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Language: English

Type of Presentation: Key Note Presentation

About Presenters:

Kamini Ramachandran: Storytelling has always been vital for Kamini Ramachandran, from her earliest memories of her grandparents telling her stories to her efforts in continuing this storytelling tradition with her two young sons every day since they were six months old.

Kamini studied English Literature & Language at the University of Reading (UK) and taught Speech and Drama privately in Kuala Lumpur before becoming a mother. While she is comfortable telling stories to children using puppets, kamishibai boards, masks and songs, she is also adept at telling stories for adults, drawing on her preference for darker, ambiguous, other-realm tales

Presently a Singapore resident, Kamini joined forces with Verena Tay to found MoonShadow Stories in Nov 2004 to promote the lost art of the oral narrative. Kamini helped found the Storytelling Association (Singapore) in early 2006 and is currently serving her second term as its President. Drawing on her extensive knowledge of stories and the storytelling craft, Kamini has provided storytelling consultancy services for a variety of educators, educational institutions and commercial entities. She is featured regularly in the Singapore media sharing stories 'live' on radio.

Gideon Arulmani is a clinical psychologist with a doctoral degree in counselling from the University of Portsmouth (United Kingdom). Much before this however, he has been interested in drama and storytelling. He wrote and produced his first full length drama, a musical called "*I want to be free*," when he was 17 and subsequently produced a number of shorter plays and skits. He is also interested in the documentary as a medium of communication and worked as a photographer-script writer in the early part of his career. He uses the parable as a key element in his presentations and his approach to counselling. He is presently working on two novels in the historical fiction genre set in South Asia. Mowyla, a company he has informally

started, searches for unseen stories in nature to create handmade artifacts that unveil their unseen intricacies. Mowyla products are collected from wild places around the world and ask you to “move on with your life and...” to look beyond for what doesn’t seem to be there, but actually is.

Title of Paper: **Telling Tales: Exploring the story as a mechanism for culture resonant career counselling**

Abstract:

Over the last few years, the importance of culture resonant forms of counselling have begun to be discussed in the literature. All cultures have their traditional counsellors. In Eastern cultures, traditional counsellors (the wise elder, the healer, the grandparent, the uncle or the aunt), typically use illustrations from parables, stories from the holy books and folk tales that depict the gods, folk heroes and other characters whom the help-seeker is already culturally prepared to revere and respect. The attention of the help-seeker would be drawn to how the characters in the stories deal with life’s vicissitudes and the help-seeker would be exhorted to emulate them. Counselling could learn from these methods and consider techniques that have a strong cultural grounding. For example, an Indian counsellor who wishes to respond to the client’s cultural preparedness could draw upon the wit and wisdom enshrined in the stories told by court-jesters, poets and itinerant bards of ancient India. The stories of Auvaiyar who lived in the 1st Century C.E is an example. She wandered around South Indian villages, advising farmers and kings alike through her stories and pithy aphorisms. Tenali Ramakrishna was a famous poet and court-jester in the 16th Century C.E and his stories are a wonderful blend of humour and satire rooted in the cultural ethos of South India. Raja Birbal was the Wazir-e Azam (grand vizier) of the Mughal court in the 16th Century C.E. and his stories reflect the culture of North India and offer simple but deeply meaningful insights into the complexities of life. Indian epics, folk tales and proverbs are excellent repositories of a folk approach to dealing with the incongruities of life. They are part and parcel of everyday life in India and could be used as counselling tools.

The key objective of this Key Note presentation is to illustrate how the ‘story’ could be used as a tool for career counselling. The story selected for the presentation is the Ramayana – one of most famous of Indian epics. It is set around two popular episodes from the Ramayana. The first is the story of Rama, the crown prince, being banished from the Kingdom of Ayodhya. The second is about the famous visit that Hanuman, the monkey God makes to Lanka.

The presentation will be made jointly by Kamini Ramachandran and Gideon Arulmani. Kamini’s role will be that of a story teller and she will present selected episodes from the Ramayana in a story form. Gideon’s role will be to interpret her ‘telling’ into a counselling format. The entire presentation will be a stage performance. Illustrations will be drawn from the sages and yogis, scholars, kings, priests and commoners who populate the Ramayana. The Ramayana is replete with examples of the meaning of renunciation, the importance of assessing opportunities, the origin of talents and aptitudes, the empowering of personal potentials, dealing with unexpected occurrences and barriers one encounters.

This key note presentation will use the Ramayana to illustrate how the story could be used to apply the principles of career guidance.