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Sri Lanka – A Tropical Island Nation

By Josiah William

The first country in the world to have established a dedicated hospital or the first country in the

world to have a female prime minister (Sirimavo Bandaranaike, July 21, 1960), or the world's leading exporter and producer of best quality of tea, other than these facts in the recent times this beautiful island nation is more known to the world for the mighty Tsunami and its everlasting Tamil tensions. Sri Lanka, officially Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (known as Ceylon before 1972), is a tropical island nation off the southeast coast of the Indian subcontinent, about 31 kilometres (18½ miles) south of India. It is in a strategic position in the Indian Ocean, along major sea trade routes from the Far East to Africa and Europe. For a small island, Sri Lanka has many nicknames: Serendib, Ceylon, Teardrop of India, Resplendent Isle, Island of Dharma, Pearl of the Orient. This colourful collection reveals its richness and beauty, and the intensity of the affection it evokes in its visitors.

In 16th century the Portuguese started the colonial rule which was replaced by the Dutch in 17th century. Eventually, Great Britain replaced the Dutch in 1796, and the coastal areas became a crown colony in 1802. After the crucial role played by Ceylon in World War II, the pressure for independence intensified, and under the name of Ceylon, it became a dominion in the British Commonwealth in 1948. The first prime minister was Don Stephen Senanayake. In 1972, the country became a republic, and the name was changed to Sri Lanka.

The island of Sri Lanka lies in the Indian Ocean, southwest of the Bay of Bengal. It is separated from the Indian subcontinent by the Gulf of Mannar and the Palk Strait. The climate is tropical, characterized by monsoons: the northeast monsoon lasts from December to March, the southwest June to October. The lowest gravitational field on Earth lies just off the coast of Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka is one of the world's bio-diversity hot-spots. Its forests are among the most floristically rich in Asia and for some faunal groups, it has the world's highest density of species diversity. The southwest, where the influence of the moisture-bearing southwest monsoon is strongest, is home to the Sri Lanka lowland rain forests. At higher elevations they transfer to the Sri Lanka mountain rain forests. Both these tropical moist forest ecoregions are very similar to those of India's Western Ghats.

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The north and east are considerably drier, lying in the rain shadow of the central highlands. The Sri Lanka dry-zone dry evergreen forests are a tropical dry broadleaf forest ecoregion, which, like the neighbouring East Deccan dry evergreen forests of India's Coromandel Coast, is characterized by evergreen trees, rather than the dry-season deciduous trees that predominate in most other tropical dry broadleaf forests. Sri Lanka is the land of the rolling hills to escape the heat of the plains in the cool of tea plantations. The entire island is teeming with bird life, and exotics like elephants and leopards are not uncommon. Sri Lanka has the world's 53rd largest population. The Sri Lankan population has not been growing as quickly as many other Asian countries but has kept a steady pace for the last 20 years. The population growth rate is 0.79%. Population density is greatest in the western part of the country, particularly around the largest city Colombo.

Both Sinhala and Tamil are official languages. English, the link language in the present constitution, is spoken competently by about 10% of the population, and is widely understood. All three languages are used in education, business and administration. Religion in Sri Lanka is as much varied as its ethnic groups. 68% are Buddhist, and the other religions are Christianity, Hinduism and Islam.

Ethnic identities in Sri Lanka generally do not represent the genetic heritage. Assimilation and intermixing has produced a group of people who are only marginally different from each other irrespective of ethnic boundaries. About 74% of Sri Lankans are Sinhalese. Sri Lankan Tamils constitute 18%, and though scattered evenly throughout the country, form a large proportion in the north, east and central provinces. Tamils comprise two communities: Native Tamils and immigrants from India (who arrived during the late colonial period) called "Indian Origin" (or "estate") Tamils. There is a large population of Moors (Muslims of Arab descent), living in all parts of the island, but forming a large percentage of the population living in the Eastern Province. There are smaller ethnic groups such as the Burghers (of mixed European descent) and Malay people. There is also a small population of the indigenous inhabitants of the island called Wanniyala-Aetto or Veddahs.

Sri Lanka calling cards are available on various sites on the internet. Phone cards are quite cheap as using pc to phone one can call Sri Lanka at as low as 10 cents per minute. As most of the people are educated they have good infra-structures though internal clashes by Tamils are continued for long time. In short, Calling Sri Lanka is satisfactory comparatively. Several prepaid calling card and phone card companies are available to call both to and from Sri Lanka.

Josiah William works in marketing for

<http://www.cheapphonecards.com>, <http://www.dealking.com>

,

<http://www.snapmobile.com>

and eCellular.

Why Aren't You In Heaven Yet?

By Mike Wendland

The only reason we remain on earth is to serve god.

Ever wondered why, once you became a Christian, God has left you here? Why he hasn't taken you to heaven?

The reason is clear. The Bible tells us we are left here for a reason. Knowing where we are going, knowing of our divine-set appointment in heaven, we are meantime to do God's work down here.

Consider the story of a Christian woman named Rebecca O'Connor. When she first saw the horrific images of the 2005 Asian tsunami disaster, she was working the night shift at New York Presbyterian hospital, where she is a pediatric nurse. She said she felt compelled to do something."

And O'Connor did do something. She flew to Sri Lanka, along with eight other medical professionals, for a two-week medical-relief trip.

Arriving in Sri Lanka, they traveled through 150 miles of destruction before arriving in a downtown area that had been completely devastated. Setting up their clinic in a downtown Sri Lankan mosque, they saw 40 to 100 patients every shift. Respiratory problems and foot and leg wounds caused by stepping on debris when wading through water were the most common ailments treated.

O'Connor and the others soon discovered they were less than a mile away from a local hospital and another large clinic. She questioned a Sri Lankan friend, "Why are people coming to us?"

The friend said, "Because at the hospital someone asks, 'Name? Age? Complaint?' and then gives them a sheet of paper and tells them to go wait somewhere. You sit them down, ask them what's wrong and treat them. You listen to them."

Rebecca O'Connor summed it up: "It seemed that the most valuable therapy we were providing had nothing to do with antibiotics or wound care. By listening to story after heartbreaking story, admiring pictures of families once happy and healthy, and playing soccer with children who lost everything, we were able to say, 'We care about you, and we share in your grief,' without speaking a word."

See how this principle works?

Like Rebecca O'Connor, are you willing to risk everything, to live boldly as one privileged, charged and empowered to represent Jesus Christ... knowing you have a divine-set appointment?

Mike is the publisher of the shopping portal Online Christian

<http://Shopper.com>

(

<http://www.onlinechristianshopper.com>)that

specializes in Christian T-Shirts and Christian jewelry. He

also runs the Christian resource directory My Testimony Space (

<http://www.mytestimonyspace.com>

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