

ME AND MY CITY

THROUGH THE LENS



Almost twilight

Aksa Beach in Malad.

PHOTO: RAJUR CHABRIA

SEND IN YOUR PHOTOS

To get your photos of Mumbai featured here, send your entries to htfromwhereistand@gmail.com.

CULTURE CAPSULE



A musical collaboration

Artistes Ranjit Barot (drums), Vishwa Mohan Bhatt (slide guitar), Mohini Dey (bass) and Gulraj Singh (keyboards and vocals) will perform at a show called Confluence.

WHERE: Tata Theatre, NCPA, Nariman Point

WHEN: November 16

TIMINGS: 7pm onward

NOT LOST IN TRANSLATION

Mumbai's Goethe-Institut is set to host the city's biggest poetry festival yet, featuring the translated works of 51 poets

Sapna Mathur

For five days straight in June last year, Mumbai-based Dalit-feminist poet Pradnya Daya Pawar translated the works of two German poets — Ulrike Draesner and Thomas Kunst — into Marathi. Three of Pawar's Marathi poems were also transformed into German verses. "I've been writing Marathi poetry and translating Hindi poems into Marathi for 25 years now, but this experience was challenging. I have never visited Germany or read the work of contemporary German poets. Normally, you translate a poem after it has been translated into English. But here, we sat together and helped each other out," says Pawar.

She is one of the 51 South Asian and German poets, who, for the past two years, have been meeting other poets across nine cities in India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh, and in 14 cities in Germany, to translate each other's poetry. The result of this cultural initiative by the Goethe-Institut — also known as the Max Mueller Bhavan (MMB) — is a collection of 280 translations in 20 languages, including Malayalam, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Bengali, Kashmiri, Odia, German and Marathi. Four of Jeet Thayil's poems have also been translated into German.

The enterprise is culminating in Mumbai at the Poets Translating Poets festival, which will take place



PHOTO: ANDREA FERNANDES/GOETHE-INSTITUT

There is a wall between the people of different countries... Translation is that bridge.

PRADNYA DAYA PAWAR, POET

in the city from November 25 to November 27. Besides several poetry-reading sessions, the festival will feature discussions on varied subjects such as the difference between feminist poetry and the works of female writers. It will also have a session on how Bengali poetry from Bangladesh and West Bengal, respectively, is different from each other. There is even a talk on the market for poetry and translations in South Asia and Germany.

However, Dr Martin



PHOTO: YAWAN RAI/GOETHE-INSTITUT

(From left) Rajendra Bhandari (poet), Sudha Rai (poet), Christian Filips (poet) and Michael Chand (translator) work on a translation in Gangtok (Silkim)

MORE INFO
For details, visit the Poets Translating Poets website.

Wälde, the director of MMB, says, the focus of the festival is to enable poets and readers to understand and accept the world's diversity. "Some of the questions that will arise and those we seek to debate on are: How can we preserve the diversity of cultures and languages when wars and conflicts enforce only one identity, which creates marginalisation and dislocation of refugees?" asks Wälde.

BRIDGING THE GAP

The festival, in effect, addresses the issue of identity politics (people's tendency to form particular religious, racial and social alliances). Pawar says that translation as a practice helps understand people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds and removes these barricades.

"Translation, by definition, stands for something [that is] cross-cultural. Otherwise, there is a wall between the people of different countries, because you don't know anything about their culture. Translation is that bridge," she says.

She adds that the more



PHOTO: THECHERRYTREE.IN

It is important for the idea to be understood by everyone. Translations make a regional work global.

NASEEM SHAFIAE, POET

the number of initiatives taken to translate, the better it is. She also talks about Donald Trump. "With something like this happening (Donald Trump winning the US election), it's important for people from different nations to come together. Liberal thought is

FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS:

Before the festival opens on November 25, a number of German, Marathi, Urdu and Hindi poets, among other poets writing in other languages, will host street poetry performances in five locations — Lower Parel, Mahalaxmi, Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, Dalal Street, and Colaba — across the city. Titled Mumbai Tea Party, the shows will begin at 11am and end at 3pm.

A discussion on how war affects poetry, titled Poetry And Conflict, will take place on November 26, at 2pm. Poets who have experienced conflict in areas including Kashmir, Beirut (Lebanon) and Dhaka (Bangladesh) will speak at the event at the gallery, Goethe-Institut, Kala Ghoda.

A Night Of Prophecy (2002), a film by documentary film-maker Amar Kanwar, will be screened on November 26. It will feature poems and songs from Maharashtra, Kashmir, Andhra Pradesh and Nagaland at the library, Goethe-Institut, Kala Ghoda, from 4pm to 5.30pm.

Padma Shri recipient and renowned literary critic Ganesh Devy — best known for helming the People's Linguistic Survey of India — will deliver a lecture at an event called The Politics Of Language. On November 27, from 5pm to 6pm, at the library, Goethe-Institut, Kala Ghoda.

Each day of the festival will feature sessions that will showcase over 200 translated poems. Each poet will read out the original and the translated poem that they worked on.



A still from Amar Kanwar's documentary, A Night Of Prophecy