

# haikuKATHA

unfolding the story within



Issue 5 March 2022

*haikuKATHA* is the official monthly publication brought out by Triveni Haikai India. Its primary function is to publish the best in contemporary English-language haiku, senryu, tanka, haibun, tanka-prose and haiga.

Each month's issue will be put together by a team of editors who will select poems from the previous month's prompts posted on the Triveni Haikai India website. The magazine is copyrighted by Triveni Haikai India.

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Issue 5  
March 2022

haiku, tanka,  
haibun, tanka-prose and tanka-art

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haiku, senryu, haibun, tanka-prose and tanka-art

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for providing prompts for the month of February 2022,  
[trivenihaikai.in/haikusutradhar](http://trivenihaikai.in/haikusutradhar)

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for gathering the poems  
written for these prompts,

our contributors  
for sharing their poems.

## Editors' Choice Commentary

Editors' Choice Commentary by Madhuri Pillai:

war  
we fold our differences  
into prayers

— Marilyn Ashbaugh

War is a topical issue. It's all we hear and read about these days. Yet the poet alludes to it in a restrained manner without getting into its grisly details. Unfortunately, the world has always been fraught with wars and, in all probability, will continue to do so.

L1 of the haiku tersely announces the grim news. This is also the pivotal line. As with all wars, the word instantly conjures up visions of death, destruction and displacement. Rather than dwell on this aspect, the poet swiftly moves on to a process of healing, and with like-minded people decides to bury differences and join hands in prayers. When one can easily wallow in pessimism, a reverse way out is chosen. She taps into the inherent resilience of mankind to survive, this fervent desire to live.

The poet offers hope, something that is much needed today.

\*\*\*

From Marilyn:

When the Ukraine invasion was announced, I felt helpless yet wanted to do something. As I contemplated on this, a prayer came to my mind, specifically a prayer as a spiritual origami. Folding our differences into prayer is something we all can do.

## haiku

spring breeze ...  
a part of me thinks  
of going home

— Agus Maulana Sunjaya

falling leaves  
settle on the wooden bridge  
mother's footsteps

— Agus Maulana Sunjaya

hopping bird  
i hope you found someone  
to still you

— Alan Peat

another world  
its back and forth edge  
worked by waders

— Alan Peat

## haiku

homeless boy  
the lake wears  
a tattered sky

— Anju Kishore

broken clay pot  
i run a finger  
along my bruise

— Anju Kishore

nimbus clouds  
the songs of puddle-bathing  
chickadees

— an'ya

barren moon  
alone in a corner ...  
godh bhara

— Baisali Chatterjee Dutt

## haiku

blood moon  
an almost-life trickles  
down my legs

— Baisali Chatterjee Dutt

gran's death -  
I fold my grief  
into origami flowers

— Iqra Raza

womb inside the womb the cosmic egg

— Lakshmi Iyer

autumn breeze ...  
another tiny cradle tied  
to the temple tree

— Lakshmi Iyer

## haiku

ghost city  
a Coke can clatters down  
the bone white street

— Lev Hart

war  
we fold our differences  
into prayer

— Marilyn Ashbaugh

nightly coughs ...  
sea waves crashing  
the age old temple

— Milan Rajkumar

childhood album  
the smiles we don't have  
anymore

— Mona Bedi

## haiku

abortion clinic  
the lady lingers longer  
over the call

— Muskaan Ahuja

journey ...  
at every jolt  
i hold my belly

— Richa Sharma

the song  
in a nightingale's beak ...  
swaying barley

— Samir Satam

the west wind moves  
as her hair comes down ...  
those summer days

— Ravi Kiran

found poetry from the song  
*fields of gold* by Sting

## haiku

Khardungla Pass ...  
taking away what was  
left of my breath

— Shreya Narang

fitting  
into the jigsaw of leaves  
blue sky

— Srinivas S.

train journey ...  
the tunnel lengthens  
into night

— Srinivas S.

my car fills  
with bittersweet scent —  
rapeseed field

— Subir Ningthouja

## haiku

lump of clay —  
my womb once shaped  
a life

— Teji Sethi

patchwork quilt  
I silently slip out of  
my married name

— Vandana Parashar

teenage acne  
the speckled face  
of the full moon

— Vidya Shankar

THE MOLD. BREAK-ED NEWS  
EYES TO BREAKS  
WAT BREAKET

birthday candles ...

wishing for light

I blow them out

Shreya Narang

## tanka

bombs  
and birdsong —  
a robin  
watching me  
pull up potatoes

— Alan Peat

dawn breaks —  
petal-cupped,  
yesterday's storm  
slowly  
evaporates

— Alan Peat

from a nest box  
the purple martin's  
melodic song  
I feel its vibrations  
even with hearing loss

— an'ya

## tanka

his shirts and shoes  
all lined up  
collecting dust  
the courage I must muster  
to visit the shop lady

— Kanji Devi

nadaswaram,  
laughter and chatter ...  
at his wedding  
the only sound unheard  
was my breaking heart

— Kavya Janani

swinging  
from tree to tree  
in his own  
slow time zone ...  
my friend the sloth

— Ken Slaughter

## tanka

longing for  
those little things in life  
    a seashell  
dusk hides in the spirals  
of a nautical dawn

— Lakshmi Iyer

diffuse winter sun  
through the classroom skylight—  
petal by petal  
a bright red peony  
opens from my paintbrush

— Linda Papanicolaou

another spring  
with no sign of rain —  
still, a frog  
in the shrinking pond  
beckons with its song

— Linda Papanicolaou

## tanka

I lower my eyes  
when you're near ...  
keep secret  
the kisses we stole  
that star-filled evening

— Marilyn Humbert

an arabesque  
of bare oak branches  
dry and lonely  
how barren this life without  
the circle of your arms

— Mona Bedi

a sea of slippers  
at the lord's gate ...  
I return  
once again with  
a mismatched pair

— Nandita Jain Mahajan

## tanka

does the night  
feel more lonely?  
oh shooting star  
will you cheer me up  
for love is lost

— Nani Marianne

not knowing  
how to swim  
i plunge  
into the deep sea  
of self-forgiveness

— Pamela A Babusci

how grateful  
for blessings of sun  
and water —  
each day I learn  
the word silence

— Pradnya Joshi

## tanka

a thunderstorm  
of angry words  
my broken heart  
sinks in the absence  
of arms unfolding

— Pris Campbell

fiddling  
with the frayed end  
of a rope -  
what bound us snapped  
the day we lost our child

— Priti Aisola

rising  
slowly as I straighten  
my back  
I see the little bird glide  
from flower bed to fence

— Priti Aisola

## tanka

a crow  
flies over a bare tree  
how brief  
the meeting  
of shadows

— Srinivas S

hibiscus-red lips  
a face washed by moonglow  
in the coldness  
thinking of fires burnt  
i pass through this night

— Subir Ningthouja

windblown poppy  
why did I let you  
make decisions  
about me  
always without me

— Vandana Parashar

## haibun

Alan Peat  
~

Late Shift

*hospice garden*

He asks if I still have the funeral hat, the one that they used to knock on the door for. I tell him yes and he reminds me that it was quite a thing to own a bowler back then.

*a shadow of himself*

My great-great grandfather bought it for his father's funeral and word quickly spread around the village. When the Hutton seam collapsed and killed a man, his brother was the first to call for it. And, until they stripped out the copper and back-filled the shaft, a steady stream of miner's sons and fathers wore it.

*in the shade*

Anju Kishore  
~

### Worlds Apart

The damp has seeped into all corners. The rest of the house is dominated by semi-dry clothes hung on a string across every room. They will only get a tad drier before they are folded away and replaced by a fresh set of wet clothes.

I step on to the porch curtained by Kerala's Edavappathi monsoon. My first one in my new home, as a bride. While I breathe in the roaring wetness, my eyes swim along with my thoughts into a sunlit courtyard far away, where mother is perhaps bent over reed mats, at this very moment.

tamil news on radio  
rice vadams  
baking in the sun

The rain continues to fall opaquely into the night. Every flash of lightning scatters, bouncing off the black foliage. A million eyes, watching.

cancelled trains ...  
an overripe jackfruit  
falls with a thud

## haibun

Anju Kishore  
~

### Drumbeats

"You will be home in under an hour," I hear Papa say, cajoling me awake. "You ought not to miss the flag hoisting at school. They must be arranging the laddus already..."

It was this delicious thought more than anything else that had me walking off to school, promising to return well in time to watch the Republic Day Parade on TV that Papa made sure we never missed. For me it was the old warhorse spirit blazing from his eyes that kept me glued to the ritual year after year.

Back from school, I see a small crowd of people outside the house. As I near the gate, heads turn silently towards me.

Our neighbour, an old friend, snatches me towards her own home. The laddus drop from my hand. A car runs over one of them. The other sits on the road, slightly squished. Their fresh sweetness tickles my nose.

marching orders  
dust rises and settles  
on old tales

Diana Webb



### Trajectories

The rasp of the newsreader's voice echoes the relentless thrust of rain on the window, the low sky, dark beyond.

through the wire-mesh fence  
fragment of the Virgin's robe  
an alkanet petal

Swathe upon swathe of cloud, low and leaden, stretch on and on into the far horizon.

a slit of blue  
lets in the light  
first pencil stroke

an azure envelope  
falls on the mat  
cuckoo song

## haibun

Mona Bedi



### Special Love

Today, he was there again. He followed me all the way to the mall and back. He also nudged me once. The onlookers stared but I kept on walking. It had become a ritual. Somewhere, in my subconscious, I missed him when he was not there. I loved the attention he gave me. It made me feel special. His good looks were an add on.

Today I carried his favourite dog biscuits with me and gave him a name. I called him Bhiku.

deep winter  
just the warmth  
of your presence

Vidya Shankar  
~

Other

*Death is no more than passing from one room into another.* — Helen Keller

The three of us are sitting at our study table, poring over our school books. Saturday mornings are meant for lessons, unlike Sunday mornings when we are allowed to watch TV. From the corner of my eye, I watch Appa get ready for work. Ten minutes later, he bids us goodbye. We continue holding our positions at our study table for another ten minutes. Then we raise our heads from our books, look at each other, and rise as one.

The sound of television brings mother to the living room. She does not scold us. Instead she asks us if we would have done this if Appa was in the other room.

\*\*\*

Appa is in the other room now.

earth spins  
the infant touches  
its wrinkled face

## tanka-prose

Barbara Kaufmann



### Wake Up Call

Late winter and we are still wrapped in blankets, staring out the window at remnants of last week's snow. You notice it first and point it out to me. The witch hazel is blooming! We grab coats, hats and boots before heading out the door, like two excited puppies.

blackbird  
your song slips through  
the breeze  
after so many months  
my heart reopens

## tanka-prose

Gauri Dixit  
~

### Edge

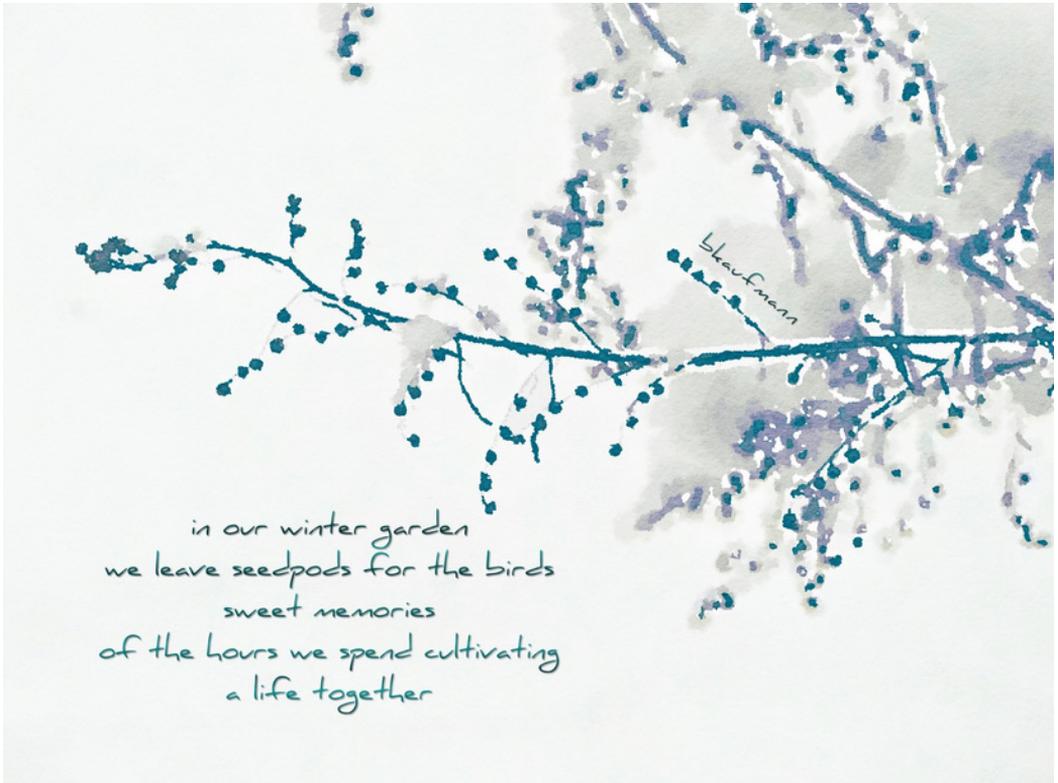
In Simran's room the night looked like day. With not a single unlit corner, sleep should have found its way there without coercion. But it was never the case.

In the centre was a raised platform that Simran used as a bed. Not even an ant could hide under it. A thin mattress, and a white bed-sheet was all she had there. No pillows, no blankets.

Beside her bed were her slip-in shoes. She possessed only a suitcase full of clothes. She owned two pairs of jeans, five oversized shirts, a towel, and a few undergarments. "Nightclothes are just frivolity. How many clothes can one wear at a time anyway. And wardrobes are festering grounds for pests, rapists, and killers." She would say.

Under her oversized shirt, she always had an olive bag that had her cards, license, keys, a few chocolate bars, a small water-bottle, a pair of undergarments, and money. She would proudly tell everyone that she could get out of her room in under a minute, fully prepared to drive away, in case of an emergency.

a tint of orange  
    in the sky  
but not all  
bright colours  
signify beginnings



Barbara Kaufmann

Dear readers,  
thank you for being with us.

See you once again on 22 April 2022  
with many more fine poems  
from our contributors.

Team haikuKATHA