



**Press Release: Announcing “POETS TRANSLATING POETS Festival” in November 2016, Mumbai**

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2016, Mumbai, INDIA

*“For say what one will about the shortcomings of translation, it is and will remain one of the most important and most worthy concerns in the whole of world affairs.”*

*J.W. von Goethe*

Poets Translating Poets is a two-year-long project initiated in October 2014 by the Goethe-Institut Mumbai along with the Goethe-Institutes in South Asia, and in collaboration with the Literaturwerkstatt Berlin / Haus für Poesie and in Cooperation with Deutsche UNESCO, with an aim to create a platform for poets from South Asia and Germany to translate each other’s works. Contemporary poetry from Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka has been translated into German by well-known German poets, while German poetry was similarly translated into South Asian languages during the course of the project. By bringing together 51 poets including 17 German poets from across 20 languages through literary encounters in several South Asian locations, this project promises to stimulate new literary networks and open new avenues for transcultural understanding.

Starting in July 2015, nine ‘**poetry encounters**’ in Mumbai, Dhaka, Delhi, Karachi, Colombo, Trivandrum/Chennai, Kolkata, Hyderabad and Gangtok, have been organized, in which poets came together for a week to understand and translate each other’s poetry. The translation process was facilitated by ‘interlinear’ translators who provided an essentially literal, word-to-word translation of the original texts, prior to the poets’ encounters, and assisted in deciphering cultural nuances, codes and riddles, without prescribing an interpretation of the poems. The original poems and translations are available online, on an extensive website that is documenting this project in order to make the work available freely and in the public domain – [www.goethe.de/ptp](http://www.goethe.de/ptp).

The **website** includes poetry in all the languages as well as audio readings in each poet’s voice. Leading experts in Poetry, Literature and Culture were invited to contribute essays on various related topics and professional photographers have documented the ‘poetry encounters as well as contributed their artistic expression of some of the poems, all these works are available on the website.

Starting in June till October 2016 over **15 poets from South Asia are travelling to over 13 cities and venues in Germany** to meet and present their poetry along with their German counterparts.

A selection of poetry in all the languages titled ‘**Poets Translating Poets**’ has been published by Draupadi Verlag, Heidelberg in Germany

The culmination of this project is the **Poets Translating Poets FESTIVAL** that will take place in several venues across Mumbai including and surrounding Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan Mumbai. The programme will include poetry readings, performances, discussions, panels, film screenings, photo exhibitions, a sound installation and much more and will be organized in collaboration with several partner individuals and organizations.

**The Poets include:**

Abdul Rasheed, Afzal Ahmed Syed, Akbar Ali Natiq, Amar Sindhu, Andreas Altmann, Anitha Thampi, Anja Utler, Ariyawansa Ranaweera, Aruna Dhere, Attiya Dawood, Barbara Köhler, Basudev Sunani, Christian Filips, Daniela Danz, Dawngi Chawngthu, Gerhard Falkner, Harish Meenashru, Hendrik Jackson, Jameela Nishat, Jan Wagner, Jayaprabha, Jeet Thayil, Judith Zander, Kedar Misra, Lalnunsanga Ralte (Sanga Says), Mamta Sagar, Mangalesh Dabral, N Sukumaran, Naseem Shafaie, Neerav Patel, Nicolai Kobus, Orsolya Kalász, Pradnya Daya Pawar, Rajendra Bhandari, Sajjad Sharif, Savita Singh, Shafi Shauq, Shahnaz Munni, Somasundarampillai Pathanathan, Sridala Swami, Sudha Rai, Sukirtharani, Sumanta Mukhopadhyay, Sylvia Geist, Thomas Kunst, Tom Schulz, Ulf Stolterfoht, Ulrike Draesner, Ulrike Almut Sandig, Veerankutty, Yashodhra Ray Chaudhari.

**The Languages include:**

Bengali, English, German, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Mizo, Nepali, Odia, Sindhi, Sinhalese, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu.

**Dr. Martin Wälde**, Director, Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan Mumbai, has been at the helm of bringing this expansive project together. In his words below, he sums up and explains why this project is important:

“The poets showed great courage to take the plunge and engage in languages they did not know - with unfamiliar scripts and alien sounds.

What often happens in trans-cultural dialogues and in cultural exchanges, namely an exchange of unprecedented monologues, is what did not happen in the encounters between poets in South Asia: they listened to each other intently, did not cling to their own language, and allowed themselves to be ‘powerfully affected by the foreign tongue’.

There are a multitude of motives and only the most important are listed here. Contemporary German poetry is virtually unknown in South Asia and accessible primarily in English translations, which attract little attention. An exception is Günter Grass, a selection of his poetry having been translated into Bengali and Hindi. An ancient, primarily oral tradition of poetry ever since the Mahabharata, explains South Asia’s wealth and enormous linguistic diversity. This is continued in the many contemporary poetic traditions in South Asia, most of which are unknown in Germany. Reason enough for the Goethe-Institut to build bridges at a time of insistence on a disastrous, often violent discourse on identity and marginalisation. In almost 60 years of being in South Asia, the Goethe-Institut has never really engaged with the subcontinent’s linguistic diversity. It was high time this ambitious cultural and linguistic dialogue on the particularly complex and very specific structure of language in poetry was initiated.”

**Website:** [www.goethe.de/ptp](http://www.goethe.de/ptp)

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