



(Plantation cultural group in the early period)

A Memory to Last

The tea industry, which brings in a considerable proportion of Sri Lanka's national revenue, inherits centuries of historical importance through means of socio-economic, cultural and political significance. Sri Lanka has been supplying tea to the global market for the past two hundred years as a result of the introduction of the crop to the country by the British colonialist in 1824. Since the residents of Sri Lanka, principally the Sinhalese population of the country, rejected the colonial rule, the British had to import South Indian Tamil Speaking workers in 1824 as a cheap labour force to work in the tea estates cultivated in Sri Lanka, and they were brought into the country till 1941. The road on which these labourers traveled, both metaphorically and literally, were riddled with thorns. Many of those who were brought on foot on land from India to Sri Lanka perished under the traumatic traveling conditions. On the other hand, the lives they were made to live in the plantations too were problem riddled and exploitative.

Even though Sri Lanka economically depended on the sweat and blood of these plantation workers, unfortunately it should be noted that these Tamil speaking Indian migrants are still alienated and kept aside from the developmental processes of the country. It is ironic that a population that does so much for the economy of Sri Lanka only were given the right of citizenship in 2003.

What should be noted is that the plantation population of Sri Lanka has a unique set of socio-economic, cultural, religious and political identity that has not been studied or looked into in detail. They brought in their own cultural traits with their migration, and through an understanding of their historical journey only would it be able for us to appreciate, value and work for the betterment of this population which keeps the heart of mother Lanka beating. To full fill this task, the Institute of Social Development created the Tea Plantation Workers Museum in order to enlighten the wider community about the lives of the tea plantation workers in Sri Lanka.



(Entrance to the Tea Plantation Workers Museum & Archive)



(Plantation women at work)

Main Goals

- Preserving and protecting the cultural heritage and history of the Indian origin plantation community.
- Collecting and protecting the artifacts and displaying.
- Recording and telecasting the oral history.
- Promoting cultural harmony.
- Publishing the oral history and folklore.
- Promoting ethnic harmony through highlighting the contribution of the plantation community for the economic development of the country to the public.

Location

The Tea Plantation Worker Museum and Archive is located in an old line room (Worker quarters build by the British planters) at Old Peacock estate which was one of the pioneer coffee plantations. (It is on the way to Nuwara Eliya from Kandy)

The Museum takes up half of the ground floor space and has separate sections which exhibit different types of items. The first section is created to give an insight about the life style of the plantation works who live in line rooms.

The second, third and fourth sections consist of very old artifacts which were collected through out the years. The last section consists of a library which includes various types of rare books, journals and articles.

Adequate accommodation and parking facilities are also available. The idyllic climate and the beautiful surroundings would be perfect for students and research persons to carry out their work peacefully.

Exhibits

The exhibits at the museum include various artifacts such as:



Urumi-Melam a kind of drum used for folk dance during the festivals and other ceremonial events



A traditional costume used for folk dance



Kumba is used as a rice bowl by the south Indian villagers until the recent past.



Batti - Kind of copper rice plates which are used on wedding days and other auspicious functions.



Grinding stones used in the earlier period



Water tumblers and tea cups and saucers made of copper.



A collection of written documents on plantation industry, social life and history of the plantation community.



Photographs of the earlier period

Contributions & Donations

All cheques to be drawn in favour of "The Tea Plantation Workers Museum & Archive" and sent to, The Institute of Social Development, No. 37, Bodhiyangana Mawatha, Kandy, Sri Lanka



Tea Plantation Worker Museum and Archive

Ramadoraiwatte.
Doragala Road,
Gampala, Doragala.
Tel: 060 2849421

Kandy Office

Institute of Social Development
No. 37, Bodhiyangana Mawatha,
Kandy, Sri Lanka.
Tel/Fax: 94 81 2202923
E-mail: kandytdl@slinet.lk

Opening and Closing Hours: Tuesday to Sunday 9.00 a.m – 5.00 p.m
(Closed on Mondays)

Tea Plantation Worker Museum & Archive

"A women is like a tea bag - you never know how strong she is until she gets in hot water"
-Eleanor Roosevelt-

