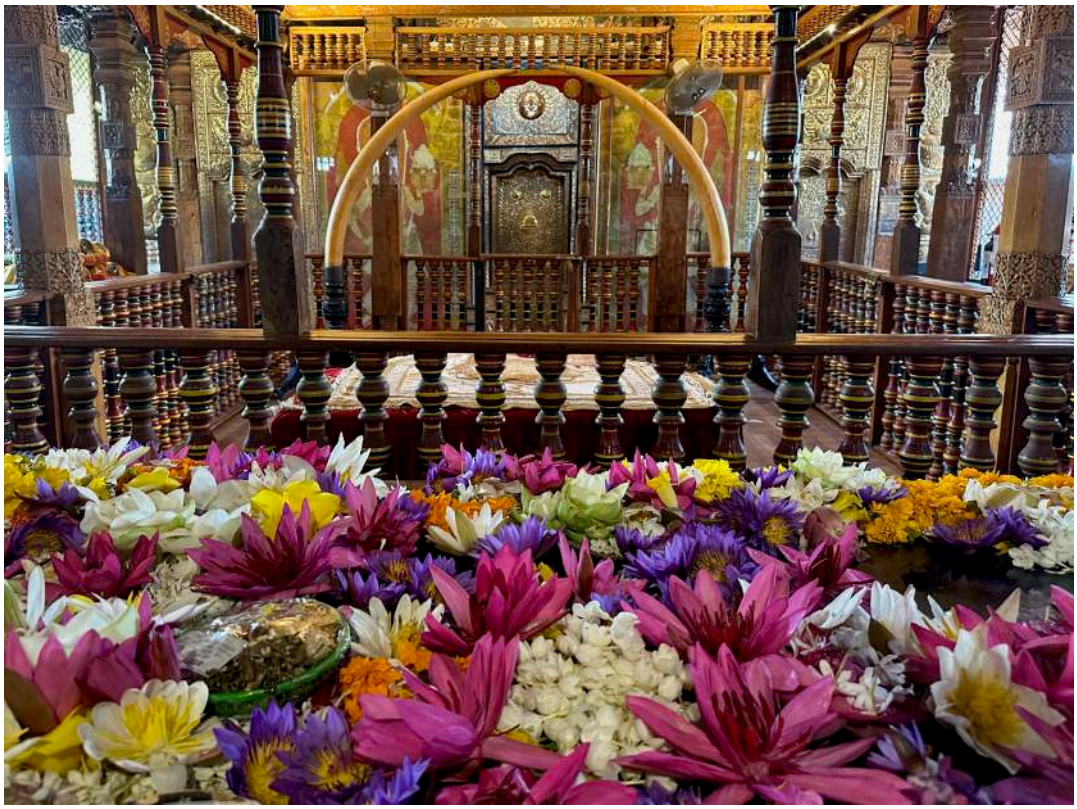
16 Navam Poya - 15 February 2025

When we left Istanbul the afternoon was dark, snow was falling and the world seemed cast in monochrome.

The following morning, 12 February, we arrived in Colombo to be met by a tropical dawn. The air was warm, moist and scented; everywhere an abundance of green.

Auspicious perhaps that the day of our arrival should be full moon day, known here as a Poya Day and each February as Navam Poya. It's a day that marks an important event in the life of the Buddha - this month the appointment of his two chief disciples, Sariputta and Moggallāna. Amongst Buddhists, who make up approximately 70% of the Sri Lankan population, the day is dedicated to rituals, meditation and temple visits.

In accordance with Poya Day teachings we appoint ourselves honorary Buddhists for the day and, before arriving at our hotel in Kandy, make a visit to Sri Lanka's most revered Buddhist temple - The Temple of the Sacred Tooth.



Central Shrine - The Temple of the Sacred Tooth

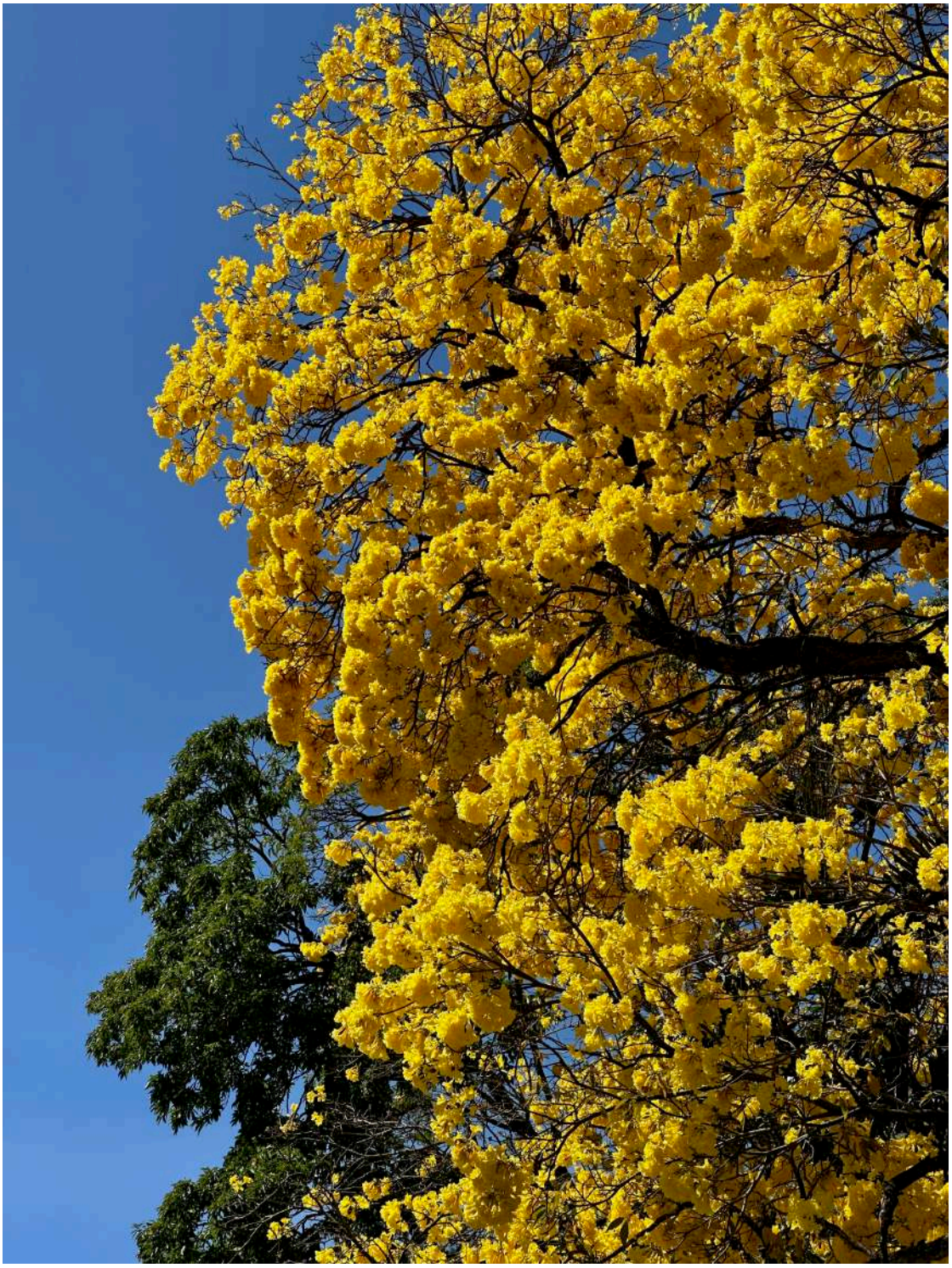
My 2025 New Year's resolution had been, on waking, to spend time with the early light in silence, contemplating whatever lay ahead of me with as empty a mind as possible, a cup of hot tea allowed. 1st January this was a view over the city of Cape Town, the bay and the mountains that lie behind it.

That resolution only lasted 3 days after which I reverted to what I pretty much always do; first emptying the dishwasher as quietly as possible so I don't disturb Jeremy; then straight to the computer.

Now we're back in Sri Lanka and I've renewed my resolve. I'm on it. Day three.

Early this morning, a view over thickly wooded hills stretching into the distance. Below a slow moving river. Light and shade travelling over the hills in concert with the rising sun. I hear birds, dogs, monkeys and the distant sounds of the world waking. I try to keep my mind empty of thoughts. That's hard. There are only the briefest moments of 'receiving' as opposed to 'processing'. Neutral mind is not easy to achieve. It's an 'undoing' and that takes practice and perseverance.

Later in the morning we made a visit to Kandy’s world famous Royal Botanic Gardens.



Yellow Trumpet / Handroanthus serratifolius

Palm Avenue

Never Never Plant / Stromanthe thalia

Pride of Burma / Amherstia nobilis

Elephant Apple / Dillenia indica

Fern Forest

Coral Aphelandra / Orange Shrimp Plant - Aphelandra sinclairiana

No doubt it was visiting this garden that put me in a contemplative mood; that caused me to consider then, as I have often done before, the comparative benefits of spending more of my time ‘being’ as opposed to ‘doing’.

Later, during a boat trip down the Mahaweli river, the same thoughts presented.

Maybe our visit to The Temple of the Secret Tooth impacted my psyche more deeply than I imagined?