



TRINITY COLLEGE CHAPEL RESTORATION PROJECT



NEWSLETTER - 2ND ISSUE

October 2024



Preserving for Eternity

“

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”

- Isija Thilakarathne (Web Content Team)

Preamble

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Page 02

Progress & Upcoming work

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Page 03 & 04





TRINITY COLLEGE CHAPEL RESTORATION PROJECT



NEWSLETTER - 2ND ISSUE

OCTOBER 2024



Images above: A restorer working on the Crucifixion Mural, Scaffolding on the outer side of the Side Chapel and the 'Good Samaritan' mural after being restored.

Preamble

The restoration of the Trinity College Chapel [CRP] is a significant and ongoing project.

As stated in the project proposal, the CRP consists of 7 components: murals, wood carvings [5 stages], heritage lighting, sounds and electrical wiring, compilation of the research document and Chapel maintenance profile.

As of now, we have completed the mural restoration and the first 3 stages of the wood carvings. Every restoration intervention of the wood carvings has revealed more about their complex designs and other elements, providing deeper insights into the originality of the Chapel.

This meticulous restoration aims to preserve every facet of the chapel, ensuring it remains a cherished landmark for future generations of Trinicians and others.

We invite you to be a part of this remarkable journey of preserving the Trinity College Chapel for eternity.



Image above: Restoration work in progress - of the pekada on pillars at the right-side nave of the Chapel



TRINITY COLLEGE CHAPEL RESTORATION PROJECT



NEWSLETTER - 2ND ISSUE

October 2024

Progress work

- Wood conservation stage 01 is complete - Consisting of the Ceiling area of the inner sanctum, pekada & patella of the nearby pillars.
- Wood conservation Stage 02 is complete. This includes the pillars to the east of the chapel near the vestry, the pekada near the side chapel, and the ceiling area and carvings within the side chapel. Additionally, work has been done on the pillars to the west and behind the chapel, both those with carvings and those without.
- Wood conservation stage 03 is complete - All carvings and ceiling areas from West entrance to the main entrance, including pillars without carvings and patella.
- Restoration work of the Crucifixion Mural and the 'Good samaritan' mural is now complete.
- 'Washing of the feet' mural restoration is currently in progress.



Image right-top:
Upper section of a pekada removed for restoration.



Image right-bottom:
Pekada on a pillar after being restored.

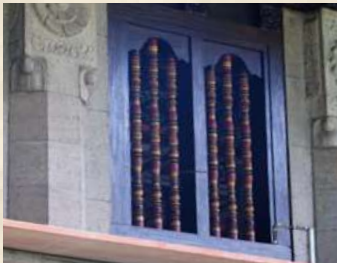


Image left: Beeralu wooden windows after being restored



Images left:
Damaged wooden artwork - due to rainwater leakage, damage by termites, and dust gathering.



Images left:
Before and after images of the Beeralu windows during restoration - at the Side Chapel



TRINITY COLLEGE CHAPEL RESTORATION PROJECT



NEWSLETTER - 2ND ISSUE

OCTOBER 2024

Upcoming work

- Main Entrance to East Wing: Restoration of pillars and carvings estimated but not yet started.
- Chapel Rafters: Some carved sections show decay; restoration will proceed.
- Untreated Wooden Rafters: Require work for preservation.
- Decorative Valance Board: Needs extensive restoration.
- Bell Tower Carvings: Rafters and wooden sections untreated since installation.
- Chapel Pekada: Requires appropriate restoration.
- Wall by the Crucifixion Mural: Damaged by rain and humidity; while painting restoration is complete, wall needs coating to prevent further damage. Planning action is underway.



Image right:
Restoration underway on the 'washing of the feet' mural

Image left:
Restored pekadas at the West entrance to the Chapel



Channa Daswatte: Reviving the Heart and Soul of Trinity's Heritage

An Assembly talk on
13th of September 2024

Review by Isija Thilakarathne (Web Content Team)

"I climbed o'er the crags of Lanka
And gazed on her golden sea,
And out from her ancient places
Her soul came forth to me.
"Give Me, a Bard," said Lanka,
"My Bard of the things to-be"

It's a crisp autumn morning on the 13th of September, and Channa Daswatte, architect extraordinary and scholar, gazes



TRINITY COLLEGE CHAPEL RESTORATION PROJECT



NEWSLETTER - 2ND ISSUE

October 2024

dreamily at the gathering. His tone is professional, yet informal- a strange, intoxicating combination. Accurate pauses within sentences, minutely calculated so that every single word would drive home with sheer force and conviction. This is an extract from a poem, The Call of Lanka, penned by the prodigious Reverend Walter Senior, glimpsing back into the serenity of Sri Lanka.

From a close up, the infrastructural artist looks refined and prudent, perhaps even more than when he had once borne the colossal title of Trinity College's Senior prefect back in '84. For a long time, Mr. Daswatte had been an integral part of the Old Boys' Association, reverently mentioned in the air one Trinitian would profess other legendary names like 'Sangakkara' and 'Kadiragamam'. To the casual eye he was, but another man of manners, a hungry soul brimming with artistic inspiration and a longing for creativity. Everything from his personal conduct to his attire teemed of what you would look for in a typical architect; grace, patience, intelligence, and finally, some cool, unforgettable factor of logic that could not be assuaged. Here was a man who could move monumental structures with a flick of an eye- or rather, expertly design them.

Mr. Daswatte who had been cordially welcomed to the midst of yet another morning's assembly- it's eight a 'clock already, and school officers pose Sentinel-like outside the College hall, sweeping their aquiline eyes for some correction of order- all in all, there was nothing to indicate an anomaly in the usually customary routine. Notices would be read, a speech or two delivered, and Father Principal Araliya Jayasundara would enlighten us all with some inspiring quote or the other. The stage, so to speak, was set, and the Trinitians were anticipating the typical flow of events in their usually chronic manner. Such was the air on that seemingly unremarkable Friday.

But, as we soon found out, the session was anything but unremarkable. As soon as the notified 'first half' of the assembly came to a close, the Principal stood graciously and made a warm toast to the introduction of Mr. Channa Daswatte. Phrases of utmost appreciation were spoken- "Sri Lanka's most sought-after architect," "an indomitable disciple of the indomitable Geoffrey Bawa" ... Mr. Daswatte took it all with a casual smile. Amidst the polite smattering of applause, he bowed a humble head, and so was promptly invited beside the podium.

And this is where the great man professed his undying love for the architecture of Trinity College, or rather, professed his undying love for one place in particular!

The Chapel of Trinity College, Kandy, Sri Lanka, is a hallmark of the colonial architectural inspirations that have been so imposingly emblazoned on the island's landscapes. Being the herald of not only our imperialistic upbringing and Sri Lanka's eventual co-existence with its colonial masters, the edifice represents not only the religious and spiritual harmony that condenses what Father Araliya Jayasundara calls "the Trinity co-values"- Integrity, service, excellence, and resilience, - but also what makes a great piece of architectural art right smack in the middle of the country's most exotic hillside.

And on that day, Mr. Channa Daswatte had returned, with positive affirmations, to recover what he thought was submerged- at least momentarily- the respect and the rigid passion which the Trinitian owes to His school, and to its Chapel.

His calm and soothing voice was just what the Trinitians needed. With the fortitude of a Zen monk and the reposefulness of a musician, Mr. Daswatte began to unfold a beautiful tapestry- a tapestry which not only had live waters, lush greens and God-cut crags, but also the living, breathing kind of serenity that one associates with only the foremost of connoisseurs. Assuredly, this man knew what he was talking about!

Soon the students found themselves walking alongside Mr. Daswatte on a calm evening stroll. In their mind's eye it was almost six, and the red sun capping the candy-floss sky of Kandy. The fresh whiff of autumn is enticing in its luscious appeal, jade arches blushing, the children of Demeter forming banks of rolling foliage on either side of the road. This is the famous stretch that many a great soul had once crossed- be it Kadiragamam, Rev. Gaster, or Rev. Ireland Jones, the man himself. It cuts a crystal sand path up to the promising blue ford that covers the upper areas of the College, and in spite of its simplicity and almost assuring normalcy, the road hides a little secret in its bosom.

John Milton may have once declared that Paradise was lost forever, but for the Trinitian with the spiritual mind it is never so. For this picturesque walkway upto the college quarters harbors the secret- a secret so revered and chanted with holy reminiscence that even the most boisterous of lads may fall pin-drop silent at its utter ethereal glory.

Welcome to the Trinity College Chapel, one of Asia's only open chapels. Paradise in its own terms.



TRINITY COLLEGE CHAPEL RESTORATION PROJECT



NEWSLETTER - 2ND ISSUE

October 2024

The edifice is imposing even from the distance; a clear, geometric design of a holy cross that many Christian buildings aim to achieve in the foremost stages of their conceptions. But this is no typical Christian Building, for this is the Chapel of Trinity College Kandy, unique in its design, conception, creation, and also preservation. The outline of it stands against the Lankan heavens in sharp relief, making an allegory to its Biblical connection. Shadow and stone make a great combination, a dark, regal shape cut into the azure tint of the sky, and the pond beside the neatly-mown lawn brings a savannah-like simile to the humid landscape, with the chapel as its highlight.

The Trinity College Chapel was conceived as early as in 1922, when the tide of Colonialism was washing far and wide over Sri Lanka. It was a profound wave- a wave that would transform, shift and even change. Back then, the country itself was in a chrysalis, entombed within its own struggles of conflicting and interweaving religions, customs and traditions. Even in these thickest socio-cultural shifts that were taking place in the community, the creators of the Chapel, namely Gaster himself, were remarkably startled by the rich and thick ethos of the native land that appealed so readily to them. Gaster even made a series of famous sketches- sketches that have been duly preserved, thanks to our quick-witted archivists- and on further inspection they appear to be what may have been the earliest recorded planning for the iconic Trinity structure. The drawings depict the Chapel with almost disturbing accuracy, from its clear-cut stone columns to the clandestine, archaic cavity of its middle, where the much-appraised murals stand unchallenged.

Everything in the Trinity Chapel speaks of its Sri Lankan identity. Even though it was visualized as a Gothic or Modernist edifice during prior scheming, later on the aspirations of a culturally-shocked, or, more appropriately stated, a culturally- bewitched Gaster made its impact upon the designs; it was his idea that the soon-to-be monument would but reflect, and not alienate, the land that it was built upon. A portmanteau of what was and what would be, in between.

But there was still yet much to be done. Following Mr. Daswatte's proud speech, students began to finally realize the mammoth task that had been put behind the inner workings of the Chapel- for we refer to a world not full of luxury and convenience back then, but to one which was full of primary hardships and arduous workloads. Everything from the intricately carved stone designs to the beams had to be taken care of, and geni from each caste of designers and sculptors had to be brought on specifically. Following Reverend Gaster's portmanteau of cultures, the Chapel began to resemble something so beautiful, something so representative, an icon more than a holy institution; its wooden-patterned pekadas, the slick sienna pews and the cold, Everest-grey stone combined aesthetically with the thin, beetle-like metalwork and attention-to-detail granite features. The Chapel was reflecting an entity that went far beyond the papyrus pages of a Holy Bible- it mirrored the chenas of the humble farmer, the daily struggles of the tropical man, of his agonies, his pains, and his sensitive yet down-to-earth perception. Gaster was playing the sous chef, and for his main dish he had prepared a palette that would surpass his forefathers, complete with a stunningly proud Sri Lankan identity that struck wonder into the hearts and minds of those who witnessed its dark majesty.

The Murals of the Trinity Chapel are unique even in comparison to the Chapel's other workings- the paintings, delivered masterfully, are rich and deep, its tones and hues peaking tropically more than its European counterparts. Even the figures of men depicted in them- masks of sheer emotion, vitality, and sentiment- represent the common Lankan man, and of his hopes. The miens express much more than just religious glory; according to Mr. Daswatte they appealed to the virtues of the wider world than the Christian epitome, symbolizing profound aspects across a plethora of cultures and humanities. Trapped somewhere in the heart of these murals, muses the refined architect, is the Buddhist, Hindu, and the Islamic- and in all four religions there have been various counterparts who would suffice for the mortal suffering and sacrifice endowed by the gracious son of God.

But, for all his colorful elucidations, Mr. Daswatte did not forget to remark on the most important part of his duly discourse, signified by the theming of one word: preservation.

Like all good things, explained the connoisseur, the Chapel was to be preserved. Although the centuries had not been exceedingly cruel on this masterpiece, there still was yet quite a lot of renovation and reinvention to be done. The murals, once vibrant, now show signs of fading and damage, and the granite pillars need reinforcement. This monument is on its way to become a thing of the past, lost to the dunes of a great existence. And Mr. Daswatte had returned, to his roots, like a modern Indiana Jones, to extract it out of time. The fire in the man's eyes is enough to profess his unfeigned ambition and the zeal bestowed to him by his own wit. Mr. Daswatte was here to uncover a lost Garden of Eden, shaking the cobwebs from it and presenting it to the world in its former magnificence. There is no doubt to the fact that he is the contemporary Michelangelo who did not sculpt David from a block of stone, but



TRINITY COLLEGE CHAPEL RESTORATION PROJECT



NEWSLETTER - 2ND ISSUE

October 2024

merely removed parts away from the block that was not David. It was a promise made to the College and to himself.

The Trinity College Chapel is not just any other Chapel. It is the duty of all proud Trinitians, new and old, to safeguard this valuable and culturally, religiously and socially integral souvenir and make sure that it survives the sweeping wave that conquers all, owns all- time. Yet, it is the role of the community as well to ascertain that the Chapel is eternalized in the heart of Kandy, for it is not merely a keepsake of the Trinitian, but also a gift from the school to the wider, better world. A comprehensive restoration plan has been developed by a committee of experts, including architects and engineers. Their assessment emphasizes the urgent need for professional intervention to preserve the chapel's structural integrity and historical value. Restoring the chapel will ensure it continues to serve as a place for retrospection, assembly, and spiritual growth for generations to come.

The most important question, boldly proposed by Mr. Daswatte was- how, where and when can you help?

If you are willing to lend a helping hand, we warmly invite you to join us in this noble endeavor, helmed by the aspiring Channa Daswatte. Your generous contributions will help preserve this sacred space, ensuring it remains a repository of legacy and stories for the future, and a pivotal joint of Trinity's heritage. Support the Trinity College Chapel Restoration Project. Donate today and be a part of preserving our legacy for what was, what is and what will be, past, present and future!

So, as Mr. Daswatte made a summary of his show-stopping narrative and engaged us with the above request for donations, the Trinitians finally understood the sheer workmanship that was going on, and of the massive work ethic that was being put into reinventing and refurbishing the heart of Trinity. On that refreshing September morning we had travelled between the centuries, had seen the dawn of a new era and the conception of a great religious and soulful icon. We had learnt the lesson of preservation and safekeeping, a silver line of time that runs throughout generations of madly proud Trinitians. As the benign architect rounded up his speech with a lovely conclusion, the students could only clap mutely, made speechless by the moving delivery, their minds flitting back and forth the little stretch that guarded the lifeblood of Trinity.

Although Mr. Daswatte's speech was over, the young Trinitians had much to mull over. The architect had left something much more than just a few words behind. In the long course of his speech, it seems, Mr. Daswatte had not forgotten to pronounce something that would truly resonate with the value of preservation, cultural integrity and true Lankan symbolism, just like the Trinity College Chapel. It was a marvelously phrased verse from The Call of Lanka once again...

**"Hark! Bard of the fateful Future,
Hark! Bard of the bright To-Be,
A Voice on the verdant mountains,
A Voice on the golden sea;
Rise, Child of Lanka, and answer!
Thy Mother hath called to Thee."**

"In necessary things, unity; in doubtful things, liberty; in all things, charity."

A spiritual quote from the Bible, making prominence of charity's virtue. Donate today and be forever preserved in this never-ending love story between architecture and heritage, yesterday and tomorrow. To all the donors waiting out there with open hands, we already appraise you. You have made yourself a part of the Trinity journey. You have looked to the end, and end where the Trinity Chapel stands unchallenged and unmoving for the years to come.





TRINITY COLLEGE CHAPEL RESTORATION PROJECT



NEWSLETTER - 2ND ISSUE

October 2024

How you can support

Your financial contributions and expertise are invaluable in safeguarding this beacon of Trinity's heritage for future generations. Join us in this noble endeavor to restore and uphold the Chapel's legacy of integrity, service, and excellence.

Donate

You can make a donation via a bank transfer to the following Bank Account:

Name: **Trinity College Kandy**

Bank: **Commercial Bank**

Account: **100 034 3975**

Branch: **Kandy**

Branch Code: **7056004**

Swift Code: **CCEYLK LX**

Email: **fm@trinitycollege.lk**

Please state CRP - (Your Name) under reference.

Donors

Trinity College expresses heartfelt gratitude to the generous donors who have already made contributions to the Chapel Restoration project.

A full list of donors can now be viewed on our College website at www.trinitycollege.lk/chapel-restoration-project

Donations as of 23 October 2024:

Rs. 37,987,143.00 / Rs. 60,000,000.00 (Initial Estimate)



Scan this QR Code to visit our dedicated page on the College website for the Chapel Restoration Project.

You can also opt-in to receive this newsletter via email

For more information

For those wishing to know more about the Chapel Restoration Project, its work, efforts, and updates, or who are willing to support and contribute:

Please visit: www.trinitycollege.lk/chapel-restoration-project/ Or email chapelrestoration@trinitycollege.lk



Image above: The crucifixion Mural after being restored



TRINITY COLLEGE CHAPEL RESTORATION PROJECT

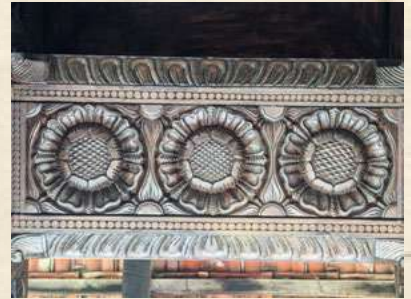


NEWSLETTER - 2ND ISSUE

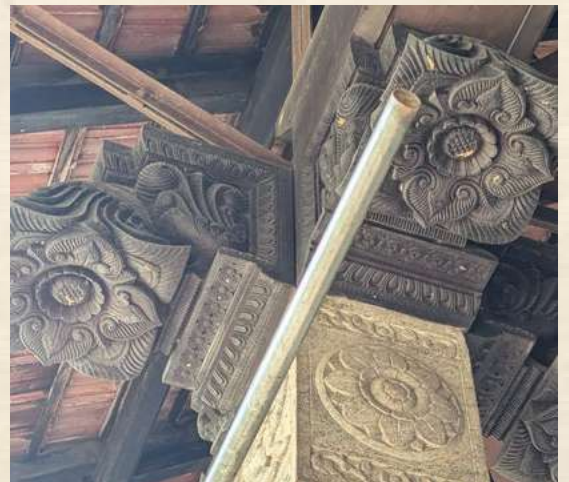
October 2024

FROM THE GALLERY

Images below: Close-up view of the restored wood carvings at the West Entrance of the Chapel, located atop the pillars.



Images below: On the right is a restored 'pekada' of a pillar, while on the left are 'pekada' that is awaiting restoration.





TRINITY COLLEGE CHAPEL RESTORATION PROJECT



NEWSLETTER - 2ND ISSUE

October 2024

Images below: Captures of the restored wooden ceiling and the 'pekada' wood carvings atop the pillars.

