



THE NATIONAL TRUST – SRI LANKA

A Shared Heritage: Ibn Battuta in Sri Lanka

By Ms. Ameena Hussein

The Monthly Lecture Series No: 143 of the National Trust
Thursday 25th August 2022 at 6.00 pm on-line

Link to join the zoom meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/91753033363?pwd=VjUyRmVIWXpnRXZMU1dlV1pTdlFJdz09>

Meeting ID: 917 5303 3363

Passcode: 055365

The 14th century Moroccan traveller Ibn Battuta came to the island of Sarandib or Lanka in 1344 to embark on pilgrimage up Adam's Peak having travelled from Morocco on his way to China. After 29 years of travelling he returned to Morocco and wrote about his travels in a book commonly called *The Rihla* today. Some 700 years later, writer Ameena Hussein decided to search for traces of Ibn Battuta in her own country, Sri Lanka and to document what he found and wrote about his travels in the country the Arabs called the Island of Rubies. Beginning her journey where Ibn Battuta landed in the coastal town of Puttalam, she goes on to meet a multitude of characters – from a sack sewing muezzin to a lone monk living on top of a rock, to a marriage broker on his way to broker a marriage. On her journey she unearths fantastic tales, visits historical mosques, and records a landscape that is as ancient as time. She also reveals the history of her minority community – the Muslims – who have lived on the island for a thousand years adapting and acculturating to make it truly their home and the conundrums that a multicultural country like Sri Lanka faces from time to time. Her lecture will focus on what Ibn Battuta said about his journey here and what she discovered in trying to unearth them on her travels – from precious stones, to the pilgrimage to the magnificent temple at Devi Nuvara. It will be a journey blending the 14th century with the 21st and highlight Lanka's rich cultural history and past.



Trained as a sociologist at the University of Southern California, Ameena Hussein is an author and co-founder of the Perera-Hussein Publishing House, the frontrunner for cutting edge literature from emerging and established regional authors. Her non-fiction book *Chasing Tall Tales and Mystics: Ibn Battuta in Sri Lanka* published in 2020 won the State Literary Prize for Humanities and was shortlisted for the Gratiaen Prize. Her novel *The Moon in the Water* was longlisted for the Man Asian Literary Award and the Dublin IMPAC. Her debut short story collection *Fifteen* was shortlisted for the Gratiaen Prize in 1999 and her second collection of short stories *Zillij* won the State Literary Prize in 2005. A Fellow of WrICE, writer digital residency and cultural exchange 2020 as well as being a fellow of the prestigious International Writer's Program at the Iowa University (2005), she has been invited to teach at the University of Iowa creative writing Summer programs in 2016 and 2018. Her stories and essays have appeared in numerous publications both international and local. Immediately following the heart wrenching tragedy, her essay on the 2019 Easter Bombings in Sri Lanka was published in the *New York Times*. Ameena Hussein has been featured at several international literary festivals held in Singapore, Georgetown in Penang, Lahore, Jaipur and in Galle.

The National Trust – Sri Lanka conducts monthly lectures generally on the last working Thursday of each month. The lectures are open to the members and the general public. 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.0112682730/ 0719566929