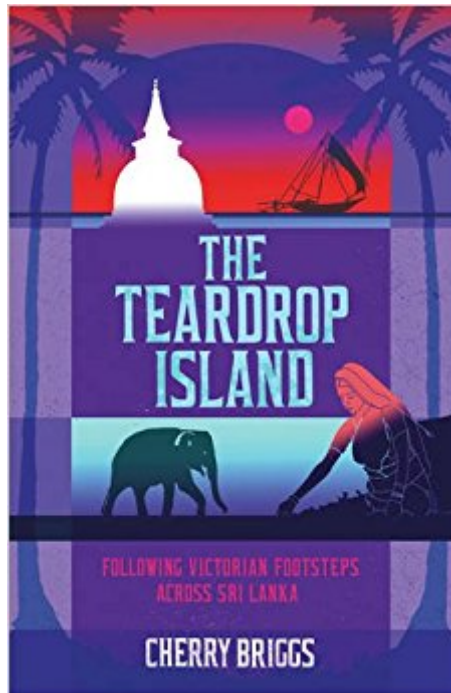




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The Teardrop Island: Following Victorian Footsteps Across Sri Lanka



Synopsis

After discovering the travel writings of a Victorian explorer and writer, Cherry Briggs decides to retrace his footsteps across the island of Ceylon—now known as the recently war-torn, tsunami-affected Sri Lanka. Mr Fernando led me into a dark room that was lined with book-cases and smelled of leather and damp. The polished, concrete floor of the library was covered with white jasmine flowers that had blown through the windows during the storm. He began to select from the shelves a collection of disintegrating books. “If you are going to read any of them, it should really be this one,” he said as he passed me two thick volumes, embossed with gold lettering and spotted with damp. The work was simply called Ceylon and was written by an Irishman named Sir James Emerson Tennent, who had been sent to the island in 1845 by Her Majesty’s Government. The Teardrop Island follows in the footsteps of the eccentric Victorian James Emerson Tennent, along a route which takes Cherry to pilgrimage trails, into tea estates and rural regions inhabited by indigenous tribes, as well as through restricted areas of the former warzone, delving under the surface of the contemporary culture via cricket matches and fortune tellers.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“In post-tsunami, post-civil war Sri Lanka, Cherry Briggs vividly retraces the footsteps of a quirky 19th-century explorer.” —National Geographic Traveler

Cherry Briggs worked as a biology teacher who lived in Sri Lanka for a period of time.

I am traveling to Sri Lanka this fall and I was looking for a good book that was part history & part travelogue. Cherry Briggs provided both. She followed the journal of a British civil servant from the 1880s and retraced his travels. She writes about her experiences and juxtaposed them to the experiences/reflections of the British traveler. In addition, she writes about the civil war between the north and the south and managed to explain the issues that brought the discord to the island. Cherry created a picture of Sri Lanka today..the good and the bad. It's a well done book.

Travel guides to Sri Lanka give readers very little idea of what the island and its people are like; Cherry Briggs portrays the nation as it really is. The book is very cleverly organized around the itineraries of Colonial Secretary Sir James Emerson Tennent in 1845-50. She roughs it on buses and tuk-tuks, but also stays in some up-scale tourist destinations. She shows some dramatic contrasts (Jaffna, Mullaitivu, Kalpitiya), but also some surprising continuities. I could quibble about many of the historical details, but they don't matter as much as the authenticity of her perceptive observations about the people: their culture, habits good and bad, attitudes towards the British (and each other), even their hair. Her descriptions, especially the bus rides, brought back vivid recollections of my own experiences 50 years ago.

I learned a lot about Sri Lanka in a way that was really very enjoyable. Well written and oftentimes amusing.

I read this book immediately after my visit to SL. Thoroughly enjoyable and easy to read, it gave me a better appreciation of the beautiful people and customs of the country.

Cherry is many many steps above the "I'm flipping my travel diary into a book" and Sri Lanka is a wonderful country to live in, particularly if irony tickles your fancy.

Read it in preparation for trip to Sri Lanka. Good for getting an overall picture of the culture and geography.

Extremmely pleasant reading

I'm not much of a reader of travel novels, nor have I ever been to Sri Lanka, but now I am obsessed.

Briggs writes with such vivid detail and personal insights that the reader feels as if they are on the journey with her. Every step of her journey is brought to life and she gives an unparalleled insight into this beautiful island and makes you fall in love with it from afar. Read this book if you've ever been to Sri Lanka, if you've got a love of travelling or if you want to go on an adventure from the comfort of your living room. Highly recommended!

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