Unique… Private… Timeless

Posted on



The timeless style of Paradise Road The Gallery Café

What would one appreciate, like, want or desire while vacationing in a paradise island…. nothing less than paradise, I would assume.
The foamy waves of the ocean settling one's mind into a quaint daydream or indulging in fresh cuisines that touch the very soul…

Words Sonali Kadurugamuwa

Take one man, his passion for texture, his labour of love and an identity that spells originality through ageless styles, statements and novel cuisine, down the many selected paths of 'Paradise Road'. His award winning restaurant Paradise Road The Gallery Café and boutique hotel, The Villa Bentota, are a few of the many incomparable tastes of paradise that Shanth Fernando, shares with the discerning traveller.

Gliding through a 75ft long pool, soaking up the sun from rise till dusk, lingering under rain showers in your own bathroom, snuggling up to the warmth of Egyptian cotton in your bed or even relaxing in quiet spaces designed to while away hours of serene privacy are not the only things that tick every box in one's check list of 'things to do in paradise' but it is also the quality of the unique atmosphere and enticing cuisine that follows alongside, at the boutique hotel The Villa Bentota. A Geoffrey Bawa property in the 1970s, now known as The Villa Bentota was taken over and enhanced structurally and scenically by Shanth Fernando in 2007. Since then the hotel has come to life with its own unique identity. "The rooms have been totally renewed in actual Paradise Road style. We may renew, but never recreate, as our style is timeless. That is the identity that I have given my properties," says Fernando.

Shanth Fernando believes that the admiration he has for Bawa architecture brings a multitude of subtlety to his décor, as is the case with yet another Paradise Road creation; The Gallery Café. Fifteen years ago, Fernando had acquired Bawa's pervious office space and made a pact that he would run the space to Bawa's credit. Many years later, the outcome stands as testimony that goes beyond a tribute to the inspirational architect. With the building being a platform for local artists as a gallery and a carefully selected, world renowned menu within its café set ambience and rustic charm, the Gallery Café is not anything short of an award winner. "It's all about being sensitive to nature and creating a warmth that comforts people. So when we win awards, those are the rewards for the effort, investment, time and money that we have put into this, and my staff is also part of this success," adds Fernando.

According to Fernando, the Café, while being a place of dishing up fusion foods, is also one of the first restaurants of its kind to serve pure Sri Lankan food, with a vast choice of western food "and one of our most popular items on the menu is the Black Pork Curry with Rice." Renowned not only for its food, the Gallery Café serves nearly 30 kinds of desserts, a few to indulge in being; the classic 'bread pudding', 'chocolate nemesis,' layer upon delightful layer of 'tiramisu', 'jaggery ice cream topped with shaves of bombai mutai' or even the 'jaggery crème brulée'… dare I say more?

Shanth Fernando has captured the true quintessence of what is sensitive to the traveller through his own years of experiences and research of travelling the world over and says that he does his research from "seeing the world, rather than books."

The comforts of easy rested spaces, the uniqueness of undeterred privacy and ambience, the richness of one-of-a-kind delicacies and those timeless moments cushioned in pleasures that one yearns for are only found in paradise. The Villa Bentota and The Gallery Café are definitely down ‘Paradise Road.’

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