

THEATRE

Conversations with God, Cinderella and Fear



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A bench, a friend, a fairytale character. Anything can be a vessel for conflict resolution in Jungian psychodrama

“When you embody another person, you understand things from their perspective,” says Magdalene Jeyarathnam, founder of the Indian Institute of Psychodrama. “When you are caught in conflict, you need to understand why you, as well as the other person, are behaving a certain way.”

Exploring one’s mind and opening channels of communication is the basis of IIP’s workshop on Jungian psychodrama, that will be held over the consecutive weeks. It will be led by Dr Maurizio Gasseau, a Turin-based clinical psychologist, who began working in the field of Jungian psychodrama in 1980.

“Jungian psychodrama involves group therapy wherein you invite others to personify not just different people, but also elements of nature that may stand out in your mind, or even something as abstract as a feeling of fear,” says Magdalene, who holds a Master’s degree in Psychiatric Social Work.

When you walk into this workshop, you will be asked to visualise a certain scene from your life that may be troubling you. You will then verbalise your problems, while your partner takes up the role of the person you are in conflict with. Soon after, there will be a role reversal – where you switch to acting as the other person. Your partner will then act as you and repeat what you just said, so that you can look at the situation from the other perspective.

“The protagonists take on every role so that their perspectives keep changing. The partner, on the other hand, is like a vessel, a reflecting board for the protagonists to express themselves,” she says.

In one section, participants will be asked to enact their recurring dreams. “Say you have been sitting on a bench in that dream, or you see a certain character again and again. While enacting it out, you can take on the role of either yourself, or the bench you were sitting on, or that character, and then describe things from that point of view,” she explains.

The director or the trainer will facilitate this re-enactment, helping the participant understand their mental processes – a method that can be used in team building, conflict management, stress management, and improving communication.

Another section of the workshop will involve participants portraying characters from their favourite fairy tales and legends. “There’s always a reason behind our identifying with certain characters from stories,” she says, explaining how such a resonance reveals deeper issues or behavioural patterns. “Of course, when you are dealing with people who have mental disorders, therapy is not a substitute for medication,” she underlines.

Magdalene experienced the most striking result of a psychodrama class while she, and the Yuva Ekta Foundation, were working with juvenile offenders at Adharshila Special Home for Boys and Place of Safety, Majnu ka Tila, Delhi.

“We did a guided imagery, allowing them to visualise whatever came to their mind. One of them saw himself talking to God. He spoke to God, regretting the sorrow he had caused his mother to face, and asking him to take that pain away,” she recalls, “After the role reversal, he spoke to himself as God, and said ‘naturally, your mother will cry because of what you did, you have to be a better person’. When he opened his eyes, he was in tears .”

The workshop will be held from September 1 to 9 at IIP, Chetpet. For more details, call 9884700135.

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