

## snapshots

# When poets translate poets

A large team of poets and translators have been translating works of other poets

“It’s a nice initiative to work on translations of my English poetry into German and vice-versa. But I strongly feel that the time has



JAYWANT NAIDU

come to first translate poetry in Indian languages. Why is it that a good English poet of the country is not known or does not get an opportunity to showcase his works in any South Indian language or vice-versa?” asks Jeet Thayil, the poet from New Delhi.

Sridala Swami in English and Jayaprabha in Telugu, form part of the large team of poets and translators who have worked for nearly a week to bring together poets by crossing boundaries of language and fostering an understanding of cultures.

Says Amita Desai, director of Goethe Institute, “This project was first initiated in Mumbai about seven months ago when I was supposed to translate Gujarati poems into German and vice versa. I could not take up that programme, but had already made up my mind to bring this initiative to Hyderabad as part of the larger project ‘Poets Translating Poets’ to bring 48 poets from across 19 languages across South Asia and Germany”.

**It’s a great transcultural experience and an extension of a few projects like the German-Arabic poetry translation**

— SYLVIA GEIST, POET

Says Sylvia Geist, poet from Germany, “It’s a great transcultural experience and an extension of a few projects like the German-Arabic poetry translation done earlier. In India there is so much diversity in the languages. Word by word translation is always the first phase resulting in ‘interlinear translation’. Then comes the task of conveying the nearest thought process including sounds and emotions in the translated language, by joining all the strands. It’s like developing a film or post processing of a digital image.”

“About 10 years ago, India was a partner in a book fair in Hamburg and I recall the buzz behind ‘translation’ works and literature from India,” says Tom Schulz, a poet from Germany. “I have learnt a lot and am inspired by this exchange of poetry amongst various regions,” says Urdu poet Jameela Nishat.

— The writer is a musician, creator of ‘Jaywant Guitar’ and a freelance photographer



**POETS UNITE:** (Back row) Jeet Thayil, Tom Schulz and Jameela Nishat; (front row) Amita Desai and Sylvia