



Milind Mulick

Issue 24, October 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, tankaprose, 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 24 October 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

Web Editor: Ravi Kiran Proofreader: Sushama Kapur Cover Art: Milind Mulick Design: Kala Ramesh

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

Our heartfelt thanks to:

Rupa Anand, Kathy Kituai, Kala Ramesh, Peter Newton and Vandana Parashar,

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

Artist Milind Mulick for his brilliant watercolour painting,

our contributors for sharing their poems.

# Editors' Choice Commentary: Kala Ramesh ancestral village by Padma Rajeswari

The Mantra of "Less is More"

Padma is a recent entrant to the haikai world whose ku shows sensitivity and a firm grasp of the much-talked-about principle of "less is more."

What is it that makes an ancestral village so enticing for city dwellers? Maybe it has to do with the ubiquitous flavour of simplicity and minimalism in living styles. It evokes memories and associations of people, forefathers, traditions, festivities and ceremonies. To this add the seamless stretch of an azure sky, the lush greenery, and fields filled with rows of crops and colourful seasonal vegetables and fruits. In contrast, we have the hustle-bustle of everyday city life — the air thick with pollution, smoke-filled roads, honking cars, busy, overcrowded streets and incessant phone calls robbing us of peace and solitude.

All this comes across beautifully in this ten-word ku, explaining less is more:

ancestral village I lose my big words in small alleys

Padma Rajeswari

I want to mention just two aesthetic qualities that beg to be noticed - Ma and Karumi.

Ma means space, intervals and lack of clutter.

Karumi means lightness and clarity. Think of standing on the beach with the frothy waves hitting you and receding without fuss. You can see your toes pressed clearly in the sand. This is similar to the way that Basho explained Karumi.

Ls 2 & 3 have this striking image:

### I lose my big words in small alleys

These two lines are what will draw a reader into this haiku. We may have experienced these moments on our own visits to our ancestral village, but to express the experience so succinctly is not easy. A powerful thought in simple words brings out the haiku spirit.

Padma has infused this poem with layers of meaning, which made me sit up and read it a second time, as I'm sure you will too, dear readers.

sloshing rain ten minutes with the TV on mute

Adelaide B. Shaw

a STOP sign riddled with bullet holes desert wind

Billie Dee

rough seas we push on through the plastic

Bryan Rickert

first date he takes the longest route to drive me home

Christine L Villa

DEAD END we ignore the signs

Eavonka Ettinger

always first breath always last

Jan Stretch

baby's breath we always thought we'd have more time

John Pappas

until the tree is stripped bare dementia

John Pappas

family vacation Ganesha bounces on the dashboard

Kavita Ratna

autumn breeze the yakuza plays a love song with four fingers

Keiko Izawa

autumn chill a limping dog looks back at the street

Keiko Izawa

yellowing osiers a pair of moorhens call to their last chick

Keith Evetts

the little stream in its autumn voice leaf boat

Linda Papanicolaou

dropping tide the wind whistles through whale bones

Lorraine Haig

moonglow the forest moves its shadows

Lorraine Haig

a glimpse of my former self ... wild lupins

Lorraine Haig

rag rug the cat's shadow slumbers

Marilyn Ashbaugh

deep winter the warmth of tea in a chipped cup

Mona Bedi

ancestral village I lose my big words in small alleys

Padma Rajeswari \*ECC

darkest night the cries of those left standing

Reid Hepworth

desert storm those tanks rusting in the sand

**Robert Kingston** 

heritage garden a distant grandfather speaks Mongolian

Robert Kingston

rush hour dribble a warm croissant spurts blueberry jam

Rupa Anand

twilight I put the book down on fresh grass

Sébastien Revon

stars shelter behind clouds wartime sky

Srini

last breath the name becoming a body

Sumitra Kumar

# one-line haiku

before and after the tsunami calm horizon

Keiko Izawa

yielding to peer pressure ripe peach

Marilyn Ashbaugh

changing the locks yet again this old age

Mona Bedi

mood swings the light on my dark side

**Robert Kingston** 

the wind in a leaf in the wind

Srini

a flower repotting me

Susan Burch

haikuKATHA

# four-line haiku

home blown to pieces at the piano a woman composing herself

Lev Hart

doom scroll ing the end less tides

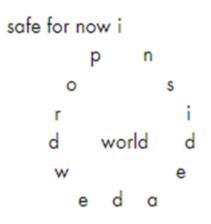
Bryan Rickert

deep in my chair a train runs along the windowsill

Lev Hart

waterfall a cascade of ferns down the rock face

Lorraine Haig



Vibha Malhotra

my perfect garden till a deer and her fawn nibble on the hosta; the flush of anger gone when they turn and look at me

Adelaide B. Shaw

dreaming of jacaranda blossoms on a winter's day my memory road long and sweetly scented

Adelaide B. Shaw

more snow filling the feeder with numbing fingers I ask myself, why do I take on new obligations?

Adelaide B. Shaw

a splatter of patterns on canvas running my finger down the ruins of his mind

Anju Kishore

childhood pet named Emily after Dickinson she was never just an ordinary rodent

an'ya

re-reading your old love letters I wonder if we still look at the moon in the same way

Baisali Chatterjee Dutt

along with kitchen scraps my tired old betta down the disposer ... 46 brilliant moons

Billie Dee

two lovers part in opposite directions from each car a dog sticks out its head ears flapping in the wind

Billie Dee

this horse with no name takes me for a trot the rhythm of hooves broken only by a dog named Trouble

Bonnie J Scherer

skipping stones down by the stream this wish to be the child I never was

Bryan Rickert

for two different reasons the cat and I enjoying our day birdwatching

Bryan Rickert

so much of my love for her unrequited the little house cat I call my own

Bryan Rickert

dance of dust motes caught in a golden shaft of morning light I still see a glimpse of your very first smile

Christine L Villa

a small sandy moth caught in the lamplight flutters and dies sad, I pray that its spirit can fly

Joy McCall

where at last we are laid to rest in the earth in years to come, flowers will be growing

Joy McCall

her gaze bores into mine this beggar dares to take such liberty to upset my peaceful day

Kala Ramesh

without words within i walk the path of oneness

Kala Ramesh

lorikeets in the garden since you passed do they bring news of your well-being?

Kanjini Devi

among so many little chirping sparrows how can I tell if any one of them is lonely

Keith Evetts

back from the vet with my eyes still wet just an old cat gone while all the forsythias are out in the sun

Keith Evetts

with a sigh I close the curtains you made on the garden I planted the bark of our apple tree crusted with age

Keith Evetts

woodpecker's call at my window early dawn the anxiety-drumming voice over deforestation

Lakshmi Iyer

I wonder where crows fly to in the gathering dusk do they also fear scavengers of the dark

Lakshmi Iyer

slicing a pomegranate ... the wonder of the trillion blood cells in you and me and them

Lakshmi Iyer

Harris hawk on a falconer's glove the sweeping view from canyon precipice to a clarion sky

Linda Papanicolaou

old man with a small bouquet his bony knees shuffling through the gates of the village graveyard

Linda Papanicolaou

a friend and I made midnight shortcuts through the graveyard once I used to fear ghosts now it's my dark side

Lorraine Haig

an orange glow behind the monoliths in silhouette boy and his dog moon gazing

Lorraine Haig

in early light walking along the beach already your plane is miles high and I'm a grain of sand

Lorraine Haig

no longer strong enough to mew the rescued cat's faint purr still vibrates with love

Marilyn Ashbaugh

a fledgling waits for its mother – tonight I hum to myself a long-lost lullaby

Mona Bedi

I set free the parrot I rescued – a lingering wish to hold on to those we let go

Mona Bedi

night alone — I trace my hand over the Milky Way stopping at the star I think is you

Mona Bedi

early morning Vinayaka chants ... a pigeon saunters up and down our Airbnb balcony

Priti Aisola

the blurry forms of trees as I sit by a train window ... some memories never lose their clear cold outlines

Priti Aisola

a string of birds on a low-hanging power line -I adjust the coral beads around my child's neck

Priya Narayanan

heat wave ... after so many months apart we rediscover the joys of togetherness

Reid Hepworth

in the dark places of my mind those little specks of starlight left behind by the thorns

Robert Kingston

at mother's home first smelling the irises then hydrangeas I'm left searching for her own scent

**Robert Kingston** 

the clay pot rests on my lap in the car ... the river flowing east waits to embrace her

Rupa Anand

the twilight nest brims over with chatter how loud the emptiness inside my home

Sanjuktaa Asopa

wet squirrel on a slippery branch I wonder whether or not to take the leap

Sanjuktaa Asopa

no flowers yet near their grave ... even death does not seem to erase every grudge

Srini

trying to fix a phrase in a poem I look outside: the unedited sky abounds with stars

Srini

my eyes glued to the cradle all night cat's cries from the street corner human-like

Sumitra Kumar

in the park at our June wedding I wear blue we say our vows to sounds of birds and a Harley

Susan Beth Furst

heart murmurs perhaps they're secrets you're tired of keeping

Susan Burch

how my muffin top became a bread basket a memoir written in the fat cells of my belly

Susan Burch

about to migrate I tell the hummingbirds to remember my feeders, my house, my face

Susan Burch

doesn't it get lonely on the mountain peak, virgin snow what do you talk about when the clouds come

Vandana Parashar

the flick of the goanna's tongue keeps time with a haunting rhythm ...corroboree

Wanda Amos

Eavonka Ettinger

### Storm Warning

My husband and I are watching TV, and we're in the midst of a heatwave so the a/c is on. I start to think the noise from it is affecting my hearing in my right ear.

lightning flash

I can't stop messing with my ear. It has a persistent white noise that frightens me. My research suggests earwax build-up. I curse my Q-tips and plan a trip to Urgent Care.

across the valley

The doctor finds my ear is clean. She suggests contacting my PCP for an MRI. Panic sets in. Once home, I discover it is likely I have Sudden Sensorineural Hearing Loss, and without steroids in the next 2 days, I may have white noise and hearing loss permanently.

thunder rolls

Luckily, I get into my doctor the next day. She starts me on very high doses of steroids for 15 days, and then I'm referred immediately to a specialist. I am within the 2 days, but the ENT doctor warns me there is only a 33% chance I will regain all my hearing and be freed of the white noise.

8 days later, just as Hurricane Hilary becomes a tropical storm in my area, I wake up free of all complications.

gentle patter of midday rain ... somewhere a bow

Kala Ramesh

### Bridge Over a Lily Pond

twilight hues

I lean closer to the water lily — it's just a daub of paint. I tell this to a man who has been painting water lilies day in and day out for the last 30 years. Daubs and more daubs of paint all over the canvas. I shake my head. He points to the window. From his first-floor studio, I see the water lily garden.

again and again

After a pause, I turn back to his easel. The room is empty. I go down the wooden stairs and along a passage with paintings of Japanese women. When I reach the pond, Monet is in deep thought. My reflection in the water merges with the reflection of the arched wooden bridge. I see it now and apologise. He smiles.

the horizon reinvents itself

Kala Ramesh

muscle power

river carries the raga of a thousand moons

when mian tansen sang the raga, it created fire and heat as no other ever could

earth now in crackling flames: she comes, tansen's daughter, to sing a melody to put out the fire that would otherwise burn her father to ashes ... and it rains

wood-deep echo of a cuckoo's song

## Lorraine Haig

### Houseboat

The Murray River weaves between the high banks pock-marked with nesting holes. Huge red gums grow from the water's edge and at times shoulder the crumbling sandstone cliffs. A sapling has sprouted in the crack of a halfsubmerged boulder.

warmth of the sun

We pass a dump of rusty cars on a ridge. Occasionally power lines thread the edge and then disappear to a nearby town. From an overhanging branch a tattered rope dangles in the flow.

curling through the landscape

The old trees along the flats struggle in the dry. They need a flood to survive and it's been years since that's happened. Four-wheel-drive tracks and burnt-out campfires scar the land.

this ancient serpent

A whistling kite skims the smooth surface and hooks a fish. Drops of water sparkle in an arc of light.

The river has changed course leaving a billabong framed with paperbarks and boobiallas. As we search for a suitable spot to spend the night, afternoon descends into a din of birdsong.

### Lorraine Haig

### Footprints in the Sand

We open the door to warmth and soft music. The curtains are closed. A sense of calm pervades.

There's no phone or TV in our log cabin. We hear waves lapping the shore. We succumb to the green feel of peace; our cabin walls, the carpet of leaves, moss on the rocks, the clear, deep water.

jolted awake a possum scampers across the roof

## Lorraine Haig

### Sailing to New Guinea

The sliding roof is open to the sky. A curious gull glides over the cruise ship then returns. Above the pool decorative silver dolphins are stranded mid-air. In the soporific heat the horizon fades in a haze. Some watch for a flying fish or a whale while others daydream beneath the drift of clouds. Library books lie in the sun, limp as those in deck chairs.

meditation breathing the deep blue of an ocean

## Marilyn Humbert

### **Breaking Out**

I escape to the outback when black moods overwhelm me. Here, beside Jardine Lagoon, I begin to heal.

wings spread in circling dance four brolgas

# Mona Bedi

### Quest

I sit on the swing on my porch. A warm summer zephyr caresses my face. The grass in my lawn flutters in the breeze. A yellow butterfly hops from the sunflowers to the roses finally settling on a nasturtium.

low tide

It is then I spot a trail of ants along the porch steps. Tirelessly, diligently they are carrying grains of sugar. Marching along, they climb up a wall in the garden.

we slowly rebuild

One of them falls, gets up and starts climbing again. All this on a lazy summer afternoon!

the sandcastle

# Reid Hepworth

### Change of Seasons

It happens without warning, this betrayal of my body. One day I'm a kid and the next I'm at the Hudson's Bay department store trying on training bras with my aunt.

I'm not sure whose idea it was. Certainly not mine. I'd much rather be hanging ten on my skateboard or building forts in the backyard. Instead, I stand barechested and mortified while my aunt yells out to the saleslady, "She needs a bigger size, she needs a bigger size."

All I know is that I won't be carrying the bag when we leave the store.

rosebuds this too shall pass

## Robert Kingston

### Break Point

Waking in the outback is somewhat stilling for most.

tempest weather

Be it a tundra, a mountain, a desert or a deep forest.

the storm in a teacup

The first thought generally is to look to the stars and ask why me?

lips out

## Sandip Chauhan

### **Green Echoes**

I remember my first encounter with the alien grass and trees quite vividly. I can't help but sense a nature so distinct, so self-contained, dancing to its silent tune.

gypsy summer

With each passing moment, my eyes root themselves in this unfamiliar terrain.

the scenes I interpret

I do not merely see the green of maple leaves in spring; I feel the greenery, a root nurtured through endless epochs.

in my mother tongue

Susan Burch

### Avian Call-off

I'm sorry I won't be able to make it in to work today. I have to stay home and watch for birds.

muggy days thirsting for you

Susan Burch

### 5 Second Rule?

One of my pretzel bites dropped onto the floor. Will I die if I eat it?

not smarter than a 5th grader Staphylococcus

Vidya Shankar

### Mukha Lepham

Though uncomfortable, I wear a surgical mask whenever I go out.

clipped wings

No one stares at me. But they would if I didn't wear one.

all those pictures

The mask hides my distorted right cheek and scarred chin – cruel reminders of the cancers that afflicted me.

of flawless looks

\*Mukha Lepham is an Ayurvedic anti-blemish face treatment.

# Bonnie J Scherer

The superstition that dragonflies can sew up the ears, eyes, or mouth of a sleeping child.

darning needle piercing holes in your story

## Lakshmi Iyer

pondering over the graphics of relationships

a caged parrot in the jigsaw puzzle released

# Reid Hepworth

negotiating with the sleep gods

a woodpecker pecks at the metal roof sunrise

# Vidya Shankar

when I have all the reasons to holler and run away

20kmph palmyrahs in Panruti stand firm and rooted

Adelaide B. Shaw

#### Buttons and Bows

I have a new dress to wear on Easter Sunday. Little white bows printed on a red background. Short puffed sleeves. Mother-of-pearl buttons. New shoes, too. Black patent Mary Janes. In the days before Easter, the dress hangs on the door of my closet where I can see it clearly. I imagine myself wearing it in church, swishing the skirt, tapping my shoes, being admired by the whole congregation.

anticipation the fever of excitement runs high the fever of measles runs even higher

## Arvinder Kaur

### Almost There

There is often no time to fuss on oneself. Filing the nails daintily or painting them in the latest fashionable shade. Chores take it all. The only "me" time you get is when you hit the pillow and there is this moment before you close your tired eyes.

bunions and crooked toes what it took to know the pain of mother's journey

## Billie Dee

### Pediatrics

Back in the day I'd pull double shifts at the County Hospital, then race home to my waiting lover, shower, dress, dance all night in that smokey little dive off Sunset Boulevard – limp home, nap, shower, dress, repeat . . .

last day working in the Emergency Room tooth marks on an infant's thigh wide as her father's grin

# Bryan Rickert

### In Bloom

In a life full of stress and obligation, where to-do lists only get longer, her love is the quiet place that refreshes my soul.

my phone vibrates a message from her ... a butterfly dancing on peonies

Firdaus Parvez

#### **Magical Places**

As a child I had this habit of hiding. Under the bed, in the laundry hamper, inside any nook or corner I could squeeze myself. And I would fall asleep while hiding. My mother spent the better part of the day looking for me. I didn't know why she never liked the game.

huddled inside the closet I wander through my mind looking for Narnia

# Keith Evetts

### A Way Through the Woods

In the bluebell years we are green and trembling as ferns, and know of destiny only from tales in books read in secret.

I recall your name from our first and only date at the cinema more than six decades ago ... there was surely some movie

# Keith Evetts

### Stranded

In solitude I walk the shore, tide ebbing to the sea's black rim, the constellations of our galaxy brightening once more. What meaning has death for a star? I think of you, and wonder where you are, of whom you dream. And why.

the full moon gleams on estuary mud as autumn comes how lost love lingers in the curlew's cry

Linda Papanicolaou

#### **Bieber** Fever

But she used to be such a quiet, earnest student!

In long, slim jeans and a clingy knit top with its neck buttons open, she breezes into the classroom just after the bell rings, having tested how far she can push before I mark her tardy — then slides in close to her best friend and begins to chatter breathlessly as if they haven't seen each other since Science.

I wait, staring pointedly. She pauses briefly, then we do it all again. New seating charts? I've tried that — she'll start hand signaling and lip reading across the room. Or she'll engage the boy on her other side, long auburn hair brushing provocatively against his shoulder.

Was I like that in eighth grade?

pouting as if I could not possibly understand this child who's young enough to be my granddaughter

Lorraine Haig

### Her Arms Around Me

Instead of sitting in front of the television all day, her mind confused, I want my mother to get up, tie on her apron in the big kitchen and bake caramel slice and biscuits that will be cooling on our big wooden table when we burst through the door, home from school. I want to see her stoking the fuel stove in the morning, the table laid, our shoes dry on the hearth.

I want her warm, fleshy arms to wrap around me when I'm hurt. I want to see her reflection in the mirror as she brushes her wavy red hair while I play with the wooden camel she keeps on her dressing table. When I swear, I want to see the anger on her face, up close when she slaps me.

As we listen to Peer Gynt, I want her to tell us again the story hidden inside the music. I want to spit out the seeds in her plum jam and laugh as she tries to catch Horace the rooster, dad holding the axe near the chopping block.

I want her knowing each afternoon I will come and bring her soup, or cake because she doesn't feel like cooking. Oh Mum, I want to hear you say my name a thousand more times.

a rattle of the tea trolley in the hallway mum looks past me as if I'm no longer there

after 'Repetitions for my mother' by Lorna Crozier

Priti Aisola

### **Reaching Out**

In a small central courtyard of a house in Lucknow, a seven-year-old girl with dark eyes and an earnest face, is mixing clayey soil with water in a shallow plastic basin. At ten, on a summer morning, it is already quite warm. The girl's eyes follow a trail of black ants and she starts to speak to them in a voice full of loving care. 'I'm going to make a house for you in one corner of this courtyard. I'll leave you food every day and see that no one steps on you by mistake.'

She shapes the wet soil into low walls and starts creating a home for the ants. After the roofless house is partitioned into rooms, she places sugar in one, tiny pieces of jaggery in another, small cubes of sugar candy in the third one, and a teaspoon of wheat flour in the fourth. Then she approaches the ants and whispers, 'Your house is ready. Please come.'

a mother draws her child closer sudden draft at a homeless-shelter many faces of the forlorn

Rupa Anand

Who Cares

The adjacent house belonged to my parents. They bequeathed it to my brother who sold it. It subsequently passed through a few hands to rest with its current owner.

The first thing he did was replace a hundred-year-old tree with a double driveway to house his innumerable cars.

grief settling deep within my heart shatters into a million pieces

> the kites circle overhead confused on finding their nests gone

Susan Burch

### Origami Moon

You used to have time for me. Now you're always busy.

if I fold 1,000 cranes, do you think my wish could save us

Susan Burch

### It's a boy!

My juvenile cardinal is going to be a male! He's more red this week, drinking from the birdbath on his own, and eating a little on his own too. He's really growing up.

25-56 days until independence glad I have longer with my kids

## gembun with tanka

## Firdaus Parvez

glimpsing a poem as it strolls by

dawn-glow through speckled clouds on the horizon orange marmalade and warm toast

## gembun with tanka

Mona Bedi

A stranger in the coffee shop has eyes just like yours.

leaving me at this stage of life ... who will hold you when you falter at life's crossroads

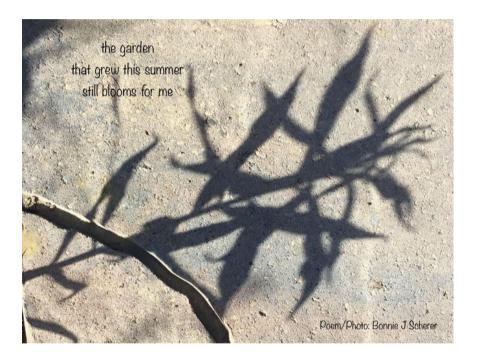
## gembun with tanka

Susan Burch

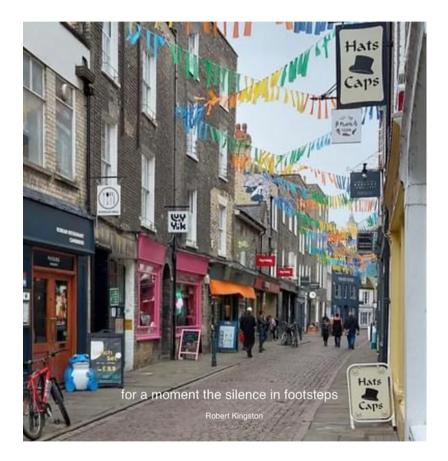
Can you die of bad karma?

picking shells out of the eggs all the time wasted trying to make you softer

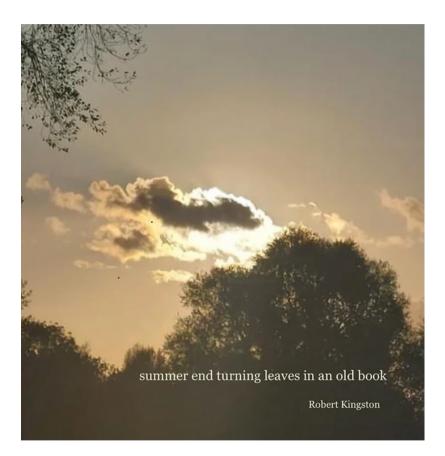
# haiga



# haiga



# haiga



### tanka-art

crisp september mountain jays back home frequent the pines as if every cone was a long lost friend an'ya

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### tanka-art

fraught were we with passing thoughts between us too young for love too old for friendship an'ya

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Team: haikuKATHA