The Perfect Fit

Posted on
Navavi is a leader in tailoring and
uniform suppliers

What the Bambalapitiya branch of Sri Lankan family tailors Navavi lacks in chic, it more than makes up for in reputation. Established in 1949, the store has a client base that would be the envy of Saville Row, counting among its clientele former president J R Jayewardene, numerous former ministers and even foreign dignitaries on visits to Colombo.

Words Yomal Senerath-Yapa

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The sweet smell of closely-packed fabric pervades the shop, which has something of the air of an Aladdin’s cave, but with the addition of a team of unfailingly polite staff. Their efficiency and discretion are impressive, a refreshing change from the sullen attendants you find sulking in the corners of so many clothing stores these days.

A F M Navavi, the current proprietor, is gentle and paternal. It is in his usual, kind monotone that he tells me about the store's philosophy.

"We always welcome customers warmly and try to fulfill their needs. We give them maximum attention, whatever their requirements. Our tailoring staff work 24 hours – in shifts."

Navavi is one of the country's leading tailors and uniform suppliers, with clients including The Kingsbury, The Galadari and The Mount Lavinia hotels, SriLankan Airlines and the Parliament.

What runs like a thread through Navavi's decades of success is their unwavering dedication to customers. They take great pride in obliging clients, especially those living overseas who have the habit of placing orders at very short notice. Nothing seems to exasperate the Navavi team; with a staff of 115, which includes 40 tailors, they are always in a position to meet even the most last minute of demands.

The firm's main concern is men's tailoring, though they do ladies as well. Either way, they are known to produce an immaculate fit, even when it comes to their readymade clothing. Their premier product is, of course, suits, which are always the latest thing in gentlemanly chic.

As far as the boss is concerned the secret to looking good is well-tailored clothes. "Men's fashion trends seem unchanging, with basically the same fundamental pieces, but men's fashion is all about attitude and being dressed appropriately for different events,"he says.

"New colours are embraced, new fits and lengths are experimented with. Whether you are modern and trendy and like bright colours with a slim fit, or a more traditional man who prefers block colours and a comfortable fit, being well groomed will always help you stand out from the crowd."

Women are different, he says. "For them fashion is personal: each woman has a distinct sense of style in the way she pairs pieces and accessorizes. Fashion is fun; from the shopping to the actually purchasing, there are so many options that it is true retail therapy."

"Yet every truly fashionable woman knows that the true secret of being well groomed is having expertly tailored clothes that fit well. Whether casual or formal, a

woman’s clothes make a statement and it is important that it is the correct statement.”

Navavi also produces wedding clothes: suits, sari jackets and dresses, in traditional as well as current styles.

Success has allowed the company to expand. Sometime back, they opened branches at Majestic City, at the Galadari Hotel and on Hill Street, Dehiwela. And there are plans afoot for two overseas stores too, in the wake of a boom in orders from Dubai and Maldives.

Going international is an exciting venture, but however far the firm expands, Navavi will always retain that comfortable, personalized, homely feel. Anyone who has ever shopped there can tell you – Navavi just seems to be the perfect fit.

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