

# haikuKATHA

unfolding the story within



Milind Mulick

Issue 28, February 2024

---

# haikuKATHA

unfolding the story within

*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.

# haikuKATHA

unfolding the story within

Issue 28  
February 2024

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

**Founder/Managing Editor:**

Kala Ramesh

**Associate Editors:**

Ashish Narain

Firdaus Parvez

Priti Aisola

Sanjukta Asopa

Shalini Pattabiraman

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

Vandana Parashar

Vidya Shankar

**Web Editor:** Ravi Kiran

**Proofreader:** Firdaus Parvez

**Cover Art:** Milind Mulick

**Design:** Kala Ramesh

Copyright © haikuKATHA 2021

All rights revert to the author upon publication. Works may not be reproduced  
in any manner or form without prior consent from the individual authors.

Triveni Haikai India: [www.trivenihaikai.in](http://www.trivenihaikai.in)

## CONTENTS

Haiga by Milind Rajkumar  
Editor's Choice Commentary by Teji Sethi 1 - 4

### haiku

Baisali Chatterjee Dutt 5  
Barrie Levine  
Govind Joshi  
John Pappas

K. Ramesh 6  
Keiko Izawa  
Keith Evetts

Keith Evetts 7  
Lev Hart

Lorraine Haig 8  
Marilyn Ashbaugh  
Nalini Shetty  
Nancy Brady

Padma Rajeswari 9  
Priti Aisola  
Richard L. Matta

Robert Kingston 10  
Srini  
Susan Burch

Susan Yavaniski 11

# CONTENTS

## one-line haiku

|                     |    |
|---------------------|----|
| Nicholas Klacsanzky | 12 |
| Robert Kingston     |    |
| Srini               |    |
| Susan Beth Furst    |    |

## four-line haiku

|                  |    |
|------------------|----|
| Bonnie J Scherer | 13 |
|------------------|----|

## concrete haiku

|                  |    |
|------------------|----|
| Barrie Levine    | 14 |
| Hassane Zemmouri | 15 |
| Jan Stretch      | 16 |
| Kanjini Devi     | 17 |

## tanka

|                  |    |
|------------------|----|
| Alfred Booth     | 18 |
| Barbara Olmtak   |    |
| Billie Dee       | 19 |
| Bonnie J Scherer |    |
| C.X. Turner      | 20 |
| Joanna Ashwell   |    |
| Kanjini Devi     |    |

## CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Kanjini Devi<br>Kirsten Cliff Elliot              | 21 |
| Lakshmi Iyer<br>Linda Papanicolaou                | 22 |
| Linda Papanicolaou<br>Lorraine Haig               | 23 |
| Lorraine Haig<br>Marilyn Humbert<br>Nalini Shetty | 24 |
| Padma Priya<br>Priti Aisola                       | 25 |
| Priti Aisola<br>Reid Hepworth<br>Sanjuktaa Asopa  | 26 |
| Shawn Blair<br>Suraja Menon Roychowdhury          | 27 |
| Susan Burch<br>Susan Yavaniski                    | 28 |
| <b>haibun</b>                                     |    |
| <i>Anniversary</i> by Adelaide B. Shaw            | 29 |
| <i>Magic Hour</i> by Alfred Booth                 | 30 |
| <i>Yin Yangs Made of Flesh</i> by Andrew Riutta   | 31 |
| <i>Fight or Flight</i> by C.X. Turner             | 32 |

## CONTENTS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <i>If I Could Turn Back Time</i> by Eavonka Ettinger | 33 |
| <i>Query</i> by Kalyanee Arandhara                   | 34 |
| <i>Girls' Rules</i> by Linda Papanicolaou            | 35 |
| <i>Dostadning</i> by Linda Papanicolaou              | 36 |
| <i>The Land of Myth</i> by Lorraine Haig             | 37 |
| <i>My Mother's Heart</i> by Lorraine Haig            | 38 |
| <i>The Way it's Always Been</i> by Lorraine Haig     | 39 |
| <i>The Relic</i> by Mona Bedi                        | 40 |
| <i>Twisted</i> by Mona Bedi                          | 41 |
| <i>Broken Fence</i> by Sandip Chauhan                | 42 |
| <i>Untouched Tomorrows</i> by Sandip Chauhan         | 43 |
| <i>In a New Nest</i> by Sandip Chauhan               | 44 |
| <del><i>Clotheshorse stable</i></del> by Susan Burch | 45 |
| <i>It's Barely a Moment</i> by Susan Yavanisky       | 46 |
| <i>Different Truths</i> by Teji Sethi                | 47 |
| <i>blessed</i> by Vidya Shankar                      | 48 |

### **gembun**

|                 |    |
|-----------------|----|
| Sankara Jayanth | 49 |
| Susan Burch     | 50 |

### **gembun with tanka**

|             |    |
|-------------|----|
| Kala Ramesh | 51 |
|-------------|----|

### **tanka-prose**

|                                    |    |
|------------------------------------|----|
| <i>Fading Grass</i> by C.X. Turner | 52 |
| <i>Stopwatch</i> by Susan Burch    | 53 |

## CONTENTS

### haiga

|                 |    |
|-----------------|----|
| Adelaide B Shaw | 54 |
| Marion Clarke   | 55 |
| Milan Rajkumar  | 56 |
| Milan Rajkumar  | 57 |
| Sankara Jayanth | 58 |
| Sankara Jayanth | 59 |
| Teji Sethi      | 60 |

### tanka-art

|            |    |
|------------|----|
| Teji Sethi | 61 |
| Teji Sethi | 62 |



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

Our heartfelt thanks to:

Marilyn Ashbaugh, Kristen Cliff Elliot, Ludmila Balabanova,  
and Aparna Pathak,

for providing the weekly challenges  
for the month of January 2024,

Milind Mullick  
for his watercolour painting,

our contributors  
for sharing their poems.

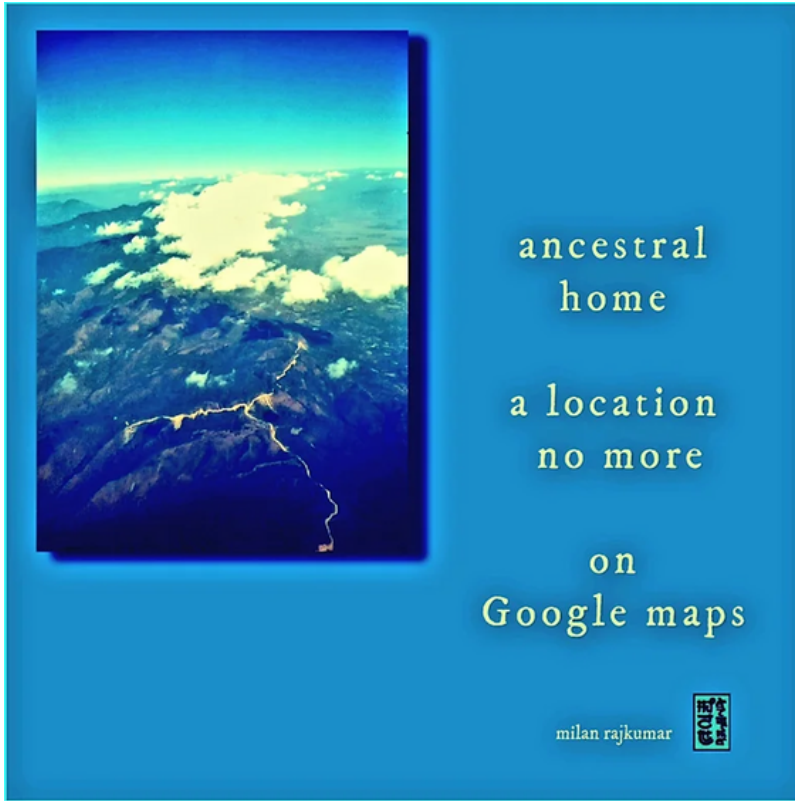
Editors' Choice Commentary: Teji Sethi  
Two Haiga by Milan Rajkumar



From what I know of haiga — the more visual cousin of haiku, is that haiga beautifully employs a link and shift technique between the haiku and the artwork which transforms it into a visual-verbal interplay. Since haiku and artwork share the same space, there ought to be an artistic attachment and detachment at the same time with neither of them explaining or overpowering the other. The contemporary haiga sometimes lacks this element and repeats the images in words and visuals which might speak of the inadequacy of either or both elements. The artwork or picture should therefore complement the haiku and elevate its essence.

The moment I saw Milan's haiga 'an autumn leaf, the delicacy and depth of the verse reminded me of a Nirgun Bhajan of Kabir, 'jaise paat gire taruvar se, milna bahut duhela, na jaane kidhar girega, lageya pavan ka rela' which means, we are much like a leaf, when severed from the universal spirit, we are liable to be blown away. In such a state, it is difficult to predict our journey. Our fate lies in/with the wind's direction.

In another reading, I visualise a sage, free from all worldly desires, who wanders from place to place gathering life's learnings. This could be the poet himself reflecting on his own journey. Pairing it with a faded pencil sketch, Milan nurtures the fragility of the moment. The back and grey tonalities add earthiness and visual depth to the haiga. The haiku takes an unexplained but intuitive leap from the sketch of a bamboo shrub and a bird perched on one of its twigs. The Japanese term for this is fusoko-furi. This haiga of his, speaks to me, at once of the many emotions embedded in a single image; of solitude, melancholy, uncertainty and freedom.



In this photo haiku or shahai, Milan creates a poignant story putting the reader into his shoes. When he opens the poem using 'ancestral home' as a backdrop, the reader anticipates something emotional like a fragment of memory to follow in the coming phrase. Rather, one gets a jolt on reading 'a location no more on google maps'. Milan supplements this image with a picture showing a google map with a bird's eye view of a mountain range highlighted in white. Knowing that Milan comes from the North-Eastern part of India, this leaves us with many questions.

Is he pointing towards the recent outbursts of violence where a whole village was turned to dirt or is he talking of a natural calamity that engulfed his home? Or may be nothing of the two.

He just wants to draw attention to the changing topography of the place. Whatever it is, the sense of loss is palpable in this shahai. The use of a technical term ‘ Google maps’ is an intelligent play of words. The versatility of technique lies in applying the use of zoom in from the bigger picture into a small one of his home, that finally fades out and you are left with nothing but a vacuum.

I congratulate Milan on creating these visual delights.

## haiku

spring breeze ...  
a Marilyn moment  
in front of my crush

Baisali Chatterjee Dutt

in the grip  
of clothespins ...  
billowing clouds

Barrie Levine

harvest basket  
the earthy aroma  
of just pulled carrots

Govind Joshi

pulling the lake  
into the sky  
grey heron

John Pappas

## haiku

dewdrop on a leaf  
the earth  
holding oceans

K. Ramesh

looking up  
to where a bird chirps  
swollen plum buds

Keiko Izawa

discussing  
family issues with friends  
crosswinds

Keiko Izawa

rising moon  
the spread of wind  
in ripened grasses

Keith Evetts

## haiku

anchored to a rock  
a kite  
at lunchtime

Keith Evetts

brushing off earth  
with a song  
skylark

Keith Evetts

feelings i can't name  
a red leaf scuttles across  
the sidewalk

Lev Hart

shimmering heat  
the pig farm wafts through  
our window

Lev Hart



## haiku

breakwater  
a trawler trailing  
seagulls

Lorraine Haig

strong winds  
    everything moving  
but the heron's stare

Marilyn Ashbaugh

deflated balloon -  
the hush within  
my womb

Nalini Shetty

first snowfall ...  
tulip bulbs tucked  
into beds

Nancy Brady

## haiku

as if in a dream  
she pats the soil  
on the fresh grave

Padma Rajeswari

fissured earth  
the sky's blue  
hurts

Priti Aisola

dusk  
my jagged thoughts  
softened by prayer

Priti Aisola

pottery wheel  
five pounds of clay  
puts me in my place

Richard L. Matta

## haiku

daffodils  
a trio of magpies joined  
by another

Robert Kingston

pit song ...  
whistling down  
the canary's voice

Robert Kingston

windy dusk  
a stampede  
of leaves

Srini

how you think  
you walk on water  
Jesus bug

Susan Burch

## haiku

nor'easter  
the tethered bull  
grows restless

Susan Yavaniski

## one-line haiku

multiple universes chatter of a magpie

Nicholas Klacsanzky

fifty spades deep the thud in dried clay

Robert Kingston

knowing everyone's names small town wind

Srini

early morning snow drifting back to sleep

Susan Beth Furst

## four-line haiku

the shift  
of tectonic plates —  
my dry knuckles  
    buckling

Bonnie J Scherer

## concrete haiku

running to the bus ...  
her windblown scarf  
hanging on

Barrie Levine

## concrete haiku

bro ken wind ow

Hassane Zemmouri



## concrete haiku

soft snow

\*

\*

\*

sounds of sibilants

Jan Stretch

## concrete haiku

thud  
thud  
thud ...  
an empty skateboard  
down the driveway

Kanjini Devi

tanka

morning birdsong  
    sometimes a touch of rain  
    sometimes a sunny sky  
there are so many paths  
to a musical phrase

Alfred Booth

when we fell askew  
i found a homeless kitten  
nurturing him  
helped me believe  
i could love you once again

Alfred Booth

eavesdropping  
on conversations  
my grandkids  
so much wiser  
than many adults

Barbara Olmtak

tanka

old pin oak  
the last of the fledglings  
takes wing  
I wonder how many springs  
are left for me

Billie Dee

a hummingbird  
whirs among the aloes  
remembering  
your turquoise eyes  
but not your name

Billie Dee

hornets nesting  
under garage eaves  
the sting  
of a mortgage  
hanging over me

Bonnie J Scherer

tanka

inside  
a chrysalis  
forming wings ...  
I learn to love  
silent spaces

C.X. Turner

my heart lifts  
as you return  
morning birdsong  
finding a way  
to be around you

Joanna Ashwell

the paddock now free  
from blackberry brambles  
rescue goats  
the permanent tracks  
they leave in my heart

Kanjini Devi

## tanka

farmers wading  
in flooded pastures  
this winter  
I reminisce about  
rice fields of Bali

Kanjini Devi

added to each  
layer of mulch  
green manure  
these parts of me  
you don't embrace

Kanjini Devi

cracking open  
this new journal ...  
waning moon  
will my salvation be  
within these pages?

Kirsten Cliff Elliot

tanka

i don't know  
why i shouted  
at my mother  
the sleepless night thundered  
with heavy rain and tears

Lakshmi Iyer

blizzard of snow geese  
across a tidal tule marsh —  
suddenly  
alone in the parking lot  
I inhale first signs of spring

Linda Papanicolaou

the felt-tipped pen  
poised above a blank page  
in my sketchbook —  
a dot becomes a line, then  
turning on itself, a shape

Linda Papanicolaou

tanka

first day of school  
through the morning traffic  
anise swallowtail —  
my resolution this year  
to notice little things

Linda Papanicalaou

the silent pools  
and deep ravines  
of a river  
your long absence  
shaping my days

Lorraine Haig

her wish  
to live past one hundred  
in good health  
the grace and beauty  
of an old Huon pine

Lorraine Haig



tanka

all afternoon  
I gaze at a blank page  
by the river  
a blackbird scratches  
at shadows

Lorraine Haig

assaulted by  
briny-ozone aroma  
mixed with  
rotten seaweed  
... memories of home

Marilyn Humbert

amid daily chores  
my muse toils  
to take form  
on a starved canvas  
an evening sun

Nalini Shetty

tanka

still water  
in the pond  
scissored by the duck  
turns still again ...  
    healing moments

Padma Priya

broke  
my sand clock into two  
only a sage knows  
how to arrest the flow  
of moments

Priti Aisola

morning walk  
she sits on a bench  
for a while  
her hand rests lightly  
on a statue's

Priti Aisola

tanka

wind-stirred  
dry champa leaves ...  
just one word  
raking memories  
of a loss i cannot face

Priti Aisola

tenderly  
the gardener grafts together  
tangy and sweet  
how hard it is to accept  
the different parts of me

Reid Hepworth

folding the day  
into poems and poems  
into paper cranes ...  
now I wait for the wind  
beneath their wings

Sanjuktaa Asopa

tanka

3 a.m.  
a deer's silhouette  
in the yard  
did we even touch  
each other yesterday

Shawn Blair

there is little  
to see in the drab grey  
this winter  
how i dread the glimmer  
of my deep blue sadness

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

hitting  
the return key  
then backspace ...  
I erase the fantasy  
of becoming a poet

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

tanka

why did you  
leave it loaded?  
your shiny gun  
perfect  
for cops and robbers

Susan Burch

alone at the Taj  
I laughed to think I'd ever want  
a monument to love ...  
now a craftsman carves  
one stone for our shared plot

Susan Yavaniski

for me  
you labored a lifetime  
in this field  
now wild with flowers  
I gather for your grave

Susan Yavaniski

Adelaide B. Shaw

Anniversary

pain and loss pain of loss loss of pain when does that happen some pain never goes it abates resurfaces reasserts itself attaches itself to nerve endings to the psyche one at a time or both all at once inclusive enveloping show stopping pain nagging persistent triggered by nothing by a look at a photo or a turn of my head by a date on the calendar

heavy winter rain  
even my bones  
know the date

Alfred Booth  
~

**Magic Hours**

Yes, I know, I sneezed three times in a row in the wee hours. You always jumped down from your basket on top of the wardrobe next to the bed. Worried? Probably. You would cuddle for a while afterwards. Until I fell asleep again.

I felt the bed receive your now-invisible paws, tracing their path to where I lay awake. I said “Hello, Sweet Pea. Don’t worry, papa is OK.”

I don’t remember how that nickname evolved from the beautiful Gao I’ve always known. It was the name given to you by the lady angel who nursed you when your mama couldn’t be there for you and your kitty siblings. There were other nicknames.

I told you “It’s alright, you can go back to sleep, wherever you are now.” The rest of our long conversation will remain our secret.

full moonbeams ...  
did you always watch them  
without me?

Andrew Riutta  
~

### Yin Yangs Made of Flesh

I don't believe I've ever seen anyone look so soft, the way she's  
caught right now in this Christmas Eve candlelight and its dancing  
midnight flickers, her face and neck so delicately aglow.

She told me once when we were both drunk, and I was being a real  
jerk, that she wished a herd of elk would trample me and my poverty  
into a few dozen pounds of fresh steak.

shut-off notice —  
she plays Nina Simone  
for her pregnant belly



C.X. Turner

### Fight or Flight

Patterns of light flicker across the pavement stretching in front of me. I try to focus on stopping the tremble in my legs and remember to breathe when the cool air hits the back of my throat.

*open sky*

It is often easy to notice a swallow in flight because they will execute tight turns and dives while searching for insects, which they catch midair.

*revealing its secrets*

I never expected to walk away from you quite as swiftly as I did when you appeared unexpectedly in the street that bright autumn Tuesday. I hope you didn't see me, but remember that it doesn't matter.

*one by one*

Eavonka Ettinger

### If I Could Turn Back Time

We are both wearing cowboy boots. I don't know why I even brought them with me to be a live-in nanny in Long Island, but she says it's a hot trend right now. Rachel isn't even legal yet, but her parents allowed her to come since I'm twenty-two and can look out for her. She's got a good fake ID. We paid for a cab to get all the way over here.

*falling*

I've only been here less than a month. It's such a culture shock living with the super wealthy in Sands Point, and I'm unfamiliar with everything. When she invited me to go to a club on the other side of the island and then spend the night at her place, I was thrilled. The family I work for has relatives visiting, and they're going to sleep early. It's such a relief to finally have a night away.

*into a snakepit*

We've been here maybe 15 minutes when a guy she likes shows up. Turns out this was all a ruse to get alone time with her older boyfriend. She takes off in his car promising she'll be back.

*so many rattles*

But she isn't. I wait at the door watching every single person coming or going and every car that pulls up for two hours until closing time comes and goes. It seems impossible. Were they in a crash? I don't even know what town I'm in. I have no one I can call. I'm terrified to wake up my employers at 2:30 in the morning. I don't know her parent's number. I have no clue how to get there. The staff is cleaning up, and there are only men left.

Kalyanee Arandhara

Query

How I restrained my urge to hug that stranger - a fruit vendor wearing a pendant of letters of my native language, when my husband and I were two lost souls in a non-English speaking country, late at night scouting for the Colosseum. Abdul, the fruit seller was indeed a life-saver as he directed us to that historical site.

Then again, those restauranteurs who gave us complementary plates of green salad in Indian restaurants in Central London.

from one milepost  
to another  
— a journey within

After eons, stories of conflict emerging from border issues still fall on my ears like crackers bursting on Diwali. These years of so-called progress, spread of education, development etc., etc., haven't been able to kindle that simple awareness of who we actually are. What are those barbed wires, fences, the hostility, disparity, the bloodshed for, if we still sing songs in our praise?

my kite flies alone  
soon to be joined by ten more  
— infinite sky

Linda Papanicolaou

### Girls' Rules

The high school gym suit is a coarse green cotton design that probably hasn't changed since my mother's day. You take it home on Friday, wash, iron, and wear it in class again on Monday if you don't want an X in the roll book. Not that it ever needs washing, what with ten on a side and only two dribbles before passing. Women's basketball adheres to the principle that ladies don't sweat — they glow.

choosing up teams —  
the consolation of being  
picked *next* to last

Linda Papanicolaou

### Dostadning

Yesterday a meme on my Facebook news feed asked if there were anyone (alive or dead) whom I'd want to talk to for one hour, who would it be? I suppose we're expected to answer Jesus Christ or Gandhi or somebody famous, but I knew immediately who I'd choose: my father. There are so many questions I didn't think to ask. An hour wouldn't be enough.

Today it seems my wish has been granted. I'm on a clean-out, weeding through boxes and boxes of his old 35 mm slides ...

long-gone summers  
in faded Kodachrome —  
my childhood through his eyes

Lorraine Haig

### The Land of Myth

We arrive at a landscape where escarpments have heaved their great shoulders out of the earth.

Red granite boulders are scattered over the valley like a giant's marbles. Some are precariously balanced. As we wander among them, it feels as if we have entered the time of creation. Perhaps if we wait, we might see the bony-scaled monster roar from the curve of the land, feel the earth shudder as it swings its huge tail shattering everything in its path. A curved bower of rock might once have been a nest of sticks and straw where a flightless bird would gently roll a huge egg under her enormous body. The land is holding its breath. As we stand in the deep silence, a startled Sure-footed wallaby bounds away.

campfire  
a pack of dingoes haunt  
the shadows

Lorraine Haig

**A Mother's Heart**

Sometimes I'm filled with a longing for those years living on a small island. For the community hall where families would gather to dance. Its cypress floor powered smooth and slippery as dusted skin. For the abandoned farm where children would carry home avocados and mangos. For the crumbling hideaway with a wall of colored bottles. For a kerosene fridge and gas lamps because there was no power. For a track winding among the smooth, ochre trunks of Angophoras, their leaves rinsed in sunlight. For the Bush Stone-Curlew, summoning with its mournful cry, all the loneliness of the island.

butterfly  
the tale of a child  
who stayed

Lorraine Haig

### The Way it's Always Been

They don't like newcomers in this small outback town. They don't like city people who buy a house and paint it yellow or blue. They don't like the new fence or the small orchard that's been planted. In their four-wheel drives, working dogs in the back, they slow down to stare from under their akubras. They never smile or wave.

Cauliflowers and zucchinis grow well in the rich soil and some locals come to buy. The oranges are ready for the market and will be picked the next day.

Through the night they come and strip every piece of fruit off the trees.

long grass  
a black snake  
slithers away



Mona Bedi  
~

### The Relic

It's a sunny day today and I decide to visit my birthplace. Born and brought up in Delhi, the hospital I was born in is just an hour away from the place where I live. As I enter the gates of the hospital a familiar breeze greets me. The old building I was born in is now a swanky maternity unit. The open grounds have been replaced by play areas for kids. All has changed except for a small temple under an old peepal tree with the same stone God idol.

peeling paint  
the walls too have  
a story to tell

Mona Bedi  
~

Twisted

She was inside the room with her uncle for a good 40 minutes. When she came out her hands were full of chocolates. Her lips were a bit bruised but the goodies had all her attention.

the flutter of her school dress spring breeze

Sandip Chauhan

**Broken Fences**

rustic rooftops  
Goddess Lakshmi aglow  
in golden lights

A man draped in a saffron robe, holding a trident, and wearing vermilion on his forehead, marches through a bustling crowd. He approaches a shop owner, ringing his bells and chanting mantras, seeking donations for a deity. The merchant lowers his head and promptly drops polished coins into his aluminium begging bowl. Right there, a slumdog boy, barefoot and in tattered clothes, extends his empty palms with pleading eyes. The shopkeeper dismisses him with a shooining gesture.

shadows deepen  
parijat bending  
to the wind

Sandip Chauhan

Untouched Tomorrows

My nephew stands ready, eyes fixed on the sky, poised to pursue his dreams. The air is alive with the heady fragrance of petrichor, blending with the tears of his widowed mother. Against a sky adorned with drifting dandelion seeds, he bids his mother farewell, promising a reunion in two years. She whispers, "Upon your return, my son, I'll find you a suitable bride."

ocean waves  
a rainbow hovers  
on a far horizon

In the quiet hospice room, now he lies in the twilight of his existence. I feel the weight of unspoken words in the pauses between his shallow breaths. Gently holding his hand, I sense his last breath ebbing away within the shelter of my cupped palms.

gray heavens  
the wilting marigolds  
on a half-strung garland

Sandip Chauhan

In a New Nest

wedding album  
the scent of jasmine  
in my hair

In the kitchen, I am preparing a feast for the entire family, the pungent smell of spices clinging to my clothes. Sweating profusely in front of the high flames of the stove, I try to mask the potent scent while wiping my sweat with the corner of my dupatta.

Outside, on the verandah, I hear my mother-in-law chatting with her friend under the spin of a ceiling fan. The cool breeze offers them a respite, turning their talks into laughter. Their laughter rings louder than the clatter of pots and pans in the kitchen. I start stirring the lentil pot vigorously, trying to drown out their merriment.

cayenne peppers  
cacophony of crows  
stifling air

Susan Burch  
~

**Clotheshorse Stable**

From a young age, my mom used to have me save my best clothes for later. So I always wore my least favorite things and outgrew my favorites. And even though I'm older now, I still hear her voice in my head and it's all I can do not to take off the shirt I'm wearing now, even though it's just a cute T-shirt, and save it for later.

estate sale knickknacks  
the price-tags  
still on them

Susan Yavanisky

**It's barely a moment**

between the two events: the first, my realization that this roar is not some distant highway, but the waterfall hidden in the forest; and the subsequent instant, my feeling of dismay changing, as if seamlessly, to one of delight. Is this that merest fraction of time Tibetan Buddhism calls a kechig?

a foreign land  
the elephant meanders  
ahead of me

Teji Sethi

### Different Truths

After chemotherapy,  
 cardamom and ginger no more work.  
 Tea tastes like bitter, half-spoken words,  
 gurgling down my throat.  
 I switch over to chamomile  
 and tender coconut water.  
 I have always loved matt.  
 Matt this time is the texture of my tongue.  
 Crunch is the sound my ears envy.  
 My eyes lust for raw, when  
 someone chews on lettuce.  
 All my life a nutritionist, I now sit  
 on the other side of the fence.  
 My family has deleted food apps.  
 My 78-year-old mother rolls out  
 a fresh chapati for me every night,  
 putting her neuropathy to sleep.  
 My husband tries new versions  
 of Spanish omelettes and smoothies.  
 My kid brother has given up  
 finger-licking-good KFC and  
 boils chicken broth.  
 From her boarding school, my daughter  
 sends me old ghazals to flavour  
 my appetite.  
 They all now munch on roasted  
 puffed rice, learn to savour  
 bland upma on their Punjabi palates  
 And when I ask them why, they say,  
 “let’s taste these times together”

varicose veins the entangled roots I belong to



Vidya Shankar

blessed

Halfway through my lunch, I rush to position the kidney dish under my husband's mouth to receive the vomit. He can barely keep his eyes open. It's been three days now since his fifth chemotherapy session. There is one more to go.

I have hardly emptied the contents of the kidney dish into the toilet bowl and cleaned it before he begins to throw up again. I rub his back hoping it will ease his retching.

*Do you really want to go through the trauma of this treatment however good the prognosis? You and your husband might as well spend your time, energy and money on a dream trip, making memories that you can fall back upon.*

Ten minutes later, when there's nothing more to come out, and I have cleaned up all traces of vomit, I help him lie down. Moaning from exhaustion, he takes my right hand into his and holds it to his chest, close to his throbbing heart. I stand beside him without moving, watching his strained face as he drifts back to sleep. His condition does not despair me. Just as my unfinished meal does not.

coldest winter —  
our mango tree bursts with  
yellowish pink flowers

Makar Sankranti —  
colourful kites rise  
with the first sun

*(blessed is the title of Andrew Riutta's book of haibun "on almost every despair" yet laced with hope.)*

Sankara Jayanth

The dancer's grace melds into the poet's lilt.

the whole world  
on a precipice  
ma

Susan Burch  
~

When you left me, I was a mess.

a hummingblur holding up the sky

gembum with tanka

**Kala Ramesh**  
~

memories do pull me back

after his eye operation

father's world

is born anew

each swollen bud

talks to him of tomorrow

C.X. Turner



Fading Grass

Sometimes only a robin sees me work, yet I hear the clang of raw metal, builders' shouts and the laying down of red bricks in what used to be a meadow.

empty feeder ...  
I miss the notes  
of summer  
foraging  
the last elderberry

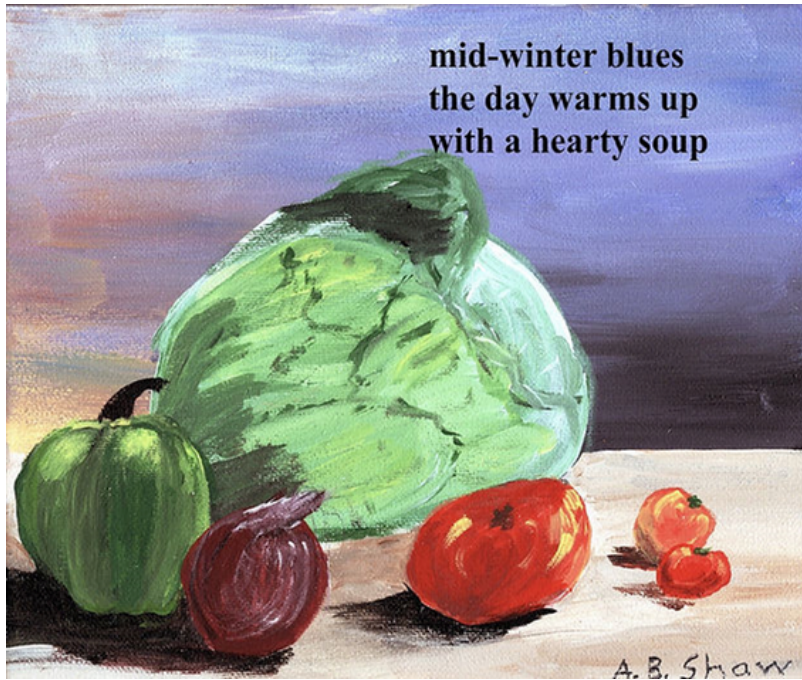
Susan Burch  
~

Stopwatch

in case I die  
I need  
a good death poem  
right now —  
and begin ...

Nothing. Maybe I'm already dead and don't know it yet.

haiga



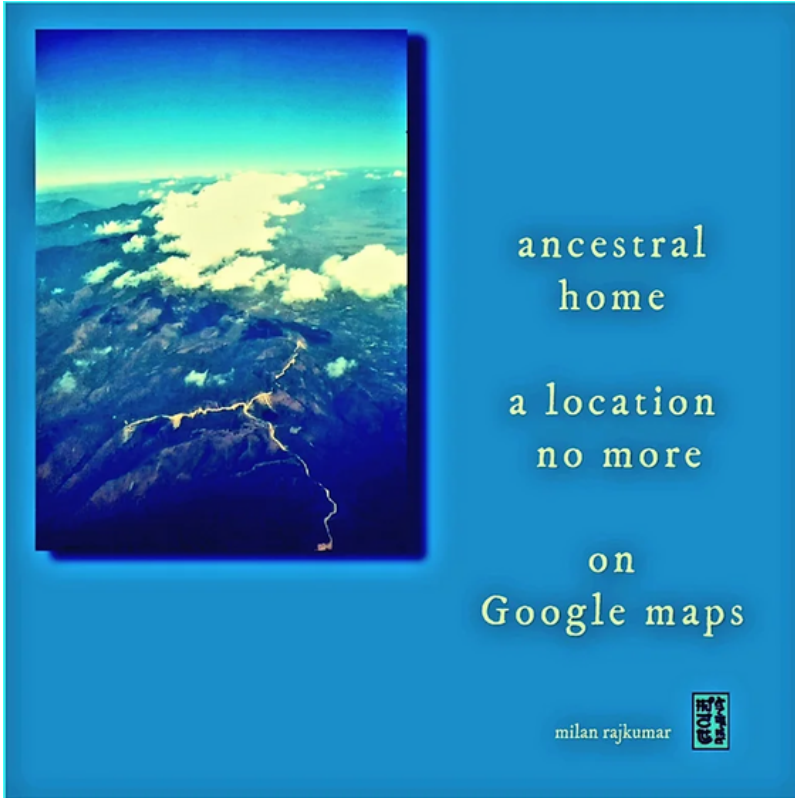
haiga



Marion Clarke



haiga



haiga

an autumn leaf  
wherever the wind blows ...  
this wandering life

milan rajkumar



haiga

*little egrets  
acting all busy  
grassland wind*



  
sankara jayanth

Sankara Jayanth

## haiga



Sankara Jayanth

## haiga

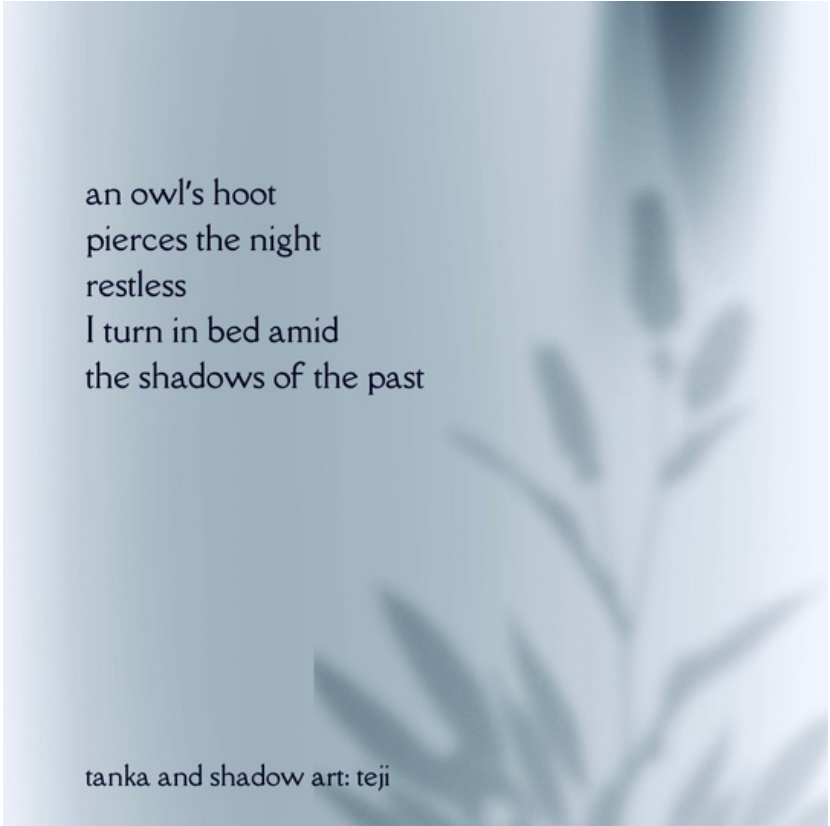




how much  
these times have taught me  
to be  
a bird in the sky with nothing  
to trust but her wings

art and tanka: teji

tanka-art



an owl's hoot  
pierces the night  
restless  
I turn in bed amid  
the shadows of the past

tanka and shadow art: teji

Dear Readers  
thank you for being with us.

See you once again on 22 March 2024!  
with many more fine poems  
from our contributors.

Team: *haikuKATHA*