

haikuKATHA
unfolding the story within



Milind Mulick

Issue 20, June 2023

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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 20
June 2023

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

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CONTENTS

Tejasvat Award to Billie Dee 1 & 2

haiku

Barrie Levine 3
Daipayan Nair
Govind Joshi
John Pappas

K. Ramesh 4
Keiko Izawa
Lakshmi Iyer

Lev Hart 5
Linda Papanicolaou

Marilyn Ashbaugh 6
Meera Rehm
Milan Rajkumar
Neena Singh

Padma Rajeshwari 7
Radhamani Sarma
Sreenath G

Srini 8

zip haiku

Billie Dee 9
Kanjini Devi
Keiko Izawa

CONTENTS

Linda Papanicolaou 10
Lorraine Haig
Mona Bedi

Rupa Anand 11
Susan Beth Furst

one-line haiku

Arvinder Kaur 12
Barrie Levine
Billie Dee
Bryan Rickert
David Josephsohn

John Pappas 13
Keith Evetts
Lakshmi Iyer
Marilyn Ashbaugh
Srini

concrete haiku

Susan Beth Furst 14

tanka

an'ya 15
Arvinder Kaur

Barbara Olmtak 16
Bonnie J Scherer

CONTENTS

Bonnie J Scherer Bryan Rickert Iffah Peerzada	17
Kanjini Devi	18
Keith Evetts Lakshmi Iyer	19
Lakshmi Iyer Linda Papanicolaou	20
Linda Papanicolaou Lorraine Haig	21
Marilyn Humbert Mona Bedi	22
Richard L Matta Robert Kingston	23
Rupa Anand Sreenath G.	24
Sreenath G. Surashree Joshi Susan Beth Furst	25
Susan Burch	26
Wanda Amos	27

CONTENTS

haibun

<i>Les Voyageurs</i> by Anju Kishore	28
<i>Kaveri</i> by Anju Kishore	29
<i>In the Shadow of Light</i> by Anju Kishore	30
<i>Mole</i> by Keith Pollete	31
<i>Instant Coffee</i> by Keith Pollete	32
<i>Alone</i> by Lorraine Haig	33
<i>Cold Mess</i> by Mona Bedi	34
<i>A bright Spot</i> by Mona Bedi	35
<i>FYI</i> by Susan Burch	36
<i>(Boo)k Awards</i> by Susan Burch	37

tanka-prose

<i>Bass, Crappies and Bluegills, Oh My</i> by Bonnie J Scherer	38
<i>Losing the Drive (By)</i> by Bryan Rickert	39
<i>Living Style</i> by Lakshmi Iyer	40
<i>If you're going</i> by Linda Papanicolaou	41
<i>Love Story</i> by Mona Bedi	42
<i>Motherhood</i> by Neena Singh	43
<i>Kintsugi</i> by Robert Kingston	44

tanka-art

Mona Bedi	45
Rupa Anand	46

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

Our heartfelt thanks to:

Subir Ningthouja, Suraja Menon Roychowdhury,
and Lew Watts,

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

Artist Milind Mulick
for his brilliant watercolour painting,

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

Billie Dee

for her five poignant tanka.

Tejasvat Award - Billie Dee

haikuKATHA - Issue 20, June 2023

is *shasei* real
or a figment of mind ...
does that matter
when the lake at my feet
sparkles true as Shiki's tears

his ruby comb
bobs up and down ...
the bantam rooster
drinking, pausing – perhaps
thoughtfully

losing track
of my birthday
a smallpox
vaccination scar
reveals my age

they tell me
once I see your face
I'll forget
this long night –
hard labor

dawn's pink
spills over the mountain
down the arroyo
does the roadrunner know
there's a war going on

haiku

a new phase ...
accepting the moon
in me

Barrie Levine

sunset sky —
the fishing float
makes a circle

Daipayan Nair

morning Pranayam
hum of a bee
joins in

Govind Joshi

spilling over
the fountain's lip
sparrow song

John Pappas

haiku

hill station tea shop ...
I listen to another
elephant story

K. Ramesh

hilltop restaurant
our forks slow
with the reddening fuji

Keiko Izawa

editing haiku
a birdsong echoes
in different ways

Keiko Izawa

Chitra Pournami
the roadside kiosks floods
with orange coconuts

Lakshmi Iyer

haiku

by a thread
my spider's silhouette against
the sunset

Lev Hart

frozen pond
a film of water crimsoned
with sunset

Lev Hart

dark band —
raven, have you come
to steal the light

Linda Papanicolaou

had I not glanced up
I would have missed the owl
deepening twilight

Linda Papanicolaou

haiku

golden hour
a cat's worth of sun
through the curtain

Marilyn Ashbaugh

the forgotten taste
of sun-ripened papaya
homecoming

Meera Rehm

sizzling hills
the blood moon moans
with the villagers

Milan Rajkumar

honeysuckle ...
the neighbor's wall
scents our side

Neena Singh

haiku

the longing
for forgotten names
autumn night

Padma Rajeswari

self-isolation
a monarch emerges
from its chrysalis

Padma Rajeswari

flautist
forgetting his home
dusk and dawn in flow

Radhamani Sarma

sweeping her skirt
on the red carpet
halfmoon betta

Sreenath G

haiku

forest path ...
for just a little while
just now

Srini

nightlife
in the old town
fireflies

Srini

zip haiku

early morning filled with crow song
burnt toast offered to the sky

Billie Dee

grey sunrise my suspended breath
gazing at the morning star

Kanjini Devi

winter chill walking the dogs
a drift of mist from distant hills

Kanjini Devi

unmanned station a weathered bench
someone's haiku notebook

Keiko Izawa

zip haiku

scent of the sea from an old hull
children play in rust-stained sand

Lorraine Haig

from a patch of mint a frog's croak
night rain releases its scent

Lorraine Haig

moonlight on the window sill
what do you wish for neutered cat

Linda Papanicolaou

looking into a tarnished mirror
a chance encounter with mom

Mona Bedi

zip haiku

tree-lined street to the dance class
two mynas prancing alongside

Rupa Anand

glitter on the garden path
two suitcases packed and ready

Susan Beth Frust

one-line haiku

firefly wings the weight of darkness

Arvinder Kaur

blue horizon the level water seeks

Barrie Levine

new moon the braille of your body

Billie Dee

just a hint of her lover's moon

Bryan Rickert

somewhere ravens fly why can't I

David Josephsohn

one-line haiku

all the things you are becoming dusk

John Pappas

wind in the pines why isn't the right question

Keith Evetts

cafe moon we sip our silence in the sugarless froth

Lakshmi Iyer

over the rainbow the hawk's sky

Marilyn Ashbaugh

sky darkening his midlife crisis

Srini

concrete haiku

prom
night
a rustle
in the
pumpkin
patch

Susan Beth Furst

tanka

last echo test
autumn leaves flutter
in mother's heart
everywhere I look
it's that time of year

an'ya

glowing gold
over blood-orange water
in our pond
my muses of the night
koi fish and a carp moon

an'ya

first crush
I swim in the same river
the waves
that play with him
caress me

Arvinder Kaur

tanka

the last red rose
on a crisp winter day
reminds me of first love
a touch so tender
the fragrance lingers

Barbara Olmtak

barely sixteen
this tarnished soul
plying her trade
in the twilight hours
of youth

Bonnie J Scherer

batteries charged,
brains fried
e-cigs trending with youth -
was a pipe any better
in grandpa's day?

Bonnie J Scherer

tanka

a name
for the stillborn
in the family plot -
the brother she had,
the brother she didn't

Bonnie J Scherer

at the bottom
of this bottle
I find
the same loneliness
as in the last

Bryan Rickert

the whining winds
of the summer rains ask
which is easier ...
to lose a beloved
or to never have one?

Iffah Peerzada

tanka

the kauri tree
bathed in beams
over half a century
learning how
to let my light shine

Kanjini Devi

only patchouli
left on your pillow
this dark night
I search for you
in every nook of my mind

Kanjini Devi

now you are one
with water and wind
ashes to ashes
I whisper your name
at first and final light

Kanjini Devi

tanka

day moon
may I breathe my last
under the apple tree
as laughing children
chase soap bubbles

Keith Evetts

even after
spring cleaning
the closets
hold tangled threads
of past relationships

Lakshmi Iyer

twilight moon
so close to the coconut fronds
the miracle
of touching a million lives
in silence

Lakshmi Iyer

tanka

i never thought
father would appear
in a dream
speaking to me at length
the reason for his death

Lakshmi Iyer

girlhood friends
in a boardwalk penny
photobooth —
my mother as she was
before father, before me

Linda Papanicolaou

father's glasses
slide down on his nose —
each plant stake
neatly labeled
with species and date

Linda Papanicolaou

tanka

what does it dream?
a rangy gray pack horse
relieves itself,
grunts, farts, shifts its weight
to the other hoof

Linda Papanicolaou

a meandering path
leads to the water's edge
in reflections
I stare at a face
that might be my sister's

Lorraine Haig

moonlight
falling across the pillow
I tremble
at your touch tonight
burning with desire

Lorraine Haig

tanka

on the plains
kangaroos graze
undisturbed
mitchell grass downs
silver in the starlight

Marilyn Humbert

snared by a rip
in an ocean's vastness
I'm adrift ...
the thud of your boots
and the slam of your fist

Marilyn Humbert

smearing kohl -
the night she wanted
to forget ...
it's not every day the son
asks his father's name

Mona Bedi

tanka

late spring stream
a brown clot of blossoms
stuck beside a stone
how much longer
will this reminder last

Richard L. Matta

100 fathoms...
where you asked
to be released
far enough offshore
for tears and screams

Richard L Matta

few know
this ghostly figure
of an oak leaf
carved on my cane
the kin you never met

Robert Kingston

tanka

a drizzle of blooms
becomes a downpour
this long rain
and the colours of spring
will fade too, along with me

Rupa Anand

hurt feelings
echo and re-echo
in the heart
assessing life's burden
my echocardiogram

Sreenath G.

lone Shiva temple
on the mountain top
as I step in
the mystic silence
burns all my questions

Sreenath G.

tanka

You entice me
with the call of the flute
after searching
the whole world
You lead me to my heart

Sreenath G.

crescent moon
my nephew and I
fight over
each wedge
of the orange

Surashree Joshi

circus elephants
leashed to a post
I too wander
no further than the length
of my chain

Susan Beth Furst

tanka

the darkest abyss
in the sea ...
is it writer's block
or an emptiness
I have no words for

Susan Burch

selling off
the prettiest orphans
to be sex slaves -
the nuns' new habits
midnight black

Susan Burch

kicked out of
my quilting group
they could tell
I was coming apart
at the seams

Susan Burch

tanka

lost in the shadows
of candy floss dreaming
her tik tok persona...
red botox lips
accentuating bruises

Wanda Amos

Anju Kishore

Les Voyageurs

...that was sixty years ago, Prem. My Nepali roommate was a member of the Delhi Mess and would often take me there as a guest when I got bored of my Madras Mess. I never had spare cash to return the favour. The cook, Ramlal Mishra, a burly Bihari took a liking to me ever since I commended the fresh flavours of his rajma. Whenever I visited, he would come 'round to thump my back and ask me if all was well and then yell for another roti brushed with ghee and another ladle of subzi for I was so frail that he was afraid "the breeze would blow me away from the path to the Mess". A hard taskmaster, he would personally oversee the grinding of masalas every morning. "In the future there will be many modern hostels, food court and more money in your pocket, less time on your proper meal. What is its name? Do you Prem? In did F... another... of c... r to... Good... asafoetida... to prepar... 1 pepper up... ask your mother... don't get tummy upset... came to tell me bye yesterday... s. Was it yesterday? Not yesterday... Somebody going to university...

empty nest
twigs dropping
one by one

Inspired by the bronze sculptures Les Voyageurs by French artist Bruno Catalano. Also popular as 'Hollow Men'

haibun

Anju Kishore
~

Kaveri

Two sons fight over the mother. One dams her, leaving the thirsty other to seek water from a neighbour.

Caught in the conflict, I catch the last bus home, hoping it will not get stopped and torched on the way. Jam-packed shoulder-to-shoulder, we are from all sides of the border.

The mother prays for rain.

still lulled
by an old lullaby
long forgotten toys

Anju Kishore
~

In the Shadow of Light

In my mind, I walk into the patch of unruly trees on the neighbouring plot. I turn from a leafing of that peepal at dawn to the scatter of assorted russet at sundown. I also become a part of its floor, chequered with sunlight and shade, back against a bark, book on my knee, in many places at once, with nowhere to want to return to, to not even this spot below the branch of wild gooseberry that bobs with the weight of a bulbul. Instead, I become the squirrel that stops short of a heel dug into the soil and scurries away, never to return.

stained bookmark
where a chapter ends

I turn away from the window. An epilogue is best left unwritten

Keith Polette



Mole

Mothered among roots, he orphans himself in the distance of digging and marries for moments only. The bat is unmet brother. For him, stars are speculations, the thud and rumble of upper vibrations. The sun is a rumor, and the hidden moon pushes him to vein the dirt. At night, he dreams of leaping.

warm breeze
an oak branch springing
after the squirrel

On a May morning, after a heavy rain, he pauses to hear the muffled sounds of birds sputtering in the trees before he begins his burrow beyond mud on the draining side of a hill.

dormant all winter
the shallow stream
starting to swell

Keith Polette

Instant Coffee

The long-handed metal spoon clinks against the rim of the jar of flash-frozen crystals that look like fresh-dug dirt infused with starlight. In the ceramic cup, the scoop of crystals could be a mound of earth atop a new grave or fresh dirt dug from a gopher hole.

hot dry days —
the arrowheads I unearthed
digging a well

The kettle hisses in a steamy pour. Coupled with cream, the coffee quickly fades from black to brown, taking on the hue of the muddy river of my youth where my best friend and I frequently biked, rolling past the floodplain that was spread out like a vast flat hand, riding the path of perfect memory in the cool thatch of oak and elm shadow. Where, as we built a fort from sticks gathered from the forest floor, he sliced open his hand with a butcher knife he had secreted from home. And later, the scar he carried in his palm like a dry stream running across his lifeline.

a moonless night —
turning to chiromancy
to find my fortune

By the window, cup in hand, the steam rising from it like the breath of a blackbird on a winter day, I wait in silence for the light to rise.

Lorraine Haig
~

Alone

I gaze over the stern, half-wanting to jump
into the turbulence churning from under the ship's hull.

What would it be like to feel the aeration
bubble over my skin before it dissipates.

What would it be like to float in silence,
and watch the high, white stern reduced to a speck.
What would it be like to feel the fear of abandonment,
treading an unfathomable depth
where the sharks of the mind are circling.
To never feel more alive.

cocktails
the slosh of water
in the pool

Mona Bedi



Cold Mess

The mountains are calling and I must go.

The slopes are slippery.

I try to find a foothold and catch hold of a tree.

Clouds surround me.

The mountain air is full of romance.

The mountains are calling and I must go.

I am young and so is he.

I shiver.

He hands me a terracotta cup of steaming tea.

Our fingers touch.

I shiver more.

The mountains are calling and I must go.

holding a stone
from my trip to the river
yesteryear love

Mona Bedi



A Bright Spot

*I accept the things I cannot change
I try to change the things I can*

My arthritis makes me frustrated. I love going for long walks, but I cannot. Only half an hour into the walk I get tired. The hips start to hurt. I am getting old and soon this half-of-an-hour may have to be reduced to only a few minutes.

I accept the things I cannot change

If nothing else, I will buy myself a new pair of shoes, and a nice workout outfit and start working out on my balcony. I also begin decorating my balcony with lush green plants to bring nature home.

I try to change the things I can

steady rain —
I promise myself
the moon

Susan Burch
~

FYI

“We are aware of loading issues in comments and trying to fix it asap. Until then, please refresh the page twice and the comments should load.”

meditation moon
does it count that I'm
an om-nivore

Susan Burch



(Boo)k Awards

How great that zero chapbooks won. And I just loved paying over \$50 to print out & mail my ebook that should have been viewed online. And how awesome that a dead person got the top prize.

homicidal moon
girl, you know you better
watch out

Bonnie J Scherer
~

Bass, Crappies and Bluegills, Oh My!

Grandpa takes us to the shed where he keeps the bait. We take turns reaching into the tub to grab a crab, being careful to avoid the pinchers.

rigging the line
for a fine day
of fishing -
the lessons
that hook us on life

Bryan Rickert

Losing the Drive (By)

Carrying the boy I had been teaching for seven years from the hearse to his final resting site was a day when a part of me died too. The following Monday, when the first graders filed into my classroom, I looked into their faces and thought, “Which one of you won’t make it? Which one of you will be a waste of time?” That was the moment I knew that I would never teach again.

a lame pigeon
on the city street
the debate
to heal it or put it
out of its misery

Lakshmi Iyer

Living in Style

Thinking about the birdsongs, remembering the colours of the sky, holding the breath of plants and trees and then walking on the road to never-ending issues, I finally realise ...

the stars
can twinkle without the sun
somewhere
on the other side
a new dawn

Linda Papanicolaou

If You're Going ...

It's my guest's first time in the US and we've driven up to San Francisco for the day. I have devised a scenic tour that will avoid all the tourist traps while giving him a sense of the city from its origins as a Spanish mission through the Gold Rush to the Worlds Fairs, the earthquake ...

He seems to be enjoying my itinerary. Mid-morning at a picnic table in Golden Gate Park, he opens his guidebook and asks eagerly,

“Where are the hippies? I would like to see the hippies.”

fortune cookies
at the Japanese
Tea Garden —
our waitress wears blue jeans
beneath her kimono

Mona Bedi
~

Love Story

Today is one of those days. My clothes don't fit. I see an old woman looking back at me from the vanity mirror. It usually doesn't bother me. But today I can just see the wrinkles and the sagging skin.

bare trees
are beautiful too
how i wish
you still found my nakedness
a sight to behold

Neena Singh
~

Motherhood

A mentally challenged young woman at Nari Niketan raped by the security guard becomes pregnant but refuses to abort her baby. The Warden wants me to talk to and convince her as she may not be able to care for and look after her child. She recognises me, returns my smile, and pointing to her baby bump, she places my hand protectively over it.

for a moment
I touch a pulsating life
to be or not to be ...
the one-breath
autumn moon

tanka-prose

Robert Kingston



Kintsugi

We enter the towpath at Papermill Lock. Passing the houseboats, we walk for about a mile in light drizzle, before a left turn takes us into a glistening field of green barley.

sucking water
from the crop
our blue jeans
with tide lines
at groin height

Reaching the edge of the field, we pause for a moment at the graveyard fence, as I point to the nest box at the top of the bell tower I'd spotted on an earlier visit.

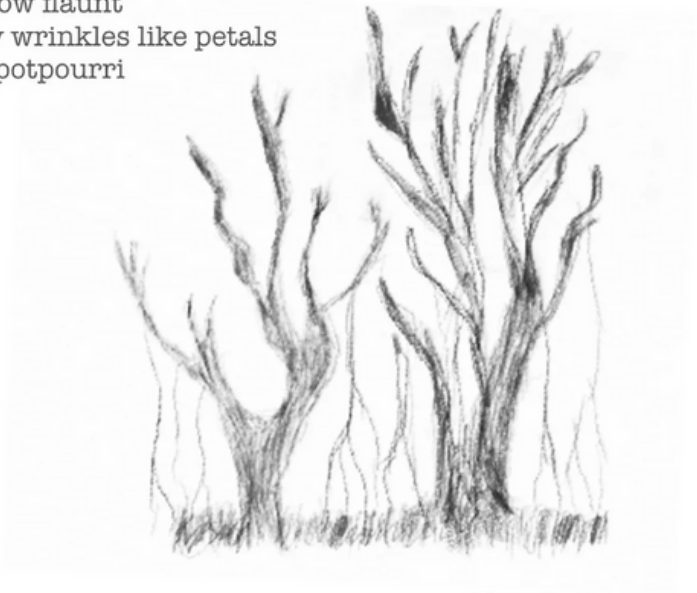
looking out
a baby osprey
poised to fly
stumbles back
into its safe house

Continuing on, we rise and fall as we cross fields of wheat and corn, pass through a lane lined with varied trees, including Yew, Willows and Oaks, and properties to die for, before arriving at the midway point.

retiring early
the weight of his cancer
not yet ready
to give way
to the sun

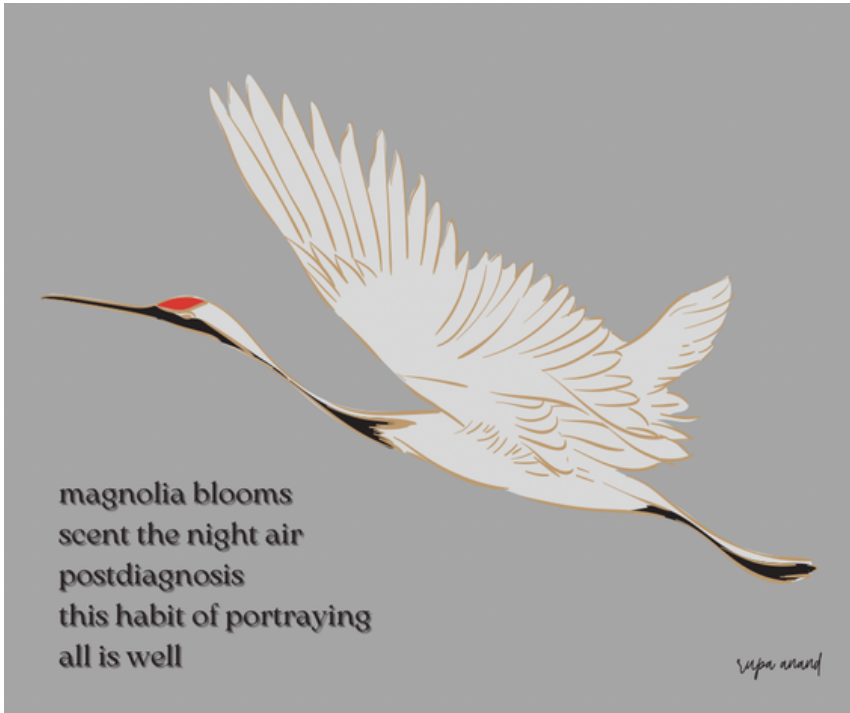
tanka-art

fiftieth birthday ...
used to the greys
I now flaunt
my wrinkles like petals
of potpourri



Mona Bedi

tanka-art



Dear Readers
thank you for being with us.

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

Team: *haikuKATHA*