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POSTED ON
26 OCT 2012

Poetry the new tool of soft diplomacy



Poetry is emerging as a new and potent tool of soft power diplomacy through 'Poetry Across Cultures' and 'Universal Poetry' international writing projects in India. A collaborative cultural event took place in New Delhi between India and Hungary.

Cultural and linguistic boundaries blurred as Rabindranath Tagore's poetry was set to a dance and Hungarian poetry composed by national icons like Endre Ady was recited in Hindi and in Hungarian. All this when 15 poets and writers from the two countries assembled here under the "Poetry Across Cultures" to read and exchange over musings of love, cadence and friendship.

The emergence of soft power as a potent tool of diplomacy is redefining poetry as the new people-to-people contact between India and the world.

"**Poetry Across Cultures**", a non-profit organisation of poets and prose-writers, uses poetry as a tool to promote cultural understanding between India and countries like Finland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, the US, Portugal, France and Italy.

The organisation - led by the faculty and students of Kamla Nehru College and white-collared professionals with a flair for literature - usually ropes in the diplomatic missions of European countries out to reach out to poets across continents.

Tibor Kovacs, director of the Hungarian Institute of Information and Cultural Centre, said: "Most people are interested in poetry because it is easy to understand."

"The Hungarian government has launched a literary exchange programme, 'Publishing Hungary', to translate Hungarian poetry into foreign languages and poetry of other countries into Hungarian. We are looking for contemporary English and Hindi poetry from India for translation into Hungarian," Kovacs told IANS.

The British Council's "**Indo-Wales Writers' Chain**" has added to the growing relationship between Britain and India.

Last year, Welsh poets Sian Melangell Dafydd, Robert Minhinnick, Twm Morys and Eurig Salisbury travelled to India to collaborate with Indian poets K. Satchidanandan, Anamika, Sampurna Chatterji and Anitha Thampi.

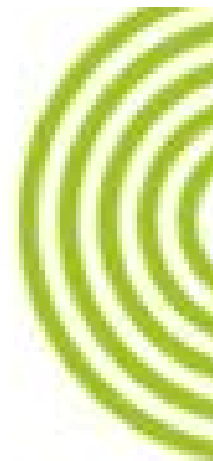
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