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## Today's Paper » NATIONAL » TAMIL NADU

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### The many ways of telling tales

Nitya Menon

On a summery Sunday morning in an apartment tucked away in Kilpauk, Sai Pradeep was wildly gesticulating as he relayed a story to a group of people listening in rapt attention.

The first in the seven-part storytelling workshop conducted by Eric Miller, Director of the World Storytelling Institute, the series has found an eclectic bunch of takers. The love for spinning a yarn has brought together parents, behavioural trainers, teachers and medical practitioners.

C. Anbudurai, a psychiatrist by profession, says he, like everyone else, grew up on his grandmother's stories

“I find that it is one of the most meaningful ways of relating to people. I'm sure this will be a value addition to my work.”

On the other hand, Sai Pradeep, a behavioural trainer, finds storytelling an important tool in influencing people in the work space. “I find that stories embody the element of possibility – of something that can be.”

Having trained as many as 200 people through workshops across the city over the past six years, Miller, a Ph. D in Folklore from the University of Pennsylvania, says that it is the interactivity of storytelling that he enjoys most.

Meenakshi, a mother caring for a child with learning difficulties, hopes to use storytelling as an instrument to nurture her daughter's communication skills. She says: “I hope to empower my daughter to overcome her difficulties.”

The training which involves modules on folklore apart from autobiographical and original stories has in the past presented challenges. For example, Miller cautions that interpretations of epics are always sensitive themes. However, he clarifies that what matters is not whether the story is true or not but the way in which it is told.

In a fascinating aside, he admits to having been profoundly moved by a story which propelled him to relocate to Chennai.

“Something about the story of Kannagi got to me. I may be wrong but I find that the ideal of authority having a conscience still embedded in people's minds over here.”

### ***An eclectic crowd learned the nuances of storytelling***

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