Celebrating Harris Wijesinghe Divi Siritha

Posted on

Harris Wijesinghe is one of the most admired, respected, and loved bridal dressers today. Harris follows his heart’s desire and continues to do what he likes. Enthusiasm, passion, and dedication are his secrets to success. The launch of ‘Harris’—Harris Wijesinghe Divi Siritha is a celebration of the renowned bridal dresser’s career and lifestyle that is beautifully and comprehensively compiled.

Words Swetha Ratnajothi. **Photography** Naradha Amarathunga.



Harris Wijesinghe fondly known as Harris mama.

Harris Wijesinghe, fondly called by everyone as “Harris Mama”, is lighthearted and simple with a pleasant persona. Those who know Harris describe him as a one-of-a-kind, spiritual, helpful, down-to-earth person with an amazing personality. With his distinctive style and flair, he carved his career in the gigantic industry.

Looking back at Harris’s childhood, he grew up at his grandmother’s place down Retreat Road, Bambalapitiya, with his mother, aunts, and siblings. This provided him an opportunity to garner knowledge from a wealth of experience. He fondly recalls those memories close to his heart. He grew up in a homely environment and was very much attached to his family, especially his mother.

Harris is a nature lover and enjoys escaping into the tranquility of the bliss in the gama (village) lifestyle of his hometown in Divulapitiya and admires the serenity it could offer. He reminisces about an array of wonderful experiences. From the traditional food to cajan huts and the fragrance of the paddy fields, festivals, and religious occasions that are etched in his memory. Going over such sweet memories brings contentment and bliss to him that remains fresh to date.

> ***Harris makes it a point to follow Buddhist principles reflected in his way of living as an ardent Buddhist follower.***



Harris’s grandniece Manilka Pathirana and grandnephew Mudith Mannamperuma lighting the oil lamp.



A spiritual moment of blessing.



Harris with his niece, Samanmali Sakalasuriya Gunawardane (left) and Chandrika Sakalasuriya (right).



Harris’s cousin, Dr. Nalin Gunasinghe, an eye specialist, delivering the welcome speech

Harris makes it a point to follow Buddhist principles reflected in his way of living as an ardent Buddhist follower. He pays attention to religious activities and ensures that every act is done meticulously. In many instances, Harris continues to organize and participate in numerous religious events.

Upon attending the nursery at Holy Family Convent, and then moving on to Nalanda College for primary and secondary education, he drew his interest toward creativity and art.

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Harris is a self-taught designer, hair stylist, and make-up artist, and beginning his career in the industry was a challenge he confronted with passion and enthusiasm. He saw every opportunity as a learning experience. At the time, with very few qualified and skilled male beauticians and bridal dressers, setting foot in the industry remained a test. This did not hinder his passion for enduring in the field; instead, he gained courage and began his career in the industry with his first opportunity in 1972, when he was approached to do the bridal dressing for Mangalika Weerasekera. Being a distant relative, Harris made use of the opportunity by telling a small white lie to start the business. When the bride’s father inquired about Harris’s experience in dressing brides, Harris abruptly said “ten”, which he recalls with laughter as the stepping stone in his career. Later, with word of mouth, he received many opportunities that elevated him towards success.


Harris presented the first few copies to the priests at the headtable.


Presenting to Nanda Malini.


Presenting to Dulal Wijesinghe.


Presenting to Irangani Gurusinghe.


Presenting to Malini Fonseka.


Presenting to Wimal Jayawardene.


Presenting to Kularatne Ariyawansa.



Presenting to Prof Praneeth Abeysundara.


Presenting to Rosy Senanayake.


Presenting to Ramzi Rahaman.



A beautifully orchestrated evening



‘Harris’—Harris Wijesinghe Divi Siritha.

Harris recalls many nostalgic moments, especially those sweet and mischievous moments when he would try out different kinds of hairstyles on his cousins, often ending with laughter and tears over his trials. Harris’s family is his strength; they have been very supportive and caring throughout the years and encouraged him to pursue his career. And in return, Harris, too, continues to support and guide them. Despite reaching many heights, he remains humble and is loved and adored by all who know him.

Over the years, Harris has worked with many acclaimed personalities, including Malini Fonseka, Nanda Malini, Rosy Senanayake, Dulanjali Premadasa, Yashoda Wimaladharma, Sabeetha Perera, Susanthika Jayasinghe, Deepika Priyadarshini, Vasanthi Chathurani, Dilhani Ekanayake, Rangi Gamage, and the list goes on.

Taking pride in having dressed thousands of brides from all walks of life and celebrities from the island, his work has been much admired and sought after.

For Harris, the person’s beauty is a hidden gem and should not be altered by

glamor or overshadowing. His focus is to portray the bride’s natural beauty and ensure that everything falls within the framework of tradition.

Harris believes that the bridal should suit the girl while it remains elegant. His flair for bringing out the bride’s beauty is a natural talent that has been appreciated by those who have worked with him. For Harris, it does not matter if the bride is a renowned celebrity or an ordinary person; he pays attention to the fabrics and shades and ensures that nothing overpowers the bride on her big day. He is very particular and honest with his choices and tastes, which turn out to be beautiful and memorable. Harris also takes pride in working with two generations in many instances, where the mother and daughter have been styled by the magical works of Harris. He also styled many models, and he takes pride in working on his first fashion show in 1987, with the participation of Rosy Senanayake and her husband being the icing on the cake, as they were the showstoppers of the fashion show. To date, he cherishes those moments.

Harris’s talents include singing, playing the piano, and cooking. He has recorded several devotional songs with his melodious voice. He is a man with many skills and ensures that those who walk through his doors are welcomed with love, warmth, and hospitality.

A well-organized and pleasant evening marked the launch of Harris’s book that commemorates the successful years of his life in the industry for 50 years. The book is titled ‘Harris’— Harris Wijesinghe Divi Siritha and it is presented in Sinhala; The book is a beautiful narration of his life, childhood, career, and lifestyle, supported by impressive photographs.

The unique evening began with the arrival of five Buddhist priests who graced the head table.



A light moment with Nanda Malini.



Harris signs his book as Kalum Wijesooriya looks on.



Harris with Glenda Parthipan.



Harris with Yashoda Wimaladharma.



Harris with Sumudu Abeysekera.



A moment with Deepika Priyadarshani.



Harris with Naradha Amarathunga.

The evening commenced with the lighting of the traditional oil lamp by grandniece Manilka Pathirana and grandnephew Mudith Mannamperuma, Harris' siblings.

Following that, the Buddhist priests chanted pirith to invoke blessings, and it was a pleasant evening of intimate gathering.

The aesthetic gokkola oil lamp and the decor reflected freshness, simplicity, and tradition.

Harris's cousin, Dr. Nalin Gunasinghe, an eye specialist, delivered an inspiring, welcoming speech in which he spoke of Harris's fond childhood memories and genuine characteristics.

The priests at the headtable were the first to receive the copies of the books from Harris Wijesinghe himself, followed by Nanda Malini, Malini Fonseka, Rosy Senanayake, Dr. Sumitra Peries, Emy Kumarasiri, Wimal Jayawardene, Dulal Wijesinghe, Kularatne Ariyawansa, Prof Praneeth Abeysundara, Irangani Gurusinghe, K W Wanniarachchi, Ramani Fernando, Dr. Rohana Weerasinghe, Joan Forbes, and Ramzi Rahaman.

Adding to the calm and lovely nature of the evening was the orchestra that played

patriotic instrumental music. The first song played on the occasion, “Akke Akke Ara Balanna Ko,” was sung by Harris’s late grandfather, Soorya Shankar Molligoda. At the same time, Kalum Wijesooriya executed and narrated the evening beautifully.

Adding to the delightful evening was when Nanda Malini and Ramani Fernando shared some heartfelt moments about Harris with Kalum Wijesooriya.

The celebration of the lovely evening concluded with a vote of thanks by Harris’s niece, Samanmali Sakalasuriya Gunawardane, who initiated the book compilation and put a lot of detail and effort into get the book published.

The book was written by Pushkara Wanniarachchi, published by Sarasavi Publishers, and available at all Sarasavi bookshops.

Followed by signing many more copies of his book, it was an evening of simplicity and sheer elegance that narrated the tale of the lovable personality and true legend of Harris Wijesinghe.