

# "Storytelling by and for Adults at a Café Coffee Day!"

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***True stories told live.***

***Personal-experience storytelling by and for adults.***

***Autobiographical storytelling.***

These are terms for an activity that was started by an organisation named The Moth in New York City in 1997.

Now ***Personal-experience storytelling by and for adults*** is also occurring once-a-month at Café Coffee Day Square (on Khader Nawaz Khan Road) in Chennai -- facilitated by the World Storytelling Institute (which is based in Chennai).

On a Monday evening in November 2013, the topic was, "The day I became human".

In December 2013, the topic was, "The best gift I ever gave or received".

In January 2014, the topic was, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again".

In February 2014 (Monday 17 Feb, at 6pm), the topic would be, "I made it look easy".

The format of these events is: There are three featured storytellers, and then any attendees are welcome to tell. There are ten-minute time-limits for each teller. The modest event-admission fee also covers the cost of a cup of coffee or tea.

Do you like to meet people, and hear about their lives? If your answers to these questions are, "Yes" -- ***Personal-experience storytelling by and for adults*** in a Cafe Coffee Day might be for you!

***Personal-experience storytelling by and for adults*** has become a major cultural phenomena in the West. Organisations facilitate these events in major cities throughout the USA, Europe, and Australia.

***Personal-experience storytelling by and for adults*** may in part be a response to the anonymity and alienation that sometimes occurs in urban life. It draws upon traditions of spoken-word performance such as Stand-up Comedy, and Poetry Readings.

But is ***Personal-experience storytelling by and for adults*** right for India? Are people in India ready for this? Aren't Indian people too shy, reserved, and conservative for this sort of thing? I don't know... India is changing!

And after all, Indian people are known as great storytellers.

Storytelling is undergoing a renaissance in the world today. And storytelling is not just for children! Storytelling is a form of public speaking that may also involve some acting (when one role-plays characters). Practicing storytelling can improve communication skills, creative thinking, and also rational thinking. In an age of information overload, people appreciate the way stories can neatly bundle information and meaning.

Many of the soft-skills taught in corporate Human Resource Departments have to do with storytelling. Being able to clearly explain in an engaging manner what one has done, and what one would like to do, is a crucial workplace skill.

And as video calling becomes an ever more important part of our personal and professional lives, storytelling via video call might very well also thrive.

As CCD has taught us: A lot can happen over a cup of coffee. People can tell their friends what is going on in their lives. People could also tell perfect strangers about what they have experienced and learned in life.

Sometimes storytelling competitions are called Story Slams. People seem to enjoy competitions -- it gives them an excuse to get together. Perhaps leading storytellers in Chennai CCDs could meet leading storytellers in Bangalore CCDs, and so on.

Two approaches that have proved to be especially effective in **Personal-experience storytelling by and for adults** are:

- 1) Building the storytelling performances around very specific occurrences, which eventually tend to "break the camel's back", and lead to break-throughs and realisations for the teller.
- 2) Developing dramatic tension in a story: What is at stake in the story? What might happen as a result of the narrated incident? What change might occur in the teller as a result of this incident?

The monthly storytelling event at the Chennai CCD Square is also functioning as the monthly meeting of the Chennai Storytelling Association. All are invited to come and meet (and join) Chennai's community of professional storytellers!

Photos of the storytelling event in November 2013 are at <http://tinyurl.com/mt3onxv> .

An *Indian Express* article about the storytelling event in November 2013 is at <http://www.storytellinginstitute.org/78.jpg> ,  
and <http://tinyurl.com/lbgyst2> .

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