Splash Of Colour

Posted on

“I have shirts and trousers, what do you want?”

We were travelling on the A 15 (Batticaloa-Trincomalee Road) when our attention was drawn to a hive of activity and a splash of vibrant colours. People were rushing to and fro with baskets laden with goods. It was the Thursday market at Sittandikudi.

Words Udeshi Amarasinghe **Photographs** Menaka Aravinda and Indika De Silva

We entered through the central path of the market. The noise was deafening with vendors coaxing customers with their prices, customers in turn bargaining to get the best price and the lively chatter of people who had come to spend their

Thursday morning purchasing goods for their homes. Vendors had put up their make-shift shops on both sides of the path and were seated on the ground close to their wares.

The entire place was a mixture of colours from the vibrance of the vegetables and fruits, to the spices and yes, plastic ware and clothes as well, this market seemed to offer everything. We navigated through the crowd inquisitive to see what was on offer and what the others were buying. We were told that the fresh produce was brought from as far as Dambulla. Leeks, cabbages, carrots and beans as well as ladies fingers, various types of gourd and other local varieties such as long beans, lime, brinjals and leafy greens added to the array of crispy veggies on offer.

Women clad in colourful attire expertly negotiated with the vendors. Reds, blues, greens, pink and orange with intermittent pastel shades created a sea of colour

‘Ara kilo ambadu’ meaning one kilo is 50 rupees one shouted, then another shouted a lesser price and the loud buzz of prices and names of items continued. The morning sun was beating down on us, but we were the only ones who seemed to feel the heat. Women clad in colourful attire expertly negotiated with the vendors. Reds, blues, greens, pink and orange with intermittent pastel shades created a sea of colour. The aromas of spices, dry fish, garlic and fresh produce were a heady assault on our senses. Mobile food stalls serving snacks such as buns and raal vadai were frequented by shoppers and sweet saruwath seemed to be the favoured thirst quencher.

Farther in we walked and through a second entrance we approached the market building. Within were vendors selling betel and tobacco, arecanut, salt, dry fish, fruits, vegetables, rice and legumes, spices, day to day requirements such as soap and washing powder and the list was endless. Towards the far side of the building, fresh fish was available. We were told that the seafood was broughtfrom Kalavankudi and Mullakudah.There were many varieties to choose from.

It was soon mid day thechildren and grand children of the vendors and customers alike were arriving to meet their parents and grand parents.

One youngster folded her legs and neatly sat next to her grandmother, without disrupting anything in the vicinity. With friendly chatter and the spirit of camaraderie we bid adieu to the market in Sittandikudi, a pit stop as we continued

on our journey.

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