# Solitude by the glistening waters

Posted on
**Kanchikudichchiaru tank**

**The evening light shimmered on the peaceful waters of the Kanchikudichchiaru Tank. Almost in a trance we walked towards its edge, ‘swish’ with one movement the fisherman cast his net. In the distance a herd of elephants had taken cover behind the trees, shying away from our presence…**

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We were definitely in elephant country as we had encountered a couple of jumbos near the banks of the Urani lagoon and also along the Pottuvil-Batticaloa road as we headed to Kanchikudichchiaru from Paper Moon Kudils in Urani. We had two British guests with us as well for whom this was a first time experience.

There is a small sign that indicates the turn-off to Kanchikudichchiaru from the main road. Driving along the dusty road we pass through a small village. A large herd of buffaloes totalling more than 100 crossed the road with their handlers guiding them effortlessly towards their paddocks. A movement within the trees alerted us to the presence of elephants foraging in the undergrowth. We were able to make out three of them, scurrying further in as we approached.

A little distance away jumbo feet were just visible and could easily be mistaken for tree stumps. Soon the Kanchikudichchiaru tank was ahead of us creating a picturesque setting. It was quiet and peaceful except for the sounds of the wild. Crocodiles were basking in the evening sun oblivious to the humans around them. Kanapathi Sinnathambi (better known as Sinnawan), the fisherman who came with us took the net and stepped farther into the water and cast the net. Within a few minutes he started to pull the net back and revealed to us an entire catch of freshwater fish. He repeated this sequences a couple of times and each time to our amazement he would return with an impressive catch.

The sun was setting and we could soon see an elephant coming out. There were bound to be others nearby. The sky was a golden yellow and created a panoramic vista that we could not get enough of. We jumped into our vehicles to head back

the way we came. We were greeted by a lone elephant who was a bit piqued to be disturbed from his evening solitude.

We soon reached a rock outcrop and we all tumbled out of the vehicle to scramble across. We had to jump or slide on a small slope to reach an area of the rock that was facing the tank. It was absolutely beautiful. After the initial ‘oooh’ and ‘aahhs’ we all settled in to our quiet little spaces on the rock and just gazed out into the horizon or looked up at the sky. It was peaceful. We were just able to make out a fishing boat gliding across the tank. We had initially been on the opposite side of the tank where we had engaged in a bit of fishing. Now, from this side we could make out the shadows of a herd of elephants, slowly but surely coming towards the tank.

We were all quiet, deep in our thoughts. This was the time that Jupiter and Venus were engaged in a galactic war and we enjoyed watching this spectacle from our little niches. As darkness fell we decided to head back to Paper Moon Kudils.

Dinner that night was a healthy menu of grilled freshwater fish from Kanchikudichchiaru complemented with a flavoursome combination of boiled vegetables. The two British guests who had joined us on the excursion and also for dinner were thrilled by the entire experience.

Having enjoyed the solitude of Kanchikudichchiaru we vowed that we will return soon.



# A boat ride along the Urani Kalapu

The green paddy fields of Urani at dusk as seen from the lagoon

The Urani *kalapu* or lagoon is just beyond the village of Urani in Pottuvil. On the banks you can hire a boat and take a journey along its waterways. A mangrove habitat, it is said that there are crocodiles but we did not see any on that day. Aquatic birds, monkeys and peacocks were some of the animals we saw. In the evenings, elephants can be seen and our boatman informed us that they cross the waters too.

The depth varies and at times can be quite shallow. We passed paddy fields and mangrove jungle to reach a large open area where *olu* flowers bloom. Here some of us took the oars and tried our skills at manoeuvring the boat. The sun was setting and we reached the Urani bridge just as darkness fell. Simply put, it was a wonderful experience.

For an excursion to Kanchikudichchiaru or Urani Lagoon
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