Going Once, Going Twice, Going Thrice… Sold!

Posted on
A captain’s telescope

It is where old things find abode until they are sold anew, giving a fresh start. Be it old wooden pettagamas, almirahs, modern and antique furniture, ornamental items or used electrical appliances, at Schokman and Samerawickreme, everything has its place.

Words Hansani Bandara **Photographs** Indika De Silva

They were the founders, the frontiersmen who introduced the tradition of auctioning to Sri Lanka. And what resulted the birth of Schokman and Samerawickreme in 1892 is the collaboration of two entrepreneurs who pioneered the creation of the first company of chartered auctioneers, consultant valuers and realtors of the country. An institution that would withstand all barriers of time to create history and preserve a customary practice of selling that runs far back to the days of yore. Fast-forwarding a century to the present, we were standing before the flagship store of this age-old auctioneer, situated at Isipathana Mawatha, aiming to explore its rich

history.

We were eager to find out what awaited to quench our curious interests. The antiques and old furniture looked as if they were taking a temporary rest from a long journey, just before they take cue to travel to the next destination.

Walking around the store, you get to see many items—old yet perfectly reusable office furniture, radios, television sets, paintings, cupboards, lamps and other ornamental pieces. A particular item that caught our attention was an antique lounge chair made out of ebony wood with a decorative shell pattern on its top rail. We were told that it was over 100 years old and had been valued around 200,000 rupees.

Much like the antiques in store, Schokman and Samerawickreme too possesses a history that they can be proud of. At the start of the company, during the colonial times, British officers and businessmen who sought to dispose their furniture at their departure from the country were their clients. This veteran auctioneer has had the privilege
of serving Heads of State such as J R Jayawardene and Sirimavo Bandaranaike.

Taking forward their legacy, Schokman and Samerawickreme continue to journey on whilst constantly improving their service standards. The company stands today as one of the most successful conglomerates, having widened their business scope through diversification into areas such as real estate, vehicle and bank auctions. Adding value to their legacy of 122 years of auctioning, the company’s next milestone will be to take the art of auctioning to the next level with the use of modern technology.

As Anuja Samerawickreme, Partner/CEO who represents the third generation of chartered auctioneers of S&S says, “this company has come a long way from where we started and it is due to the tireless efforts of its founders that S&S today stands where it is. When we took over the operations, we improved what they created. And we always strive to improve our standards to offer a even better service to our customers.”

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