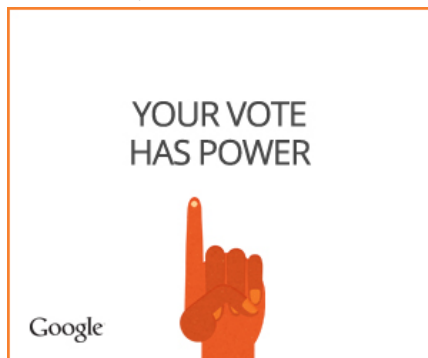


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UAE poet, musician Yesudas chorus for peace

CDS Mani, TNN | Oct 28, 2013, 02:55 AM IST



CHENNAI: The seeds of a friendship sown in a desert land bloomed in Chennai on Saturday when classical Indian musician and noted playback singer Yesudas turned up at a gathering of poets to meet Emirati bard and peace activist Shihab Ghanem.

The Poets Meet, organised by the city-based World Poetry Society Intercontinental (WPSI), took off on a sober note with WPSI president Syed Ameeruddin calling on poets to be instruments of change to bring about peace and harmony in the world. "Poets should not take this responsibility lightly and their verse should stir the minds and **touch** hearts," he said.

After this solemn pronouncement, the entry of Yesudas brought about an **atmosphere** of bonhomie as he came on stage and embraced Ghanem, exclaiming, "I am so happy, my dear brother, to come here to meet you." More than a month ago, the two had met during the Onam festivities hosted by the Indian community in Dubai.

"I am not a poet though I have experienced poetry through songs," Yesudas said breaking into his own composition, "Nellaide nane maname, pollada nenai nanandai (Think of good things, not bad things that will hurt somebody or create a problem, which you will later regret)".

Yesudas said that though his 'brother' Ghanem hailed from the UAE which was miles across the Arabian Sea, he shared the poetic vision of one country, "which I always like to think is the one **universe** and so I don't feel the divide between countries".

He said the Tamil word for god 'Kadevul' meant 'entering inside to know' and asked Ghanem to pronounce it, which the visitor promptly did. "Our shared ideas of one god despite existence of different religions is what I like," Yesudas said on the sidelines of the event, explaining why he had come to meet Ghanem. "I am not a poet," he reiterated. "Ask me about Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer and Bade **Ghulam Ali** and I'll tell you."

Ghanem who was awarded the Tagore Peace Prize by the Asiatic Society, Kolkata, in May, said, "Apart from the old spice routes from India to the Gulf and Aden, we need to build a new spice route based on song and poetry. Yesudas is trying and so am I. I am always happy to be in the company of poems because poetry is a universal language like music," said Ghanem, who received the poetry award for culture and humanism from WPSI emeritus president A Padmanabhan.

The poetry conclave was sponsored by Bharat Soka Gakkai, New Delhi, India chapter of the worldwide organization founded by the Japanese Buddhist philosopher, poet and crusader for peace Daisaku Ikeda.

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