

haikuKATHA

unfolding the story within



Milind Mulick

Issue 8 June 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 is put together by a team of editors who 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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haiku, tanka,
haibun, tanka-prose, haiga and tanka-art

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

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for providing weekly challenges
for the month of May 2022,

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for his watercolour painting,

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for gathering the poems
written for these prompts,

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for sharing their poems

Editors' Choice Commentary by Shalini Pattabiraman

Under Pressure by Keith Polette

In the morning, after I don the mask and fins to go oyster diving, I drop into blue where I search the seabed like I'm looking for lost keys. With the air tank on my back, feeling like an underwater Quasimodo, I move slowly in submerged silence — the closest bells are banging on wave-bucked buoys — the way one moves after waking from a long sleep, keen to be alert for the sharp edges of shells protruding from the ocean floor. As I pluck one and hold it in my hand, it is like a stone perfect for skipping or a flying saucer ready to take flight. I admire how tight oysters are, precisions of compression, like the valves of a trumpet stubbornly stuck shut or rock-hard eyelids that will not open — the envy of every insomniac. Cloistered within, a solitary pearl grows, not like a heart preparing itself to beat, but like a moon that is slowly filling with light in the dense darkness of a constricted inner space.

pointillist painting
each dot and dab of color
the seed of a star

Shalini Pattabiraman writes:

Undeniably, the prose embarks on a journey into the depths of the sea and as the diver glides to the bottom, he discovers something other than just the oyster.

'Under Pressure' evokes the idea of stress and tension—a force that can be either physically or emotionally charged. At this point the reader may make assumptions as many readers do, predicting perhaps something negative as stress often comes with negative connotations.

The prose begins with 'In the morning after I don a mask and fins'. 'Mask' brings to mind the image of a 'self' that wears a certain face to work or wherever it is that the day takes them. I found the juxtaposition of 'mask' with 'fins' interesting

For me, 'fins' evoke the image of translucence and fragility. Imagine putting on these together and going into the depths of the sea where both darkness and light exist in different ways. For me, therefore, the start of this haibun was especially beautiful. 'Looking for lost keys' added to the narrative further, continuing the process of unravelling the invisible parts of a 'self' that is in search of something elusive. The idea of loss and grief lingers in these words. I thought of lost music (the keys of a piano), I thought of things which cannot be retrieved.

'I move slowly in submerged silence — the closest bells are banging on wave-bucked buoys'. Keith's prose is lyrical and musicality is heightened by the alliterative sounds while the pace of the prose moves slowly as we too travel underneath the waves, trying to find the ground that will bring us a certain rootedness. The prose captures that rootedness as the 'self' discovers more in the oyster. Sometimes we can only find ourselves in other things.

The shift from prose to haiku is stunning. The eye is drawn to the tiniest of things and then the lens expands to the widest of things - the stars birthing and spreading in the infinite universe.

Keith's haibun moved me because it allowed me touch the dark places and find the light.

Cover Art by Milind Mulick
Train of Thought: from an art lover by Alaka Yeravadekar



Train of thought:

Trains have fascinated artists for ages. The 19th-century train paintings of Claude Monet and J.M.W. Turner bear witness to that. They have also inspired other art forms. Indian movies have romanced the locomotive by using its natural rhythm to great advantage in choreographing foot-tapping dance numbers. In modern literature, the Hogwarts Express of the Harry Potter book series forms a key link between ordinary life and the magical world.

The dextrous watercolour by Milind Mulick depicts a speeding train, with a glistening engine and succulent plumes of steam and smoke, forming a strong contrast to the stillness of the landscape of misty mountains, ochre houses, and onlookers. Where did it come from? Where will it go? We are content to have been a part of the brief drama- the long whistle, the rush of air, and then the speeding train itself, throbbing, vibrating in our bones, long after the last bogey has vanished from sight.

haiku

watching the party
an ammonite washed
from the slate-grey sea

— Alan Peat

crotal bell —
some days the past
weighs heavy

— Alan Peat

emptied urn
a bit of me ebbs
with the tide

— Anju Kishore

bird trills
backstage warm-ups
at the opera

— Baisali Chatterjee Dutt

haiku

summer fling ...
she leaves her castles
behind in the sand

— Baisali Chatterjee Dutt

long phone call —
the smell of burnt rice
from the kitchen

— Daipayan Nair

crowded bus —
taste of coconut hair oil
on my lips

— Daipayan Nair

consistent trilling
those morning birds don't know
i'm awake

— Gillena Cox

haiku

empty trawl nets
sand lodged in her
tangled hair

— Kavita Ratna

stamp album ...
we exchange
our countries

— Lakshmi Iyer

groundnut seller ...
clank of the ladle
at the count of three

— Lakshmi Iyer

cheeks stinging
chop
ping the frozen pond

— Lev Hart

haiku

soap bubbles ...
blowing up
the day moon

— Lorraine Padden

grandfather's hands
the cradle that cradled me
cradles my daughter

— Marcie Wessels

at my writing desk all the words rustling palms

— Marcie Wessels

horizon line a sailboat edges sunset

— Marcie Wessels

haiku

war zone -
the old oak holds on
to its roots

— Mona Bedi

mom's cookbook
the turmeric stained pages
with the best recipes

— Mona Bedi

babbling brook
a mynah sings
the higher notes

— Namratha Varadharajan

the sea
in every wave
the sea

— Neena Singh

haiku

sunflower blooms —
a parrot pops seeds
for breakfast

— Neena Singh

deep into the night
I grope for a pillow
to muffle his snores

— Priya Narayanan

payday jingle of the bookshop bell

— Reid Hepworth

May long weekend
my lily white legs
make their debut

— Reid Hepworth

haiku

widening
the window of why
seascape

— Richa Sharma

wind wave i leak into the freedom of a painting

— Richa Sharma

a gulp midway through the croc's eye

— Robert Kingston

the pressure within me empty subway

— Robert Kingston

haiku

the sound
without you
hard rain

— Robert Kingston

Visarjan
 sea returns
the marigold

— Sangita Kalarickal

salting my peanuts sea breeze

— Srinivas S

the shore
lets go of the sea ...
first light

— Srinivas S

haiku

fallen tree
only the moss knows
branches from roots

— Subir Ningthouja

hightide ...
the sandcastle
we left behind

— Vidya Shankar

receding waves the sand that escapes me

— Vidya Shankar

concrete haiku

crayon

his

from

off

takes

butterfly

a

— Lev Hart

tanka

a lone nargis
blooms in the backyard
for years
this feeling
of being unloved

—Arvinder Kaur

the first call
of an oriole
one May morning
a newborn sighs
into my arms

—Barbara Kaufmann

buzzing fireflies
in fields of mustard ...
this starry night
a siege-train
thumps along

— Daipayan Nair

tanka

the song breath
of a mockingbird
at my window
fogging up the panes ...
poems I long to read

— Daipayan Nair

screech of tyres
on the deserted street
last night
I lost my sleep and
someone, their life

—Gauri Dixit

silken strands
in morning light
how fragile
this web of trust
that holds us together

—Ken Slaughter

tanka

shimmer of water
from deep in the well
around its rim
the darkness of
our faces peering in

— Linda Papanicolaou

a man who'd been
on air traffic control
can still recall
the clear blue morning skies
of 9/11

— Linda Papanicolaou

bonfire
in a refugee camp
a toddler curls
into the warmth
of her mother's lap

—Marcie Wessels

tanka

drought
has filled Lake Hodges
with saplings and scrub
a white egret wades
through neighborhood traffic

—Marcie Wessels

forest walk
even though we now lead
lives far apart
our names still etched
on the old oak

— Mona Bedi

the child flies
a kite into the sunset
how I long
to freely cross borders
like the migrating geese

— Mona Bedi

tanka

cars squeeze through
every gap in traffic—
a butterfly
leaves its final imprint
on the windshield

— Namratha Varadharajan

front page
of newspapers ...
how quickly
the stock exchange
replaced the war

—Priya Narayanan

from a rooftop
a muster of white storks
clattering
after the bombing
the rebuilding

— Reid Hepworth

tanka

on our journey
we watch the mating dance
of grebes
our conversation turns
to our wedding day

— Robert Kingston

on the turn
of this ebbing tide
i place a stone
on each grave marked
unknown soldier

— Robert Kingston

final game
of the season
at least
the wind isn't partial
to the home team's flag

— Srinivas S

tanka

an ancient fort
 stands tall
year after year
I see my mother droop
with the weight of her past

— Teji Sethi

Anju Kishore
~

Small Voices

I crush the dried rose petals in the foot soak between my toes — a hint of a fragrance rises, and no more.

big city
warblers hit
a glass tower

Diana Webb



Flightpath

A certain kind of light. Oblique. Glints and glistens along the water - through the sheen - in the surrounding trees a stipple of birdsong. Deep breath. It's just out of sight around the meander.

mute swan
with enfolded wings
a gift from childhood

Curve of a cello. Somewhere an oboe. Or maybe a flute. Muted whispers fade to a hush. The set is revealed. There's a hint of moonlight. The story unfolds through the limbs of the dancers. It's yet to come. You wait as the music lingers...

spotlight
in the shape-shift of art
her arms become wings

Gauri Dixit



Facade

“Keep that switch on, you imbecile,” Mr Lele barks at the building’s security guard. “If the lights are not on how would the CCTV camera capture intruders in this darkness? Forget about intruders. There are thieves and thugs in our own building. How would we catch the person who put those ugly scratches on my car?”

“Old buildings are good for exercise, no elevators here,” Mr Lele mutters, balancing the vegetable bag. Beans, beetroots and tomatoes create a colourful trail towards the third storey.

an ant crawls
on the chequered floor ...
queen’s gambit

K Ramesh



The Expected

On the forest trail, an eagle perched on a branch seems equally surprised when I spot it. The huge bird looks at me intently from a distance as if it's searching my soul. The wind ruffles the eagle's feathers and the bird adjusts itself on the branch. Soon, it takes off with a shrill call that fills the forest. I watch the eagle spread its wings and soar. It calls again as if to say, hey! there is someone here who is not part of the forest.

back to the apartment ...
the neighbour unaware
of my return

Lakshmi Iyer
~

Chasing Memories

I always wanted to be first, but I couldn't. Each time I tried, my wheezing would show up and I had to stay at home for almost a week. Father would write a letter to the principal. The same lines for the seventh time. This time I learnt a new word, 'convalescence'.

July rain ...
drops follow drops
on the windowpane

Keith Polette



Under Pressure

In the morning, after I don the mask and fins to go oyster diving, I drop into blue where I search the seabed like I'm looking for lost keys. With the air tank on my back, feeling like an underwater Quasimodo, I move slowly in submerged silence — the closest bells are banging on wave-bucked buoys — the way one moves after waking from a long sleep, keen to be alert for the sharp edges of shells protruding from the ocean floor. As I pluck one and hold it in my hand, it is like a stone perfect for skipping or a flying saucer ready to take flight. I admire how tight oysters are, precisions of compression, like the valves of a trumpet stubbornly stuck shut or rock-hard eyelids that will not open — the envy of every insomniac. Cloistered within, a solitary pearl grows, not like a heart preparing itself to beat, but like a moon that is slowly filling with light in the dense darkness of a constricted inner space.

pointillist painting
each dot and dab of color
the seed of a star

Mona Bedi



The Afterglow

It's a full moon. The moonlight stealthily enters through the crack in the curtains. It caresses your face as you sleep. You turn and the incandescence shifts to the beating pulse in your neck. I lean forward to taste it.

homecoming
just the trembling
of wind chimes

Reid Hepworth
~

Bend

She cried when told that she couldn't pee standing up. The unfairness of it. All the little hurts rolled into one, like cuts doused in antiseptic.

to school again
in a pink frilly dress ...
square peg

Reid Hepworth



Remembrance

We walk the house. Grandma asks me to point to objects that I like. Later, I find her with a roll of Scotch tape and a marker. She writes my name on the bottom of the items I choose. She's preparing to go when I want her to stay.

crystal vase
the heirloom rose
in bloom again

haibun

Robert Kingston



May Day

The day opens with a rendition of Grandsire Caters already in full swing on the radio.

Being Sunday I adjust the volume so as not to upset the birds. Addressing the rainbows in the wardrobe, I select a shade of black and white.

borrowed light
in the bathroom mirror
a broken smile

wooden staircase
stepping down
among the voices

bottom step
underscored in red
an unopened bill

haibun

Robert Kingston



Waves crash from one rock to another.

city arch
a new settler
unfolds a box

Note:

This is a gembun and gembun don't have titles.

Teji Sethi
~

The Secret Ingredient

In the wee hours of the morning, she stirs honey and psyllium husk in lukewarm water. The steel spoon in a brass tumbler makes a tinkling sound. My ears are now used to these notes. Four pills, two arrowroot biscuits and this concoction — is exactly the way my grandpa wants it. In another pan, on the gas stove boils tulsi leaves and ginger. She hums a prayer while her feeble fingers sink into the grainy dough of his favourite makki ki roti. As she flattens the dough-ball between her palms, she whines, “I can no more churn butter, my bones have given way, I wish I had taught you, your grandpa doesn’t like this amul-shamul, it is for your generation of Barbie dolls”. From the corner of my eyes, I see her hiding a handsome piece of jaggery between two rotis. It literally swims in clarified butter. My eyes widen at the sight of it. “He’s a heart patient granny!” I scream. “Nothing works better for the heart than love, puttara,” she smiles coyly.

incense stick
dawn rises through
the rings of smoke

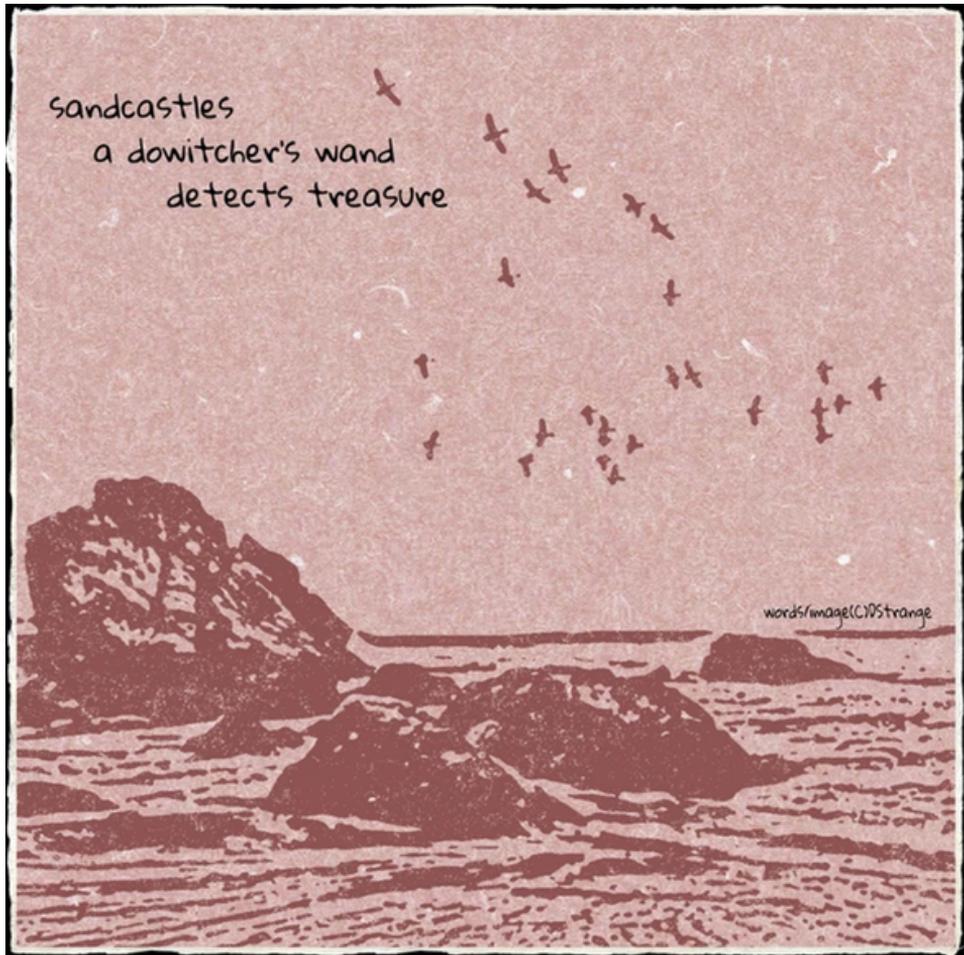
Lakshmi Iyer
~

Fear

I vaguely remember the nights of the Indo-Pak war in 1971. We were in Gujarat then and the security in our neighbourhoods was tightened. The windows were fully covered with dark brown paper so that light wouldn't escape. The medicinal supplies were home delivered. The postal department had closed. We couldn't go to school or go out to play. The sirens in the middle of the night were haunting. There were no television or cell phones. The radio news was all that people listened to.

memories
of making greeting cards
and paper dolls
she cross stitches the words
To Dad With Love

haiga

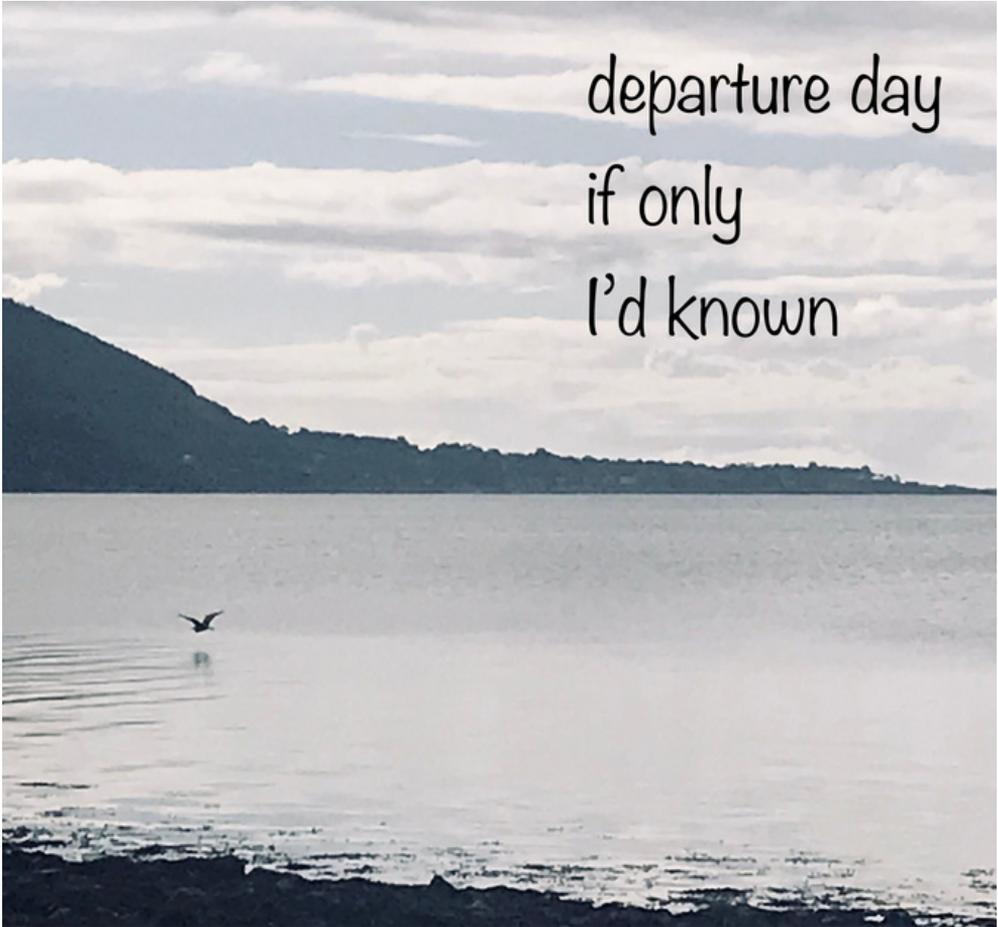


haiga



pic and poem by Marion Clarke

haiga



pic and poem by Marion Clarke

haiga



pic and poem by Wanda Amos

gracing the sky
a gulp of swallows
my love I share,
this moment with you
witnessed in real-time
an'ya





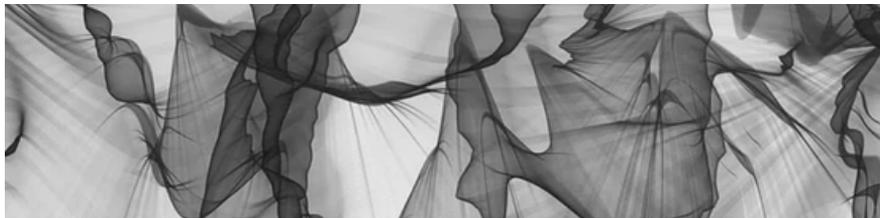
monsoon rains,
the endless fields
are weeping too ...
lost in the winds of change
rice-planting songs of natives

Milan Rajkumar



the last drop
of ink
from my brush
life has drained me
bone dry

pamela a. babusci



*nothing
left between us
but this winter chill ...
I wrap your muffler around
and pour some tea for myself*

teji

Dear Readers
thank you for being with us

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

Team: *haikuKATHA*