

DECCAN CHRONICLE
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— metropolis —

Blind for 60 minutes

Dialogue in the Dark show was an eye-opener for many city youngsters



A scene from *Dialogue in the Dark*

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That's your first reaction as you enter 'Dialogue in the Dark', at Inorbit Mall, Madhapur. You are led by the hand through completely darkened rooms. Your guide is a blind or partially sighted person, and as you are confronted with normal, everyday situations, like crossing a street, finding a bench in a park, eating a meal or visiting a coffee shop — the experience of what it is like to be born visually impaired, gradually settles upon you. It opens your eyes to notions you never 'saw' before...

Roles are reversed, as sighted people are torn out of their social routines and visually impaired people give them a sense of orientation and mobility.

During and after the tour, visitors can ask questions they might never have asked a visually impaired person, bringing barriers down on both sides. The emphasis is not on blindness, but on empathy and solidarity.

We got hold of a few people who had taken the tour, which costs around Rs 300 per head. One of them, Suman Khanna, an employee, looked moved. "It was an unforgettable experience." Another, Prathyusha Sharma, marvelled, "Generally you feel sorry for blind people and try to help them. This time it was role reversal — a blind guy was helping me!"

This sort of experience is also empowering for the visually challenged, like it was for Pavan Bundela, who works at Dialogue in the Dark as a guide. He says, "I've been visually

impaired from birth, and there haven't been too many job opportunities, even though I can do everything a normal person does, like accessing a Facebook account. It's a great feeling to work here and guide people who can see." There are around 15 guides like Pavan working at Dialogue in the Dark.

S.V. Krishnam, Founder of ACE, the company which bought the licence for Hyderabad, reflects, "Youngsters these days don't spare much thought for the visually impaired. My wife Sudha and I wanted to change this."

Dialogue in the Dark's goal is to create jobs for sightless people. Since 1988, over six million visitors from more than 25 countries have experienced Dialogue in the Dark, giving 6,000 visually impaired people jobs.

LEASE

Building for lease at Gachibowli Hyderabad 12000 sq.ft area in 3 floors in the prime area Gachibowli x Roads (presently occupied by Intex Flooring & Interiors) falling vacant by February end. Interested parties contact

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