

A STORY TELLER'S TALE

Pic: P. Jawahar



Cathy Spagnoli

ments could do.

She knew what she wanted to do in life through an unforgettable experience that she had during her first visit to the country in 1970. After hours of tedious travel to Delhi, her health gave up on her and she got admitted in a hospital in Delhi with Hepatitis. There she befriended a Muslim patient who was in the same ward. Cathy was shattered and completely caught off-guard when the girl, who had been alive and talking till a few hours back, suddenly passed away.

"I was left all alone battling the harsh truths of a new country and new people. That was when two of my father's friends came to my rescue and I just kept questioning them about death, as the incident had left me shook. They told me stories of mythology, life and so much more. I found myself intrigued by them and completely drawn," she recalls. This was the first stone

towards her career as a professional storyteller.

Cathy's profession has certainly taken her places. She has traveled widely and shared her stories in Indonesia, with the Japanese epic singers, Korean monks, Tibetan dancers and the South East Asian refugees. "Storytelling is like a triangle. There should be perfect coordination of the storyteller with his story and his audience. I haven't mastered it myself because most of the time I don't know my audience," she admits.

Today, her stories reach a wide audience of both children and adults across the globe. "This is not exactly a lucrative profession. It brings in modest money but I have been supporting my family with it for years now and we are doing great. More over this is not my work, it's my passion," she smiles.

— Saranya Chakrapani

Pic: D. Sampath Kumar



INDIA has drawn in a number of people from abroad who are purely fascinated by its abundant cultural heritage and arts. But Cathy Spagnoli owes all the good times in the sub-continent to her passion for telling stories.

As a young American girl, fresh out of college, Cathy's first visit

to India changed her life. And with time, it gave her more; a man she fell in love and decided to spend the rest of her life with. Today, she is a professional storyteller, wife and mother, based in Seattle and travelling profusely in India and is absolutely convinced of the wonders cross-cultural experi-

A NARRATION FOR ALL

THE select audience at Chamiers, the venue for Cathy Spagnoli's storytelling session, seemed transfixed, barring the applause that they cheered her with, story after story. An evening when the climate isn't hard on you, a gathering that thoroughly enjoys the session and a master story teller to keep you entertained, the effect, no need to say, was telling.

Cathy's session lasted an hour. "My stories have been designed for the adults. Hope the children don't get too bored," she began her session with. But, for the children, she did have a story to narrate too. The story about the tiger that ate rice cakes, her narration supplemented with pictorial representation of the story.

But the show's highlight had to be the sign language story about the Monkey that liked mangoes, which had the audience cracking up, as

they guessed the story she explained with simple signs.

Forgotten Korean fables, stories about her story telling sessions- the narration was rich with her experiences and learnings. Having spent a year and a half in Korea helped her get wind of their evergreen stories, she explained. Adding to the feel was the Hangeul script, artefacts and books from Korea that formed the backdrop for the storytelling session.

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