

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

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

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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
EAS 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

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

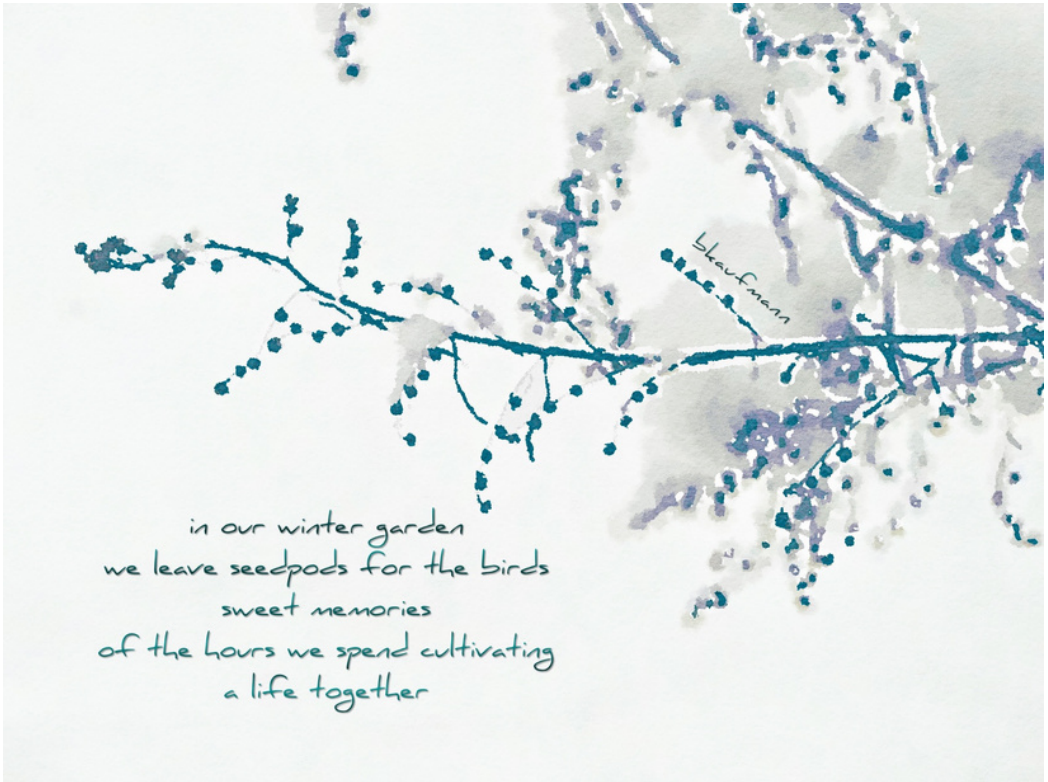
In Simran's room the night looked like day. With not a single unlit corner, sleep should have found its way there without coercion. But it was never the case.

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