

haikuKATHA

unfolding the story within



Milind Mulick

Issue 7 May 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 7
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haiku, tanka,
haibun, tanka-prose and tanka-art

Founder/Managing Editor:

Kala Ramesh

Associate Editors:

Akila G.

Ashish Narain

Firdaus Parvez

Madhuri Pillai

Priti Aisola

Shalini Pattabiraman

Shobhana Kumar

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

Vandana Parasha

Consulting Editor: Shloka Shankar

Proofreader: Sushama Kapur

Webmaster: Ravi Kiran

Cover Art: Milind Mulick

Design: Kala Ramesh

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

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for his watercolour painting

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for gathering the poems
written for these prompts

our contributors
for sharing their poems

Editors' Choice Commentary by Firdaus Parvez

secateurs snap ...
I'm deadheading
spent roses
and no words
explain his betrayal

— Marilyn Humbert

I like how the tanka begins with an auditory setting. Snap! The secateurs (aka pruning shears) snap, setting the mood. The alliteration works well too. Snap! I feel the sharpness of the sound. It's not a soft snip of a delicate stem being cut but a thicker, harder, tougher one that takes more effort. But what is the narrator pruning here? "I'm deadheading/spent roses." I wasn't familiar with the term "deadheading," but now that I know it means "to remove faded blooms ... often, to help continued growth," the term has grown on me. Specifying the type of blooms makes the image so much clearer.

Finally, we come to the *turn* in the tanka - it is quite a turn: "and no words/explain his betrayal." And the whole piece turns on its head. Here is the narrator snipping away at spent roses, and now we know there is probably a range of emotions, from hurt to indignation to anger, taking turns in her head, and that's why "secateurs snap" takes on a whole new meaning. It shows frustration and anger: "the deadheading" becomes a fantastic metaphor for cutting off the ties of a toxic or dying relationship. Maybe the narrator is thinking along those lines.

The beauty of this piece is that it's so open-ended, encouraging the reader to ponder on it long after reading. I wonder what the colour of the roses is; we usually associate red with romance and yellow with friendship. Whether the betrayal is by a partner or a friend, it has definitely caused anguish and bewilderment to the narrator and this comes through with full force. A good example of saying less and meaning more.

Cover Art by Milind Mulick

A few words from an art lover by Alaka Yeravadekar



What first catches your attention in the painting is the auto-rickshaw rolling towards you. Then the eye is drawn to the soft sunlight falling on the buildings, the splash of warm red above, the subtle reds in the house, and to the left, the figures clothed in red. Then the eye moves backwards and begins to follow the curve of the street.

This is a painting that depicts the poetry that exists in the ordinary: an old city waking up, the way the early morning light beautifies the dilapidated houses, women- possibly sweepers, a student with a backpack ... There seems to be a deliberate lack of details. And yet there is enough information for the viewers to build their own scenarios. Adherence to realistic proportions and perspectives makes the scene believable. Light washes of mainly cool colours lessen the heaviness of urban brick and cement. Above all, the controlled transparency of the washes, and the brilliance of the white paper left untouched, show the hallmarks of a master watercolourist at work.

haiku

scouring rain
the moss absorbs
a footprint

— Alice Wanderer

swaying pines finally I understand the wind

— Devoshruti Mandal

forest stream ...
I leave the moon behind
filling a bowl for tea

— K. Ramesh

packing time ...
water-striders
delay my return

— K. Ramesh

haiku

rinsed sky-
a presence lingers
as petrichor

— Kashiana.Singh

displaced ...
the river finds a home
in the basement

— Kavitha Sreeraj

half-buried in moss
a fallen trunk
no longer itself

— Lev Hart

morning hike
a wet cough
where the trail branches

— Marcie Wessels

haiku

a carpet of moss finding home in the forest

— Marcie Wessels

feeding koi--
our last night's words
bubble to the surface

— Marilyn Humbert

deep autumn ...
the school yard full
of ghosts

— Marion Clarke

golden sunset
marigolds melt
into the sky

— Mona Bedi

haiku

still pond —
a koi dimples
the tree's reflection

— Namratha Varadharajan

thanjavur painting
leaf by gold leaf
I shape my own god

— Priya Narayanan

deep summer
the village pond shrinks
into my palm

— Priya Narayanan

baggage collection-
question marks rotate
along the belt

— Radhamani Sarma

haiku

riptide...
she hides her suitcase
under the bed

— Reid Hepworth

through the window
the touch of spring
in the spider's web

— Robert Kingston

afternoon rain
a toddler stamps out
another tsunami

— Robert Kingston

that makes two of us circling koi

— Sanjukta Asopa

haiku

summer breeze ...
braiding the sunrays
into her hair

— Shreya Narang

temple pond
all the fish that mistake
feet for food

— Srinivas S.

scorched suburb
the moon has nowhere
to swim

— Srinivas S.

nightfall ...
what the croaking frogs
make of the pond

— Subir Ningthouja

haiku

old tree
all those tales
woven in the roots

— Subir Ningthouja

below the fallen blooms an ant nest

— Tapan Mozumdar

feeding fish
frail hands that once
fed me

— Teji Sethi

haiku

concrete haiku

brand
new
sneakers

cross
the
clouds

in
roadside
puddles

— Lev Hart

tanka

Mother dying
she tells me
not to remove her earrings
otherwise the holes
will close

— Alexis Rotella

sunlit morning
outside the coal mine
a whistle-pig
standing still and tall
the harbinger of spring

— an'ya

a movie
of my girlhood days
this yearning to live
just one more day
with those who lived then

— Arvinder Kaur

tanka

hands entwined
we stroll where butterflies once
danced along
a goldenrod trail...
lengthening shadows

— Barbara Kaufmann

shared blanket
shared coffee, shared dreams
nothing remains
on this chequered board
but the ruins of combat

— Gauri Dixit

only one
from the pair of ear-pods
sits catching dust
on my bedside table
equal division of assets

— Gauri Dixit

tanka

in a thrift store
we sing in every aisle
I can't help
falling in love —
Senior Day

— Ken Slaughter

after a concert
the rustle of leaves...
I hum a song
accompanied only
by the swirling wind

— Ken Slaughter

twilight drizzle ...
 millions of stars
tiptoe on the pond
 to walk
 another sky

— Lakshmi Iyer

tanka

the oak tree
all-knowing what it means
to parent:
its sleeping acorns
blanketed with leaves

— Linda Papanicolaou

in wee hours
the old cat and I
awake
for moon viewing —
warm herbal tea

— Linda Papanicolaou

secateurs snap ...
I'm deadheading
spent blossoms
and no words
explain his betrayal

— Marilyn Humbert *ECC

tanka

flickering lamp -
how the shadows play
hide and seek
the way every now and then
I fail to read your mind

— Mona Bedi

travelling
on a deserted road
without you
Orion and Polaris
walk me home

— Mona Bedi

what matters to me
is not your looks
but how
your words touch me within —
on a date with a poem

— Namratha Varadharajan

tanka

on a dark canvas
the street light
paints
a hundred needles
... winter rain

— Namratha Varadharajan

dusk falls
on an uphill trail
as I reach
for the warmth of a hand ...
cold ribbon of moss

— Neena Singh

late again
for dinner
you come home
reeking
of infidelity

— Pamela A Babusci

tanka

discovering
a worn-out note
between the pages
of a library book –
borrowed love

— Priya Narayanan

surrogate clinic -
a cuckoo on the tree
waits
to lay her eggs
in the crow's nest

— Priya Narayanan

unaware
that you have gone
the varied thrush
trills joyfully
at first light

— Reid Hepworth

tanka

your hands
 I now hold
protectively
the way you held mine ...
tree rings

— Reid Hepworth

each night
this same dream ...
seldom remembered
the point at which I fall
nor where it ever ends

— Robert Kingston

the stowed sail boat
turns on a long tether
to the tides tune
an old sailor rocks his pipe
content with a chair now

— Robert Kingston

tanka

distant hills ...
into the calm haze
I walk
seeking myself
where shadows play

— Subir Ningthouja

rented room ...
you, me
and the almirah
overflowing
with our dreams

— Subir Ningthouja

two wires
tending to infinity -
lined next
to the festoons of war
morning pigeons

— Tapan Mazumdar

tanka

my arms
around the furrowed bark
of an old tree
I feel how wars leave scars
our bodies, a battlefield

— Teji Sethi

a century oak . . .
another family crying
in its shade
and my father's stone so close
but never visited

— Tish Davis

Anju Kishore
~

Infusions

As she leaves for the hostel after a weekend break, she takes both my palms in hers and raises them to her face. She inhales slowly and deeply. “Mmmm, coriander and heeng! This will sustain me all of this week ...”

migrating stork
a little soil
on each claw

haibun

Diana Webb
~

Skiffle

He's pushing his nose in under the earth to find a tasty bite. Look there's an ant
the children tell him making percussion along his scaly plates with their pencils
on their way back home from school.

“Do you mind if I write a haiku about you?” one of them asks.

He pushes his long, pointed snout back under the earth in a way that tells her no.

click clink clink
the armadillo scurries by
catching the sun

Gauri Dixit



Aerial Roots

“Do not tug at my hair, Ma. It hurts,” I yelp.

“I do not have time to be nice to your kinky hair. Breakfast will not make itself,”
Ma hands me the hairbrush and storms away.

As always, I am left with a head full of stubborn tangles and a hairbrush full of
broken bristles and broken hair. Here Dad steps in, smiling, as always.

petal by petal the spring carpet thickens

Lakshmi Iyer
~

Storytelling

“Where?? Where is it Maaji? I can't see.”

The eighty-five-year-old Maami stares at the maid. She counters that she had heard the soft steps in the middle of the night and points at the marks.

“Now, there's no medicine for these weird imaginings, Maaji.”

Maami had just moved in a year back. She was not fully satisfied with the security. The owner of the house had committed suicide. Maami decided to close the outlets of all the washbasins and washrooms fearing that the spirits could come from anywhere. Even the tiniest holes were blocked at night.

“Maaji, the house lizard or the spider would not dare to peep inside, except for that line of ants moving steadily towards the sugar box,” the maid points out.

“Oh! They are Lord Ganesha's messengers,” Maami smiles.

trespassing ...
sunlight peeps
through the curtains

Mona Bedi



Quietude

A film of dust covers the pair of wood-framed pictures on my side table. I clean them and step back to observe from a distance. The bigger frame has the picture of my first dog, Sheriff, an Indian Spitz. He was a happy soul. The other frame has the much smaller Snowy, a Lhasa, posing in a foul mood.

even after ...
the flowers blooming
in his garden

Bruno, my shihtzu, pads in from outside and settles at my feet. His soft breath keeps me company.

Neena Singh



Mindfulness

Spring is in the air, and in the garden, flowers. The pink roses on the gate trellis hang in abundant clusters and hordes of bees buzz around them. The dahlias — violet, yellow, red and lavender — bend their heads to hide in the leaves. The orange trumpet vine climbs the wall and its blossoms fill my eyes.

I sit on the cane swing.

Pigeons nest on the porch and squeakers can be heard over the breeze. The family of squirrels are chittering, cavorting up and down the evergreen tree. The bird feeder is almost empty and it's still early noon.

a grey feather
floats silently ...
sunset years

Robert Kingston



Tunnel Vision

Fred was a ferret that in my view belonged in the wild. That's not to say he wasn't, six days a week he resided in a hutch in the garden.

One Saturday, having plucked up the courage to tag along for a workday, I watched as, upon release, he weaved through the undergrowth to a nearby warren.

Asked to watch the entry hole whilst my sibling tracked to one beyond a mound, I stood ready to grab whatever surfaced.

last touch ...
a moon-shaped scar
on my thumb

Vidya Shankar
~

Eternal

Appa slides his hand under his pillow and extracts two black and white photographs.

“Do you know who that is?” He points to the young woman in the pictures. I nod my head. Mother. But not the mother I knew. This was before she married Appa and had me, my sister and my brother.

Before she was ravaged by asthma that we three grew up watching her suffer from.

Asthma that took her away from us.

time warp ...
water bead at the tip
of a leaf

Lakshmi Iyer
~

Nesting

She thought she would continue staying here as the autumn passes into winter and the year ends with the half notes of a woodpecker. Living is not a problem, but, leaving is.

trails of dust
on the fresh tarmac
how much we build
on our dreams
forgetting we belong nowhere

Lakshmi Iyer

mindtree

the mad rush continues the minutes giving way to hours and the hours sliding away into dusk I pick up my to-do list which is endless my thoughts boggle me those jumbled boxes of never-ending doubts and questions I cross out most of them a few fall into my basket of joy and happiness while others remain in the shadows of my yesteryears.

midway
between the bump
and crossroads,
the u-turn showing the light
at the horizon

Marilyn Humbert
~

Long Paddock Dreaming

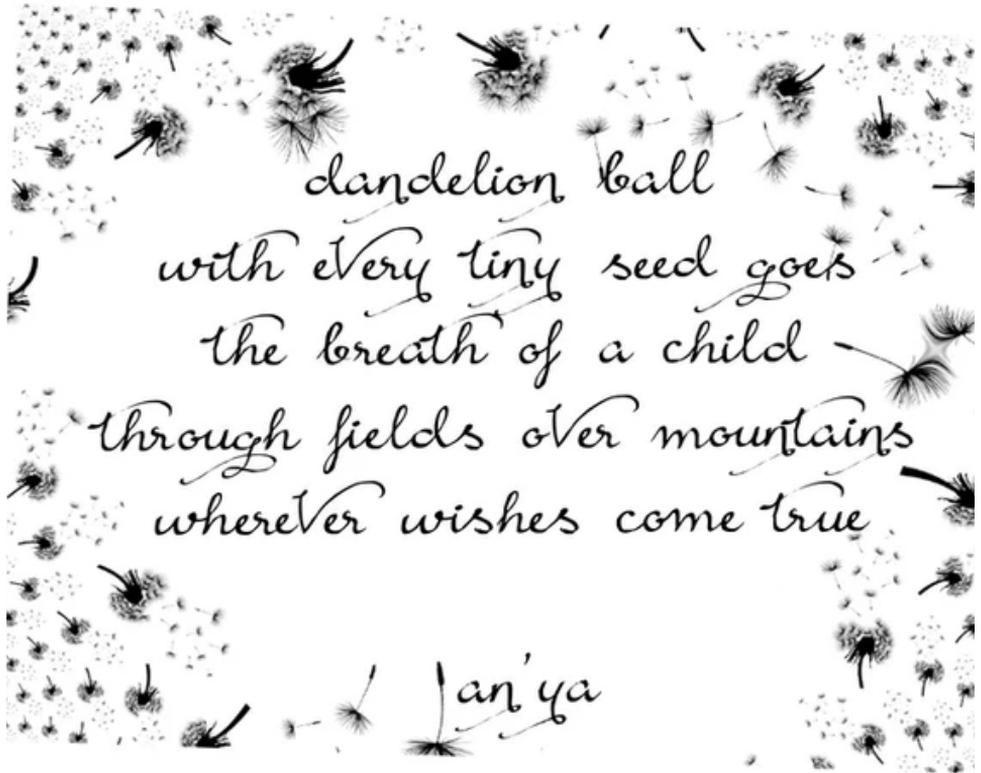
1962, drought has left the paddocks of our holding barren. The constant wind stirs red dust, the air thick and heavy. To save the last of the breeding stock, Mum and Dad take to the road along the corridor of reserves, old stock routes following the network of rivers south toward the Queensland, New South Wales border.

whips crack
across barren land
the long trek
herding cattle
southward

During school holidays, cattle droving is a family affair. I have my pony, and my young brother drives the wagon with our supplies and extra grain for the horses. It's a slow journey, as the cattle graze and stroll, and rest for a while under the edging coolibahs beside the river.

Dad and Mum keep the herd moving, never staying too long in one place. Others need the grass and water for their stock too.

sun-bleached hair
coloured with red dust
my mum
cattle droving with dad
down the long paddock





our tangled hairs
interwoven
morning clouds float
through an open
bedroom window

pamela a. babusci



remaining
sakura blossoms
silently fall
effortlessly you ask
for a separation

pamela a. babusci

Dear Readers
thank you for being with us

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

Team: [haikuKATHA](#)