' and see the Successive Key Factors (KSF) and uniqueness in the film industry. We can then see how to apply these models (with some modifications) in the Sri Lankan context with Ranminithanna.

It is worthwhile to understand the meaning and implications of the creative economy (sometimes referred to as the creative industry). According to John Howkins, the author of 'The Creative Economy: How People Make Money from Ideas,' creative industry refers to a range of economic activities concerned with generating or exploiting knowledge and information. Howkins divides the creative economy into 15 sectors, which are:

- 1) Advertising
- 2) Architecture
- 3) Art
- 4) Crafts
- 5) Design
- 6) Fashion
- 7) Film
- 8) Music
- 9) Performing Arts

- 10) Publishing
- 11) Research and Development
- 12) Software
- 13) Toys and Games
- 14) TV and Radio
- 15) Video Games.

"According to Andy Pratt, Professor of Cultural Economy at City, University of London, three main areas are worthy of attention, particularly for developing countries:

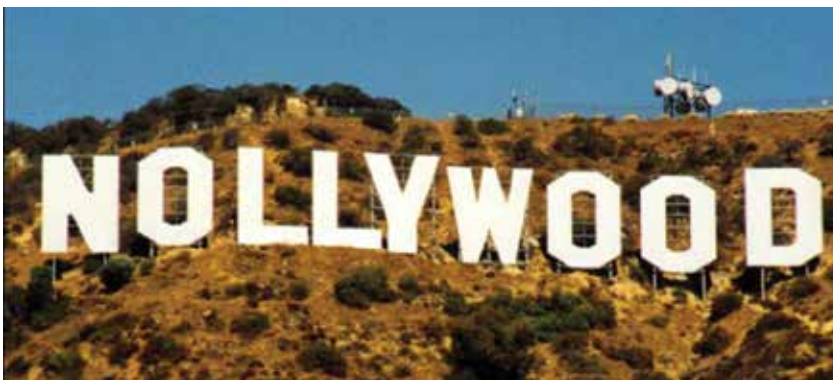
1. Emerging trade asymmetries, deepened by digital platforms
2. The nature of work in the cultural and creative industries
3. Environmental issues and sustainability

There is no equal access to trade in the CCIs. The global South is running to catch up, to find a place in many of the (established creative) networks," Pratt said, adding that colonial trade networks persist and focus on extractive value. He pointed to the trend of developing country artists moving to places such as Europe and the United States, resulting in value-add being captured there, rather than in their home countries.

Jeannette Snowball, Professor of Economics at Rhodes University in South Africa and Chief Researcher at the South African Cultural Observatory, believes that cultural trade is the nexus



Ranminithenna Tele Cinema Village.



The Nigerian Film Industry (Nollywood) is globally recognized as the second largest film producer in the world.

This pandemic demands us to revisit and read our traditions of Sigiriya, Anuradhapura, and Polonnaruwa! We should have a paradigm shift in the Sri Lankan economy.

between creativity and globalization. “An equal distribution of creativity can provide a way for emerging markets, or developing countries, to benefit from both creativity and culture and globalization,” she said. For example, the cultural economy is a source of innovation in products and processes, which can spill over into other industries and increase competitiveness and productivity. She cited a study on nine South American countries that showed a rise in creative exports such as design, media, and graphic arts increased exports in noncreative sectors in subsequent years.

However, she cautioned that the informality of the sector and firms in developing countries affects their ability to benefit from cultural trade.

“Better legislation can make the IP trade between the developed

and developing world fairer, but it’s difficult to enforce. Realistic, evidence-based policy, built on their specific experience of the cultural economy, is needed for this to happen.”

According to Landry & Bianchini (1995), “The industries of the 21st century will depend increasingly on the generation of knowledge through creativity and innovation.” Human capital can be considered essential and KSA factors – namely, knowledge, skills, and attitude – as prime factors that will govern the world economy at this moment. As the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), “Significant three percent contribution to global gross domestic product (GDP) makes the creative economy a powerful

emerging economic sector that is being strengthened by a surge in digitalization and services.” So the effect of the creative economy for any country cannot be underestimated. Refer to the following extracts from UNCTAD, which is essential for Sri Lanka as we have our own valued traditional culture, which is not properly utilized.

We must understand the importance of moving away from traditional markets such as manufacturing and seeing the creative industries as a key strategy in a new knowledge economy (Abeysekera, 2011). Policymakers and intellectuals should understand the importance of this. COVID-19 has created an opportunity to “stop and see” (reflection) our policies in the long run. This pandemic demands us to revisit and read our traditions of Sigiriya, Anuradhapura, and Polonnaruwa! We should have a paradigm shift in the Sri Lankan economy. ☐

Source of information for the article: UNCTAD: How the creative economy can help power development.

Prof Nalin Abeysekera, Professor in Management Studies at Open University of Sri Lanka.

COPYRIGHT FRAMEWORK

Creative Industries and Copyright Framework in Sri Lanka

What are creative industries?

Creativity defines the 21st century just as manufacturing did the same thing in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Even in this context, many of you might not be able to ascertain what the term “creative industry” suggests. This relatively new concept was first documented in 1994 in Australia when the government, for the time being unveiled their new policy, “Creative Nation”. Three years later, in 1997, the UK also embraced and further developed the concept of creative industries to which they added the role of ICT and intellectual property.

The UK Department of Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport views creative industries as a spectrum of economic activities ranging from films, TV, music, fashion and design, arts to architecture, publishing, advertising, video games, and crafts. Those industries, according to them, have their roots in individual creativity, skills, and talents and have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property.

After a lapse of nearly 20 years, the concept of the “creative industries”, and its significance to national economies were recognized by almost all countries across the globe. In 2015, it was estimated that the creative industry sector generated USD 2,250 billion in revenues, which amounts to 3 percent of the world’s GDP, and provided 31 million jobs. In the same year, film, TV, video, radio,



Geethanjali R Ranawaka, Attorney-at-Law, Director General of National Intellectual Property Office, NIPO.

and photography in the UK were valued at USD 7 billion, while the film industry in the USA alone earned USD 10.3 billion.

Creative industries exist in Sri Lanka as well. Eight sectors, namely: literature and publishing; advertising; performing and visual arts; photography; crafts; fashion design; IT including software and graphic design; architecture and interior design, can be recognized as creative industries that have collectively granted nearly 240, 000 employment opportunities in 2017. Approximately 62 percent of the

creative industry workforce are employed in the arts and craft sector. IT and publishing industries have occupied the second and the third places respectively. The economic potential of Sri Lankan creative industries is immense. For instance, in 2018, the export revenue of the Sri Lankan IT sector ballooned to USD 1 billion.

The Relevance of Intellectual Property to creative industries and how copyright matters

Intellectual property plays a pivotal role in fostering creative

industries. In Sri Lanka, the whole body of law of intellectual property (IP) is enshrined in the IP Act No. 36 of 2003 and regulations made thereunder. The National Intellectual Property Office (NIPO), which comes under the purview of the Ministry of Trade, is the sole government department that administers intellectual property rights in Sri Lanka.

“Intellectual property” refers to creations of the human mind. Original literary and artistic works, industrial designs, inventions, and trademarks fall under the category of IP and qualify to obtain protection under the IP Act No. 36 of 2003. The creators or authors of such original works can secure their rights and prevent infringements by third parties through different forms of intellectual property. Copyright, being one of such forms, is enjoyed by almost all Sri Lankan creative industries. Therefore, legal principles of copyright are mainly described in this article.

Creative industries eligible for copyright protection and enforceable rights

Copyright protects the creative or artistic expressions of ideas, commonly known as “works”. However, it does not protect the idea itself. Copyright, a complex legal concept, encapsulates protected works, protected rights, and enforcement of such rights.

In terms of section 6 (1) of the IP Act, copyright safeguards original literary, artistic or scientific works, regardless of its literary or artistic merit. Such protected works range from books, articles; speeches; stage productions like stage plays; musical works, audio-visual and architectural works, photographs to maps and illustrations. Accordingly, Sri Lankan creative industries can benefit from the protection granted through copyright. For instance, with regard to work related to software, both object code and source code can be protected under copyright. Program manuals also

“Intellectual property” refers to creations of the human mind. Original literary and artistic works, industrial designs, inventions, and trademarks fall under the category of IP and qualify to obtain protection under the IP Act No. 36 of 2003.



receive copyright protection. Lyrics of songs, scripts of films, and stage plays are also copyrightable. The literature and publishing industry, advertising industry, photographic industry are among many other creative industries that enjoy the benefits of copyright protection.

Copyright laws grant an author of a work a bundle of exclusive rights for a specific period. Upon creating original work and publish the same through a medium, you will get copyright protection without formalities such as registration. In that sense, copyright differs from other forms of intellectual property, which require registration.

However, not all original works are eligible nor receive copyright protection as prescribed under section 08 of the IP Act. Accordingly, any idea, concept, news of the day, very simple works, and any official text of a legislative, administrative, or legal nature, as well as any translations thereof, are excluded from copyright protection. It is pertinent to mention that although the said works cannot be copyrighted, the way they are presented to the public, i.e., writing styles, is copyrightable.

Protected rights, creativity, skills, and talents of literary and artistic creators are the primary means of creating wealth and jobs. By rewarding creators' efforts and creativity, copyright acts as an incentive to continue to develop new works. In the past, writers, musicians, and artists across the globe wrote, composed, and did their works mainly for fame and recognition. Fortunately, copying, being a laborious and costly process at that time, was not a significant issue. With the advent of the industrial revolution, making multiple copies was easier due to the invention of copying techniques. This posed a great danger to creative people who, by that time, wanted to earn a living or make profits from their creative efforts since monetary considerations have overrun this area of human activity. In this backdrop, original authors voiced their concerns, requested to address their issues, and bring culprits to the book. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Berne Convention, have recognized and documented the importance of copyright thus, safeguarding the rights of the original authors. These days, every jurisdiction has encapsulated the concept of copyright in their IP laws, and thanks to this concept, it was possible to safeguard the interests of creative people.

Copyright offers a bundle of rights to the creator, broadly divided into two, i.e., economic rights and moral rights. The former can be transferred to others by licensing (licensing of rights means the creator, whilst retaining his ownership of copyright, sells authority to use such rights for a

third party under specific conditions) or assignment (this means a creator gives full ownership of his copyright to a third party for consideration) for financial gain. Such economic rights include but are not limited to;

- To prevent others from making unauthorized copies of the work
- To make and to distribute copies of protected works created by him
- To rent or lend physical or digital copies of the work created by him
- To modify a work, or to permit others to modify it, to create new work in another art form (example: adapt a novel to a film), including publication of a translation
- To authorize live and recorded performances
- To broadcast the work

In the exercise of economic rights, Collective Management Organizations (CMOs) play a significant role in using collective bargaining power to negotiate and manage creators' rights. CMOs also collect and distribute payments among creators for the use of their works.

Moral rights are inseparable from the creator and hence, are not transferable. According to principles of moral rights, even after the economic rights of the work were transferred to others, the creator can challenge to transferee's activities that would negatively affect his reputation. Also, the creator should be named or credited when his work is used or played in public.

However, not all unauthorized use of a work commit infringement. To balance the interests of right holders and the general public, IP Act accommodates or permits the acts of fair use for some purposes, namely private use, criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, and research. In addition, if the work is in the public domain, unauthorized use can be permitted, provided such

Related rights also demand some kind of creativity or technical skills and embrace three categories of ownership: the rights of the performing artists, the rights of the producers of sound recordings (phonograms), and the rights of broadcasting organizations. Therefore, related rights are of particular significance for performances in musical works, drama and film industries, broadcasting and recording industries.

use does not harm the right holder's moral rights.

Related rights, a relatively modern legal concept compared to copyright, can be considered an extension of copyright and safeguard the interests of the persons who contribute to making the copyrighted material available to the public. Related rights also demand some kind of creativity or technical skills and embrace three categories of ownership: the rights of the performing artists, the rights of the producers of sound recordings (phonograms), and the rights of broadcasting organizations. Therefore, related rights are of particular significance for performances in musical works, drama and film industries, broadcasting and recording industries.

Enforcement mechanism for copyright

As regards enforcement of copyright, according to section 170 of the IP Act, creators who are aggrieved with actual or threatened infringements of their rights can institute civil and/or criminal litigations. The first instance of civil jurisdiction regarding intellectual property-related issues, including copyright, lies with the High Court of Provinces. However, if such a High Court of Provinces has not been established, the High Court found for the Western Province has the jurisdiction. Among available remedies are damages

and injunctions. Section 178 (1) of the IP Act states that wilful infringers of copyright shall be guilty of a criminal offense. According to this section, such infringers of copyright are liable, on conviction after trial before a Magistrate to a fine not exceeding five hundred thousand rupees or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to both such fine and imprisonment. In the case of second or subsequent conviction, the fine or the term of imprisonment or both may be doubled. In addition to the said litigations, an administrative mechanism exercised solely by NIPO through a dispute resolution mechanism is also available. Sri Lanka Customs can also take measures to curb importation and exportation of pirated copyright goods.

Copyright protection is not eternal. In terms of section 13 of the IP Act, in most cases, copyright is protected during the author's life and for 70 years after his death. Upon the lapse, the work becomes public property; that is to say, it falls into the public domain.

Other forms of IP

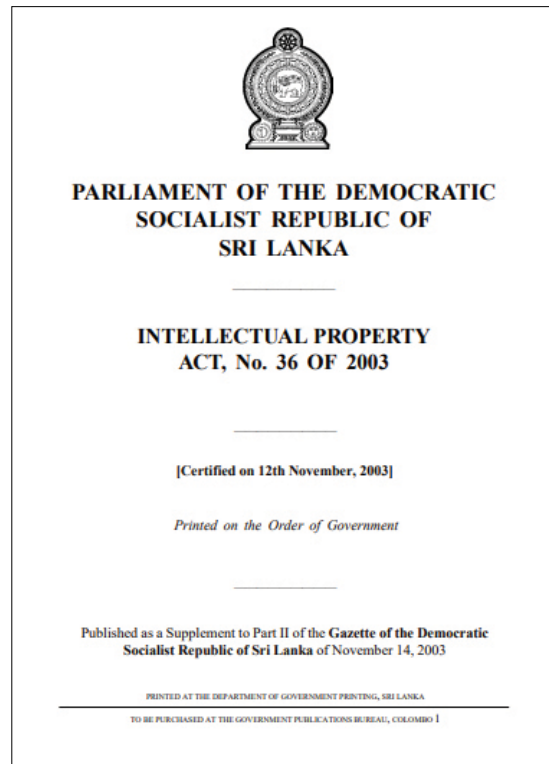
In addition to copyright, other forms of intellectual property rights relate to creative industries. Of them, key forms are as follows.

- Trademarks – Trademarks are defined as visible signs, which distinguish products or services of one commercial

entity from those of others. They include names, numerals, letters, shapes, devices, and many more. A unique mark facilitates the commercialization of products or services of creative industries. Unlike copyright, trademark protection requires registration, and therefore you should file an application at NIPO. Upon receipt of such application, we examine the mark in terms of provisions of the IP Act to ascertain whether the propounded mark falls under absolute grounds of refusal or conflicts with third-party rights. If the propounded mark is free from such issues, we publish the mark in the Government Gazette. Within three months from such publication, we register the mark unless we receive objections from third parties and issue a certificate. Such registration is valid for ten years and is renewable. Rights attached to trademarks and enforcement mechanisms draw parallels to copyright, but there are some differences.

- Industrial designs and inventions – A unique appearance of a product or a design can be registered as an industrial design. This is applicable to the crafts and fashion industry. On the other hand, invention means an idea of an inventor that permits the solution to a specific problem in the field of technology. Both these rights should be acquired through registration. Rights attached to industrial designs and patents and their enforcement mechanism are similar to those of copyrights, and there are some deviations. The protection period for industrial designs and inventions is 15 years and 20 years, respectively.

When compared to copyright, the said intellectual property rights are of less significance, and hence, I refrain from giving a detailed account of them.



With a well-developed IP strategy, Sri Lankan creative industries can embark on a smooth and long journey.

Conclusion

It appears that Sri Lankan creative industries have underutilized the benefits of intellectual property, which assist and facilitate them to fight an infringement case, safeguarding their interests.

I would like to emphasize the significance of having an IP strategy to manage intellectual property irrespective of the type of creative industry you operate. Such strategy should assist rights holder;

- To ascertain what rights you own in your original work
- Take all necessary steps to identify yourself as the creator and rights holder
- To prepare a plan for the exploitation of your IP

- To identify infringements and to take preventive, remedial measures.

With a well-developed IP strategy, Sri Lankan creative industries can embark on a smooth and long journey.

NB: This article should not be considered as legal advice. Readers are recommended to obtain independent legal advice from qualified legal professionals in case of an infringement or violation of IP rights. ☐



Prasanga Panditha Sundara
Assistant Director – Legal
The National Intellectual
Property Office (NIPO)

Novelists

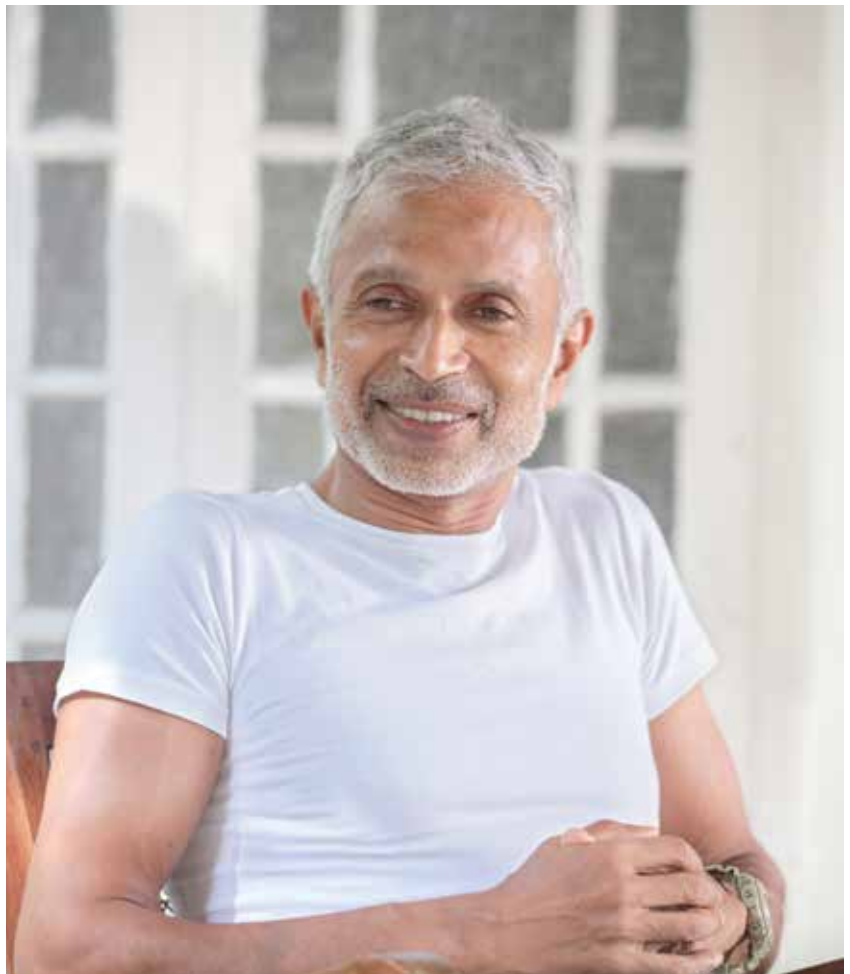
Sri Lanka's Talented Writers are Telling their Stories to the World: It's Time to Listen

As internationally published authors of Sri Lanka, Ashok Ferrey and Pramudith Rupasinghe are among an ever-increasing range of literary voices engaging in diverse and unconventional storylines. Both writers derive inspiration from their wide-ranging travels and encounters. Ashok and Pramudith have taken their work global, publishing them through international publishing companies and translating them to foreign languages.

Carrying a positive spin on life: Ashok Ferrey

Sri Lanka has a splendid tapestry of tales woven around its past, people, and culture, like a blank canvas for drawing from a rich palette of colors. Its writers have a story to tell whether they're living in Sri Lanka or abroad because there's much inspiration roaring from its depths. The checkered lives of Sri Lankans captured through the lens of the writer's eyes give a positive spin to a life filled with episodes of tousel relationships and catty mouths.

Ashok Ferrey, one of those few English language authors of international repute writing from Sri Lanka, articulates the dynamism and mystique of this tropical land with much punch and valance. A writer by accident, his first novel *Colpetty People* (2005) is still the bestselling book in English in Sri Lanka by a living author even after 16 years. *The Colpetty People* and *The Good Little Ceylonese Girl* (2006) got shortlisted for Sri Lanka's leading literary award, the Gratiaen Prize. *The Ceaseless Chatter of Demons* (2016) was shortlisted for the Gratiaen Prize and longlisted for the 2017 DSC Prize for South Asian Literature and is listed among the 10 Extraordinary Books by Male Sri Lankan Authors by *The Curious Reader*. It is available in French as well. His latest – *The*

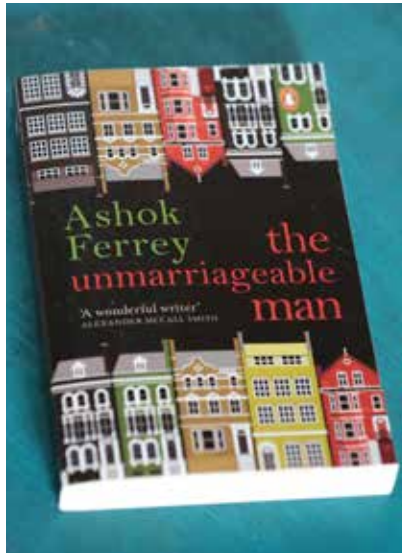


Ashok Ferrey.

Unmarriageable Man – described as his coming-of-age novel, was published by Penguin Random House in March 2021.

Ferrey's books provide an unfiltered window to the fascinating stories of ordinary people in perceptive lightness that dares not belie the nation's soul and steal the sparkle in the normality.

Like the people in the land of his birth, Ashok himself is a checkered man. He has, it seems, a penchant for thriving anywhere he finds himself in, by choice or chance. Growing up in East Africa from the age of eight was followed by an old-school education in a Catholic monastery in England. A Math degree from Oxford was readying him for a high-flying job as an actuary in the insurance



Ashok Ferrey's
The Unmarriageable Man.

“One of our faults is the desire to please. We cannot sell only war stories to gain traction. I get criticized for not writing serious stuff. But you have to be true to yourself. Because living on an exotic island, it's easy for writers to exoticize the island. We can't do what advertisers do. It's a given that Sri Lanka is one of the most beautiful countries in the world. Telling the truth as you perceive it – people will be interested. If I write about my mother and describe her as the most wonderful woman, nobody will read that book. If I say she was a wonderful woman, but she could be very catty at times, then immediately people would be more interested. We mustn't play to the gallery, and writers should be cognizant of that. Be true to yourself. If you think Sri Lanka is wily, you must say so. It doesn't matter. No one's going to hate us for that. We have this notion that we must show only our good side. Telling the truth through your writing is crucial. Don't scratch the surface or smoothen things just because you want to please someone and hurt no one.”

Having lived in three continents – Africa, Europe, and Asia, Ashok says Sri Lanka has one of the richest and textured canvasses in the world for storytelling. And Sri Lanka would be the wealthiest if it could export that richness and culture appropriately packaged with high writing standards.

industry, only to abandon it upon discovering its dreariness. He has no qualms in claiming his transition to a builder in England, working at construction sites. However, he was able to reinvent himself stupendously and stylishly to become a 'house convertor,' transforming a derelict house into flats and making his first sale. He spent the next eight years successfully converting buildings into flats and selling 84 of them, and of course, making a whopping return.

So, it's no surprise that Ashok's latest book – The Unmarriageable Man (2021), which had a successful launch and reading at the Sarasavi Bookshop at One Galle Face Mall and is preparing for its launch and reading in the UK this autumn, is about a Sri Lankan builder in London. The protagonist is working as a

builder in England. It's in a particular time of capitalistic exuberance in the Thatcher era of the 1980s. Sanjay de Silva resonates with Ashok and his heady days working as a builder in London. The parallel story is about the protagonist's dysfunctional family relationship back in Sri Lanka as he attempts to cope with the death of his eccentric father. The point is Ashok's inimitable style with wordplay and the buried puns to make the mundane events in life, and even the complexities sound jocularly absorbing.

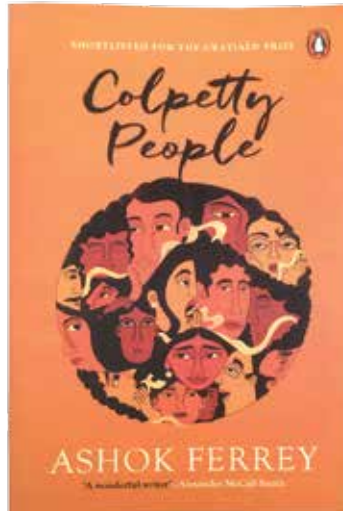
There has been quite a lot of interest in The Unmarriageable Man, with readings in book clubs in Surrey and Manchester. Five Indian newspapers are reviewing the book, meaning a sense of curiosity and enthusiasm about writers in Sri Lanka.

Having lived in three continents – Africa, Europe, and Asia, Ashok says Sri Lanka has one of the richest and textured canvasses in the world for storytelling. And Sri Lanka would be the wealthiest if it could export that richness and culture appropriately packaged with high writing standards. The literature he says has the tremendous potential to be a soft power to showcase Sri Lanka to the world and build bridges across countries and continents. It is on this premise that Ashok plays around with his characters. Something is flattering about the Sri Lankan psyche that he explores and exposes through his casting, a sense of meaning – wit and wackiness that he derives from people's normality.

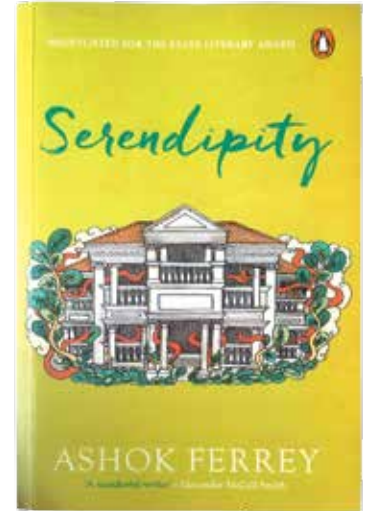
What's fascinating about his work is that it's witty and less 'serious.'

However, it's an experiment into the complex world of human behavior in its individual and social aspects, the individual's relation to the environment. It's a journey on trying to unravel human nature beyond the surface. It explores Sri Lankan friendships and relationships beyond the surrounding landscape of nature to expose the underlying traits of optimism, pessimism, trust, and envy. The truth is that once the outward niceness is unpeeled, in its place emerges the complexities that genuinely define a multicultural society. As a race, he contends that we are a complex lot, that we are not entirely prone to be truthful because we're a people so inclined to pleasing outsiders. It's praiseworthy but too complex for an outsider to understand the intrinsic being. This complexity provides the richness that writers look for; there's much inspiration in that knottiness. Writing is always an exploration of understanding characters, situations, and more, and consciously 'coloring' them as he does, to better understand the Sri Lankan psyche. After all, you cannot export the psyche, but you can export literature about the mind. In satirizing, he says, the truth is stretched for people to laugh, but later readers realize that it's the truth. It is this richly textured canvas that Ashok exhibits to the world through his writing.

So what does Sri Lanka require to harness this potential to achieve a wider global audience? With the international publishing industry estimated to grow in value by 2023 to 129 billion dollars, Ashok insists that it's time to insert some energy and verve into literature. Given its strength as a soft power to showcase the country, State institutions and corporates must realize the strength and allure that books can deliver in transforming and improving Sri Lanka's image. Literature ascribes a sense of suaveness to our image globally as a country appreciative of literature and rich culture of writing. We can accompany this involvement by sponsoring significant representation at international literary



Ashok Ferrey's 'Colpetty People' and 'Serendipity'.



festivals to enhance our writers' visibility.

Sri Lanka also needs good publishing houses, points out Ashok. An island nation with a small population, the readership is small, and English books are even smaller. Ashok has sold over 17,000 copies of *Colpetty People*. Over 50,000 of all his books, which is remarkable given the economy of numbers. But the industry will take off robustly and fast and will be in full swing once there are adequate publishers, editors, and proofreaders of our own.

Such a setup is crucial for local Sri Lankan writers to flourish internationally, which a significant number of expatriate Sri Lankans have, by winning prizes internationally. For a book to do well, the literature has to pass the acid test. At the moment, there seems to be a headlong rush to reward black writing, says Ashok, which is laudable. "However, it is not enough to be rewarded just because you are a writer of color, if our writing is not as good as that of white writers. Writers of color need to be aware that you have to be brilliant at your job as others or even better. It's not enough to be recognized for your color. Your work has to stand the test of time."

After many years of staying out of social media, Ashok entered the global playing field of virtual visibility when he collaborated with an international publisher – Penguin for the Kindle Edition of *Colpetty People* and later *The Unmarriageable Man*. Yet, he feels a writer needs to transcend beyond the artificial hype created on social media. Social media is a cloud that surrounds the personality. And there's a great danger that the individual will overtake the art. You're only as good as your last film, said a Hollywood director who won an Oscar to Ashok, which he says writers also need to keep in mind. No amount of social media presence can help if what's written is not consistently good. Although social media is projected as the 'be all and end all,' writers mustn't lose sight that it's the writing that matters.

Ashok carries a positive spin on life always. He says our life is vibrant here, if not in monetary terms, in quality. And that needs to be celebrated in our literature. There's nothing more sustainable than the written word. Once written, people will repeat it from generation to generation. A book is quintessential.

Writing from the field: internationally published Sri Lankan novelist Pramudith D Rupasinghe

It's a working environment that is hostile. Rockets are flying over. People are fleeing a diseased landscape as a human catastrophe is unraveling right before your eyes. And suddenly, you're vulnerable. You turn to pen and paper for solace. It's hardly tolerable, but you keep going.

That has been the poignant sketch to Pramudith D Rupasinghe's breakout into the vast universe of writing. His stories are of people collected from the places that he has served as a humanitarian worker, exposing him to a cosmos of inspiring and intensely human stories.

Today, Pramudith is an internationally published author. His entry into the realm of published authors began with his debut novel *Footprints in Obscurity* in 2016 through Penguin Random House. His first novel was followed by *Beyond the Eclipse* in late 2016 and *Bayan* in 2018. His books have been translated into several languages in Europe and Asia. *Footprints in Obscurity*, is listed by *The Curious Reader* among the 10 Extraordinary Books by Male Sri Lankan Authors. *Pulse* magazine had selected *Behind the Eclipse* among 10 Best Novels Written by Sri Lankan Authors.

Someone wrote, "What if we get to choose how we show up for hard moments?" I wish we all could. But life's a journey with no beautiful ever-after moments in time that come undone like tidal waves and somber instants. And it is this reality that he brings to the fore as portraits of resilience. Pramudith's humanitarian work across continents and countries is his inspiration.

His stories are about people, relationships, and struggles, fears in the face of uncertainty and death, and their fight to live. They are heartbreaking stories of human distress and the power of human triumph—the grit in the heart of darkness. The narratives impinge not

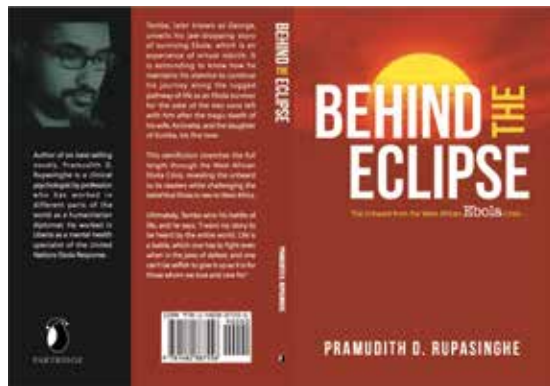


Pramudith D Rupasinghe.

His stories are about people, relationships, and struggles, fears in the face of uncertainty and death, and their fight to live. They are heartbreaking stories of human distress and the power of human triumph—the grit in the heart of darkness.

on the superfluous but raw human emotion. It's a journey of a thousand, if not a million, the apparent voyage of life that flows serenely and then plunges coarsely, struggles that marvel us.

A psychologist by training, his humanitarian work of 17 years had allowed him to respond to disasters worldwide, such as the Indian Ocean Tsunami, the earthquake in Nepal, Pakistan, and Haiti, the African Great



Right: Pramudith's Behind the Eclipse. Below: Bayan translated to many languages.



“As a fiction writer, I do a few things different to conventional fiction writing. I choose to live in the place where the story is set. Which means I choose characters from the place I have lived or living in, and those characters are with whom I interact on a daily basis. I make it an everyday experience. As fiction writers, we narrate human stories and not fantasy, and the characteristics of those characters are more or less of real people. I’m not depicting those characters elevated from the reality of human life. In that people can often relate to one character or another in the book. There is something that the reader can pick from the characters that may relate to their lives.”

Bayan that followed in 2018, a philosophical fiction about an elderly Ukrainian man, is the first-ever novel by a Sri Lankan author to be translated into Burmese, Polish, Hungarian and Ukrainian. And it’s available in German, French, Sinhala and Russian as well... Bayan has created history as the first-ever novel by a Sri Lankan author set in the Soviet Union.

Lakes Refugee Crisis in Goma, and the Kivu crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the civil war in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the West African Ebola crisis and more recently the Rohingya issue spanning the borders of two countries. Those have been his canvas upon which he has woven tales of human resilience amid grief, illness, and adversity. His books may not be so much about hope. But they certainly are manuals on coping and acceptance.

His first book: Footprints in Obscurity, was narrative non-fiction based on his travels across the borders of 29 countries in Africa. It was an obscure experience; the title alludes that footprints were his journey; obscurity refers to the nature of his trip itself – of being lost, the gloom, not knowing how to

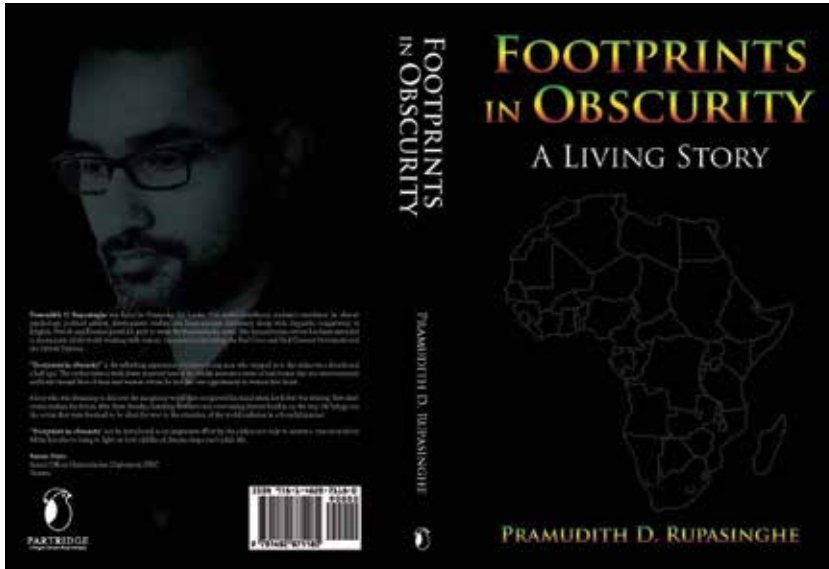
crossover to the next until he reaches the border.

Footprints in Obscurity was launched with Penguin Random House, followed by Behind the Eclipse, published under the same banner. His second book focuses on the devastating Ebola epidemic in West Africa, and at the time of its launch in November 2016, the intensity of the Ebola crisis was still raging. Behind the Eclipse catapulted him to the international stage of the world of book publishing. The growth in the years that followed was fast. It happened faster than he had expected. Bayan that followed in 2018, a philosophical fiction about an elderly Ukrainian man, is the first-ever novel by a Sri Lankan author to be translated into Burmese, Polish, Hungarian and Ukrainian. And it’s available in

German, French, Sinhala and Russian as well. It’s in the process of being translated to Hindi. Further, Bayan has created history as the first-ever novel by a Sri Lankan author set in the Soviet Union.

In 2016, Behind the Eclipse was one of the books read mainly by the humanitarian community across the world. As a story spun around the Ebola epidemic, Behind the Eclipse has gained traction in the present pandemic. It’s one of survival through loss, of coping with loss and moving on. This expressive narrative on survival is enormously relevant to our struggles today. We consciously adhere to safety protocols such as staying at home and washing hands and physical distancing, scaled-down workplaces and working from home, which was customary in 2013 in West Africa. Therefore, the book resonates with the current sentiments and, hence, is aggregating visibility and appreciation by people trying to get through unscathed by the pandemic.

However, when it comes to building a readership for books, Pramudith said his first book’s sales weren’t impressive. In contrast, his second book has over twenty thousand



Footprints in Obscurity, Pramudith's first release.

Even today, the reader builds an affiliation with certain fictional book characters, a kind of love that helps them identify with their favorite protagonist. The powerful protagonist will be an enduring teacher nudging you in the face of difficult situations. An excellent fictional story leaves a sustainable behavioral impact on the reader.

readerships on social media. It has made it into 70 countries, but it took him more than one and half years to reach out to the global readership. Moreover, it was his second book that shaped his style of writing. He has earned substantial readers in the UK, USA, and Africa.

In a world where over 600,000 books are published every year, Ernest Hemmingway's words, "You have to roll out your sleeves, walk out and take out your book to the readers," is Pramudith's mantra. Four basic steps have guided his success. One, writing constantly. Two, no one else will take you to the readers. You are on your own. The publisher has financial and business objectives to realize. Hence, the publisher's campaign is not sustainable, so it's the author's role to draft a campaign and link every


work into the campaign and branding. Three, don't expect to become a best-seller overnight. Make sure the book reaches as many as possible around the world. The sustainability of sales depends on a cohesive and consistent campaign. Four, authorship is entrepreneurship. Time equals money. So investing time to make one's work sustainable and reach a wider global audience requires a clear strategy and campaign. First, define the readership, followed by a finely crafted social, behavioral campaign, or advert campaign to increase the take-home of your book and make it relevant to readers' lives.

Pramudith vouches for the impact of self-promotion. An active role on social media platforms to interact with followers is imperative; that gives greater visibility. But, proper visibility

is also essential, such as having a book reviewed by acclaimed and accepted critics. Quite often, book reviews are in exchange for money and hence filled with happy choruses. Or some confine themselves to critiquing the writings of a country or continent. Pramudith has launched Asian Reviews, a global platform inviting careful and responsible commentaries on writing to fill this vacuum. Asian Reviews right now is an online platform, which he intends to convert to a printed version as the pandemic eases.

Fortunately, the nature of his work allowed Pramudith to travel the world and, with it, the opportunity to launch his books in several countries. Further, this allowed him to connect with other authors and have his work translated to different languages were also launched in those countries.

His future work continues to shed light on human stories; "The Girl Who Snatched the Moon" is in the dark unspoken world of Kandapara, one of the world's largest brothels in Bangladesh. It's a tale of a girl sold to the brothel and her desire for liberation and education. The book is most likely to be out at the end of 2021. The plight of Rohingya is the focus in Rain of Fire, a tale woven between two states, the lives of the Rohingya people, disinherited from the land that they call their country where they are considered illegal and forced out. They continue their state of dispossession in the new.

As a fiction writer, Pramudith has injected his emotions and values into telling a story. To him, fictional stories are compelling in reaching a wider audience, and it's those stories that have survived through posterity as folktales and old stories, passed down through oral tradition. Even today, the reader builds an affiliation with certain fictional book characters, a kind of love that helps them identify with their favorite protagonist. The powerful protagonist will be an enduring teacher nudging you in the face of difficult situations. An excellent fictional story leaves a sustainable behavioral impact on the reader. 

FILM

The Courage to be Daring: Chandran Rutnam's Long-run with the Movies

In an era when innovation has penetrated the film industry, Chandran Rutnam thinks that today's cinema is only limited to one's imagination and creativity. He believes that Sri Lanka could be part of the technological revolution that has swept the industry because of its triple whammy of location, expertise, and equipment.

Chandran, debonair, daring, and a dynamo, brings with him decades of experience in moviemaking. Taking up work as an assistant in the prop department on the sets of *Bridge on the River Kwai* when it was shot on location in Sri Lanka in 1956, it was an experience that set the tone for the rest of his exploits in the glimmering land of Tinseltown.

His journey to the 'promised land' began soon after 17, sailing to London via Marseille to meet *Bridge on the River Kwai* production manager Cecil Ford, who offered him work on a new movie. He continued to Los Angeles, calling on William Holden, lead actor in the *Bridge on the River Kwai*, who happened to be the lead actor in the movie shot in a southern city in England, from whence began his four decades in Hollywood. It was hard work and dedication, and perseverance that let him work in a crowded composition like the Hollywood movie industry. The consistent trailblazer with a 'never-say-die' attitude dipped his hand in every aspect to gain mastery. He introduced international movie production to Malaysia, which acknowledged him for that. He had many other collaborations with Asian countries, including making seven movies in Malaysia.

Upon returning to Sri Lanka, he set up Film Location Services to facilitate filmmakers, both local and foreign, to make their films in Sri Lanka with equipment, set designs and props, and



Filmmaker Chandran Rutnam.

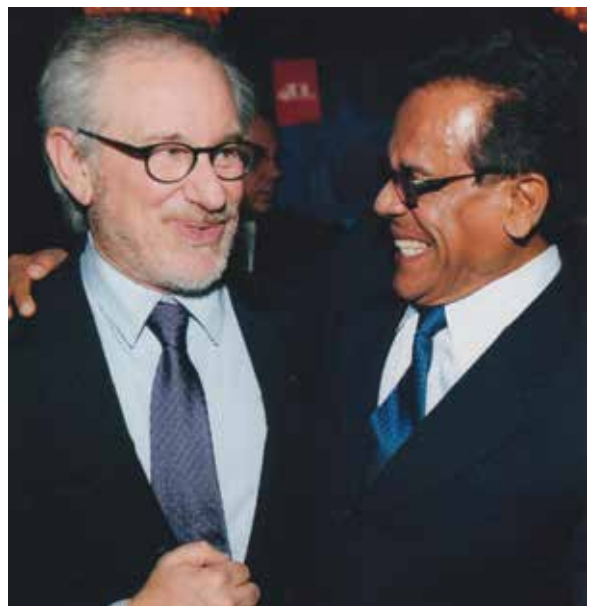
technicians and post-production work. Chandran is best known in Sri Lanka for collaborating with Steven Spielberg on *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. The thriller *A Common Man* (2013), starring Sir Ben Kingsley and Ben Cross, has won Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Actor awards at the Madrid International Film Festival.

The man behind the lens who has traveled from Sri Lanka to Hollywood, creating award-winning movies and collaborating with the world's greats,

avows that Sri Lanka has it all – the best locations, the men, and the machines. To him, Hollywood is only a state of mind. Hence, a state of mind is creatable anywhere if we have the location, the talent, and the technology. Even after more than five decades in the industry, Chandran is still playing hard with new projects such as a home-grown streaming service, an international movie with 'Hollywood' actors, and an animation movie up his sleeve. The pandemic breaks had given



It was never the plan to shoot the blockbuster movie Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom in Sri Lanka. Jaipur in India was the original location. The ground was already in preparation. That was until Spielberg met Chandran, who was looking for a gorge to shoot a particular action sequence in the movie. Promising Spielberg to find a gorge in Sri Lanka, with future Air Force chief Oliver Ranasinghe at the controls, Chandran hired a helicopter from the Air force to find a hidden valley. It was near the picturesque site of the Victoria reservoir's dam that he discovered the famous gorge, much to Spielberg's delight. The initial plan was to film the gorge scene in Sri Lanka and the rest in Jaipur. But due to other issues with India, Chandran convinced Spielberg to shoot the entire movie in Sri Lanka. He did all this over a telephone call that he attributes to the power of convincing.



Left image: Chandran at the Madrid International Film Festival with his award for Best Film and actress Alice Krige. Right image: Chandran's friendship with Steven Spielberg goes back twenty-five years when "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom" was filmed in Sri Lanka.

him much space to reboot, rethink and rewire himself. Specifically to create more excitement for movie buffs, who have in recent months realized the value of watching movies in the comfort of their homes on their high-definition televisions, laptops, or even on their mobile phones.

What drives Chandran is audacity. To be in the movie industry is to embrace entertainment as the core of it all. But, many are afraid to acknowledge its value and importance.

Movies are about entertainment, says he. He has no qualms in claiming that he makes entertaining commercial movies like real-life stories like According to Mathew to international movies like A Common Man. Whether based on a local or foreign story, whether stories are for the local or global audiences must be exciting and entertaining in a positive way. He doesn't document a story. His movies are always fun and evocative. As a filmmaker, Chandran believes

that you have to tell your story in a way that people will want to watch. Entertainment quite often is anathema in certain filmy circles, but the truth is the movie industry's foundation is entertainment, and entertaining people and people watch movies for different entertainment reasons.

And that Chandran continues to promote and harness through his progressive projects. Tontoflix will be Sri Lanka's first movie streaming service. Like other global streaming



Left image: Chandran Rutnam with his wife Nihara Jayatileke, and Lester James Peries at the Cannes Film Festival. Center image: Chandran with his fleet of aircraft at his hangar at the Ratmalana Airport. Right image: Chandran Rutnam and Jacqueline Fernandez during the movie shoot of *According to Matthew*.

Chandran, through his company, Film Location Services, is ready with cutting-edge technology for production and post-production facilitation to take young creative work to the forefront.

services, it exemplifies the future of moviemaking and redefines the movie-watching experience for 4.5 million Sri Lankan diaspora living around the world. He will leverage the on-demand culture that the adoption of digital technologies has established where movie watchers can decide what they want to watch and where they want to watch. He will produce Sinhala and English editions of a movie for streaming on Tontoflix, which would benefit foreigners to pay to watch movies. Moreover, some well-known Sri Lankan films that people want to watch will be retrievable from the streaming service's library.

He says that Tontoflix is an opportunity for the country's movie industry to thrive globally and the best platform to offer young and talented creatives who are longing for opportunities to showcase their talent but are not allowed to achieve visibility. His streaming service will give every creative filmmaker a breakout opportunity to pitch their name in the field and find it easier to make movies and show them to an audience even more quickly. And Chandran, through his company, Film Location Services, is ready with cutting-edge technology for production and post-production


facilitation to take young creative work to the forefront. Chandran never waits for things to fall into place or for that perfect moment that would never arrive; his keyword is action and leads where he wants to go.

There's talent in Hollywood as well as in Sri Lanka. If that talent had lay waste before, it was because the industry lacked the means or the technology at its disposal. Today, the industry players have the technology. So, Sri Lanka can do what Hollywood can, except the scale of the budget.

Chandran is very enthusiastic about Tontoflix and the tremendous opportunity it would offer young people to make a movie and offer it to the world through such a new movie streaming platform without selling it in Sri Lanka. With the technology available in Sri Lanka, the market is at its doorstep. Tontoflix is an opportunity for Sri Lanka to earn from a global audience and attract foreign moviemakers hoping to use the platform to reach a new audience.

Meanwhile, Chandran is also busy planning other productions: an international movie with a Hollywood actor, an animation movie, and a local film for the global market. With the symbiosis of technology and Tontoflix, it certainly is a new chapter

for movies and moviemakers. Added to this combination is Sri Lanka's brilliant technicians – its greatest strength. Sri Lanka also has beautiful locations if they fit the story. An enabling environment for foreign crews is the most critical criterion. Being a small island, film crews can access most sites in a few hours by road. Chandran's company Film Location Services as a local collaborator handles the entire gamut of operations. From obtaining official approvals and clearing the path for shooting, supplying equipment, the crew, creating sets and props, the know-how, and information about the country and locality to post-production services with state-of-the-art facilities, the company has been doing since 1980.

Chandran declares that he's currently on his 'third wave.' His time working in Hollywood marks his first wave. His exodus back to his home country to continue moviemaking was his second wave. And the third wave that he is embarking on through the locally born Tontoflix movie streaming service is one-of-a-kind that would benefit Sri Lanka by generating an income. In a borderless virtual world, cinema is another field that has no boundary; it has but endless dreams and possibilities. He invites all cinema lovers, including foreign moviemakers, to join his platform to add color and value to this radical shift in the viewing experience. 

MUSIC

BnS Taking Local Music to the World



Sri Lanka, the Pearl of the Indian Ocean, houses many creatives who contribute to a small but thriving music and entertainment industry. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the streaming music market experienced a 20 percent growth last year. The arrival of Spotify to Sri Lanka marked a significant milestone in the industry; while contributing to the development of the local music industry, it also increased foreign revenue. The digital age has not only taken our music beyond the shores but our artists as well. Sri Lankan music is also a popular niche overseas as our rhythms transcend cultures, especially genres fused with colonial influences.

Embarking on a partnership that resulted in over 50 number one hit singles, six platinum-selling mainstream albums and four commercially successful EPs, Bathiya Jayakody and Santhush Weeraman, the dynamic duo behind BnS managed to carve a unique style of contemporary music in the local entertainment industry. Crossing the language and cultural barriers, their music integrated Sinhala, Tamil, and English lyrics into the songs reflecting the spirits of the multicultural communities that call this island their home and bringing these communities together during turbulent times.

The duo pioneered the use of Hindi in local lyrics, and they were the first Sri Lankan musicians to release a single in India. The single's release led to collaborations with leading Indian singers such as Hariharan and Asha Bhosle for the first time in the local music industry. They once more brought the island into the spotlight by contracting with international music labels, Sony BMG Music Entertainment, and Universal Music India. They were the first artistes to sign up with SONY Music in 2002 and the Hindi album came under Universal Music. Also, the duo have composed for Sonu Nigam for a Hindi animation movie.

Apart from being one of the most commercially successful music acts in Sri Lanka for over two decades, BnS are also known for their successful entrepreneurship within the local entertainment industry. The BNS Production Group started housing



Bathiya Jayakody, Dr Yamuna Rajapaksa and Santhush Weeraman.

some of the most lucrative companies in the local entertainment industry and has taken them one step closer to converting the entertainment industry into a significant corporate-driven industry. In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, BnS are presently working on a virtual project called the 'World of BnS' resulting from the fusion of technology and music. Unlike traditional concerts, this virtual space provides the platform for artists in various disciplines ranging from calligraphers to 3D artists to collaborate with musicians, resulting in a brand new stream of revenue for the artists and the country.

In an age where creativity knows no boundaries, BnS believes that this

fusion has created a new perspective in expanding into the global digital playground where Sri Lankan music could find its rightful place. They also think that the accessibility of the internet easily allows the international audience to explore the unique music that is truly Sri Lankan, not only as music lovers but also as entrepreneurs and investors. While the revenue from the virtual concert is low compared to conventional concerts, it is possible to get an insight into how the future would look for revenue streaming and how it can be maximized in the next few years. Globally, the more prominent players and corporations engaged in the entertainment and music



The dynamic duo Bathiya Jayakody and Santhush Weeraman.

business help turn around a billion-dollar industry that is well structured, regulated, and managed. On the other hand, Sri Lanka is in its infancy when it comes to music and entertainment as an industry. There are no multinational corporations, local blue-chip companies, or even entrepreneurs backing the industry, making it very attractive to those willing to establish and invest in a creative economy in Sri Lanka.

Over the years, there have been some significant and conducive developments in the creative industry of Sri Lanka. With the Intellectual Property Act, the nation took a step forward in protecting its creative intellect. The establishment of professional bodies such as OSCA (Outstanding Song Creators' Association) and ACPO (Authors, Composers and Publishers Organization of Sri Lanka), which look into the mechanical rights and the publishing rights of the artists whilst

BnS are confident that the Sri Lankan music and entertainment industry is set for exponential growth in the next five-six years. No challenge or obstruction would halt their dreams and endeavors of taking Sri Lankan music to the global arena being part of the worldwide industry.

still at the preliminary stage, makes the industry a lot more appealing for international collaborations and investments.

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Sri Lanka is renowned worldwide for our precious stones, world-class

teas, spices, and garments, but we are little known for our intangible creative exports. Only a few countries have not yet shared their intellect with the world, and Sri Lanka is one such nation. The intelligence present in this country is precious and what is required is proper business development, structuring, and packaging to export it. The world is hungry for novel intellect, and it would only be a matter of time before we see Sri Lankan creativity playing a vital role in the economy. 

ADVERTISING

The 'Visualist' Shaping Ideas

Although often clichéd, Irvin Weerackody is indeed a doyen in Sri Lanka's advertising industry, launching one of the first home-grown creative agencies – Phoenix in the halcyon days of the 1970s. Today, as Chairman, Ogilvy Sri Lanka, diversified and robust, he continues to create value for the industry, changing and challenging and inspiring the sensory feel by channeling the three pillars of advertising – ideas, creativity, and strategy. And together with the immensely creative talent of Sri Lanka and the adoption of technology, he continues to shape ideas for some of the largest industries, brands, and multinationals.

He is Sri Lanka's head of one of the largest marketing communications companies in the world, with local and international awards. His agency has managed iconic campaigns such as the ICC World Cup T20 in 2012 by beating all other global contenders to clinch the deal. Irvin Weerackody is a man for all seasons. A prizewinning name in the local marketing communications space, but rather than simply staying assured of his success at home, he navigated beyond the shores to zoom into the global landscape of advertising. And so was born Phoenix Ogilvy, Sri Lanka. His agency has made the country and the brand proud by handling the communications and marketing campaigns for other mega international events and brands. The 2011 Cricket World Cup and the International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) awards festival in Colombo in 2010 and more recently with Coca-Cola Sri Lanka's Sprite. Among recent awards, Ogilvy Media and Neo@Ogilvy bagged the 'Rest of South Asia Media Agency of the Year – Bronze' and the 'Rest of South Asia Digital Agency of the Year – Bronze' respectively at the South Asia leg of the Campaign Agency of the Year Awards 2018 in Mumbai, India.

For such a trailblazer, it is only natural that ingenuity, innovation, and creativity are his tools for success.



Irvin Weerackody, Chairman, Ogilvy Sri Lanka.

They are, in fact, the best assets of a nation, he said. Indeed, this combination is the global currency of the 21st century, said Irvin, speaking with Business Lanka. It is imperative that these need to be combined with technology in this day and age. Therefore, it is logical to find that the advertising profession selling, building public opinions, perceptions, changing/destroying perceptions have already embraced technology. Working in this digital age, Irvin and his team have been cognizant of

advertising's new pitch, of creating personalized communication, and continuously invent new, better, and more precise targeting tools. And the advertisements of today will stand the test of time not just by being tech-driven but by making an iconic piece that will challenge the rules and shape thinking, and be a guiding light for future work. Irvin thinks the golden age of advertising is at our doorstep.

Ingenuity, innovation, and creativity are not mere aphorisms



Above: Irvin Weerakody at the 38th All India Awards for Creative Excellence (ABBYs).

Page 18 AD ISSUES

Phoenix Ogilvy shines bright at ABBYs

Phoenix Ogilvy (Phoenix O&M) received a clear message: winning awards and accolades meant that it was one of the best agencies in the world. The 38th All India Awards for Creative Excellence (ABBYs) were held in Mumbai, India, on February 27, 2011. The event was organized by the Advertising Club of Mumbai, and the winners were announced on the evening of February 27. Phoenix Ogilvy was one of the agencies that were recognized for their creative excellence in the advertising industry.

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Page 12 NEWS

Phoenix Ogilvy, communication partner for Sri Lanka Tourism

The Sri Lanka Tourism Board has selected Phoenix Ogilvy, leading advertising and marketing communication agency, as its communication partner to promote and develop Sri Lanka Tourism.

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Page 12 NEWS

Phoenix Ogilvy trounces global players to win ICC T20 World Cup pitch

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Working in this digital age, Irvin and his team have been cognizant of advertising's new pitch, of creating personalized communication, and continuously invent new, better, and more precise targeting tools. And the advertisements of today will stand the test of time not just by being tech-driven but by making an iconic piece that will challenge the rules and shape thinking, and be a guiding light for future work.

of digitized modernity. Irvin thinks they helped countries like Japan, Singapore, and South Korea achieve remarkable progress during the last century. Quantum leaps in human or civilizational progress have

been marked by such 'marriages,' as is evident in each industrial revolution and the success of the most prominent brands globally. But talent is necessary but is hardly sufficient, insists Irvin. For the youth

to innovate or hone their innovative skills, the imperative is an investment in research and development, with the opportunity for skills development. Identify markets. For this, specific institutional and programmatic

Advertising is but one minute facet of the creative economy, and admittedly, it can play a significant role in aggressively marketing creative and cultural industries globally. The creative economy is vast, and given Sri Lanka's thrust towards engendering investment and its inherent potential, we can do much to market such things globally.

arrangements must be put in place to enable our talent to be competitive.

Irvin is relatively buoyant about the country's potential and talent pool to produce not just ripples but visible hype in the creative space. After all, Sri Lanka, he said, has had its share of virtuosos of international repute. Geoffrey Bawa, for example, was a much sought-after architect, locally and internationally. Other architects have also made their mark overseas. Artists of international repute like George Keyt and Ivan Peiris' work still fetch good prices in galleries such as Sotheby's and Christy's. Rohan De Saram is a cellist who has enthralled audiences in many countries.

Similarly, Kishani Jayasinghe, a corporate lawyer world-renowned as a soprano, has performed in leading opera houses, royal palaces, concert halls, and theatres in 24 countries for more than 20 years. In literature, Michael Ondaatje, Shehan Karunatileka, Ru Freeman, and others have won prestigious awards. Most recently, Kanya D'Almeida won the Commonwealth Short Story Prize. Kavi Alexander of Water Lily Acoustics won a Grammy for recording. So Sri Lanka, said Irvin, has had and still has a wealth of talent. What this talent generates undoubtedly has immense potential to capture global attention and, as importantly, a slice of the respective global market.

He contends that ingenuity, creativity, and innovation are paramount for international recognition and gain commercial

value, but this could happen only when they manifest themselves in products and services. The Vega supercar may be considered an example of Sri Lankan ingenuity, creativity, and innovation. They have made Sri Lanka proud and drawn international attention to its product to a certain extent. Vega technology compares favorably with the best in the world. This fully electric two-seat supercar can compete in the world of automobile market; the market potential for products like Vega is certainly massive given the world moving fast towards electric vehicles.

There is immense commercial potential for products and services that reflect our ingenuity, innovation, and creativity. This potential, Irvin said, has to be harnessed through aggressive marketing at the international level, combined with much-needed technological input. Consistency is critical, he said; what could be called a Sri Lankan creative signature becomes evident only when such products enter the global market continuously. Advertising can definitely and decisively help market Sri Lanka's creative and cultural products and services far more aggressively than what is apparent right now. However, advertising is only one aspect of the marketing mix.

Further, micro-targeting will be the future of advertising. In a digital universe of tweets and Instagrams, marketing and advertising are changing to accommodate a new normal of people virtually gripping

their devices. Hence blanket advertising may not be the most favored by clients. Micro-targeting is already happening, and agencies are embracing it into their fold. Data is a crucial element in such exercises, especially information related to behavior or behavioral patterns. Such an exercise allows data aggregators to build a picture that enables precision targeting. According to Irvin, this is not something new, in a sense, as politicians have always used behavioral information to craft and communicate messages that resonate well with particular constituencies.

"We have to move in this direction in the future more systematically and comprehensively. We must use multiple digital platforms and specifically tailored communication content for the particular platforms and those who are on it."

While developing relevant capacities locally, Ogilvy Sri Lanka is not averse to outsourcing to global resources for this purpose. For instance, when Ogilvy got the Sri Lankan Tourism business a few years ago, global digital resources were used, followed by a similar practice in 2015 and 2016 when it got involved in marketing Ceylon Tea globally. Regular online webinars by Ogilvy digital and technology experts happen all the time, benefitting the local creative talent vastly. Irvin believes that there may come a time when companies outsource creative work to Sri Lanka, but for this to happen, there can be no shortcuts. He said there are no substitutes for hard work and constant upgrading of knowledge and technological systems to keep pace with the rest of the world.

Advertising is but one minute facet of the creative economy, and admittedly, it can play a significant role in aggressively marketing creative and cultural industries globally. The creative economy is vast, and given Sri Lanka's thrust towards engendering investment and its inherent potential, we can do much to market such things globally. However, it is not that Sri Lanka is 'unmarked' on the global map in this regard. □

DESIGN

The Academy of Design (AOD): Producing Changemakers

Dr. (Hon DCL) Linda Speldewinde is still the pioneer who boldly launched degree programs in design in Sri Lanka, for the first time shedding light on their value to economic growth as creative industries, which have now gained momentum and demand. The Academy of Design (AOD) has always been about leveraging what Sri Lanka can offer to a global landscape using design. It was set up on a vision to improve, build livelihoods using design, and contribute to its economic landscape. And education became a means to do that.



Students at AOD experiment and work with different materials and designs.

“Sri Lanka is a unique mix of high-tech manufacturing at the factory level and low-tech hand manufacturing at the village level; they give our designers the ability to combine the best of tech and human hand-capabilities, creating unique products. We can present these products at a premier price paid by audiences that value sustainability, creative ingenuity, technology, and exciting cultures. That is a comparative advantage that more significant economies in Asia could not tap into so easily.”

AOD claims to have a lot more to leverage the potential of design and what the creative industries can do for Sri Lanka in driving exports, and it sees enormous potential in Sri Lanka. Often, the idea that ‘opportunities for designers in Sri Lanka are limited’ comes from not understanding the distribution of design as a sector that spreads transversely across many other

industries and sectors. At AOD, the management and the academia shift their students’ thinking to help them understand how these opportunities arise in different sectors.

Given this vision, AOD is evolving. It’s the eternal startup, ready to change, prepared to adapt, and prepared to deliver the kind of designers needed to take industries globally. To make grassroots cottage

industries provide international products. The expectations of this ‘designer’ keep changing, especially right now it continues to create a whole new world.

Entrepreneurship is a prominent part of the AOD learning culture. Many of its students are familiar with the drive, courage, and business basics needed to get their brands going by the time they graduate. The academy



Dr. (Hon DCL) Linda Speldewinde, Founder and Chairperson, Academy of Design (AOD).

expects to see more successful young brands with the AOD Graduate School and StartUp School.

The AOD, when it came into being, was promoting an untested field of education that was never the first option, leave alone mainstream. Today, that trajectory is no longer relevant. Its study programs, from fashion and textile design to motion graphics and animation design to fashion marketing, graphic and visual communication, and interior design, have become significant contributors to the country's creative economy with the potential to extend work and collaborations and business globally.

The programs AOD franchise from international organizations is adapted, with decisions on the international faculty it engages and the local experts according to its vision for the designer it needs to create for that moment in time. According to Linda, AOD never believes that its job is to issue education only. Its task stops when the designers it creates make tangible change and impact by generating exports, new markets, building livelihoods, and creating economic impact for their companies.

This approach is what makes the programs at AOD competitive. Because its programs have been

According to Linda, AOD never believes that its job is to issue education only. Its task stops when the designers it creates make tangible change and impact by generating exports, new markets, building livelihoods, and creating economic impact for their companies.

tried and tested in several countries worldwide, they allow students to successfully design, build and create for a world outside Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka has vistas of opportunities with the global apparel market projected to grow in value from 1.5 trillion US dollars in 2020 to about 2.25 trillion US dollars by 2025. While the industry will grow, there's a call to adapt phenomenally, a complete re-hall. Already, AOD has been working with the industry for the past 15 years. Such as shifting the product manufacturing process to a much more quality and specialty-focused product design, innovation, and manufacturing offer, has played a significant role in bringing Sri Lanka's apparel industry its current global recognition. The South Asian Apparel Leadership Forum and The Sustainable Fashion Summit have been annual events in the calendar of AOD at the Sri Lanka Design Festival since 2009. The Mercedes Benz Fashion Week was also a platform to speak about these new worlds and possibilities that would evolve.

During the recent past, AOD launched the graduate school and also the Colombo Innovation Tower. Through the masters offered at its Grad School in Design Innovation and Design Management and Entrepreneurship, it's calling its alumni back from industry through the part-time programs to be re-skilled for the new world. It also offers a specialist MA to support further the apparel industry's elevation, the

MA Contour Fashion Innovation program. Globally there is a massive growth in athleisure wear and sectors like swimwear, performance sportswear, and lingerie – areas that Sri Lanka's apparel industry has been specializing. AOD's MA in Contour Fashion will directly support this field and the industry's journey towards becoming the Contour Fashion Hub for the world by producing skilled designers who have the relevant know-how and contribute to the country's export income.

The Motion Graphics and Animation degree, a relatively new addition to AOD, presents some fantastic career opportunities for young people. While this sector holds robust prospects for creative talent, it has the potential to take any industry to its next phase when it comes to communicating with its audiences and building great user experiences.

In the short period since its introduction to Sri Lanka, AOD has seen a great deal of interest and engagement from big tech to artificial intelligence startups. Even the apparel industry is looking for innovative ways to enhance their businesses and tell their story to audiences worldwide. Motion Graphics students at AOD have had the opportunity to work with these industries and create animations of workflows in complex settings that merge software, hardware, AI, cloud to communicate better international projects and opportunities with stakeholders worldwide.

AOD encourages students, pushing them to understand their role in contributing to Sri Lanka and making it a catalyst in the region. It is doing this by exposing students to what Sri Lanka offers, parallel to imparting global knowledge.



Young graduates at AOD are encouraged to contribute towards the creative industries in Sri Lanka.

AOD often advises and encourages young graduates to find the next right step in the journey. It involves encouraging them to take the plunge, through to building and stabilizing through the years. For many of them, the brands and businesses are at the stage of scaling now. The AOD StartUp School, tied with AOD's Graduate School, aims to mentor and guide the budding entrepreneurs. A focus on exports is critical as the economic value and contribution to the country are higher. Small numbers will not help. Even if quantities are low, exports have to be of high value.

AOD encourages students, pushing them to understand their role in contributing to Sri Lanka and making it a catalyst in the region. It is doing this by exposing students to what Sri Lanka offers, parallel to imparting global knowledge. Through initiatives like the Island Craft Project and the DFSD foundation, students bring their fresh expertise from an international curriculum to reinvent Sri Lanka's cultural treasures. The Colombo Innovation Tower is a local creative hub for all of South Asia and

shares all this work with the rest of the world and drives collaborations.

The focus on sustainability has always been part of AOD's DNA, long before it became today's widely spoken topic. Sustainable and circular systems drive the future. And AOD knows that there is no other way. Thus, it has its own Circular Design Lab and many other initiatives that bring new knowledge to Sri Lanka with global partners and have made much progress, especially with the Dutch. This transformation is critical for the apparel industry, and championing Sustainability and Circularity is the next version of the Garments without Guilt movement that impacted the global fashion manufacturing industry. The outcomes of AOD's sustainability-focused design curricula became apparent almost ten years ago when AOD graduates went on to launch sustainable brands like House of Lonali and Nithya. Supplementing sustainability-conscious design education are additional courses and workshops with international sustainability experts like CIRCO from the Netherlands.

Engaging with craftspeople in Sri Lanka to promote their products and their industries here and abroad is another crucial AOD project. Linda believes that a number and a target for exports must be developed for this sector and drive it as part of a national plan. AOD plans to work with the EDB in this area by presenting some thoughts and actions. Sri Lanka's strength is in creating niche products with high quality and complexity, sustainable origins, and unique storytelling—these match our access to a unique culture, internationally relevant design, high quality, and small to medium scale manufacturing capabilities.

Design is undoubtedly one specialty that holds enormous potential to develop Sri Lanka's creative industries towards entirely new markets and consumer demands shaped today by technology and significant behavioral shifts. In this framework, Sri Lanka can still occupy even a small portion of the global market, with much room to grow and occupy a leading position as a destination for design-driven technology, innovation, and sustainable practices. ☐

ARCHITECTURE

Sustainable Architecture and Green Planning: The New 'Religion' of the Digital Age

In 2007, she was recognized as Sri Lanka's leading environmental architect by Time magazine and later in 2008 by India Today. Her designs are a testament to the work ethic and ethos she has been embracing in her career. This genre creates more pleasant and sustainable living spaces by invoking Sri Lanka's culture, tradition, and landscape. It promotes a lifestyle of coexistence and leverages alternative concepts. Environmental architect Sunela Jayewardene has achieved remarkable success through her work. Many iconic sites bear testament to her practices benefitting local health, economy, and the environment. She believes that environmental architecture is inevitable today and should be a nation's strategic shift to achieve multiple benefits for the greater environment to which, humans belong.

Creating spaces that preserve the environment and promote healthy living, leisure, and pursuits can be an example abroad and a catalyst for responsible investment, which is crucial for sustainable development. There is great potential for investment if the country capitalized on the modern trend of environmental conservation and promoted sincere sustainable development, focusing not on vertical masses but on combining indigenous design with modern technology, says Sunela.

She was a founder and first Chairperson of the Federation of Environmental Organizations of Sri Lanka. She was named among the '50 Most Powerful Women in Sri Lanka' by Echelon in 2013 and 2014. Among her most iconic designs, Jetwing Vil Uyana was listed among the Best 25 Eco-Lodges in the World by National Geographic (2013). Rainforest Ecolodge is one of the six world-class hotels, which has been

"We have a lot to learn from our past. We must look at what we have rather than aping something from the West. For instance, the design of the Ambalama (ancient resting places for travelers) is brilliant. What we can do is examine how to apply that old building system in the modern era. The more you look at it, the simpler it is. A designer has to understand the purpose of such systems in design. Then you begin to understand why certain elements are in place."

awarded the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Platinum Status. The Colombo Courtyard was recognized for the Best Hotel Interior by Asia Pacific Hotel Properties International. In addition, she designed the famous Jetwing Kaduruketha, Camellia Hills by Teardrop and numerous private residences and holiday villas in Sri Lanka. Most of her work is in rural and rustic settings.

Sunela studied architecture at the prestigious Pratt Institute in New York in the early 1980s and interned at the Center for Human Environments, New York, USA. It was a time when

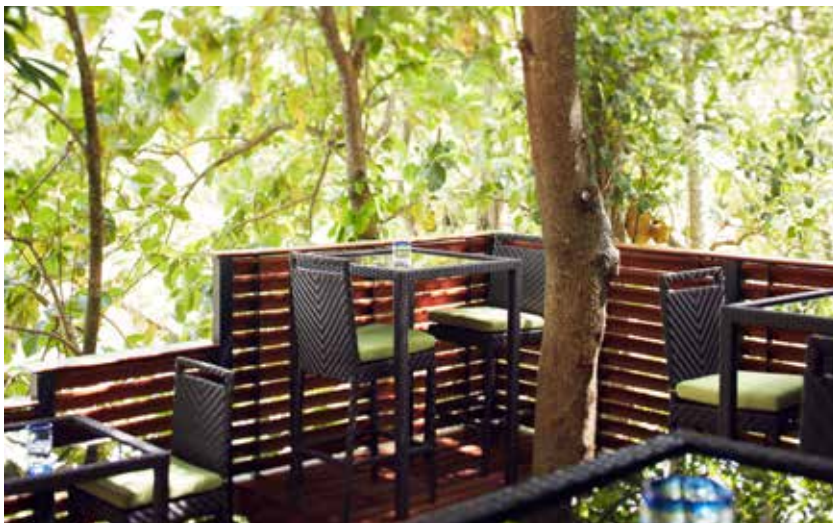


Environmental architect Sunela Jayewardene.



© Jetwing Kaduruketha

Jetwing Kaduruketha has been designed to resemble a traditional village surrounded by rural Sri Lankan landscapes.



trying to outdo each other. In contrast, today, as we face the consequences of environmental neglect, there are many voices in the design discipline promoting green designing for the long-term. This focus becomes even more significant as we calibrate our priorities in sync with the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development 2021.

It is impossible to design a suitable structure or building without understanding its relationship to the natural systems. So, it's only fair that environmental architecture or green architecture makes the environment its priority. An architect doesn't get a clean slate when asked to design a property; each site has its problems. Hence, an architect who is committed will successfully retain the natural beauty of a new site or enhance a distressed site through rewilding. The design develops and revolves around the form, materiality, and environmental performance.

Fundamentally, environmental design takes into consideration what is essential for the preservation of the natural environment. This genre of responsible design is always beneficial to the local ecosystem. Through a process of research, the designer prioritizes the essentials. The local climatic zone, gradient of the land, the direction of the sunlight, direction of the rain, water flow, wind and the interaction between inhabitants and wildlife are essential for the survival of

Sunela blends traditions associated with the locality with the landscape, which she describes as a further enhancement of contextual design...She believes traditional designs are tried and tested over thousands of years, and the ease in which they blend in to a landscape is indisputable.

environment-centered designing was not mainstream. Her focus on the environment was unavoidable as the natural environment is her driver. Being an avid environmentalist who had traveled extensively around the country, observing and studying the country's vernacular-built environment, restoring and conserving the environment is a passion that she pursues. She has been in

environmental conservation and activism for a long time. As a matter of fact, when she began working as a professional, she developed concepts that showcased natural environments or restored distressed environments of the sites where she undertook projects.

The sanguine 1980s and 1990s development meant vertical high rises and frenzied urban sprawls

the building in the long-term. These considerations Sunela describes as contextual designing. A sustainable environmental design ensures that there is no disruption to water sources, excavations that are dangerous to erosion, and constructing inclusively in forests rather than deforesting, allowing the retention of valuable trees. It is an acknowledgment of the interdependence between man and nature. In promoting environmental architecture, the key is first to understand its rationale. It's not a mere showpiece that awes and mesmerizes owners and visitors. The sustainability of human habitats and the site's ecology is at the core

Jetwing Vil Uyana is a true lifestyle hotel that embodies the ultimate in eco friendly luxury. Inspired by the local, rural traditions, the buildings blends into the landscape.

of this design genre. Showcasing the natural environment through sensitive building systems, sustainable sourced and traditional building material, can add to the iconicity of a truly crafted built environment.

Sunela blends traditions associated with the locality with the landscape, which she describes as a further enhancement of contextual design. This is in contrast to imposing alien, foreign architectural forms on our native landscape. It's about visual compatibility. She believes traditional designs are tried and tested over thousands of years, and the ease in which they blend in to a landscape is indisputable.

There's always something visually pleasing in them, so it's a matter of tweaking the traditional and using it in a more practical way to suit the modern dwellers. Simply said, it's a revival of our vernacular design traditions through their incorporation in contemporary buildings.

Such a departure requires a reference point, and for Sunela, Sri Lanka's vernacular building systems display traditional elements of designs used for generations. These design elements have been used again and again in buildings for a reason. She reminds me of the high gabled roofs that allow heat to rise, roof eaves that will protect from the rain, sun, and the wind. A designer has to understand the practical purpose of such systems in design.

Sri Lanka has one of the best traditional design disciplines, but they are not adequately utilized. Architects like Geoffrey Bawa practiced it by bringing all the elements of the native design philosophy into their work. Sunela believes that her work has been recognized for showcasing our heritage and traditional design systems, which is a shift from transplanting foreign design elements. Sunela encourages the community of architects to study traditional building systems and materials to promote sustainable building practices. After all, architecture outlives humanity, and our meticulous choices contribute



© Jetwing Vil Uyana



© Yathra Houseboat by Jetwing

Yathra Houseboat by Jetwing floats upon the gentle waters of the Bentara River, as Sri Lanka's first houseboat within the southern backlands of Bentota.

By extensively and earnestly promoting environmental architecture, we can undoubtedly attract investment into the country. First, introducing a framework or template by which all investors abide is essential.

towards a healthy and harmonious environment.

A soil testing on the abandoned agricultural land identified for Jetwing Vil Uyana, revealed one of the most distressed soils with enormous chemical content. Sunela's team did a Fauna and Flora survey of the land to determine the species using the land. It took at least five years for rewilding to sow results. It was a slow recovery process, but 17 years later, it is one of the best habitats with a return of iconic species and migrant birds, long absent from the site. The success of its rewilding allows the owners to generate an independent income purely from wildlife safaris on the hotel premises.

Urban habitats have become hugely problematic by compromising the quality of air. In restoration and recovery, it is essential to choose elements that negate the already challenged environment. Sunela has done just that when creating the Colombo Court Hotel, by amalgamating four structures in one of the most urbane localities of the capital. The concept of the project was focused on recycling and restoring

and thereby, taking affirmative action. In improving air quality in the surrounding area, she has landscaped extensively with bamboo that has air-cleaning properties.

In an apparent shift espoused locally, many corporates and hotels are converting their workstations to mitigate the environmental impact. They are investing in green office spaces and practices and renewable energy systems, blending with passive design strategies, which positively impact the workforce and other users and visitors.

By extensively and earnestly promoting environmental architecture, we can undoubtedly attract investment into the country. First, introducing a framework or template by which all investors abide is essential. The state should ensure compliance. One such proposal, that Sunela, along with Dr. Sumith Pilapitiya and Dr. Eric Wickramanayake had worked on a few years ago, was to attract foreign investment by rewilding of neglected and rundown state land adjoining national parks. Such valuable spaces could be open for foreign investment. The project had aimed to achieve

ecological restoration, providing guidelines devised by environmental specialists, for investors to rewild these wastelands within a specified timeframe. This initiative would have extend the borders of the national parks through investors, hotels built according to strict guidelines with provision for employment for local communities. Such initiatives could be an opportunity to create landscapes that can transition from wasteland to a rewilded ecotourism destination.

For green architecture to thrive, humans have to shift from a hegemonic mindset. When humans understand their place in the ecosystem, they will adapt their living spaces beyond personal desires to one that has immense consideration for nature and the environment, says Sunela. We can no longer continue on the colonial model of environmental rape culture to fill the coffers. **■**

MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY

Cyber Illusions: Where Art Meets Technology

A veteran in the Creative and Audio Visual Industry, Lalindra Amarasekara, a Visual Technologist, co-founded Cyber Illusions in 2011. A new media, design and production studio housing a group of Artists, Technologists, Engineers and Designers was created with the vision of producing live sensory experiences in physical spaces with the aid of technology. With clients locally and in the Asian, European and Middle Eastern markets, Cyber Illusions strives to create extraordinary experiences and change the experiential industry in Sri Lanka.



Cinematic musical experience – the Kuweni Concert with Charitha Attalage, received recognition at Wow Awards Asia.



They made their mark in the local experiential industry in 2012 with a visual projection for Vesak, where the National Museum was utilized as the canvas.

Lalindra Amarasekara, Visual Technologist, and Co-founder, Cyber Illusions.

With the vision of going beyond the virtual screen, Cyber Illusions works primarily with event producers in the production of events, brands, and companies regarding promotional or customer engagement work and museums and galleries. They made their mark in the local experiential industry in 2012 with a visual projection for Vesak, where the National Museum was utilized as the canvas. This project involved a series of collaborations with various writers and artists, including Vimukthi Jayasundara, who wrote the script and, Anthony Surendran, who produced the score.

Working closely with the Goethe Institute of Sri Lanka, Cyber

Illusions has also been involved in numerous German and Sri Lankan cultural exchange projects. One such prominent project would be the Pettah Interchange, where an audiovisual experience is created in an abandoned but prominent building in Colombo for a limited period. These projects also involve collaborations with musical artists, visual artists and, performing artists to design and develop various content and performances.

International Reach

Cyber Illusions has a diverse portfolio of its international clients. Being reasonably active in the Middle East, which has a significant market

for big experiences and shows, they work primarily in Oman and Dubai to produce large-scale visual productions. In Oman, they contribute to a series of cultural festivals where each festival contains about five different installations. For the past five years, they have also contributed to the Muscat and Salalah festival, an annual festival held as a tourist attraction. These large outdoor productions, which are song and dance-based, relay various cultural stories utilizing visual imagery. Cyber Illusions is also involved with designing and producing these stories in collaboration with GT StageTech in Oman. Another long-standing customer is the Military Technical College in Oman, where



Left and right: 360-degree projection mapping of one of the largest monuments in the world, the Ruwanwelisaya Stupa of Sri Lanka.



Above: Vesak at the Colombo Museum – a visual projection for Vesak, where the National Museum was utilized as the canvas. Below: Sarasaviya Film Awards.

Cyber Illusions has been conducting a 20-minute long projection mapping show for their graduation ceremony for the past six years.

India is considered by Cyber Illusions to be an exciting market as they appreciate the design influences of Sri Lanka. Thus, enabling them to incorporate local sound and visual designs subtly into the regional productions to create exotic projections. Whilst providing their services primarily to an integrated marketing agency known as Swordfish in Bangalore, Cyber Illusions consider their biggest production in India to be the Indian National Day Event.

Adapting To The Pandemic

Although the company was started to work within the physical space, during the COVID-19 pandemic, they were pushed into working in the virtual space. Thus, during the past year, they have been experimenting with how to translate physical experiences into virtual experiences whilst making them as engaging as physical experiences.

They utilized this knowledge and learning last year, where they collaborated with the Goethe Institute



to create an online live electronic music performance known as 'Interface Project'. Electronic artists Asvajit and Nigel Perera produced and played live music whilst the visual representation was created by Cyber Illusions. A production that was inspired by the anonymity aspect of the web, the visual content was

both reactive and representative of the artists; although the artists were visible, it was not in the traditional form.

Start of Visual Arts and Experiences Group (VAEG)

Although Cyber Illusions has its own in-house staff, the various projects they are involved in require



Left: Robotics Competition, Oman. Right: The Kuweni Concert with Charitha Attalage – the effect was amplified with layering light and lasers.

the expertise of individuals in multiple disciplines. This need led to the creation of the Visual Arts and Experiences Group (VAEG). VAEG was founded by Cyber Illusions and AV Lab. It is a collective of like-minded professionals specializing in multitudes of disciplines but who come together for specific projects. They have also produced an array of musical shows for local artists, including both niche artists and more contemporary artists such as BnS. Their most recent cinematic musical experience, the Kuweni Concert with Charitha Attalage, received recognition at Wow Awards Asia.

Thus, Cyber Illusions considers the future to be the Visual Arts and Experiences Group (VAEG) as individuals are more amenable to contributing and experimenting in a collaborative space. Although they began as a group of individuals working within the physical space, they have now realized the potential in the virtual world. Thus, going forward, the projects would be an amalgamation of the physical and virtual world. They plan to create a platform under this group to bring more from a variety of disciplines to

As the experiential industry is one of the fastest-growing industries at the moment with a significant level of development, Cyber Illusions wants to create a structured platform where they can provide information, knowledge and a considerable level of hands-on training to elevate the future of this industry locally.

explore this new medium.

Navigating The Younger Generation

When Cyber Illusions began ten years ago, they realized that while Sri Lanka had an array of talent, many individuals have limited themselves to the digital world instead of exploring the physical space. Furthermore, many limited themselves to the traditional careers available within their fields without venturing beyond these conventional scopes. The experiential industry, however, is not restrictive as every project is different from the one before. Thus, individuals are allowed to push their skills and find an interesting area within this industry as their canvas is not limited to a virtual screen.

Cyber Illusions' future plans

consist of conducting workshops collaborating with the Goethe Institute to train the younger generation. They also have plans to collaborate with an array of producers and creators and transfer knowledge locally. As the experiential industry is one of the fastest-growing industries at the moment with a significant level of development, Cyber Illusions wants to create a structured platform where they can provide information, knowledge, and a considerable level of hands-on training to elevate the future of this industry locally. ☐

Lalindra Amarasekara, Visual Technologist, and Co-founder, Cyber Illusions.

HANDLOOM

Paving The Future Of The Handloom Industry

Selyn, a handloom business that was created to provide a sustainable livelihood to 15 rural women in 1991 has grown today into a social enterprise that supports over 1,000 creative women and their families. Fair Trade certified and having carved out a name for themselves as a fashion brand locally and a toy brand globally, Selyn exports unique, handmade educational toys to over 40 countries worldwide.



Selyn is an organization driven by its vision to uplift the females of the rural community. They attained this goal by ensuring that their artisan sector comprises predominantly of women. Their women-friendly business model was also developed with the notion that merely granting job opportunities for women is insufficient. To ensure that the women would remain at work, Selyn offers flexible working hours, work from home option or even the option to become self-sufficient entrepreneurs by setting up their own business at home. Thus, as a woman progresses through her life, the Selyn 'homeworker' model is flexible to provide her work and enable her to access work. This model also positively impacts the economy as most of the artisans who are the sole breadwinners of their families are now granted the opportunity to earn a steady income.

To remain relevant in the competitive apparel market, Selyn has consistently been customer-focused. Although emotional about the products they produce by hand, they are also predisposed to making difficult decisions. If a positive reaction is not observed towards a particular product, they will not exhaust time and money developing or producing it. Thus, Selyn believes that being customer-focused is the key to being relevant and staying ahead of the curve. Having exported soft toys for years, Selyna Peiris, the Business Development Director, revealed that they made the difficult decision five years ago to direct their focus towards educational toys to counter the losses suffered. This decision thus enabled them to once again compete successfully in the global market.

Selyn understands the global demand for authentic, ethical, sustainable, and Fair Trade thinking companies. Being a Fair Trade certified organization since 2009, Selyn is subjected to a stringent compliance framework that protects the environment and its workers. As handloom is a carbon-neutral



Being a Fair Trade certified organization since 2009, Selyn is subjected to a stringent compliance framework that protects the environment and its workers.



Above: work at the toy factory.
Left: Selyna Peiris, Business Development Director, Selyn.



Above and below: at the weaving workshop, workers spin dyed cotton yarns into bobbins of different sizes.

By catering handloom and craft products to a premium market, Selyn plans to make a lucrative craft industry for the rural communities to encourage the younger generation to join this traditional art.



industry, the only potential hazard is in the dyeing agent. Thus, to combat this, Selyn has a dye plant that is equipped with a wastewater plant treatment. As a manufacturer of fabrics and toys, they utilize safe, non-toxic dyes that adhere to international safety standards. They are also committed to reducing their carbon footprint by shipping their export

products instead of using airfreight. However, they have been unable to go green presently concerning their export packaging as plastic is needed to keep cotton moist free to prevent fungus growth. But they are committed to reducing their plastic usage and are currently seeking affordable alternatives. Apart from introducing a Zero Waste collection,

they also ensure that all their products are zero waste. Regarding garments, only patterns that create zero waste are given the green light, while the minimum waste created is utilized to produce handmade necklaces.

Being in the peripheries of the tourist industry, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the collapse of



Left and right: Selyn integrates different and innovative craft techniques. Below: Soft cotton handloom sarees by Selyn.

Selyn's retail market. This significantly impacted the craft and handloom producers, as there was no export market for handloom toys. Thus, if Selyn decided to focus solely on the export market that required handmade educational toys, they would have weaned themselves from the handloom and craft industry. But despite suffering a financial loss last year, Selyn's main goal was to keep their artisans together and not lay off any employees. They understood that the key to enduring these challenging times was creativity. Thus, two weeks after the first lockdown in March last year, they began producing cloth masks by cutting up handloom sarees. The company also started to design products that artisans could start and complete in their homes. In the past, they would take a portion of a product home and bring the completed portions to be assembled at the factory. But with the Zero Waste collection that Selyn recently released, it was possible for artisans to start and finish products such as reusable masks and menstrual pads at home. This thereby made it possible for workers to work remotely instead of going to the factory daily. Thus, Selyn is surviving the pandemic by not only focusing on the visual aspect of a product but by also focusing on how the backend can be sustained.

At present, the younger generation in rural communities tends to shy away from the craft industry and, in lieu, joins the informal sector as drivers, domestic workers or migrant



workers. But Selyn plans to revive the ancient art of handloom and convert it into a lucrative industry. They completed the first phase of this plan by obtaining a USAID grant. This enabled them to build a third vertical for their business to export handloom fabrics to premium luxury markets in Europe and the USA. Thus, by integrating different craft techniques, weaving techniques, and fibers, Selyn plans to turn a USD 4 meter of fabric into a USD 60 meter of fabric. Therefore, they would be taking a step away from the fashion industry and moving towards the home and lifestyle sector in the future. This move would also double the income of the weavers in the

next one to two years. To meet the consumer demands for transparency and traceability Selyn also plans to integrate blockchain technology into its supply chain. Thus, every product would contain a code enabling the consumers to be aware of both the hours that went into the product and about the artisan that created it. Thus, by catering handloom and craft products to a premium market, Selyn plans to make a lucrative craft industry for the rural communities to encourage the younger generation to join this traditional art. [\[1\]](#)

Selyna Peiris,
Business Development Director, Selyn.

INVENTION

RESPIRONE NANO AV 99 Face Mask: A Novel Concept by University of Peradeniya

After the announcement by the World Health Organization (WHO) of the cases of pneumonia of an unknown cause, found in Wuhan city of China, on December 31, 2019, a novel coronavirus responsible for the disease was identified as the cause by the Chinese authorities on January 7, 2020. The disease was temporarily named “2019-nCoV”. At the time, there were no scientific data pertinent to its infection and spreading or the precautions available to minimize these factors. As such, the disease control became problematic, and some patients died on the spot even before admitting to hospitals for possible treatments. Since then, the disease has spread throughout the entire world, creating a pandemic. Consequently, the number of scientific literature appearing in journals has increased, thereby educating people on all the aspects of the disease. The disease was renamed COVID-19, and the virus responsible for causing the condition was SARS CoV-2.



Professor R.M.G. Rajapakse, Senior Professor of Chemistry, University of Peradeniya.

In March 2020, the first COVID-19 patient, a Chinese tourist, was identified in Sri Lanka. As the disease began to spread among the people who were the first encounters of the patient, the Sri Lankan Government took aggressive steps to control the disease propagation right from the beginning by appointing a Task Force for COVID-19 Control. Sri Lanka managed to curtail the spread of the disease to the best of its ability by imposing extended curfews and lockdown procedures and, following that, identifying all the contacts of patients and introducing proper quarantining and patient management systems at the Infectious Disease Hospital (IDH) and other designated COVID-19 wards of some hospitals and thereby confining the deaths in the first wave to as low as 13. Good Health Practices are the best ways to control the infection and the spreading of the disease. The good health practices recommended

By considering this important factor, an environmentally-friendly, bio-degradable, low-cost, and re-usable face mask to repel and destroy any aerosol particles containing the virus, blood, or any other water-based stains was developed by a team headed by Prof R M. G. Rajapakse, Senior Professor, Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Science, University of Peradeniya.



Above and below: Dr. Bandula Gunawardena, Honorable Minister of Trade in discussion with the team and inspecting the process.

by the WHO include wearing a proper face mask, frequent washing of hands for at least 30 seconds with soap, and maintaining at least one-meter distance between individuals. Additionally, the functions that encourage crowding of people were strongly discouraged, and in extreme cases, they were prohibited.

At the beginning of the disease capture, i.e., in March 2020, the proper face masks and personal protective equipment were unavailable in Sri Lanka. Additionally, most of the face masks that were recommended for use were made of polypropylene and were meant for only one-time use. Since the wearing of face masks is mandatory to mitigate the disease, and if the 7.8 billion of the world population uses these masks, billions of polypropylene pieces will be disposed to the environment every day. This will become a severe environmental problem that would invite many other diseases in the future. By considering this important factor, an environmentally-friendly, bio-degradable, low-cost, and re-usable face mask to repel and destroy

any aerosol particles containing the virus, blood, or any other water-based stains was developed by a team headed by Prof R. M. G. Rajapakse, Senior Professor, Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Science, University of Peradeniya. An M.Sc. student, Tharindu Trishan Senarathne, assisted in the initial phase of the mask development even during rigorously imposed curfew situations. This novel project to develop such a face mask stemmed from the knowledge gained through over ten years of extensive lab, pilot, and industrial scales of R&D pertinent to "Advanced and Intelligent Textiles". In this research, novel functionalities, such as antimicrobial, superhydrophobic and stain-resistant, anti-pilling, anti-static properties, were introduced to cotton fabric and various other textile materials. The pilot and industrial-scale projects were carried out in collaboration with Teejay Lanka at the Awissawella Free-trade Zone. The research was sponsored by the Technology Grant Scheme of the National Science Foundation, Sri Lanka, and Teejay Lanka. By that time,

four Ph.D. and two M.Phil. degrees were produced in this area of research, thus, contributing enormously to the advancement of science in this discipline.

This is the first time a global invention of a face mask having these multi functionalities has been developed. Dr. Chaminda Herath, Consultant in Radiology and Technology of Nawalapitiya General Hospital, Gayan Sasanka Tilakaratne, Postgraduate in Nanoscience and Nanotechnology, and Niroshan Samarasinghe, a Micro analyst and a Technical Officer at the Department of Zoology of the Faculty of Science, were the other members of the team. Several others, including a Ph.D. student in Instrumentation Ruwan Jayakatha, M.Sc. holder in Nanoscience and Nanotechnology Charaka Jayasinghe, Ph.D. holders in Nanoscience and Nanotechnology applicable to textiles Dr. Charith Anuruddha Thennakoon as well as Dr. Dilan Sandil Rajapakse together with an M.Phil. student in Textile Technology Somasiry Manage, helped in many ways throughout the



project. At the initial phase of R&D studies, Mr. Rasika Rajapakse helped manufacture research samples of ready-made face masks in many ways. The antimicrobial properties of textiles have been investigated over ten years with fruitful research collaboration with Professor Sanath Rajapakse of the Department of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology, University of Peradeniya. Professor Faseeha Noordeen, Dr. Veranga Liyanapathirana, Dr. B.N. Dissanayake and the Technical Officers of the Department of Microbiology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya, contributed in analyzing antimicrobial activities of the modified fabric used for making the face masks. Biocompatibility studies were conducted at Professor Jayanthe Rajapakse's laboratories in the Department of Veterinary Pathobiology, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine & Animal Science – University of Peradeniya. Many other studies pertinent to face mask characterizations were done at the Sri Lanka Institute of Nanotechnology (SLINTEC), Industrial Technology Institute (ITI), and Bureau Veritas (BV).

In making such a multifunctional face mask, the target has been to develop a face mask that would protect people from catching the disease and a patient from spreading the disease while reducing the waste burden and the impact on the environment. Cotton, a natural fabric material, has been used in three layers and nanotechnologically modified to have inherent properties. The outer layer of cotton fabric is superhydrophobic. It repels aerosolized particles containing the virus, bacteria, blood, or other water-based stains. Suppose the virus penetrates to the outer layer

and reaches the nanotechnologically modified middle layer cotton fabric. In that case, the negatively charged viral envelope is electrostatically bound by the positively charged microparticles that have been used to cover the pores of the cotton fabric to the level below 300nm. The star-shaped nano-particles present throughout this layer's surface can cut the spike proteins and destroy the viral envelope, thus deactivating the virus. Micro and nanoparticles of titanium dioxide and zinc oxide are used to partially block the pores of the commonly available woven cotton fabric via chemical bonding, to result in nanometric range filtration and inherent antimicrobial activity via multiple mechanisms. The innermost layer comprises 100 percent hydrophilic cotton to absorb carbon dioxide and moisture present in the exhaled air and quickly expel from the headspace, not allowing for re-inhalation of carbon dioxide-rich air. This face mask can be reused even after 25 cycles of washing or disinfecting at least for a period of one month. The titanium dioxide and zinc oxide micro and nanoparticles used in these masks are safe in various applications, including medical and cosmetic industries.

Using X-ray diffraction (XRD) and X-ray Fluorescence (XRF) analyses of the masks that were subjected to high airflow tests and wash cycles, the team has proven that the chemically bonded nanoparticles are stable and do not detach from the fabric surfaces. Bactericidal effects have been proven efficacious for Gram-positive, Gram-negative, and Pseudomonas types with low nanoparticle concentrations. As performed at the Industrial Technology Institute (ITI), the Bacterial filtration efficacy shows 99.99 percent filtration.

Viricidal effects of the mask materials for viruses have been studied at Imperial College, London, Great Britain, using nanoparticles incorporated into gloves, where 99.8 percent efficacy has been observed. The materials used and the mask material have over 99.99 percent virucidal effect against the SVR virus. Animal studies at the University of Peradeniya have shown no significant side effects on mouse skin or internal organs such as kidneys and liver, even at 20 times the dosage used. The mask has high resistance to flammability with satisfactory results in differential pressure tests used for breathability testing. It is highly resistant to blood and fluid permeation. The outer layer superhydrophobic properties are stable for up to 20 machine cycles of standard washings and remain hydrophobic for 30 cycles. A unique mask design addresses the problem of air escape at the nasal bridge that is further supported by a metal or plastic nose plate. The adjustable ear-loops make sure to tight-fitting to the wearer.

The team initially produced more than a thousand masks using nearly a hundred meters of treated fabric at the factory setting with standard non-toxic binders at Teejay Lanka, Awissawella. Due to limitations of operators, machines, and time to devote for additional work, the Teejay could not proceed with industrial production. With outstanding assistance and the advice of Dr. Bandula Gunawardena, Honorable Minister of Trade, the team was able to find Sarasavi Industries for mass production of the face masks. The coating suspension is prepared at the Isabella Group of Companies and fabric coating at the Lumiere Textiles. It is the first time an invention from the University of Peradeniya has been converted into a commercial product with the assistance provided by the Ministry of Trade.

The novel three-layered-fabric-antimicrobial-face mask comprises adjustable ear loops and is available in three colors, white, black, and brown, with three sizes, large, medium, and small. The polybag in which the face mask is enclosed is also biodegradable. The mask held within the polybag is enclosed in a cardboard

Having ensured the perfect protection against COVID-19 for the fellow local population, the combined team wishes to produce them for the export market and attract foreign revenue to improve the National Economy of our motherland.

box with all essential details printed on the front and back sides of the box in Sinhalese and English languages. The face mask sales are done by the State Trading Corporation and are available for purchase at Sathosa supermarkets throughout the country. The University of Peradeniya owns patent rights and has signed an agreement with Sarasavi Industries for manufacturing. The combined expertise of the team comprising the scientists of Peradeniya University, industrialists of the Sarasavi, Isabella, and Lumiere and the expertise in Economics of Minister Dr. Bandula Gunawardena contributed in converting the research output into a marketable product.

The inputs of Minister Gunawardena are remarkable in designing face fitting characteristics by introducing a nose clip and adjustable ear loops to adjust the mask for 100 percent fit to the wearer's face. Dr. Bandula Gunawardena organized several Press Conferences with the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Upul B. Dissanayake, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Parakrama Karunaratne, the scientists involved in the invention of face masks, and the industrial partners. They addressed the media to explain the functionalities of the novel face mask. They also intended to popularize it within the Sri Lankan general public. Further, the new invention was introduced to the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Honorable Mahinda Rajapaksa, the honorable ministers and parliamentarians at the introductory session held at the Sri Lanka Parliament, which Minister of Trade Dr. Bandula Gunawardena also organized. The Prime Minister then declared the State Sponsorship for this unique face mask. Minister Gunawardena also arranged a rare and historical event of presenting the face mask characteristics before the Cabinet

of Sri Lanka, including His Excellency the President of Sri Lanka Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Honorable Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, and the Cabinet Ministers at the Presidential Secretariat. Under Dr. Bandula Gunawardena's arrangement of organizing a virtual meeting with Trade Ambassadors of all the countries with which Sri Lanka has diplomatic relations presented the innovation to the entire world, thereby educating on the unique characteristics of the face mask.

It is the first time in the history of Sri Lankan University research spanning over 70 years that the inventions made through university R&D activities were converted into a marketable product that has emerged at the right time to protect people from the deadly COVID-19 disease. The mask gives protection to hybrid variants of the disease also since the nanoparticles used are capable of physically disputing the viruses and bacteria. This unique project would not have been possible without the support of all the industries involved in the project, particularly Minister Bandula Gunawardena and all those who helped in this project in numerous ways.

The credit for the commercial production of the face masks goes to Sarasavi Industries, the largest Sri Lankan-owned Socks & Tights manufacturing company, originally established in the year 1991, for the manufacture of Socks & Tights. It has been a leading manufacturing entity approved by the Board of Investment of Sri Lanka (BOI), with 'Sedex, Oeko-tex Standard' for Socks & Tights in Sri Lanka. In collaboration with their sister companies, Isabella (Katunayake, Pallekele, and Ethiopia), Sarasavi Industries is the second most significant socks & tights manufacturer in the South Asia region. And Yoo Brands is



The face mask innovated by the University of Peradeniya incorporates unique features for protection.

their newly-established branded shoe company for producing unique shoes to meet the latest trends demanded by the world population. They follow a state-of-the-art production process with well-equipped, fully computerized latest knitting machinery. Sarasavi Exports cater to the European, UK, US, and Scandinavian markets with 800,000 pairs of socks and 300,000 pieces of tights per month. Tesco, Marks & Spencer, George, Guess, Hummel, FCT, and Meyba are a few buyers. Their main target is for the niche and mass markets, and they offer socks and tights with the composition of Cotton, Nylon, Acrylic, Spandex, Lycra, Merino and Angora, and Bamboo. Due to the association with such a reputable industry and other sister industries such as Isabella and Lumiere, the new invention of the RESPIRONE NANO AV 99 Antimicrobial Face Mask with multifunctional properties is now available in the Lankan market.

Having ensured the perfect protection against COVID-19 for the fellow local population, the combined team wishes to produce them for the export market and attract foreign revenue to improve the National Economy of our motherland. □

Professor R.M.G Rajapakse, Senior Professor of Chemistry, University of Peradeniya.

GO DEEPER

Organic Agriculture

Sustainable and harmonious farming driving future growth for Sri Lanka



Organic agriculture is a mission to strive at improving environmental health. Sri Lanka is embarking on a journey of making sustainable choices.

Organic agriculture is bustling with an impetus to return to the old order of growing plants and raising animals naturally. It heralds the panacea for human health and wellbeing. Organic is an environmentally friendly, culturally sensitive, and economically viable sustainable agricultural system that maintains an efficient management system.

We live in an age where changing direction seems to be the only choice left for humans as the earth is gripping and stuttering from a gush of portent ecological episodes pointing to the fallout from global warming and climate change. And the new direction that the world needs is transformative and curative. It pleads respect for nature. Appeals to make ethical choices by embracing a holistic approach to ensuring food security and human health while protecting the wellbeing of plants, livestock, and soil organisms. Organic agriculture

is a mission to strive at improving environmental health.

Sri Lanka is embarking on a journey of making sustainable choices. Of producing food in the future without using herbicides, pesticides, weedicides, fertilizers, or genetically modified organisms and using natural resources such as manure and compost instead. As the government declares an end to previously harmful practices and advocates organic agriculture, it bids to pursue a wholesome approach to farming and food production in acknowledging and promoting the strong interdependence between the different compositions of the production system – from the ground to the consumer.

As Sri Lanka embraces organic agriculture methods to produce high-quality vegetables and fruits, the future envisaged is one of adhering to sustainable farming practices that harmonize with the environment by

protecting the biodiversity within the ecosystem, minimizing land degradation and soil erosion. The organic farming system increases the soil's long-term fertility while recycling resources and materials as much as possible and utilizes renewable resources wherever possible. As foreseen by the International Trade Centre, the most significant benefit to developing countries like Sri Lanka on switching to organic agriculture are the export opportunities and its role in reducing poverty in rural areas.

The market for organic products is growing steadily. The prices of organic products are higher than those of conventional products. Globally, Asia ranks as the third-largest market for organic products. The next issue of Business Lanka magazine will explore the growing cult of organic agriculture sweeping global trade and the promising future for Sri Lanka through its radical shift from conventional agriculture to organic agriculture. ■



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