

"An interview with Dr Eric Miller, Director, World Storytelling Institute, and Chennai Storytelling Festival"

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English translation:

1) What is storytelling?

Storytelling can be defined as, the relating of a series of events. "Relating" is a key word here, because in storytelling events, the stories are conveyed in the context of ongoing relationships between tellers and listeners. These people are "present" to each other: they can see and hear each other, and can respond to each other, as the event unfolds.

Books and movies deliver stories, and enable people to experience stories. However, they involve documents and recordings: non-interactive media. Thus, strictly-speaking, these ways of delivering stories do not qualify as storytelling.

2) Who could benefit from storytelling?

All could benefit from telling and listening to stories -- and from discussing the stories, and ways they are told.

Engaging in storytelling activities helps to develop one's creativity, imagination, and communication skills (such as ways to present material so that listeners would be able to take it in and make sense of it).

Acting-out (role-playing) story characters may help one to develop empathy and compassion, because this activity involves imagining and feeling how things look, seem, and feel from various points of view.

Storytelling activities may also help one think about ways actions may have consequences.

Storytelling, like all forms of play, gives opportunities to think through, and practice possible ways of managing, life situations.

3) Why do you organize this 3-day storytelling festival in Chennai?

The second edition of the Chennai Storytelling Festival (CSF) is scheduled for 7-9 February 2014 (Friday the 7th, Saturday the 8th, and Sunday the 9th of February).

The CSF is primarily a teaching-and-learning festival, featuring three days of workshops for adults. (There would be performances for people of all ages in the evenings.) Admission is free for all of the workshops. We are doing this because we want Chennai to develop as a leading hub in the global revival of storytelling.

The previous edition of CSF offered workshops that gave training in using storytelling for a wide variety of applications, including to teach, coach, entertain, and heal. CSF 2014 would focus on "Storytelling and Healing": that is, using storytelling to help people feel better.

There are many types of Folktales, including Animal fables, Fairytales, Raja-Rani stories, Grandmother stories, and even episodes of epics. Telling such stories to give comfort and guidance is a practice "as old as the hills". CSF 2014 would involve comparing this practice, with modern global psychological approaches to facilitating emotional well-being. We would like to develop ways to use the best of both approaches.

Thus, in CSF 2014, there would be one workshop on telling Tamil folktales to give comfort and guidance (in Tamil, with translation). The other workshops would be on topics such as, "Using Metaphors to Create Inspirational, Healing, and Transformative Stories", "Art, and Storytelling and Healing", and "Dance/Movement, and Storytelling and Healing" (all in English).

Enclosed with this file is a "Letter for Hospital Administrators" (pdf file) I have sent to Hospital Administrators in Chennai and vicinity, inviting them and their hospitals to be involved with CSF 2014. This letter might give a clearer picture of what CSF 2014 is about.

Some of the workshops of CSF 2014 would also be accessible via videoconference, and in some cases the videoconferences would be webcast live, and the recordings would be accessible on line. This is a technological experiment we are attempting in response to people's requests to participate in, or at least observe, our Workshops online.

4) What can people expect from those 3 days of workshop?

These workshops might be useful for parents, teachers, trainers in soft-skills and life-skills, performers, and anyone else who might be interested in storytelling, and/or methods of facilitating psychological healing. No previous education or experience is needed.

Two of the workshops would offer introductions to "Art Therapy", and "Dance Therapy". In CSF 2014, we are helping to develop the field of "Storytelling Therapy" (also known as "Therapeutic Uses of Storytelling", "Narrative Therapy", "Narrative Medicine", "Storytelling and Healing", "Storytelling as a Healing Art", etc).

Chennai Storytelling Festival is presented by the World Storytelling Institute (WSI), based in Chennai. The WSI's mission is to document and develop styles of storytelling. The WSI perceives storytelling as a form of communication, and seeks to help develop forms of storytelling that might be useful in the world today.

Advance registration is requested for CSF 2014's free workshops. For additional information, and to register, please call 98403 94282 or e-mail to info@storytellinginstitute.org .

The workshop schedule and other information about CSF 2014 is at www.storytellinginstitute.org