

haikuKATHA

unfolding the story within



Milind Mulick

Issue 14, December 2022

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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, tanka art, 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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Issue 14
December 2022

haiku, tanka, haibun
tanka-prose, gembun and haiga

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CONTENTS

Editors' Choice: <i>did something</i> by Susan Burch	1
Editors' Choice Commentary by Firdaus Parvez	
Commentary on Cover Art by Alaka Yeravadekar	3
haiku	
AJ Anwar	4
Arvinder Kaur	
Baisali Chatterjee Dutt	
Barrie Levine	5
Bryan Rickert	
Disha Upadhyay	6
Lakshmi Iyer	
Lev Hart	
Lev Hart	7
Lorraine Haig	
Marcie Wessels	
Marilyn Ashbaugh	
Marilyn Ashbaugh	8
Milan Rajkumar	
Rupa Anand	
Samir Satam	9
Seemanthini Iyer	
Vibha Malhotra	

CONTENTS

Vladislav Hristov 10
Wanda Amos

one-line haiku

Arvinder Kaur 11
Disha Upadhyay
Lev Hart
Marcie Wessels

Robert Kingston 12
Richa Sharma
Susan Burch

concrete haiku

Lev Hart 13
Lev Hart 14

tanka

Billie Dee 15
Bonnie Scherer

Bryan Rickert 16
Ken Slaughter

Linda Papanicolaou 17
Marilyn Ashbaugh

Marilyn Ashbaugh 18
Mona Bedi
Ron Russell

CONTENTS

Ron Russell 19
Susan Burch

haibun

Unfastened by Anju Kishore 20
Creature Comforts by Bryan Rickert 21
Acoustics by Diana Webb 22
Outside the Box by Diana Webb 23
Summer Tidings by Lakshmi Iyer 24
Conversion by Marilyn Ashbaugh 25
The Long Way Home by Martin Duguay 26
Reverence by Mona Bedi 27
My Husband Laughs at Me but by Susan Burch 28
Fecund Earth by Vidya Shankar 29
Charm by Vidya Shankar 30
Northern Breeze by Xenia Tran 31

tanka-prose

The Little Things by Bryan Rickert 32
A Misunderstanding by Marilyn Ashbaugh 33
Jagged edges by Vibha Malhotra 34

gembun

There's a change within by Rupa Anand 35

haiga

Sankara Jayanth 36
Teji Sethi 37
Xenia Tran 38

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

Our heartfelt thanks to:

Susan Burch, Tish Davis

Matsuo Basho

Narrow Road to the Deep North,

for providing the weekly challenges
for the month of October 2022,

Artist Milind Mulick

for his watercolour painting,

Samir Satam

for gathering the poems
written for the prompts in HAIKUstradhar,

our contributors

for sharing their poems.

Editors' Choice Commentary: Firdaus Parvez
did something by Susan Burch

did something
change
between us
the slight notch
of an ox-eyed daisy

Susan Burch

Susan's poem, though the style is quite contemporary, is a good example of a classic tanka. We have the inner reflection in the upper verse and a concrete image (or outer reflection) in the lower verse. What we get together is a fantastic metaphor in the last three lines:

between us
the slight notch
of an ox-eyed daisy

I'm pretty sure most of us have seen an ox-eyed daisy but, have you noticed that there's a slight notch on each tip of its petals? So, here's the brilliance of this poem: only the ones immersed in a relationship would probably notice even a minuscule change (as small as a notch on a daisy) between them.

did something
change
between us

But then that, as a reader, is my interpretation. Maybe the poet meant that there's a slight mark or defect on the perfect flower (read relationship); the first sign of deterioration, but who's to say. I read somewhere that a poem is like a bird, once it flies away from the poet it perches on the branch of the reader and it becomes theirs to interpret. Isn't that beautiful about poetry?

I love how the third line acts as a bridge between the upper and lower verse (if you look at it that way). The line breaks are perfectly timed and the tanka is effortlessly smooth.

*did something
change
between us*

*between us
the slight notch
of an ox-eyed daisy*

Try splitting the next tanka you write this way. It won't work all the time but when it does you'll know! I enjoyed reading this tanka several times and came to multiple conclusions and I hope you do too.

Cover Art: Milind Mulick
Thoughts from an art lover: Alaka Yeravadekar



Musings in Blue

The painting by Milind Mulick leads one into a world of fantasy, the surreal, where houses have eyes and expressions. It reminds me of the dwellings from fairy tales... Hansel and Gretel, Rapunzel's tower. I feel as if I have stepped into Narnia. What do these houses see? Do they judge those who pass by them? Still, as they stand, do they approve of the madly rushing humanity? They look like houses that were once homes, full of warmth and life, now abandoned. They have seen the rough and tumble of life, the soot and grime of industry. They have lived once upon a time. Now they wait, with a look of resignation on their facades.

Curiosity made me google for buildings with eyes. A place in Romania does have houses with what one might call 'eyes' in their roofs, which are openings to let air into the attics.

Coming to the artwork, the range of blues used suggest a cold stark landscape; the darks, an industrial town. The white spaces offer relief and let the mind roam. And then there is that stroke of fresh green. Even in this bleak landscape, there is still hope.

haiku

bullies
their choice
of toys

AJ Anwar

evening walk
wheelchairs gather
near a bench

Arvinder Kaur

bird watching ...
my eyes follow a song
into the leaves

Baisali Chatterjee Dutt

no one to fight with
over the last piece of cake ...
I eat something else

Baisali Chatterjee Dutt

haiku

failed audition —
mouthing Ophelia's lines
on opening night

Barrie Levine

waving a bubble loop ...
summer breezes
through my childhood

Barrie Levine

where the wind blows
my freedom
to not fit in

Bryan Rickert

kitten
playing with the leaf
played by the wind

Bryan Rickert

haiku

ear to the kitchen wall
live score
of my neighbours' fight

Disha Upadhyay

debutant dentist
my root canal filled
with speculation

Lakshmi Iyer

home alone ...
talking aloud about things
i can't share

Lakshmi Iyer

alone at the bar
i pay the band to play
my birthday song

Lev Hart

haiku

time to myself
I rehearse
our next argument

Lev Hart

knowing when to leave . . .
winged termites stream
from the stump

Lorraine Haig

midnight —
a car door
dents the stillness

Marcie Wessels

soft rain
a clothesline length
of solitude

Marilyn Ashbaugh

haiku

hearing your voice
in the honks of geese
home alone

Marilyn Ashbaugh

cataracts
the fuzzy logic
of loss

Marilyn Ashbaugh

in-law's aquarium –
a goldfish struggles
among tiger barbs

Milan Rajkumar

school choir—
a stuttering crow
amid nightingales

Rupa Anand

haiku

her grave ...
the fragrance of mogra
and me

Samir Satam

pushing clutter
out of the frame —
virtual meeting

Samir Satam

kindergarten
a little hand
finds mine

Seemanthini Iyer

team lunch
the quiet one
cracks a joke

Vibha Malhotra

haiku

far from home
i warm up my hands
in the first snow

Vladislav Hristov

family shame
everyone knows the darkness
of alone

Wanda Amos

one-line haiku

revisiting all my sins solitary night

Arvinder Kaur

him and i burn (in)toxicated words

Disha Upadhyay

following me into the elevator my flatulence

Lev Hart

failing to connect social media

Marcie Wessels

one-line haiku

the flex in each branch morning dew

Robert Kingston

idle sunrays waiting at the same place

Richa Sharma

(t)all by myself

Susan Burch

new motorcycle club the other wives sizing me up

Susan Burch

concrete haiku

alone
with the infinite
stars

Lev Hart

concrete haiku

as

it

buries

me

the

stillness

of

falling

snow

Lev Hart

tanka

piercing midnight
a harmonica's wail
from the bunkhouse
who'd have guessed such feeling
from that quiet old farmhand

Billie Dee

the slow
simmer of molé
on the back burner
cleaning Granny's stone mortar
these chilies bring me to tears

Billie Dee

black waist-length hair
combed then washed
the farmhouse sink
a focal point
in grandma's house

Bonnie Scherer

tanka

blue jays
at the feeder—
my aunts
arguing over
who's pie is best

Bryan Rickert

steady rain
pounding the roof ...
my confession
sleeps in our bed
like a stranger between us

Ken Slaughter

on the beach
searching for glass
at low tide
I pick up
a jagged piece of memory

Ken Slaughter

tanka

a willow twig
in my newly woven
trellis for peas
this first spring morning
buds its own green leaves

Linda Papanicolaou

my thoughts scatter
like dustmotes
in the attic sun
I lift the lid
to grandpa's cedar chest

Marilyn Ashbaugh

pine needle path
learning to live
with less
grandmother weaves a rag rug
full of rainbow colors

Marilyn Ashbaugh

tanka

grandma's log-cabin quilt
swaddles the newborn
... its silken threads
holding all those stories
told long ago

Marilyn Ashbaugh

another birthday ...
I remember the rose
dad gave me
the one he picked every year
from our neighbour's garden

Mona Bedi

hushed creaks
of rubbing wood
an oar
slips into the stillness
of a lover's moon

Ron Russell

tanka

old friends
together once more
before passing
no words can match
the voice in our touch

Ron Russell

sand sucked
into the eddy ...
I guess
I'll never know
if you loved me

Susan Burch

did something
change
between us
the slight notch
of an ox-eyed daisy

Susan Burch

haibun

Anju Kishore
~

Unfastened

The sky had been hanging dark and low, ready to drop to the earth in one thundering mass. The air lay thickly in between, as if oppressed and awaiting redress.

I set out on foot, empty handed. People are hurrying in the opposite direction, gathering whatever possible before the storm strikes. Some try to stop me. Some pause to look at me, but clatter on.

The gale has made a mad man of me, snatching at my hair and robe. My sight is on the hill that almost always stands shrouded on the horizon. Crowned by a small shrine, it begins to appear through the clouds, now small enough, now too tall to be climbed.

moon haze
on the narrowing path
a blade of grass

haibun

Bryan Rickert
~

Creature Comforts

The smell of ripe guava scents the air. The sound of the ocean rides in on a salty breeze. Tropical palms and exotic fruit trees fill the small yard of the home where my father-in-law was born. In a language I don't understand, his elderly mother is talking and showing great concern. My wife's father roughly translates that it's been a long time since the Americans have come for a visit. This is my first time and she seems to be worried about my ability to eat the island food. So, she made chicken soup. After spending the entire day on three separate planes to get here, I am desperately hungry and delighted that on my first day I wouldn't be confronted with any foods too foreign to me. Surrounded by people I don't know, I put my spoon into the chicken soup and on the first bite, pull up the uncut and perfectly shaped chicken heart.

island night
the lump in my bed
moves

haibun

Diana Webb



Acoustics

Route through dim lanes, the full moon all the way to the destination, a vast school chapel, built as memorial to a myriad young lives lost in the Great War. Between stone pillars the stalls resound with massed choirs of children, eyes switching from words on their music sheets to the conductor's baton in quick succession. The pages rustle. The percussion resounds.

dark poppy stamens
gleam with an upward thrust
notes of a bird

haibun

Diana Webb
~

Outside the Box

A candle here. A candle there. A petal here. A petal there. And a window to
show just what a rainbow is made of.

showered with droplets
a tree in the sun
the light in your eyes

Lakshmi Iyer
~

Summer Tidings

We stand at the entrance of The Mother House in Calcutta. The board at the entrance reads, "This is the modest entrance to the world headquarters for the missionaries of charity and has been home to Mother Teresa... It is here that the Mother's mortal remains rest."

We find a place in the hall, calm and serene; a tranquility deep inside experienced only once in a lifetime. There's a cup-candle lit at the tomb of Mother, her rosary placed just near it as Father reads verses from the Bible and the mass prayers hum, 'Make me a channel of your peace...'

The words linger with me as I murmur "where there is hatred let me bring your love". Years ago, I sang this carol on Christmas Eve in our school. Reminiscing the winter holidays with eggless cakes and pastries, I reach out to allow Father to bless me. The Cross on my forehead is placed just half an inch away from my big red bindi.

fisherman casts his net
over the cloudless horizon
a dragonfly pauses

haibun

Marilyn Ashbaugh
~

Conversion

The barn contains small meditation rooms each containing a prayer bench, a cot and a small round window. The wind howls through the barn's slats and the continuous sound gives the feeling of a ship in a stormy sea. My thoughts toss about until I get out of the cot and anchor myself on the prayer bench where I remain until dawn.

first blizzard
hermitage chanting
rolls down the hill

Martin Duguay



The Long Way Home

On its approach to Gimpo Airport, our plane is tossed from side to side by merciless typhoon winds. I look out the window and can barely see the landing strip as the fields on my left have flooded over. Upon touching the tarmac, the plane slides about as if on ice. We hold our breath until the plane slows down to a crawl. This sends the passengers into a frenzy of cheers and applause for the captain.

curtain call the flight crew takes a bow

Due to the storm, my connecting flight to Daegu has been canceled. I decide to head to Seoul's bus terminal. The queue at the taxi stand is nightmarish. A businessman suggests we share a cab, which I accept gratefully. The driver informs me that he can't make his way to the terminal because of flooding in the area. The best he can do is to drop me off at a subway station. The businessman is worried about the five-hour bus ride that awaits me. Afraid to impose, I turn down his generous offer to stay overnight with his family.

beach race a sand crab beats the surf

Once out the subway station, a downpour greets my face. I'm struggling to carry two large duffel bags when the heavy load in my right hand disappears. A petite lady has taken it upon herself to help me carry the bag as far as the terminal. My objections fall on deaf ears. Before I can thank her, she rushes back into the pouring rain. The bus bound for Daegu leaves in two hours.

the warmest welcome
a happy dance
and wagging tail

Mona Bedi



Reverence

The temple bells are silent today. Gates of the temple are closed. The god idols haven't been bathed. The devotees have lined up outside in anticipation of a darshan. I hear the priest is down with covid.

meteor shower
not all our wishes
come true

haibun

Susan Burch



My Husband Laughs at Me but...

sometimes eating raisin bran feels like too much work. The bran is crunchy & the raisins are chewy & it's so much effort in every bite.

JAWS how did he do it

Vidya Shankar
~

Fecund Earth

The antechamber to the sanctum sanctorum is small, dark, and warm. Almost like a cave. It can hardly hold the five of us — my mother, my aunt, my two siblings, and me. The only air inlet is a doorway so low that even I, a ten-year old, have to bend to get in or out. Beads of perspiration roll down my forehead and settle into my bushy eyebrows but I don't complain. I stand enthralled of the Goddess within, Friday after Friday, when the five of us walk down here to offer prayers. A few weeks ago, I had come to Her with a special prayer, a child's prayer — an imploration for good marks. The Goddess, so majestic, so full of grace, a benign smile playing upon Her lips, always makes sure my report card reflects marks I am proud of.

Karkathamman, I think she is called. Her name meant nothing to me. Several years later, I will understand She is Karu-kaatha-Amman, the Goddess who protects fetuses. I will, then, approach her with a different prayer.

madhumalti ...
the growing strings of lines
of my new poem

Vidya Shankar
~

Charm

Seated snugly between two protruding roots, my back resting against the hard trunk of a banyan tree, a paperback for company, I transcend to a world of witchcraft and wizardry. My backpack of snacks lies abandoned, my coffee flask neglected, my phone switched off.

The sunflowers in the field across the muddy, rustic road have turned their heads from east to west. I read on still.

Platform 9 and 3/4...
preoccupied eyes
fail to see magic

haibun

Xenia Tran



Northern Breeze

Most of the forecast rain blows over and we take a chance to head for the coast. Our dog sniffs the marram grass, already turning gold in places. We navigate our way through the dunes, following a trail of boot and paw prints. Side by side we pause where the light bursts through the clouds, showing us a glimpse of blue.

fresh northerlies –
a pied wagtail chirrups
near the stones

Bryan Rickert
~

The Little Things

Packing up the old man's books into boxes, a little piece of paper slides out from between a few pages. A note written with a much younger hand and in a language none of us learned to read, hidden away but obviously important enough for him to keep. I put it on the small stack of other papers we've found pressed in these books.

papa's
old accordion
the tunes
he sang to mama
need no translation

tanka-prose

Marilyn Ashbaugh
~

A Misunderstanding

I check and recheck and check again. Numbers do not lie — the funds are missing. Yet the more I insist there is a serious problem, the more I am dismissed. There is only one thing left for me to do.

solo flight -
losing the moon,
these breadcrumb
stars
lead me back home

tanka-prose

Vibha Malhotra
~

Jagged edges

I don't know what is worse — you and I fighting or us being polite to each other.
It has been peaceful for days, but

i search for you
behind your mask ...
the comfort
of those stark
snow-covered peaks

Rupa Anand
~

There's a change within.

a feather
on a park bench
here and there
through the greens
flying north, flying south

haiga



*another summer
grandma home
alone in her mind*

Sankara Jayanth

haiga



alone in bed
the tilt of a portrait
I never noticed

Teji Sethi

haiga



Xenia Tran

Dear Readers
thank you for being with us.

See you once again on 22 January 2023!
with many more fine poems
from our contributors.

Team: *haikuKATHA*