

Maternal Bliss at the Joseph Fraser

Posted on



Almost 90 years since its birth, the Fraser's monumental facade will take your breathe away....

Stepping in through the gates within the hustle and bustle of Colombo, I was pleasantly surprised by the lush green well-manicured garden surrounded by the red-tiled colonial-style buildings. Within seconds, I was instantly transported into an era which I had only imagined during my childhood. Ceylon in the 1920's...

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Born on a farm in 1852 to a large family of 14 children in Aberdeen, Scotland, he was one out of nine children to survive. At that time, little did he know of the legacy he would leave behind in an island, which would be known as the Pearl of the Indian Ocean. Joseph Fraser arrived in Ceylon in 1872 at the vibrant youthful age of 20.

In 1875 he married Chrissie Watson, who was also from Aberdeen and they had four children.

He worked in Haputale as a scientific planter, knowledgeable in both tea and rubber

cultivations. He is noted for introducing chemical fertilisers to Ceylon, which revolutionised yields of both these crops. Fraser was awarded a gold medal in London by the Rubber Growers Association in recognition for his valuable services to the plantation industry.

Upon the demise of Joseph Fraser in 1913, his widow Chrissie Fraser was determined to set up a memorial to commemorate her beloved late husband. She reserved a sum of 120,000 rupees, which was a handsome saving in 1914. Initially, she considered funding a new department at the General Hospital but eventually opted to establish a nonprofit private hospital to serve the community of European planters. She urged the Planters Association in Kandy to help fulfill her dream. However, it wasn't until 1919, after World War I that the matter was pursued effectively by Dr Percy Chissel who had returned to Ceylon and approached the Colonial Secretary to take the matter further. The current picturesque site was identified and chosen after a rigorous search. The property was leased to build a nursing home in 1920. The Planters Association appointed a subcommittee to monitor the progress of the project.

In 1923 the hospital building was completed and equipped with additional sponsorship from well wishers. The Governor of Ceylon, Sir William Manning, declared open the Joseph Fraser Memorial Hospital in August 1923.

The Fraser transformed into a women and children's hospital in the mid 90's and continues to serve the Sri Lankan citizens to this day, focusing on Obstetrics, Gynaecology, Primary and Secondary Paediatrics. The beautiful serene environment is ideal for mothers experiencing the miracle of hearing the only anticipated cry, that of her newborn.

Located in the heart of Colombo 5, The Fraser has maintained its quiescent facade, transporting its visitors into the colonial era of its inception. Stepping in through its gates, I was pleasantly surprised with its neatly manicured lush gardens surrounded by red-tiled roofs at its periphery, indeed a rare sight in cosmopolitan Colombo! It appeared a coloured snapshot of the British era, giving the nostalgic feeling of the bygone "Ceylon".

It's natural to be intimidated by the physical enchantment of this neat garden and reminiscent architecture and automatically assume the services offered here should cost a fortune; but surprisingly the Fraser costs no more than other hospitals.

Although its external presentation is antique, internally the building houses modern state-of-the-art equipment with two Operating Theatres including High Dependency Unit, three private Labour Suites, 4D Scan Laboratory, Paediatric Natal Unit, X-Ray and CTG monitoring. It can be safely said to be the only sanctuary of its kind where an almost century-old Ceylon fuses with modern Sri Lankan medicine.

The Hospital offers three categories of rooms; deluxe, luxury and suite. Six new luxury rooms and suites are arrayed with luxury beds, comfortable sofas, cable TV, fridges and phones. An adjacent visitor's rooms accommodates family members. The suites and super luxury rooms, have rear verandahs which continue into private gardens making Fraser a truly unique mother and child hospital in Sri Lanka. There is also ample parking space for visitors.

The friendly staff are well trained to take care of the mother and baby before, during and after the delivery with tender compassion, ensuring that the entire process of having a baby and the aftercare is a pleasant memory to the mother and her entire family. Being the hospital with the largest number of staff per patient, it is no wonder that mothers are undoubtedly pampered with nothing less than a homely atmosphere, redefining hospital service.

As you will witness one of the most rare fusion of diversely different eras and cultures fuse within its gates, the Joseph Fraser Memorial Hospital will pleasantly tranquilise your senses. It is a mesmerising place to be visited by anyone, as the Fraser needs to be personally seen and experienced to be believed. What better place to welcome a new born into this world?

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