

LEISURE

Land of tea and beauty



Margaretha Haglind

**By Esther Williams
and Radhika
Dandeniya**

"There are so many beautiful books about wine valleys, why hasn't anyone done a book about tea valleys?" asked Swedish journalist Margaretha Haglind during one of her visits to Bogawantalawa. The breath-taking landscape and tea culture she experienced there inspired her to write *Bogawantalawa - Life and Passion in the Golden Valley of Tea*, which was released last week.

Twenty years in journalism has seen Mrs. Haglind writing for various business-oriented magazines in Italy and London. She currently contributes to the Swedish "Design and Konstvarlden" (Design and the World of Art). When her children were young, she imported Sri Lankan toys to Sweden

for seven years and also travelled extensively to places like the Napa Valley in the U.S., wine valleys in France and the Hunter Valley in Australia.

Initially visiting Sri Lanka because of her husband's job as Area Manager of Ericsson, she, while vacationing at Bogawantalawa, thought it would be the perfect subject for a book. Fortunately, the family had to move to Sri Lanka for a 10-month period at that point and she couldn't wait to get started on the book, set in a country that she fell in love with on sight, enthuses Ms. Haglind, describing Sri Lanka as her second home.

The glossy coffee table book features different aspects of a tea estate. "The traditions of planting, plucking and processing tea in this valley are largely carried out in the same orthodox way and have not changed much during the last hundred

years," the author says.

The chapter on the Legacy of the Scottish Pioneers takes readers briefly through the history of the first settlers and the planting of tea, which is not a native plant of this country. Ms. Haglind also vividly describes the dramatic weather changes, the 'mysterious microclimate' which is characterized by bright sunshine at one moment, and pouring rain the next.

She also captures the panoramic views from the planters' bungalows. The well-manicured gardens, some looking almost Italian, the stone works with Roman arches and exotic lemon trees beside the English country houses add to the charm of the region, she feels.

Facts concerning tea, differences in leaf, flavour etc., are dealt with in detail. Says Haglind, those who start in the tea sector are hooked on tea for life, as tea culture is addictive.

For a foreigner to produce such a book, she

had to actually live, interact and personally experience life with the warm and friendly people of the area. What struck her was the variety of people that she came across, of different religions and language groups living peacefully side by side unlike in some other areas in Sri Lanka. This she hopes will encourage peace everywhere in the near future.

Being a professional photographer, all the vivid pictures depicting different moods of the valley that illustrate the book are her own. She also designed the layout for the book which was printed in Singapore. It is distributed by Vijitha Yapa Associates.

Having a husband who visits Sri Lanka every tenth week, Margaretha Haglind has ample opportunity to discover more of Sri Lanka.

With the roads to the North-East open, she is eager to venture into other exotic locations in the country. "Something about beautiful Trincomalee would be nice," she smiles.

