

The Galle Literary Festival

Words: Suranga Rajapakse

Following in the wake of the Refreshingly Sri Lanka Literary Festival, held with much success in London, Serendipity is proud to support The Galle Literary Festival; an event that takes place from the 11th to the 14th of January 2007.

The first of its kind, this festival will be held in and around the city of Galle and its magnificent Fort, now a United Nations World Heritage Site. This world class event promises to feature a host of prominent Sri Lankan writers, of both local and international acclaim, with such distinguished names as Arthur C Clarke, William Dalrymple, Mark Tully, Romesh Gunasekara, Yasmine Gooneratne, David Robson and Kerry Hill on the guest list.

The festival will run over four days and include keynote speakers, panel discussions and writing workshops. An environmental day with the authors and chefs (including Rose Gray and Christine Mansfield) at an organic eco farm, a day at Lunuganga, the country estate of the late great architect Geoffrey Bawa and a host of literary lunches and dinners are also on the cards.

This event comes at a time when interest in both Sri Lankan authors and their contribution to English literature is high. In recent times Sri Lankan authors have proven to be a formidable force, with many authors regularly receiving awards for leading literary prizes. This, together

with a host of new books by international authors that focus on Sri Lankan culture, lifestyle and arts, have given rise to an increasing popularity and curiosity to explore the island which have in the past, attracted such greats as Mark Twain, Pablo Neruda and Anton Chekov.

In a country where the rate of literacy is an impressive 98%, it is surprising to note that comparatively very few people are exposed to English Literature and the organisers hope that the festival can be used as a vehicle to not only promote Sri Lankan authors but to expose Sri Lankan readers to English Literature as well. The festival will also prove an effective method of promoting Galle and the country's beautiful Southern Province as a key tourist destination as visitors, both local and international, will get a chance to visit some of the most unique and memorable venues in the area.

Serendipity is proud to support The Galle Literary Festival which takes place from the 11th to the 14th of January, 2007. For further information on how you can participate and support the festival, contact Libby Southwell at libbysouthwell@yahoo.com.au or Ameena Hussein at tangalla@slt.net.lk