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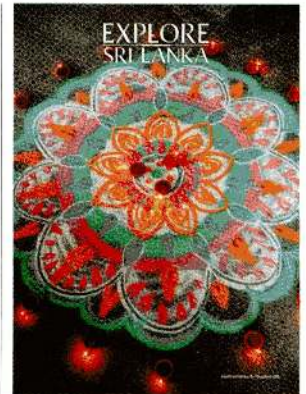
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Magnificent and Marvelous Masks of the Island

Fusing creativity, culture, and tradition, Sri Lankan masks play an important role in the mask heritage. From earlier times to the modern-day, making masks passed on to generations, creating vivid and intricate designs native to the island.



A vibrant kolam to welcome Deepavali.

Photo: BT Images.

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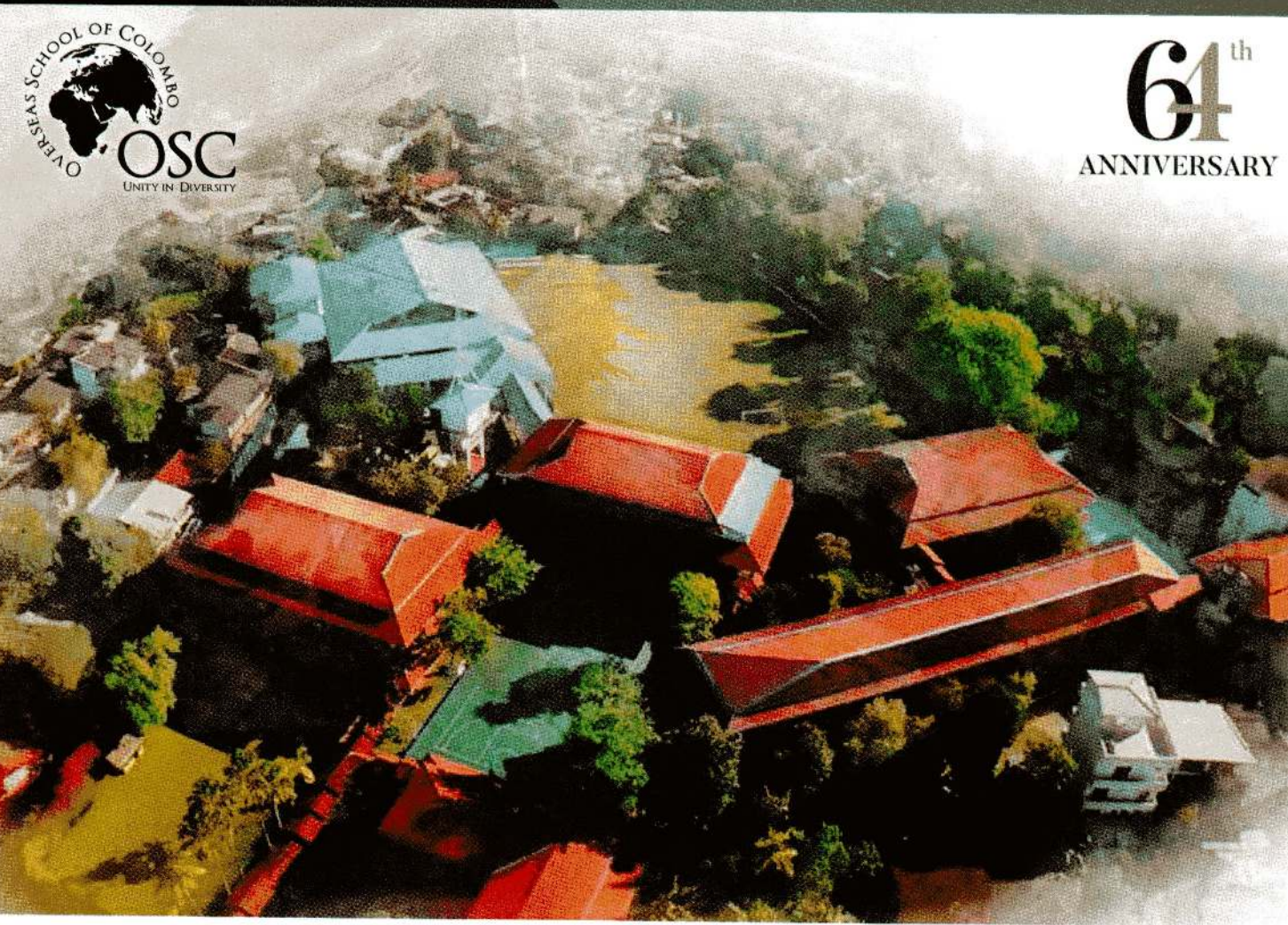
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MAGNIFICENT AND MARVELOUS MASKS OF THE ISLAND



Sri Lanka is home to many indigenous arts and crafts, and the traditional face masks are no exception. Fusing creativity, culture, and tradition, Sri Lankan masks play an important role in the mask heritage. It is also popular in the mask dance-drama. From earlier times to the modern-day, making masks passed on to generations, creating vivid and intricate designs native to the island. However, in the current situation, with the ongoing pandemic, when we talk of 'masks' what strikes our mind is the practice of wearing 'masks'. It has become a lifestyle routine adopted in everyone's lives for safety and protection.

Sri Lankan masks are fascinating because they have distinct features and characteristics representing a story peculiar to them. It is very much a part of a living social framework, mythology, and philosophy of the southern people of Sri Lanka.

Exotic creations of expert craftsmanship, these fascinating masks are used essentially for theatrical or ritual masquerades. The effect is usually visual and amplifies the dramatic situations or the rituals performed.

Sri Lankan masks could be divided into two categories – Kolam masks and Thovil Sanni masks.

Kolam is a rural dance drama, a form of traditional entertainment associated with the country's south. The Kolam masks aid in the clever caricature of characters and incidents from southern Sinhalese village life, including the infiltration of foreigners with the advent of the colonial era.

The actors, headed by a narrator, depict various episodes through masked dance, mime, and impromptu dialogue. Here almost every character wears a mask. Each Kolam dance has its own characters, such as Panikkala, the drunken drum messenger; Nonchi Akka: his wife of the Anabera Kolama; and Lenchina, the young and pretty wife of Jasaya, who is the oldest washerman in the Pedi Kolama.

Thovil and Sanni (disease) are demon dance ceremonies performed to exorcise disease-causing demons. The *Kattandiyas* (witch doctors) impersonate these demons, wearing masks and costumes peculiar to each demon. Some of the masks used in these rituals, such as 18 Sanni demons, have their own distinct features, symbolizing a particular Sanni, and masks of the five *Yakku* (demons) such as the *Kalu Yaka* and *Mahasona Yaka*.

Crafting a mask was initially reserved for those belonging to families of artisans coming down the generations. It was an undertaking, which involved a lengthy procedure.

In carving the mask, the wood of the Kaduru tree is used almost always. This wood is light, easy to carve, and durable.



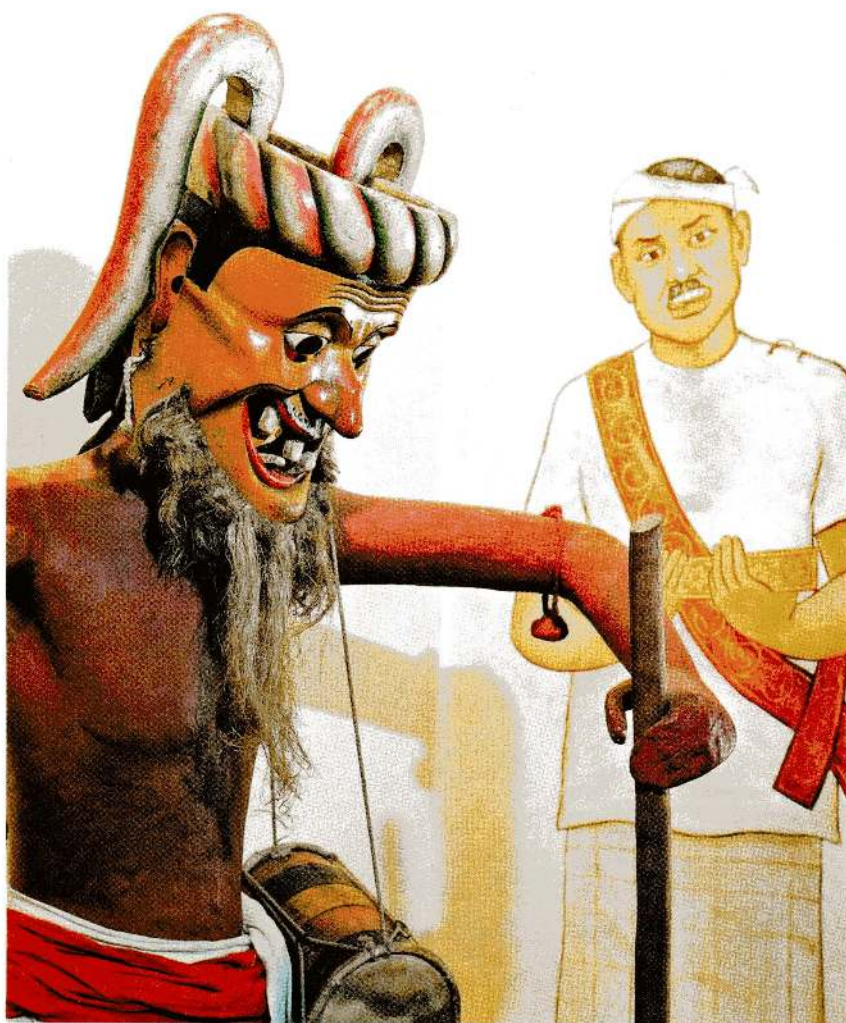
Naga Rakshaya.



Gara Raksha.



Gurulu Raksha.



Anabera kolama.



Kolam masks.



Dukkiniya, son of Ana Bera from the Pedi kolama.

Apart from playing an important role in rituals and ceremonies, Sri Lankan masks are the best souvenirs that reminisce the island's history and traditions.

In the preliminary stages, the bark of the tree was peeled and the trunk chopped into sizeable blocks. Gradually, the chosen part was trimmed and reduced to a specific size and hollowed from the inside. Later, the potential mask was kept close to the kitchen fireplace for about a week to absorb smoke and fume. The wood, originally white in color, turns a golden hue. The final product is reached after several such seasonings at different stages of its carving.

If a mask is kept at the kitchen fireplace for three months, it will last nearly 75 years. And a mask kept for six months will last almost 150 years.

This process is essential because the type of wood used contains a large quantity of latex, and the wood needs to be completely dry as otherwise, it would tend to crack during the



Salu Paliya presents an energetic performance.



Lenchina, the young and pretty wife of Jasaya.

Mask performances are an expression of portraying stories that are distinct to the island.

hollowing and scraping. Then the dried face of the mask is smoothed first with rough skins of the swordfish and stingray. It is further smoothened with tree leaves of *Motadeliya* and *Delsavaran*, and yellow is applied as a primary color. After this, the detailed painting is begun. Next goggling eyes, lapping tongues, sagging cheeks, pointed chin, wrinkles on the forehead, protruding teeth, beards, horns, and fangs of demons are patiently and carefully worked out.

Traditional artists possess handwritten manuscripts containing prescriptive verses (*Ambum Kavi*) detailing the conventional masks'

proportions, characteristics, and color combinations.

In the past, masks were painted with natural paints extracted from leaves and flowers of trees, stones, and minerals. Brushes for painting were made of the fiber of roots and hairs of animals. Painting a mask in this pure local tradition involves much labor and time. Such masks, made according to conventional methods, are highly valued and used in traditional performances and rituals.

Masks manufactured today are essential for the tourist market. These masks will not fail to mesmerize you with their delicate carvings, attractive color combinations, haunting features, and hypnotic effects. Apart from playing an important role in rituals and ceremonies, Sri Lankan masks are the best souvenirs that reminisce the island's history and traditions. You can find mask-making workshops and shops that display vibrant collections of masks.

Mask performances are an expression of portraying stories that are distinct to the island. A mask is a true treasure for your Sri Lankan collection that is sure to recall the nostalgic experiences of the vibrant island. ¹⁵⁹



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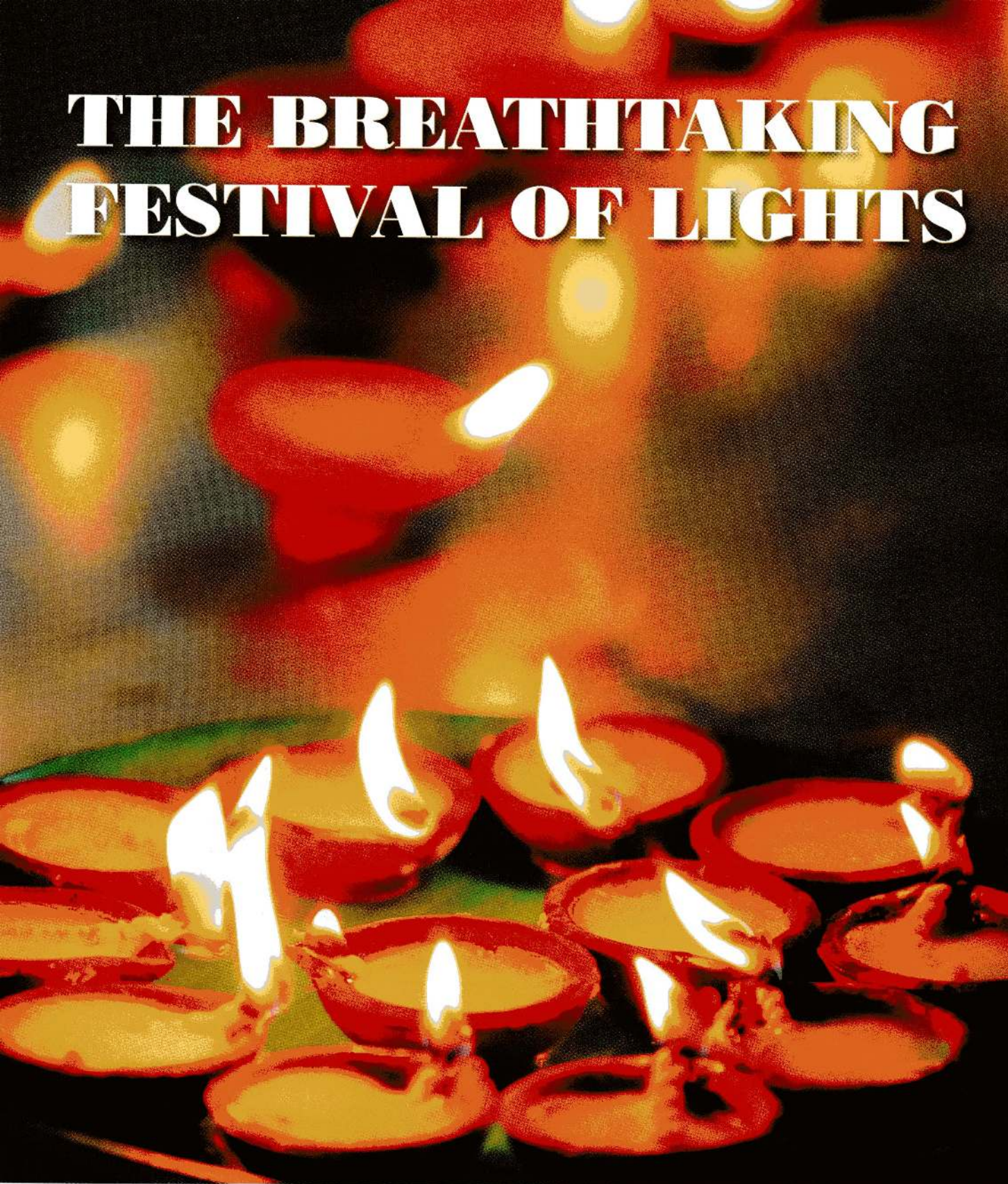


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THE BREATHTAKING FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS



Deepavali, the 'Festival of Lights' illuminates households and surroundings by bringing the joy of the festive mode. It is a time to share the joyous spirit with families while recalling the true essence of the festival.

The traditional celebration of Deepavali is entwined in celebrating cultural values and social ties. Temples and households prepare a week ahead of the festival. From beautiful garlands to adorn the deities to colorful and elaborate kolam that beautify the floors of temples and homes and preparation of mouthwatering sweets, there's a lot that Hindus are engaged in celebrating the festival to welcome happiness, prosperity, and good luck.

Deepavali, the lustrous and most anticipated festival in the Hindu calendar, is celebrated on a day selected according to the moon's position during October and November. Commonly known as the 'Festival of Lights', the main occurrence on this day is the lighting of oil lamps and the illuminating of homes and temples. The bright lights from the lamps signify the triumph of light over darkness.

Deepavali, for Hindus, marks the beginning of a new life, and for this reason, it is celebrated during autumn, when all trees shed their leaves and nature itself prepares for a new start.

The Sanskrit word Deepavali means 'row of lights' when millions of Diyas/Deepam (clay lamps with coconut oil and a clean cotton wick) are lit in homes. During the festive season, a fascinating sight of twinkling Diyas in intricate designs is painstakingly arranged by family members in a Hindu home. These Diyas are lit in aesthetic splendor in the hallway, living rooms, shrine rooms, and gardens of Hindu homes.

Celebrations in Hindu households begin with cleaning and tidying up, as unclean homes are believed to drive away good fortune. Floors are washed at early dawn and turmeric water sprinkled to ensure purity and cleanliness. After that, vibrant Kolams (geometrical designs drawn with rice flour) are drawn on the floors of sacred and important places of the house like the entrance, shrine rooms, and areas allotted for worship. The Swastika – a symbol of good fortune for Hindus – is drawn on the doorways, walls, and



Vibrate kolam with beautifully lit lamps add glow to the celebration.

During the festive season, a fascinating sight of twinkling Diyas/Deepam in intricate designs is painstakingly arranged by family members in a Hindu home.



A tray full of mouthwatering sweets.

floors. Beautifully decorated or plain diyas are placed on the kolam at entrants as a sign of welcoming Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of wealth.

All this is done by the women of the house who wake early at dawn and have oil baths (applying oil on the head and bathing). Men, too, follow this custom of having an oil bath, which signifies purity and a new lease of life. While children are cheerfully engaged in joyous festive mode and exchange wishes and enjoy the



Garlands to adorn the deities.



Some temples perform special poojas on the day of the festival.



Devotees seek blessings for the wellbeing of their families.

moments with families. Some light fireworks too. Donned in new clothing, families then gather to partake of richly prepared food. In Sri Lanka, devotees visit temples to seek blessings, conduct poojas at homes, and worship for the well-being of their families. They spread the joy of celebration by sending trays full of sweetmeats to relatives, friends, and neighbors.

The history of Deepavali consists of many myths and legends and dates back to the sixth century. The commonly believed legend is about Lord Krishna defeating a demon king of India called Narakasura, thus portraying the triumph of good over evil. Lord Krishna, an incarnation of Lord Maha Vishnu, appeared to assist the people suffering from Narakasura's cruelty and punishment. Demon Narakasura,

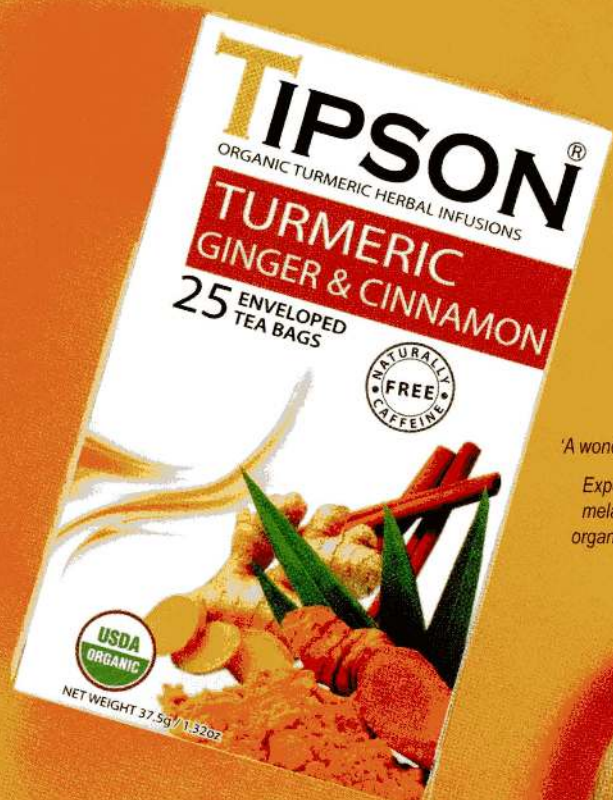
Devotees visit temples to seek blessings, conduct poojas at homes, and worship for the well-being of their families. They spread the joy of celebration by sending trays full of sweetmeats to relatives, friends, and neighbors.

on his deathbed, regretting his misdeeds, fell on the lotus feet of Lord Maha Vishnu, seeking mercy. He was allowed a boon, and he asked that the day of his death be celebrated with pomp and pageantry. Thus, this day also signifies the triumph of good over evil and knowledge over ignorance.

The liberated people poured oil over their heads, had baths, and lit lamps and crackers to rejoice. The story says that thousands of damsels, held in captivity in the underground world by the demon king, received their freedom on this day. Yet, another story believed by Hindus is the return of Lord Rama, Seeta, and brother Lakshmanan to Ayodha after a 14-year exile in the wilderness. In some parts of India, the festival is celebrated according to the customs and traditions of their lands. Whatever manner it is celebrated, this multi-profile festival brings enjoyment for young ones and a New Year for the traders.

During the breathtaking festival of lights, Hindus worldwide gather in their ancestral homes, exchange gifts and wishes, partake of the traditional food and step into the New Year with the blessings of their elders.

It is a time to engage in the joyous celebration of the festival with the sparkling glow of lights of hope and prosperity. ©



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VAP PŌYA

MARKS THE COMPLETION OF THE VAS OR THE RAINY SEASON SOJOURN.

The Vap Pōya is significant because it is associated with Bhikkhūs' Completion of Vas or the Rainy season retreat and several other momentous events in Buddhism.



A Kathina Ceremony at the premises of the Siriwardhanaramaya, Temple Lane, Colpetty.

On Vap full moon Pōya day (in October), several significant occasions are celebrated, including the completion of Vas observation or the rainy season retreat by Buddhist monks; the visiting of The Lord Buddha to Sankassa city, in India after the conclusion of preaching Abhidhamma in the Heaven named Thāvatinsa; the arrival of the venerable

Arhath Sanghamittā Bhikkhuni to Sri Lanka with Jayasirimā Bō Tree; convening of a convocation to verify the Vinaya pitakaya; the code of conduct for Buddhist monks by Venerable Aritttha mahā Thera at Thūpārāmaya temple in Anurādhapura city in Sri Lanka; and the beginning of the “Cheevara Pūja”— offering of Kathina robes for Buddhist monks who

have completed the three months of Vas observation or the rainy season retreats up to this month (Vap full moon day). Hence, the article would intend to discuss the Katina Cheevara Pūja, which is going to be held after the Vap full moon Pōya day as it is recommended to fulfill once, in one time between the Vap Pōya and the Ill Pōya, in November.

From this Vap Pōya until Ill Pōya is called 'Cheevara Māsaya' in Sinhala or the 'Kathina Cheevara Pūja Māsa' in Pāli or Kathina Robe offering month. Kathina cheevaraya is a length of cloth made in a day and presented to a Buddhist priest who had completed the Vas season or rainy season retreat for three months. This month of Cheevara offering is significant for Buddhist devotees because this is the year when they can accumulate merits engaging in various religious activities.

In detail, there is a significant value in a Kathina Cheevara Pūja or Kathina Ceremony. 'Kathina Cheevara Pūja' is held in every Thēravāda Buddhist country in the world. Kathina ceremony is very limited to this 'Vap' month. It is an annual event in every temple. Moreover, there are some other reasons for this day to be very important for Buddhist monks. Kathina Pūja Ceremony, though it is a religious festival, there are many Vinaya Kamma or discipline rules to be performed. And also, it is mentioned in Dhamma, the devotees who fulfill this Kathina Pūja, would gain a big fortune in this world and in the hereafter, like 'Āyusha, Warna, Sepa, Bala, pragnā' – Long life, Beauty, Comfort, Power, and Wisdom as a result, in both lives. If there are bad karmas done, in this world or in the previous lives by them are neutralized preventing them from going to a bad world after this life, like hell or an animal world. In a nutshell, it is

This month of Cheevara offering is significant for Buddhist devotees because this is the year when they can accumulate merits engaging in various religious activities.

mentioned that the Kathina Pūja is the KING of all Pūjas. As the noblest religious activity. According to psychology, good thoughts stimulate brain function, bringing about mental and physical good health and well-being. Because good thoughts produce good hormones like dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin, and reduce mental stress, and keep the mind calm and quiet. It plays a role in how we feel pleasure. According to Buddhism, that's called KUSALA or merit, which makes a person happy, healthy, and contented. As the final goal, it paves the way to supreme bliss or Nubbāna.

As the origin of Kathina Pūja, the legend goes to The Lord Buddha's period. Once thirty bhikkhū from



Ven Diyapattugama Revatha Thero, Chief Incumbent of the Siriwardhanaramaya Temple, Colpetty.

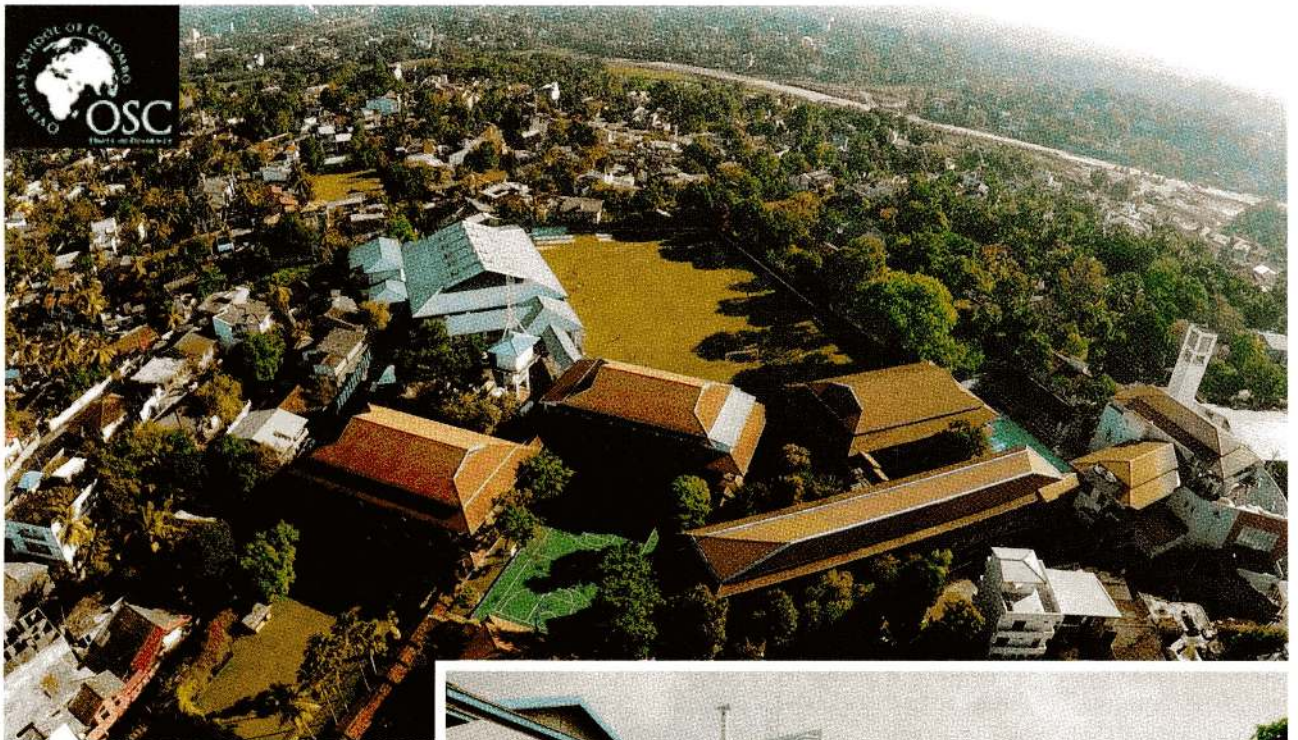
Pāweyya state were journeying to Jēthwanārāmaya in Sāwathi in India, where The Buddha was in retreat during a Vas period. Since it was the rainy season, on their way, they got caught in heavy rains as the rainy season was not over. They came to Jēthwanārāmaya in wet robes. On inquiry, they told The Buddha that they had got caught in the rain. Having heard that The Buddha gave them permission to have a 'Kathinastharanaya' or have an extra robe. It makes on the Kathina ceremony day. Finally, we must keep in mind thoroughly not to hold Kathina or any other ceremony during this pandemic period, considering it as a big disaster for the welfare of oneself and others. ☸



At the Kathina Cheevara Pūja.

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THE OVERSEAS SCHOOL OF COLOMBO: 64 AND GOING STRONG



The Overseas School of Colombo, Sri Lanka's oldest internationally accredited educational institution, celebrated its 64th anniversary on the 23rd of September. "Never erase your past. It shapes who you are today and will help you to be the person you will be tomorrow," said Ziad Abdelnour. Looking back at the past, the journey began in 1957, and the original name was 'The Colombo School for Overseas Children'. In 1967, the school was granted 'accredited' status by the International Schools Association in Switzerland. In 1982, the school changed its name to 'Overseas Children's School'. In 1983, the school gained accreditation from the International Baccalaureate



Organization, and in 1984, the school was moved to its present location at Pelawatte, Battaramulla. In 1990, the school received further accreditation from the European Council of International Schools and the Middle States Association of Colleges & Schools. In 1996, the school took its

present name: The Overseas School of Colombo.

The school follows the International Baccalaureate program from grades one to 12, and current student enrollment is around 350, with a very healthy teacher-student ratio of 1:7. The students represent over 40



Our wish is that The Overseas School of Colombo will continue to be a success story where attributes such as love, care, togetherness, trustworthiness, innovation, and positive energy will sparkle and glow.

PURPOSE: Prioritizing high quality learning experiences for everyone

POWER: Unleashing empowered thinking across the school community

CHANGE: Committing to an ethos of continuous improvement

STORY: Developing the story of the school as a learning community and build & nurture trust

countries, and aptly, the school motto is 'Unity in Diversity. It has always harnessed its diversity as a significant strength.

Its mission is a commitment to guiding the community toward international and intercultural understanding and to develop the whole person as a responsible learner, striving for personal excellence within a culturally diverse environment.

The school has also been offering scholarships to deserving Sri Lankan students to pursue their secondary education. It is heartening to note that these students have done well in their academic courses and continue to shine in their chosen universities or professions.

In January 2020, recognizing that a pandemic was growing worldwide, the school's management started working on a Distance Learning Plan. It was implemented in March with the closure of all schools in Sri Lanka.

The school has prioritized a child's well-being over academics, with the

understanding that optimal learning cannot take place without a healthy body, healthy mind, and a sense of belonging. Five areas have been identified as the reasons for the success of the distance learning plan offered by the school.

- Clear policies and expectations for all staff
- Caring, innovative and invested teachers
- Healthy parent-school partnership
- Efficient technology systems to support continuous education
- Valuing and embracing ambiguity

In line with the school's vision of being a model of excellence in education through nurturing and empowering its community of learners to achieve global success, the present Head of School – Dr. Michelle Kleiss, has spearheaded developing a strategic plan viewed through five lenses as given below:

WORLD: Leveraging collective efficacy for the benefit of our students

The Overseas School of Colombo is blessed with a green and spacious campus. Over the years, the school authorities have contributed immensely towards developing its infrastructure and classroom facilities and creating an environment where all stakeholders feel safe, supported, and respected. Even if these physical resources cannot be used at present due to the restrictions caused by the pandemic, the distance learning plan is implemented with the belief that a positive impact on student achievement can be gained despite all other influences in their lives that challenge their success.

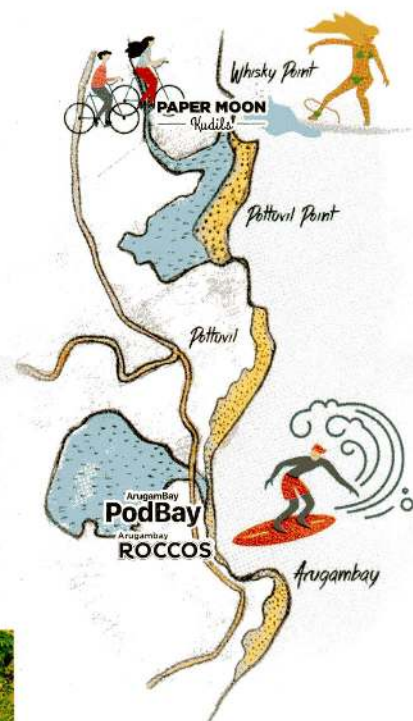
The Overseas School of Colombo is a culturally diverse community with students, parents, and staff working in harmony. Our wish is that The Overseas School of Colombo will continue to be a success story where attributes such as love, care, togetherness, trustworthiness, innovation, and positive energy will sparkle and glow. ☺

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Arugambay PodBay



Arugambay PodBay is a novel concept that comprises compact convertainers (NapPods) in pastel hues, HomePods, and Bay rooms. The seaside hotel has one of the largest swimming pools in the area (WaterPod), and the restaurant PotPod serves a range of cuisine and beverages in an area ideal for relaxation.

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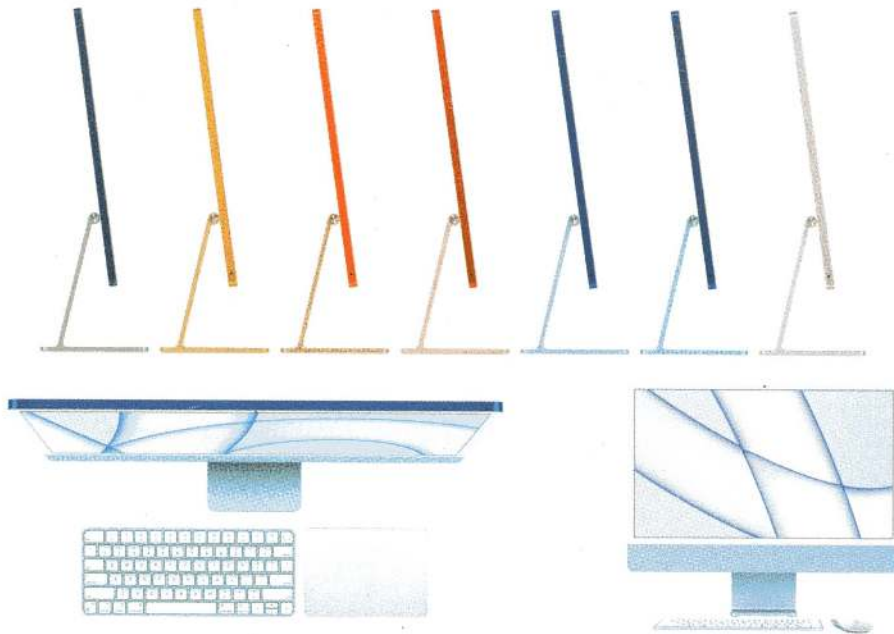
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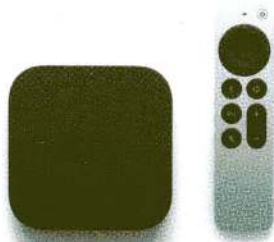
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Lena Kassicieh – Ceramics from UAE Designer Exhibition 2.0.

The UAE Designer Exhibition 2.0 will unveil works by 25 emerging and undiscovered creative talent, based and produced locally...



Farah Ahmed –The loop chair from UAE Designer Exhibition 2.0.



Fabidha Safar Rahman from UAE Designer Exhibition 2.0.



Drinks Table by Adnan Ihsan.

the challenges of the design process from idea to application for a brighter transition to the future.

Live Programming

A program of 80+ workshops under the theme of 'Paper, Plastic + Play' will provide visitors of all ages and levels of experience with the opportunity to experiment with ancient and innovative ways of making at the Making Space; from pottery or reforming plastic to paper making or using soap as a new medium, each

activity curated with people and the planet in mind.

A line-up of 50+ talks will feature the leading designers and architects in the region as well as international guest speakers, to learn more about the latest innovations and trends in the global design scene; new, daily remodelled program of gatherings, curated by Fatma Al Mahmoud, 'Meet the UAE Creatives' will bring the local creative community and its stakeholders together in a series of talks and dialogues. 



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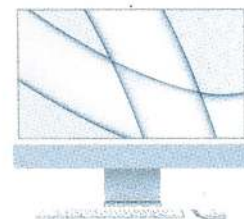
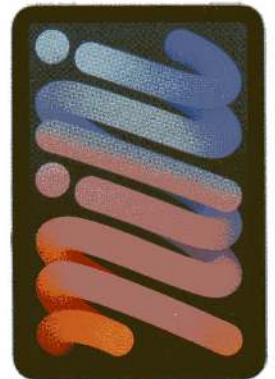
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