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## Professor turns storyteller

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STORYTELLING is an art. According to Australia-based Ananth Rao, it is the extent to which a person gets involved with the story,



Ananth Rao

relates to the audience and identifies with the characters in the story that sets a good storyteller apart from the rest. His job as a professor of applied mathematics did not stop Rao from exploring his creativity in storytelling in its cultural context.

### TELLING TALES

"I moved to Australia around 30 years ago. When colleagues and friends asked me to tell them something about my homeland, I wanted to make the sessions more interesting. That's how I started storytelling," says Rao.

The traditional art of storytelling has always been a source of inspiration for this professor. "As a child in Bangalore, I remember listening to traditional performers. They can be excellent entertainers, since their traditions are not time-bound and therefore can be of relevance to today's society as well. I have been translating various stories from Sanskrit to English and shared it with so many people abroad who are genuinely interested in learning more about a different country," he explains.

In the city on work, Rao also spent an evening at the Oxford Book Store telling a story from the work of Kalidasa. Specially for this story telling session, Rao told the story from Kalidasa's *Kumarasambhava* — of how goddess Parvathy does penance in order to win over Shiva.

"It was a one-hour performance wherein I explained Kalidasa's *shlokas* along with Narahari Rao, a scientist at the IISc who played the harmonium," says Rao.

According to Rao, more than any religious relevance, it is the ability to develop an age-old story in a universal language that gives his sessions an extra touch. Storytelling has been Rao's hobby so far, but considering his passion for the same, it may soon develop into a profession as well.