



January 2016

Dear Friends of Sangam House,

We hope this finds everyone well with 2016 off to a good start. We are in the final weeks of our eighth year of Sangam House in which we had the honor of hosting 20 writers from nine countries. Since the founding of the organization, we've hosted nearly 200 writers from across India and, indeed, from across the world -- and the family continues to grow.

A major highlight from this season was the Kannada Translation Workshop, graciously hosted by our friends at **Jamun** in December and funded by **Aditi Foundation for the Arts**. This workshop sprung from American poet Neal Hall's request to have his work translated into Kannada while he was in residence. Working from Mr. Hall's poetry allowed us to explore an entirely new engagement with the literary community in Bangalore by bringing local translators and some Sangam House writers into direct contact with each other. More importantly, it allowed us to bring Kannada into closer and more dynamic contact with Sangam House activities and give resident writers a chance to spend time with local translators in a more intimate setting.

Using a workshop model, we brought the translators together with Neal Hall for a weekend of work and discussions, each making the most of this focused contact time with the other. Poems were selected by Hall in advance and divided between the participating translators. The workshop opened with Hall talking about his work -- his language, his concerns, his context, his themes and images. The translators worked on their own and came together at the end of the weekend to share what they accomplished. Common themes, ideas, vocabularies and forms were discussed, thereby creating a more or less unified voice for the poems in Kannada. The weekend closed with a public reading of the poems in English and Kannada.

We look forward to creating more opportunities like this, allowing Sangam House residents from around the world to engage with languages throughout India, Kannada most of all since it is the local language of the state where Sangam House is hosted by **Nrityagram**.

Early this month we hosted the fifth annual, **Lekhana**, a weekend of literary conversations and readings. The theme this year, "Sound of Silence," was inspired by a literary landscape in which more and more people are being silenced or feel like they cannot speak or should not speak. Many of the events, including protest readings from the work of various Indian writers who have returned Sahitya Academy Awards, examined the death of diverse



opinions, practices and beliefs. We are grateful to our partners who made Lekhana possible including **Bhoomija**, **Out of Print Magazine**, and **Jamun**, and of course the **Indian Institute for Human Settlements** for hosting. A comprehensive recap of the festivities can be found in this [Bangalore Mirror](#) article.

In June we conducted the first phase of **Simurgh**, an ongoing Kashmiri translation project sponsored by **Aditi Foundation for the Arts**. For nine days we conducted an intensive workshop for major works of Kashmiri poetry. Our time was divided between lectures on themes, images, tropes and genres in Kashmiri poetry by senior poets, writers and critics and close readings of our selected texts with them in Srinagar. This was followed by four days of intensive translation work in Pahalgam, each translator being given individual attention as well getting the benefit of group work and collaborative sessions. There were also guided discussions about issues and concerns in the practice of translation. Participating translators were asked to choose poets and texts that they believe constitute landmarks and milestones in the language, representing its rich, multi-layered and complex history. Participants confronted such critical issues as unstable texts from the oral tradition, meanings and interpretations from esoteric mystical traditions that color poetry and how to carry form and structure when translating into another language. Looking towards an eventual publication, our participants continue to work on their translations individually, together and with the help and support of our mentors.

We are happy to report that **Cornell University** has expressed interest in teaming up with Sangam House to archive all audio and visual files generated by the Simurgh sessions. And that archive will become more robust at the end of this month when we reconvene for the second phrase of the project. Workshop participants will again gather in Kashmir to further refine the translations they began in June. This is a significant project, made even more so by our possible partnership with Cornell -- and we are excited to be getting closer to publishing some of the translated work. Stay tuned.

Sangam House alumni have had a banner year receiving nominations and awards for their work. Highlights include: **Namwali Serpell**, winner of the Caine Prize; **Rohini Mohan**, winner of the Shakti Bhatt First Book Prize and the Tata Literature Life Nonfiction Award; **Aditi Rao**, winner of the Satish Verma Young Writer Award for Poetry; **Shahnaz Bashir**, winner of the Satish Verma Young Writer Award for Fiction; **Karthika Nair**, winner of Tata Literature Life Book of the Year Fiction; **Anu Singh Choudhary**, winner of the Ramnath Goenka Award for Excellence in Journalism; **Priyanka Dubey**, winner of the 2015 International Center for Journalists Knight International Journalism Award; **Perumal Murugan**, winner of the Samanvay Literature Prize; **Jeremy Tiang**, recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts (U.S.) Literary Translation Fellowship; and **Janice Pariat**, who was shortlisted for The 2015 Hindu Prize.



Just recently we published the third volume of our Sangam House Reader, entitled *Other Worlds*, and it features work from those who were with us for seasons five and six. It is hard to believe it is already time to begin work on volume four! Thanks once again to our faithful partner, **InkoCentre**, for making volume three possible.

As we enter our ninth year, we look forward to watching the continued success of those who have spent time with us. In our upcoming season our management team will expand to include **Giles Hazelgrove**, a writer and recent alumnus of the program. Giles will join returning residency manager **Pascal Sieger** to oversee day-to-day operations during year nine at Sangam House. We look forward to welcoming both of them back.

And we look forward to updates from all of you and, again, we thank everyone for your support and engagement.

With continued good wishes,

Arshia Sattar, DW Gibson & Rahul Soni