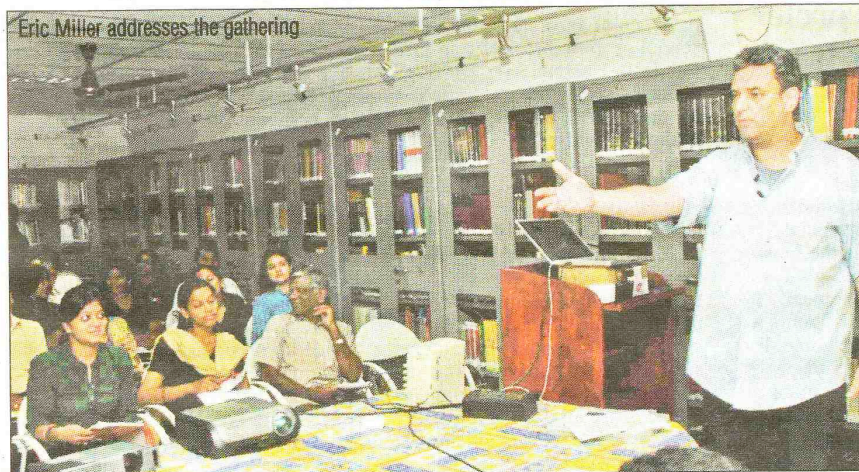


A journey across the state through stories



Eric Miller addresses the gathering

CHITRA MAHESH

DECCAN CHRONICLE

Story telling, eco tourism and cultural exchange was the focus of the talk by Eric Miller, that was part of the workshop on Higher Education of Inclusion Collaboration and Community Engagement being conducted by the National Folklore Support Centre.

Eric spoke about how people who are unfamiliar with cultures of lands, specifically that of Tamil Nadu, would be benefited if along the travels they are part of a story telling culture that would bring the essence of the world they are part of, albeit briefly. He calls Chennai the new Poompuhar and says, "Poompuhar must have been like Chennai those days. It evokes a sense of nostalgia."

The Kannagi tour that he touched upon goes from the old Poompuhar, Madurai

Valparai and then to Top Slip in a curve that actually briefs people about the journey of the myth and the legend. He dwelt briefly on the kind of programmes they have come up with to make visitors enjoy the ambience and the intrinsic nature of the culture through video clips, photographs, maps and live performances.

Eric exhibited clips of the catamaran *pattu* — the celebration song and the small skit that spoke of the fisher folk who went to sea and were thought to be dead but were actually not.

The manner in which the women react upon their return and the ensuing celebration brings about the culture of the fisher folk in bright hues. Eric believes the Nachikuppam area (Santhome) that shows the link between the sea and its people and the catamaran symbolising it is a perfect

specimen for anthropological study.

Eric explains, "Nowadays, youngsters don't want to go into the fishing profession and would much rather play video games. So if someone developed a videogame based on fishing, we might be able to get more people into this vocation."

The workshop looks at different disciplines that have rediscovered folklore and ethnographic fieldwork as materials and methods of central importance. The National Folklore Support Centre's resources provide the additional help. The centre aims to present its methods and materials in an appropriate theoretical context with the help from collaborators and scholars in the field.

Conducted from July 2-9, the social anthropological aspects of the Indian folkloric traditions and customs have been the focus in these few days with experts and scholars presenting their views through lectures, audiovisuals and films.

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