Rippling Rhythms Of Life

Posted on



Life around the Kandy Lake

A little girl pranced about the pavement while her father watched her fondly. An ice cream seller and an achcharu (fruit pickles) seller stood nearby eagerly awaiting business.A cormorant glided elegantly on the waters of the Kandy Lake, sunlight hitting its exquisite back glistening with crystal sparks on blue-black feathers. A shoal of fish frolicked around making spirited splashes against the shadowy depths of the lake. All of these beckoned us to discover the rhythm of life around the Kandy Lake.

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Ever since Sri Lanka's last king Sri Wickrama Rajasinghe built it, the Kandy Lake has always been a favoured attraction to relax and unwind. The king completed the project in the year 1807. However, he could not finish the 'Valakulu bamma' (wall of clouds) around the lake. To this day the wall only covers part of the lake and the lake itself has become the centerpiece of the Kandy city and the pulse of life unfolds around the lake. In spite of the continually busy traffic around it, the lake provides a serene setting for a walk to remember.

As we traced millions of footprints around the Kandy Lake, the rhythmic liquid ripples and the caressing wind welcomed us.

We first encountered a newly wed couple and their loved ones capturing snaps of their happy day amidst the scenic setting of the lake. A shower of red mayflowers surrounded the couple and their friends adding that extra touch of romance to the picture. As we trudged along, we spotted many more lovers engrossed in each other. However, they do not monopolise the romantic setting of the lake. Parents bring their kids to the lake to let them run around, chase birds and unleash their perpetual energy. Groups of friends come to the lakeside to share a moment, make silly jokes and simply enjoy each other's company. Sellers of ice cream, achcharu, popcorn (for both humans and fish), accessories and even balloons have become permanent fixtures around the lake.

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Trying to move a little away from this engaging crowd, we went a little further in search of the 'ulpange' (bathing house): a man-made pond in which, during King Sri Wickrama Rajasinghe's time, the palace ladies bathed. Today, the building on top of the pond houses the Sri Lanka Police branch of the Sri Dalada Maligawa (Temple of the Tooth). As we tried to picture what the pond must have looked like, we were suddenly startled from our ramblings by a fervent beat of drums and pipes. The sound came from the Temple of the Tooth. It was a procession to mark the ordaining of young Buddhist monks (Upasampada ceremony). Colourfully adorned elephants and dancers stepped to the rhythm of the drums, while young monks rode on elephants followed by their relatives and a host of others on foot.

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After gazing at the procession for a while we turned our eyes back on the lake and strolled along with the rhythmic music still ringing in our ears. A Buddhist monk throwing crumbs at the fish in the lake greeted us with a warm smile. The fish obviously used to this evening snack made noisy splashes trying to snatch the crumbs as they fell on the water.

Being the bird lovers that we are my friends and I stopped a while to gaze at a

cormorant dive for fish and rest on a cement block to preen its shimmering feathers while disdainfully ignoring us. Soon after approached a coquettish snow-white duck. As we tried to capture its image the duck kept posing for us: a model display of vanity. Then followed a host of wobbly ducks, geese and graceful egrets. Some courted our attention while the others treated us with aloofness. Kingfishers splashed into the lake, caught fish and settled on branches to eat their fill leisurely.

A little further we spotted a tree full of egrets' nests. Each nest held about two baby birds chirping away for food. Their parents took turns to feed the young and groom their feathers as the babies made satisfied little chirps.

We moved on determined to spot at least one tortoise that we knew was there, though discreetly staying away from humans. We were lucky enough to spot several tortoises sunning on low tree branches that almost touched the water. We decided to rest our tired feet awhile and contemplate the lethargic tortoises. Our eyes were still full of the beautiful sights we witnessed; our ears were full of the music of rippling waves, splashing fish, chirping birds, people's laughter and lively drums.

Suddenly, the skies broke open greeting us with furtive drops of water to bring us back from our trance. Caught by surprise we ran towards shelter to bid a sweet goodbye to the Kandy Lake just for the day.

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