

# SUNRISE FACETS

Old friends building a cutting factory together.



Nilanthy and Wijittra at the opening ceremony



Svend, lighting a candle to wish good luck



On the 2nd of January 2022, Wennick-Lefèvre opened the new lapidary, *Sunrise Facets*, in Sri Lanka in partnership with our dear friend of 15 years, *Nilanthy Thisera*.

Together we're building a cutting factory based on the values of equality, respect, and a healthy life/work balance.

*Nilanthy* is now the first woman in Sri Lanka to own and run a cutting factory.

The journey to a partnership across cultures doesn't come without challenges along the way but when you face those challenges as a team you can create something truly harmonious and beautiful.

## THE FOUNDATION FOR A GREAT PARTNERSHIP

We met *Nilanthy* in 2008 while doing business at the Sri Lankan lapidary, *Beehive industries*. She had worked her way from being a quality controller, to supervising over 1000 cutters and handling the factory's import and export.

That meant she was handling the orders for *Wennick-Lefèvre*.

We got to know her as a resourceful and responsible person who was a joy to work with every time.

Over the years we had built mutual respect with one another and when *Beehive Industries* unfortunately had to close its doors in 2019, we decided to offer her a partnership with *Wennick-Lefèvre* to build a new cutting factory together.

From working with her for over a decade, we knew we shared similar values and that we had laid the foundation for a great potential partnership.

What made our partnership possible was that both *Nilanthy* and we had a willingness to listen and understand each other's needs.

We understood that only by supporting your partner so that they're able to flourish, does your own business also grow.

Our similarities became apparent when we sat down to discuss how we saw our partnership and how we could morph our individual morals into the shared value set of our partnership.

*Respect* and *equality* are essential for us in our relationship as partners but also as *integrated values* at the cutting factory.

It's important to us that everyone feels and is a valuable member of the team which should function as a family.

That means looking out for each other and supporting one another in times of need.

We also agree that having a *good life/work balance* is paramount to ensuring that everyone feels fulfilled and is motivated to do their best every day.

Only by having this balance can we reach our full potential as people and businesses and enable each other to grow.

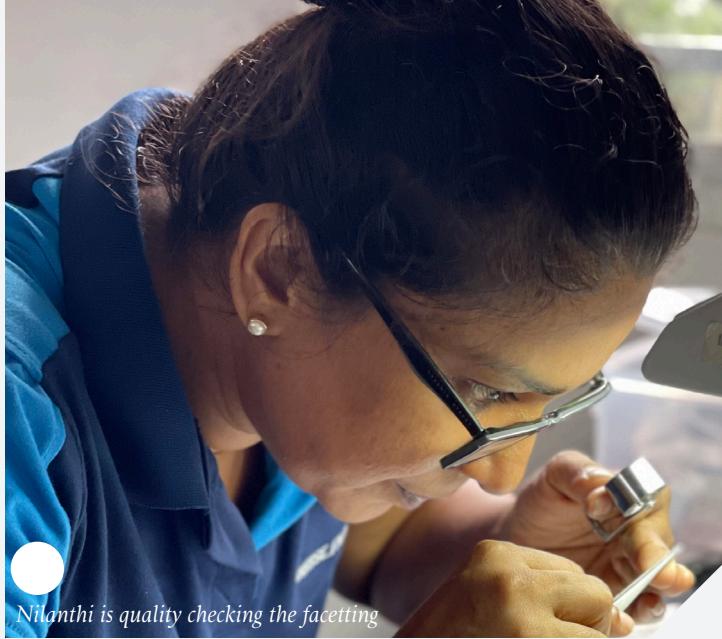
Lastly, both *Wennick-Lefèvre* and *Nilanthy* are ambitious and strive to achieve greater things than we can imagine presently.

We are open to learning along the way to transform ourselves and take the lead in changing the industry for the better.



# SUNRISE FACETS

continued



Nilanthi is quality checking the facetting

*“They’re the family and I’m not the owner.  
We’re a team. I’m not the boss - I’m the sister.  
I’m the big sister to them.  
They call me big sister.  
I know them from working together before from my 20 years in the  
gem industry. I don’t get tired of work.  
If I must take over quality control I go. Preform, I go.  
Sometimes my employees get sick and then I go.  
I’m always here.  
Every morning I clean up and prepare tea for them. I’m not doing the  
cutting because they’re the experts.  
They’re experienced cutters. When I opened the factory, I asked them  
to come work with me and they came to join me.  
I take care of my cutters and handle them carefully because they’re  
very difficult to find”*  
- Nilanthi Thisera



## ENACTING OUR VALUES

We are enacting our values in both our partnership with *Nilanthi* and at the cutting factory, *Sunrise Facets*.

From the start we’ve aimed to create a culture where everyone is equal and respected, and this has formed an atmosphere where everyone can speak their mind and support each other. Just as *Wennick-Lefèvre* and *Nilanthi* are a partnership, so are *Nilanthi* and her employees. They listen and help one another in times of need like a family unit.

*Nilanthi* has told us that she personally doesn’t see herself as the boss but rather their sister. She’s there to help and take care of her employees every day.

Whether that means covering for them in case of sickness, making tea and lunch for them or providing a bed overnight if they can’t go home due to monsoon rain flooding the roads.

She gladly accommodates specific needs, and some cutters have shorter days as their commuting times are long and others have specific tasks to match their competences in the best way.

*Nilanthi* knows most of her cutters from their time as colleagues at *Beehive Industries* - and some she’s known since they were kids. The team has built a close and loyal bond with one another and know that their factory is unique in *Sri Lanka* and is something to be cherished.

In our partnership, we’ve implemented the same family values by supporting *Nilanthi* financially in the 1.5 years that it took to renovate her third floor into the cutting factory.

During this period, we paid her full salary and covered a lot of the costs related to the renovation and the buying of new cutting equipment.

*Wennick-Lefèvre* is committed to paying a 50% premium on top of the cutting rates in the market.

This is a business model that we have always applied. It enables our partners to grow their businesses and also adapt a responsible policy towards their teams and set new standards in regards to contracts and salaries.

To our excitement the standards we expected *Nilanthi* to implement, were not only met – they far exceeded our expectations. The contracts we suggested, were actually less ambitious than what *Nilanthi* had already implemented.

The salaries of the workers are not simply improved, they are doubled!

All choices made by *Nilanthi*, and the premium we pay, is put to work to an extend we did not imagine possible.

# SUNRISE FACETS

continued



Every link of our supply chain united. Wijitra, Rishan and Nilanthi

## WORKERS' CONTRACTS

The contracts we've created are similar to the ones we know from the western world. While most Sri Lankan lapidaries wouldn't have contracts for their employees, *Sunrise Facets* ensure the employees a two months notice period among other fundamental rights.

*Nilanthi* has personally included equal pay between genders, paid holidays and six months paid maternity leave which would not typically be the case.

*Nilanthi's* team has a 42-hours Sri Lankan work week with two breaks throughout each day. Sunday is off as it is a sacred day of rest in the Buddhists religion.

These contracts ensure their rights - especially women's rights in the workplace - which is unusual in the Sri Lankan gem cutting industry.

## OUR SHARED AMBITION

In our partnership we are laying the foundation for a lapidary built in and by a harmonious community and producing the highest quality faceted stones. *Nilanthi* cuts exclusively for Wennick-Lefèvre which means that she can customize the production to fit the needs of our customers. She provides beautiful cuts to our Madagascan sapphires and a unique luster due to her slow polishing process. Quality is paramount.

*Profit* to both parties is secondary. We don't have plans on expanding the factory and we are proud to have a small and exclusive production that fits our customers' needs and doesn't waste stones by overproducing stock.

We want to show our industry that true partnerships and an integrated set of shared values not only create the best working environment but are also the key to running a sustainable business. We aim to transform all communities where we have a presence, for the better.

The fact that *Nilanthi* has founded the first female owned cutting factory in Sri Lanka is a huge achievement, but for us in Wennick-Lefèvre it was just a plus and not the deciding factor that she's a woman. It was not her gender, but rather her capabilities, competences and personality that drew us to working with her. Sri Lanka can be a very prejudiced and old-fashioned society where men run the businesses and their values are typically based on power and profit. We believe that *Nilanthi* will prove that their strategies are outdated.

Many companies would stay away from trying to change the status quo in another country but we have confronted this challenge due to our values in Wennick-Lefèvre.

We want to create a positive change in and around the communities surrounding our supply chain and it's one of our goals, in Sri Lanka specifically, to promote gender equality.



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## A PARTNERSHIP ACROSS CULTURES

Having a Sri Lankan business partner offers many opportunities due to the profound work ethics of the culture. *Nilanthi* and her team in particular are very detail oriented and will assess each stone closely before and during cutting compared to many other lapidaries who will prioritize a quick profit over quality. This work ethic and focus is also what gives *Sri Lanka* their good reputation in gem cutting.

They have a long history of cutting and are considered to be some of the best globally, only rivalled by the Swiss who initially trained the Sri Lankan cutters.

*Building* a cutting factory across cultures does present challenges along the way. We have found that most of them lie within communication as our cultures are quite different.

Communication in *Sri Lanka* is calm and patient while Danish communication is more direct and hurried.

We're used to being able to pay for work to be done quickly but that's not part of the culture in *Sri Lanka* where the culture is more laid back.

There, you will only get the best quality if you have built a good relationship and established mutual respect with the people you buy from.

*That's* why it was essential to us to start a partnership with someone who we knew well and had a good relationship with. In the business culture people usually work alone.

If they choose to work together, they think more in the short term as they are not used to being able to rely on each other.

This is a culture that we hope to change over time by working with *Nilanthi* and thereby inspire more people and companies to trust each other and work together.

Building partnerships require work, collaboration, and an understanding for one another.

Building a partnership is an ongoing process and it's a pleasure to do it together with *Nilanthi* and her team.

