

**THE NATIONAL TRUST – SRI LANKA LECTURE ON**  
**THURSDAY 30<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2019**

**“A SINGLE WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION FOR SRI LANKA’S POST COLONIAL  
FORTIFICATIONS”**

**By Deshamanya Vidya Jyothi Ashley De Vos**

The 116<sup>th</sup> Session of the Monthly Lecture Series of the **National Trust - Sri Lanka** will be held at the HNB Auditorium, 22<sup>nd</sup> Floor, HNB Towers, 479 T.B. Jayah Mawatha, Colombo 10 at 6.30p.m. on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2019.

This project, that commenced many years ago, was an attempt to make a single nomination to World Heritage that identified and brought together all existing colonial fortifications located around the island. The study was intended to examine these colonial monuments not only from a historical context but also, with a serious consideration to enhance a sustainable use value for each monument. This was envisioned to be a long term strategy to ensure that the monuments may in time, be better preserved in a sustainable manner.

However, the purposeful delay in introducing this concept is due to its very special nature and requirement to be examined very judiciously to ensure that the local and international conventions and charters are not violated. Ultimately, the concept seeks to minimize gentrification of the remaining colonial fortifications. This simple concept was first put forward by de Vos in 1975 in an effort to protect the Fort of Galle. However, today what you see is what transpires when basic ideas and concepts are overlooked and more grandiose schemes are encouraged. The fort is not as it should have been, but is the victim of extreme gentrification. What remains is an almost pseudo environment that may in time involve people dressed in Dutch period costumes – if that is what it takes to continue to generate business.

In modern times, gentrification is encouraged by budget-friendly package tours, cheap flights, all-inclusive resorts, and cruises. In general, it allows vast numbers of travelers to descend on a given destination in a relatively short time, usually during peak season and includes all the extra infrastructure that is demanded by the tour operators, including the titillations demanded by these fickle groups and unfortunately granted by a desperate administration. On the positive side, this extreme influx of tourists can help to generate jobs, stimulate the economy, and develop much-needed infrastructure. On the downside, many of these jobs are not given to locals, much of the revenue is kept by outside investors, and the overwhelming tourist crowds often keep locals the real heirs to the tradition, from being able to enjoy the infrastructure and other benefits.

Unfortunately, in this scenario when use is investment driven with no consideration for the compatible use value of the archaeology and the need to maintain authenticity, the end result could be the complete destruction of the site. Mass tourism is inarguably the most popular form of tourism today, however most responsible travel experts consider it a shallow, exploitative, and unsustainable form of travel, consuming huge amounts of resources while giving little back to the local community. There are many examples where large-scale tourism has had detrimental effects on biodiversity, including coral reefs, coastal wetlands, rainforests, arid and semi-arid ecosystems, mountainous areas (UNWTO 2010d). Biodiversity will be greatly affected by the way in which tourism grows and develops, especially in developing countries (UNEP 2010). This is generally brought about by tourism demands that soon exceed the carry capacity of the particular site.

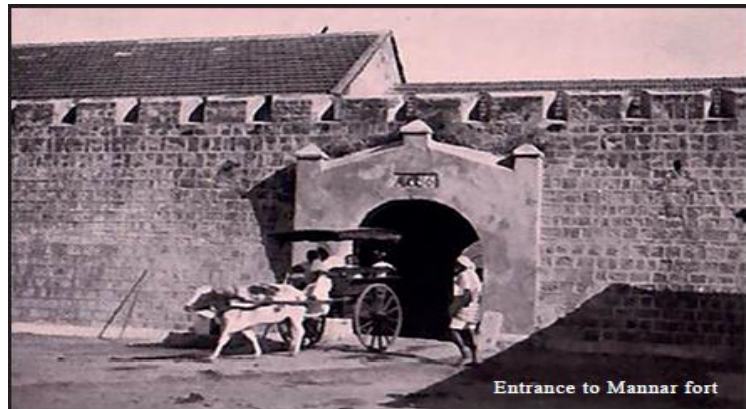
Sustainable tourism thus aspires to be more energy efficient and more climate sound, consume less water; minimize waste; conserve biodiversity, cultural heritage and traditional values; support intercultural understanding and tolerance; generate local income and integrate local communities with a view to improving livelihoods and reducing poverty. Making tourism businesses sustainable, in a way that benefits local communities, and raises awareness and support for the sustainable use of natural resources. Sustainable tourism is tourism that takes full account of current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities. With greater respect for the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, a need to conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance

The negative result is seen at many unique International destinations, for example Venice. Venice and its Lagoon have long been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. But due to mass-tourism, not only does it risk losing its status, it faces entering the “Endangered” list, a list normally reserved for ruins and sites damaged by war. The Fort at Galle is being studied by World Heritage as it seems to be heading in that

direction (WH). Hikkaduwa on the south west coast was exposed to mass tourism from the 1970's, today the original residents have been replaced by new business from elsewhere. This is something that Sri Lanka will soon experience on a greater scale with its present unsustainable over exposure to International tourism.

This talk will concentrate mostly on a visual presentation to familiarize the audience with the rich material available, and is similar to the presentation made at the military fortifications conference held in Seoul, Korea in 2016. The presentation will start with an examination of the existing world heritage sites in Sri Lanka to understand what role an overabundance of cultural tourism can play in the degradation of these events or sites. It will then go on to form an introduction to the thirty six colonial fortifications that have been identified around the island. There are a few more that have still to be identified. However, the presentation will not suggest solutions.

As a conservation project it is a long term investment that needs funds. The funds can be generated anywhere as long as it respects the intrinsic values of the monument and adopts a long term approach, instead, of a short term solution based purely on profit.



Ashley de Vos is the Senior Vice President of The National Trust – Trained as an Architect, a Landscape Architect, in Conservation and Heritage Management and in Urban renewal. Fellow of the Sri Lanka Institute of Architects and Member of the Royal Institute of British Architects for 46 years.

He was a full time Faculty at the University of Moratuwa, today serves as Visiting Faculty & Examiner in the Departments of Architecture, Design, Urban design and Landscape Architecture. He has also been a Visiting Faculty at the International Centre for Conservation, Rome (ICCROM) – Italy, University of Baghdad – Iraq, East West Encounter, East West Centre, University of Honolulu, Institute of South Asian Studies, University of Amsterdam – Netherlands, Lahore College of Arts, Lahore – Pakistan, The National Centre for Conservation, Restoration & Museum Sciences, Havana – Cuba and the Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU) & Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, Nara – Japan.

He has won the following awards ‘South Asian Architect of the Year’ International Award (1996, 1998 & 2004). Seven Design Awards from the SLIA and a Life time Achievement Award from the Sri Lanka Institute of Architects (2009). Two PATA Heritage Awards (Dutch Period Museum Project 1980, Jetavana Project 1982). Winner of the National e-Swabhimani Award for the animated film, a “Day in the life of the Jetavana Monastery at Anuradhapura” (2010).

Archt. De Vos was the Chairman, required to the report on a Tourism Master Plan for the East Coast, Sri Lanka presented to Hon Milinda Moragoda, Minister of Tourism. Is the current President, Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka, Past President of ICOMOS (Sri Lanka), and Wildlife & Nature Protection Society of Sri Lanka, was Director Conservation of the UNESCO/CCF Jetavana Stupa and Monastery Project and Director General of the Galle Tsunami Rehabilitation Project after the 2004 Tsunami, is a Member of the Advisory Board of the Department of Archaeology, was a Member of the Galle Heritage Trust, Central Environment Authority, Governing Council, University of Moratuwa, Katubedde and Board of Governors of the Arthur C. Clarke Centre, Katubedde.

He has also been Elevated to National Status, as Vidya Jyothi, (Light of Science, 1994), Desamanya, (Pride of the Nation, 2006), in recognition of the continued contribution to Architecture, Conservation and protection of the Environment. The Jathika Uruma Prasada Pranama (Protector of Cultural Heritage of Sri Lanka, 2014) in recognition of continued efforts to protect the Cultural Heritage of Sri Lanka.

Since 1976 – 1990, he has been Partner / Director, Design Group Five International and from 1990 to date in practice as Ashley de Vos Consultants.

**The National Trust – Sri Lanka conducts monthly lectures on the last Thursday of each month. The lectures are open to the members and the public at a nominal fee. The HNB Sustainability Foundation is the principal sponsor of the events of the National Trust – Sri Lanka.**

**Further information can be obtained from the Trust Office Tel 2682730 / 0778081214 at the Post Graduate Institute of Archaeology, 407, Bauddhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 7.**