

haikuKATHA

unfolding the story within



Milind Mulick

Issue 23, Sep 2023

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 23
September 2023

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

Founder/Managing Editor:

Kala Ramesh

Associate Editors:

Ashish Narain

Firdaus Parvez

Priti Aisola

Sanjuktaa Asopa

Shalini Pattabiraman

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

Vandana Parashar

Vidya Shankar

Proofreader: Sushama Kapur

Web Editor: Ravi Kiran

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

CONTENTS

Tejasvat Award to Keith Evetts 1 & 2

haiku

Arvinder Kaur 3
Baisali Chatterjee Dutt
Barrie Levine

Bonnie J Scherer 4
Debarati Sen
Dipankar Dasgupta
Govind Joshi

Jharna Sanyal 5
John Pappas

Kanjini Devi 6
Lakshmi Iyer
Linda Papanicolaou

Milan Rajkumar 7
Richard L Matta
Robert Kingston
Susan Burch

one-line haiku

Firdaus Parvez 8
Lakshmi Iyer
Marilyn Ashbaugh

Srini 9
Susan Burch

CONTENTS

concrete haiku

Lev Hart	10
Martin Clark	11
Robert Kingston	12
Susan Beth Furst	13

concrete gembun

Kala Ramesh	14
-------------	----

four-line haiku

Alan Summers	15
Keiko Izawa	
Linda Papanicolaou	

tanka

Alan Summers	16
Amrutha J Prabhu	

Aparna Pathak	17
Arvinder Kaur	
Billie Dee	

Billie Dee	18
Bonnie J Scherer	

Hassane Zemmouri	19
Joy McCall	
Kala Ramesh	

CONTENTS

Kanjini Devi Linda Papanicolaou	20
Linda Papanicolaou Lorraine Haig	21
Priti Aisola	22
Reid Hepworth Robert Kingston	23
Robert Kingston Rupa Anand Snigdha Agrawal	24
Sumitra Kumar Suraja Menon Roychowdhury Susan Beth Furst	25
Susan Beth Furst Susan Burch Vandana Parashar	26
one-line tanka	
Alan Summers Kanjini Devi Lakshmi Iyer	27
Lorraine Haig Rupa Anand	28

CONTENTS

haibun

<i>Journeys</i> by Anju Kishore	29
<i>What One Gathers</i> by Anju Kishore	30
<i>Instructions</i> by Billie Dee	31
<i>Lot's Wife</i> by Eavonka Ettinger	32
<i>Whether or Not</i> by Eavonka Ettinger	33
<i>Illusion</i> by Firdaus Parvez	34
<i>Wipeout</i> by Lorraine Haig	35
<i>Asking For It</i> by Peg Cherrin-Myers	36
<i>Winter's Approach</i> by Reid Hepworth	37
<i>Heads or Tails</i> by Reid Hepworth	38
<i>Overexposed</i> by Richard Grahn	39
<i>Sketchy Memories</i> by Richard L Matta	41
<i>Long Haul</i> by Robert Kingston	42
<i>Lessons</i> by Sangita Kalarickal	43
<i>Signpost</i> by Sangita Kalarickal	44
<i>The End is The Beginning</i> by Teji Sethi	45
<i>Lullaby</i> by Vidya Shankar	46

gembum

Lakshmi Iyer	47
Lakshmi Iyer	48
Sangita Kalarickal	49

tanka-prose

<i>Bottleneck</i> by Bonnie J Scherer	50
<i>Introspection</i> by Bonnie J Scherer	51
<i>Goodnight</i> by Firdaus Parvez	52
<i>Off-leash</i> by Linda Papanicolaou	53
<i>I should've stayed in bed</i> by Lorraine Haig	54
<i>Bonhomie</i> by Mona Bedi	55

CONTENTS

<i>Rush Hour</i> by Rupa Anand	56
<i>Labour of Love</i> by Sreenath	57
<i>Dust to Stardust</i> by Suraja Menon Roychowdhury	58
<i>How He Urned His Name</i> by Susan Burch	59
<i>General (in the) Hood</i> by Susan Burch	60

gembun with tanka

<i>she's got</i> by Firdaus Parvez	61
<i>we've seen him</i> by Susan Burch	62

haiga

Sankara Jayanth Sudanagunta	63
Marilyn Ashbaugh	64

tanka-art

an'ya	65
an'ya	66
Barbara Olmtak	67
Bonnie J Scherer	68
Mona Bedi	69
Suraja Menon Roychowdhury	70

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

Our heartfelt thanks to:

Sangita Kalarickal, Joy McCall,
Lorraine A Padden, and Shloka Shankar

for providing the weekly challenges
for the month of August 2023,

Artist Milind Mulick
for his brilliant watercolour painting
of still life,

our contributors
for sharing their poems.

Tejasvat Award

from

Triveni Haikai India

The tanka editors,
Kala Ramesh, Firdaus Parvez,
Priti Aisola and Suraja Menon Roychowdhury
are pleased to present
the

Tejasvat Award

Tejasvat in Samskrit means shining bright
with strength and excellence just like the sun,
given here to a poet
who has a set number of poems
which hold the essence of Japanese short-form
poetry in any one issue.

In this issue, we'll be honouring

Keith Evetts

for his five poignant tanka.

Tejasvat Award - Keith Evetts

haikuKATHA - Issue 20, June 2023

maple leaves
fall soundlessly
and I hear sadness
as the robin sings
for no-one

step by step
a solitary walk
among the pines
I quite forget
the questions

with twinkling eyes
the bent old labourer
shows a graduate
an effortless way
to scythe hay

above tall grass
before the autumn chills
antlers of stags
resting in company
untroubled by does

first frost kills
the exotic red spinach
we raised all year
but never got round
to picking

haiku

mizzle
the gentle stoop
of lilies

Arvinder Kaur

insomnia
a house gecko reminds me
I'm not alone

Baisali Chatterjee Dutt

raking leaves ...
the oak's shadow
unmoved

Barrie Levine

a mound of lilies
settled in the shade
I too find my place

Barrie Levine

haiku

em dash —
going to great lengths
to make a point

Bonnie J Scherer

metaphors —
all that I
ever wanted to say

Debarati Sen

the snoring couple
on my bus ride home ...
a jugalbandi

Dipankar Dasgupta

garland seller
two bees
in tow

Govind Joshi

haiku

a bumble bee
on the marigold
grandma waits her turn

Jharna Sanyal

drooping lilies
the you we thought
we knew

John Pappas

funeral lilies
the white noise
of grief

John Pappas

blue skies
somewhere in the hospital
whistling

John Pappas

haiku

the dogs
howling in tandem
fire drill

Kanjini Devi

hanging lilies
a betel-leaf tendril hooks
on the blooms

Lakshmi Iyer

not ready yet
to write my death poem —
field of wildflowers

Linda Papanicolaou

apple blossom —
old scars of lovers' names
age in the bark

Linda Papanicolaou

haiku

opium cultivation –
what do they know
of lilies of the hills

Milan Rajkumar

blow as you may
summer wind — the cherry trees
are but bones

Richard L Matta

sudden rain
the first flower
on the coffin

Robert Kingston

be careful
what you wish for
5 am wren

Susan Burch

one-line haiku

first love how short the long way home

Firdaus Parvez

neighborhood fights the loose talk of Manthara

Lakshmi Iyer

toddlers wrapped in summer naked

Marilyn Ashbaugh

in a Barbie world Athena weaves a war

Marilyn Ashbaugh

one-line haiku

burning my guilt Hiroshima Day

Marilyn Ashbaugh

too many trees history

Srini

baseball stadium all the SHOUTING in Caps

Susan Burch

concrete haiku

the
fragrance
of
falling
dark
Rangoon
creeper

Lev Hart

concrete haiku

in the oak's shade
white lilies humming bees

Martin Clark

concrete haiku

summer dream
riding a petal
over the weir

Robert Kingston

concrete haiku

empty
bucket
all the Easter lilies
flower
the
cross

Susan Beth Furst

concrete gembun

Children cooped up inside four walls.

 n bi on t e n
u r s h f c
s d e e
 play musical chairs

Kala Ramesh

four-line haiku

the chaffinch's
rain-song
how many notes
in a storm

Alan Summers

summer's end
a bee drops by
and leaves
the bare althea

Keiko Izawa

sprig of mint —
the cold sweat
on a tumbler
of iced tea

Linda Papanicolaou

tanka

*into the world
of worms*
a mechanism lowers
me into the next realm's
intermission

Alan Summers

my long walk
with a dog each side
grass shimmers
into deepening sunsets
of bluish-gray colour

Alan Summers

sitting alone
i observe shadows
chasing light
this breeze carries
a fragrance of the sea

Amrutha V Prabhu

tanka

bruised cheek ...
she tells her son
how the moon wanes
a bit more
every day

Aparna Pathak

orchids
sway with the breeze
at the wedding
I bend down for the one
trampled upon

Arvinder Kaur

a long drive
through the Rocky Mountains
spinning childhood yarns —
 how did we grow
 so old, little brother

Billie Dee

tanka

mountains
rimmed with a lavender glow ...
for this moment
I stand in awe of the day's
 unfolding

Billie Dee

kick the can
idle play
when we were young
now we're older
kick the bucket

Bonnie J Scherer

mapping the deepest
most remote ocean floors
new species are discovered
learning to love
what is not understood

Bonnie J Scherer

tanka

the heartbreaking
groans from my mother
all night long
insomnia
knocks at the door

Hassane Zemmouri

sitting in the woodland
where my body will lie
I touch the ground
and say thank you
to the worms

Joy McCall

day and night
claim twilight as their own
and yet, Kabir
walks the streets
singing of oneness

Kala Ramesh

tanka

kauri snails
on the far side
of this rotting log
will my end be quick
or drawn out

Kanjini Devi

when I can no longer hear
the wood pigeon's coo
let me utter OM
as my last breath
leaves these lungs

Kanjini Devi

old master paintings
in the art museum —
the gilded frame
of a personage whose name
has long since been forgotten

Linda Papanicolaou

tanka

poem scratched
with a driftwood stick
on the strandline
sanderlings pick through my words
until the sea takes them

Linda Papanicolaou

without warning
I'm filled with a sadness
I can't name
on the doorstep
a mouse curled in death

Lorraine Haig

waiting for you
I listen to Mozart
the loneliness
of an empty road
in soft rain

Lorraine Haig

tanka

sipping
my morning tea
i savour
the memories of their laughs
whose voices are silent now

Priti Aisola

watching him
drag his hind legs
as he walks
I begin to lose
the spring in my step

Priti Aisola

I aired your room
and cleared the clutter —
outside my door
the 'do not disturb' sign
you refuse to see

Priti Aisola

tanka

after months of heat
the steady staccato of rain
on our tin roof ...
at the open window
a tree frog in full voice

Reid Hepworth

all these doorways
of missed opportunities
a beggar
rifling through
the city ash can

Robert Kingston

in the fisherman's chapel
deep within the cathedral
an urge to touch
the artist's block of oak
carved with scenes of the sea

Robert Kingston

tanka

on the ancient path
we wade through fields of grain
a lone skylark
startled into flight
takes our gaze with it

Robert Kingston

along the river
merging footprints
in the sand
a sudden squawk
disrupts the dawn sky

Rupa Anand

all night
bangles jingle jangle
massaging his legs
unmindful of
stiffened knuckles

Snigdha Agrawal

tanka

neem twigs
across the garden
late grandpa's chewies
his mantra
for zero cavities

Sumitra Kumar

all the leaves
on the bush eaten
and yet
a single peach rose ...

so many butterflies

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

in the home
for unwed mothers
the nurse's aides
wear starched white uniforms
and rock the babies to sleep

Susan Beth Furst

tanka

a lump
under the covers
Paddington Bear
sixty-eight years old
and we're still friends

Susan Beth Furst

how slow
my dad has become
with Parkinson's
the tortoise now
instead of the hare

Susan Burch

nothing to hold back
these brushstroke clouds
my daughters teach me
how liberating it is
to colour outside the lines

Vandana Parashar

one-line tanka

slinking through the bars set into my heart how the sun hits the cat

Alan Summers

roadkill my heart tearing up from the talons your words

Kanjini Devi

perennials on a street corner still using cloth strainers the coffee lady

Kanjini Devi

the roller-coaster ride of my belief looking through a magnifying glass

Lakshmi Iyer

one-line tanka

reclaiming all that you own seaweed flung ashore dragged back to deep water

Lorraine Haig

burning brighter towards the end of my journey flames across the sky

Lorraine Haig

in my head the way white porcelain cracks dark thoughts

Rupa Anand

Anju Kishore
~

Journeys

Waiting for my school bus under the old raintree, Selvi is oblivious to my sticking its pink blossoms into her hair. Narrating the plot of the latest Tamizh movie she watched, complete with dialogues and the opening lines of its songs is her idea of keeping me entertained.

becoming rainbows

As she waves to me I grin at the thought of how our housemaid would pluck the brush-like flowers sticking out of her daughter's well oiled, braided jet-black hair.

one by one by one

Back home, Amma chides me for my prank and insists I apologise. Half-way to their hut, I am met by a bounding Selvi waiting to run off to the park with me.

mountain streams

Anju Kishore
~

What One Gathers

I cast another last glance at the unruly clump of trees on the plot next to mine. Within days, hundreds of miles away, I am staring at clipped rows of boxwood, mounds of ixora rounded into basin-shaped clay pots, and careful tumbles of morning glory. Enough to make a heart leap but mine has stayed behind among the kingfishers and lapwings that frequented the marsh beyond my previous house and the shaggy little patch of forest.

rolling stone

Returning home one dusk, the apartment's lawns look expertly mowed. Parakeets greet me in a burst of fluttering colour from a grilled balcony on the ground floor. From higher up, a caged canary begins its song and stops abruptly.

laugh lines deepening

Taking the elevator to my flat, I knock on my neighbour's door. I offer her my new cocktail dress that she had admired so much last evening, in exchange for her bird. I set myself free, along with the canary.

in the April air

Billie Dee
~

Instructions

Take a deep breath and make a list of your lovers.
Show it to your neighbors, to your spinster aunt.
Pretend none of this matters — you're grown up now.
Tie on a string and fly these old passions as a kite.

cut free at last autumn wind

Eavonka Ettinger

Lot's Wife

train tracks

Following a trail in the unforgiving sun, my eyes burn with heat mirages in the distance. Thoughts get lost in the trudge.

looking behind to see

I don't know how to forgive myself. What did or didn't I mean to do? Does it even matter? This same road was paved with good intentions.

what's been lost

Betrayal has a way of getting under the skin and eating its way out. I never know where the leaks will sprout. The traces of tears remain.

Eavonka Ettinger
~

Whether or Not

Pitter patter on the window waking me far too early. No one warned me there'd be rain. I check my phone. It still says 4% chance of precipitation while it pours harder than I've heard it in years. Is it only a cloud over our home like a Peanuts cartoon character getting wet from sorrow? Are we lost in a storm and destined to burst forth with the returning sun? Or shall it remain grey and dismal begging for tea with milk and honey to warm the soul?

Tea it is then (and socks!) as I search and search to see if anyone anywhere will admit it is raining today.

steam rises
as the ship sails
a kettle whistles

Firdaus Parvez
~

Illusion

What if, on a cold-moon night when the sky is clear, you throw back your head, neck straining as your arms reach for the vast expanse above, wrinkled hands smoothing over the embellished canopy, knotty fingers digging into the thick darkness, then scooping out a chunk of glittery tar – what then?

inhaling a lifetime of breaths to exhale

Lorraine Haig
~

Wipeout

Fingers of foam curl over me like Hokusai's waves. I hear a sharp crack in my neck as the force slams. Is my neck broken? I feel like a shell scraping sand. The water's strong arms tear at my limbs. An abandoned marionette left to the churn of water, somersaulting. I'm nearly out of breath. My arm is wrenched backwards by the board attached to my wrist strap. I cork to the surface, gulp air.

on the beach
a retriever shakes out
the sea

Peg Cherrin-Myers

Asking For It

I'm in double digits, still
wetting the bed, dreaming
of standing and watering
the old oak tree. Mornings

when I can't wake up, he throws
cold water from a pale
blue Tupperware container.
Sometimes I pretend to be

asleep, wanting Father
of the Year to break
up the smell.

past the age ...
still summoning
a primal scream

Reid Hepworth
~

Winter's Approach

The sickly sweet scent of decaying leaves fills the air as we traverse the moss covered rocks. After days of hard rain, the small waterfall is almost overflowing the steep bank, making our descent all the more treacherous. We are bound and determined to follow the creek as far as we can as part of our re-enactment of an episode from "Adventures in Rainbow Country".

I'm wearing mukluks, so I feel fairly confident on the rocks, but Richard is wearing dress shoes. His face is set in concentration and as I did tell him to wear boots or sneakers, he hasn't complained about the tricky terrain or the fact that his feet are sopping wet from sliding off the rocks and into the creek.

Long forgotten is dad's warning about staying close to the cabin or the fact that the light is getting dim.

It's the grumbling in my tummy that makes me stop and look around. It's dark already. The trees are casting ominous looking shadows and I realize that I can no longer hear dad chopping wood.

Richard notices that I have stopped and I can see that he is thinking the same thing as I am. Where the heck are we and do we have anything to eat? We start hollering as reality settles in.

bear scat
the last of the blueberries
shrivel on the vine

Reid Hepworth
~

Heads or Tails

Friday night. Shadows are beginning to creep into the backyard, but our parents haven't called us in yet, so we continue to play 'war' at Louise's house. The boys are soldiers, while Louise and I are nurses. I'd much prefer to be a soldier, but that idea was nixed as soon as I brought it up.

The boys lob mounds of dried dirt into the derelict veggie patch. They shoot at one another and dive into the dirt to avoid getting hit by 'live grenades'. Dirt clings to their clothes and streaks their faces.

Louise and I, with our makeshift nurses' uniforms, take turns on the watchtower (Louise's parents' back porch). It's Louise's turn on the tower, so I go below the porch and wait for my signal to pull injured soldiers to safety. Our 'signal' is an old metal broom that Louise's parents had thrown out. The broom is supposed to be swung back and forth over the porch to raise the alarm. Unfortunately, this time, when Louise signals, the broom slips out of her hands, falls, and hits me square on top of the head.

Next thing I know I'm on the ground. I don't want to be a crybaby, so I try to stand up, but my head hurts and my knees feel wobbly. It's when the other kids start screaming that I feel something warm dripping down my face.

electroencephalogram
one shiny new Memory
wrapped with a bow

Richard Grahn
~

Overexposed

flashbacks—
stuck in a groove
that old song

You occupy half the space; your smile dominates the composition. I look happy —must have been—I was holding hands with you. Here we are in posterity between my finger and thumb. How have I become so numb to file you in the circular file, to banish you from this time and space, to leave behind what could not be, to set aside what you meant to me?

Turn the page. Another display of happy faces, you half dressed, my hair a mess —nothing like obliviousness to paint a carefree picture. Two criminals of love, abusers of each other's lust, nightmares passing in the hall, emotions bouncing off the walls. "They're the perfect couple," others said.

If they'd only read between the lines, watched the tears drip from our eyes, peeled the masks from our pasted smiles, traveled a while in our pain and fears, got a good look at what's etched inside.

dream castle...
my bones too frail
to scale the stone

My Queen—your face framed with gold but with a heart so heavy I could not hold it—we clicked for a while, got sick for a while. Shutters closed on the grand hotel—we fell into a spell of disrepair.

haibun

So, here we sit in the kitchen, scattered as we always were. Bits and fragments of laughs echo off the ceiling. I'm in this for the healing, so don't mind the mess. I'm clearing off this table—letting go of the emptiness.

a blink—
your face
slips out of focus

Richard L Matta



Sketchy Memories

Twenty years later I'm at the Senior Bar with a few chemical engineering (CHEG) classmates. We didn't party or study together in school (I was usually at the Arts and Literature library), but they're having a great time. They've made and spread all over the table stick figures out of straws and rolled-up napkins and toothpicks like skinny people contorted every which way. Curious I ask and Bill, the instigator of all this says, "Don't you remember sitting in the front row of the classroom on the aisle edge and stretching the last fifteen minutes before you ran off to track practice?" It never occurred to me that anyone noticed. So I fashioned a stickman and then put an olive on each end of a toothpick and said, I see you still work at the 'clean and jerk.'

mockingbird ...
a picture brings back
all the songs

Robert Kingston
~

Long haul

It's never easy shopping with one arm tied behind your back.

market day

The same can be said of competing in a three-legged egg-and-spoon race.

between the oohs and ahhs

And then there's the hop, skip and jump to navigate through.

her trapped nerve

Sangita Kalarickal
~

Lessons

“So, do you have airplanes where you’re from?” My classmate breaks into laughter at his own joke. I wince. He probably thinks he’s the class joker. No one laughs. His eyebrows furrow and then he guffaws.

chandrayaan

“And cars?” His shoulders are now shaking hard with laughter. “Do you have those?”

a tricolor

“No, of course not,” I say, “We use elephants. Very intelligent elephants. They stop at red, and go at green.”

moonbow

Sangita Kalarickal

Signpost

The first year I learn gardening I plant a frail, brown and nearly dying mint. An especially cold fall, the trees are already bare and preparing for winter. I prop up the single, wilted branch with a chopstick and water it until the twig almost drowns. I fold my hands, gaze up at the sky, and pray it survives the frost and winter.

The next year I nearly break my back hacking away at the growth to stop its almost vicious invasion of the rest of my garden.

hunter moon
flames devour
the marshmallows

Teji Sethi
~

The End is The Beginning

Since I turned an adult, I have been attending antim sanskars. Being the eldest daughter and daughter-in-law, I have the responsibility to represent my family at these rituals. Anybody who has been to the cremation grounds would know the meaning of ‘dead silence’. There are pyres all around with flames rising high. At some distance, you might spot a pile of cinders waiting to be collected. Amidst all this, you hear faint crackling sounds as the body melts back into its origin — mitti. But we now have electric crematoriums that save us from witnessing all this.

When my father passed away, I realised there could be bigger dilemmas. My brother and I did not know what to write on the cremation invite. So we just picked up the phone, informed the extended family and a few very close friends and invited them over to our home. In his room, on the same bed where he breathed his last, we seated our holy scriptures. For five days we prayed and sang in his remembrance, cooked his favourite meals and shared moments of hope and despair, until the final day when we disclosed that we had honoured his last wish of pledging his body for medical research.

ash-less urn
he chooses the path
not taken

wilderness
a song ripples
the blue of a pond

antim sanskar : cremation/last rites
mitti : earth/soil

Vidya Shankar
~

Lullaby

The last time I saw Periamma was in 2001, when Mother died. Usually very chatty, Periamma, through the five days she visited us, sat by herself in a corner. She neither shed a tear, nor did she lament about the unfairness of our loss. She had always been there for my mother, a strong force to reckon with, and her stoicism gave us strength to keep going through the rituals of the funeral.

After twenty-two years, today, Periamma welcomes me into her home as if I had never stopped visiting her all these years. She is just as I have always remembered her, except that she is not as 'rounded' as before. Her eyes speak of more losses.

My visit was to be a short one but she insists I have lunch with her. It is not much — just rice, sambar and papadam. It is a meal I have longed for.

spring dusk ...
a pollen-dusted bee
crawls into a globe mallow

Lakshmi Iyer

trying to open father's tight fist ...

scattered stars
in a hexagon
hide and seek

Lakshmi Iyer

his intense stare reflected in her eyes

buried
in tidal mud
seashells

gembun

Sangita Kalarickal
~

stars rise when the curtain goes up

a glint
in the cat's eye
glass marble

Bonnie J Scherer
~

Bottleneck

Teams of climbers are on track to summit K2,
the second-tallest mountain peak
in the world. A sherpa falls.

grandma slips at home

Ill-equipped with no oxygen mask or
down suit, this young porter is still alive on a
narrow passageway when climbers step over him
on their way to the summit.

*frail and weak
elders spend their days
waiting for visitors ...
waiting to die*

Bonnie J Scherer
~

Introspection

The sun breaks early this mid-summer morning. The aroma of freshly brewed coffee. Thoughts drift to how the day will unfold.

lollipop lilies
growing taller
day by day
recurrent dreams
of childhood

Weeds to be pulled. Must get out in the garden before the sun gets high in the sky. Then it's too hot to even hold a garden tool.

my buttercup squash
needs watering
the irony
of too much early rain ...
feast or famine

Kitchen scraps to be hauled to the compost pile over the hill. It's a quiet spot at the edge of the forest where I once saw a moose on bended knee browsing on the leftovers we toss on the ground. Looking down from this spot, I feel the cool of the lush, green forest where watermelon berries and red currants grow. They'll be harvested in the fall to make jam.

busying ourselves
with daily to-do's
oh, to live simply
like a berry
glistening in the sun

Firdaus Parvez
~

Goodnight

I spill some sugar into the sky. It mingles with the stars. Scoops of vanilla clouds gather and strong winds blow sugar dust into our eyes. It doesn't rain, just oozes syrup for weeks, dripping languidly down windowpanes and salty cheeks.

reading fairytales
in the paediatric ward
tonight
all is well and sweet
in the land of dreams

tanka-prose

Linda Papanicolaou
~

Off-leash

I'm taking some bills to the mailbox, I say. My husband's attention is on the evening news, but at least I know I've told him. It's not that late and it's only to the corner — still, I pause at the driveway, wondering if I should have brought my cell phone.

When did it take hold, this expectation to be accounted for at all times? As a child I rambled through fields, climbed trees, found secret places by the creek...

I inhale and lengthen my stride.

winter stars
beyond the lamppost
look, there's
my old friend Orion
out walking his dog

Lorraine Haig
~

I should've stayed in bed

I arrive home to find I've left the door unlocked. After hauling the groceries inside, a carton of milk falls and washes over the kitchen floor. After cleaning it up I'm in desperate need of a coffee only to remember that they've switched the power off for a couple of hours.

an autumn leaf
hangs by a thread
in the breeze
another day spinning
out of control

Mona Bedi
~

Bonhomie

My husband is busy watching a crime thriller while I am watching a romance on the laptop with AirPods on. I order a thin-crust wheat pizza for dinner while he has butter chicken. He switches on the air conditioning and I turn on the fan. Minutes later I look up to see he is not there in the room. It's then I find him on the balcony just looking at the passersby and listening to old songs.

vapoury clouds
scud and whoosh
across the sky —
for a short while I leave you
alone with your thoughts

Rupa Anand

Rush Hour

I am leaving for Canada in three days to be with my younger daughter's family. I'm confused about the weather swinging from warm to chilly. A bit paranoid, I pack clothes ranging from cotton and silk to wool. And my pearls, I mustn't forget the pearls.

the house
has been wound down
carpets put away,
and indoor sansevieria
placed outdoors

My older daughter's laptop has crashed. She's rushing to the Apple Store when I call her to buy some last-minute gifts. Cardamom and saffron have arrived via Amazon. I'm pleased as Punch seeing my suitcases ready to roll. She has yet to start hers. I gaze at my green garden and the moss roses under my window. I linger outside giving an extra chin rub to Charlie and Peaches.

a detailed to-do list
for my husband ...
i hope
he doesn't jumble
the cats

Sreenath
~

Labour of Love

In my thirties I took care of a British lady in her early eighties, till her end.

She loathed being touched, but as she grew weaker, in stages she got used to me taking care of her more intimately.

When there's an emergency, like being unable to get up from the commode, you no more care about shame.

Mini emergencies helped her to conquer her sense of shame in stages.

Even for me, who couldn't clean my niece as a baby but ended up taking care of an elderly lady intimately, was a part of growing up.

what's there in us
that hankers for freedom
and yet
when necessary
surrenders like a child

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

Dust to Stardust

I put the book aside and lie back. The illusion of life. The permanence of the soul. I feel I finally understand.

night chorus
interspersed with moonlit twists
of flapping wings
 I contemplate death
and a nameless terror grips me

Susan Burch
~

How He Urned His Name

A few weeks ago a black snake visited the nursing home and they named him Sammy. Now every time they go out the front door, the joke is to “watch out for Sammy!”

the curse fulfilled
for now ...
the black asp
slithers
back onto the vase

Susan Burch
~

General (in the) Hood

So, when our pear tree dies my husband says we'll get a non-fruit tree. I'm thinking an oak or an elm and then I've got it!

200 years
from now
a tourist attraction
the only giant sequoia
on the East Coast

gembun with tanka

Firdaus Parvez
~

she's got a pet rock in the drawer

over the years
it slowed its beat
then hardened enough
to not feel —
this rib-caged bird

gembun with tanka

Susan Burch
~

We've seen him now, but still haven't heard him talk.

that new guy
sitting in on
our Zooms -
could he be
an AI

haiga



ku and pic:
Sankara Jayanth Sudanagunta

haiga



downsized...
the one thing I wanted
for keeps
was love but it had
a nomadic soul



an'ya

tanka-art



broom-like squalls
across a river sweep
till the spring sky
as if by design
changes my narrative

an'ya



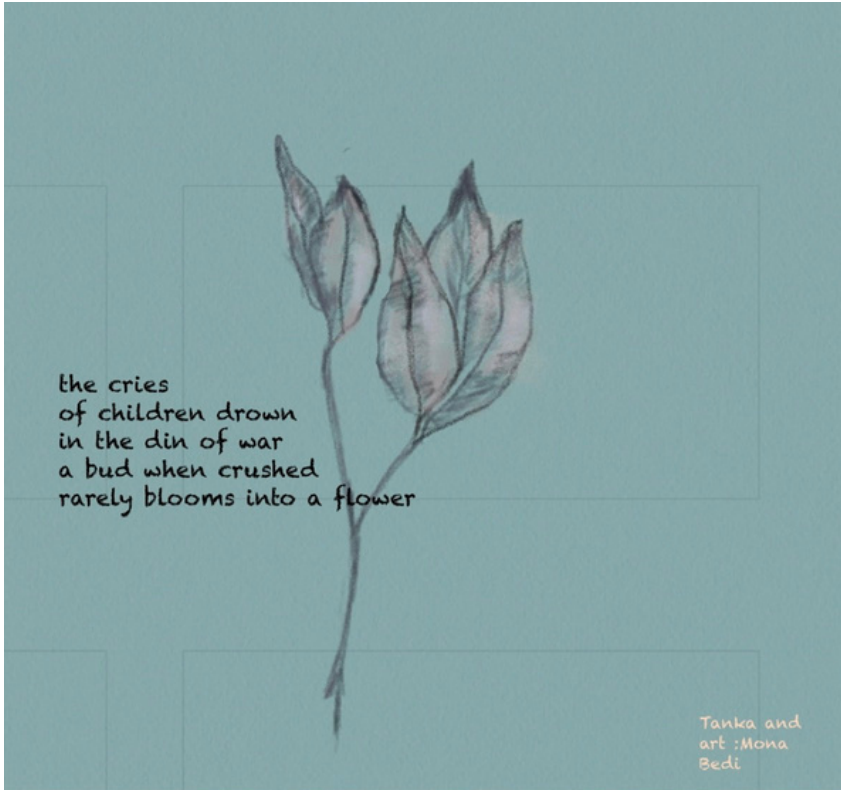


tanka-art

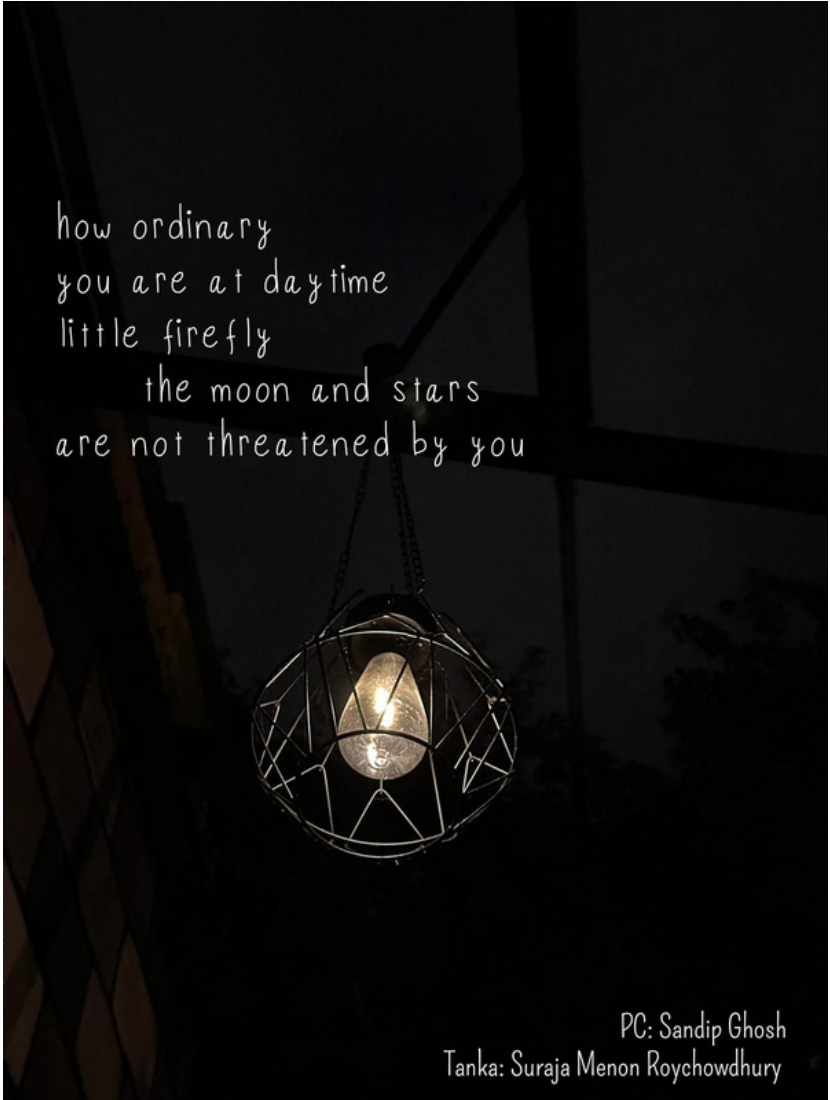


ku and pic:
Bonnie J Scherer

tanka-art



tanka-art



how ordinary
you are at daytime
little firefly
the moon and stars
are not threatened by you

PC: Sandip Ghosh
Tanka: Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

Dear Readers
thank you for being with us.

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

Team: *haikuKATHA*