

haikuKATHA

unfolding the story within



Milind Mulick

Issue 42 April 2025

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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 42
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haiku, tanka, tanka-prose,
and haiga

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CONTENTS

Editor's Choice Commentary: Suraja Menon Roychowdhury	1
Editor's Choice: <i>beloved children</i> by Cynthia Bale	

haiku

Adelaide B. Shaw	3
Alfred Booth	
Billie Dee	
C.X. Turner	
C.X. Turner	4
Firdaus Parvez	
Geetha Ravichandran	
Kala Ramesh	5
Kalyanee Arandhara	
Joanna Ashwell	
Linda Papanicolaou	6
Lorraine Haig	
Martin Duguay	
Milan Rajkumar	7
Mona Bedi	
Nalini Shetty	
paul m.	8
Rupa Anand	
Sherry Renikar	9
Srinivasa Rao Sambangi	
Sumitra Kumar	

CONTENTS

one-line haiku

Rupa Anand Shloka Shankar	10
------------------------------	----

tanka

Adelaide B. Shaw Alfred Booth	11
----------------------------------	----

Alfred Booth Anjali Warhadpande an'ya	12
---	----

Billie Dee	13
------------	----

C. X. Turner Cynthia Bale	14
------------------------------	----

Cynthia Bale Fatma Zohra Habis	15
-----------------------------------	----

Gauri Dixit Kala Ramesh	16
----------------------------	----

Kala Ramesh Kalyanee Arandhara	17
-----------------------------------	----

Kalyanee Arandhara Kanjini Devi Keith Evetts	18
--	----

CONTENTS

Keith Evetts Lakshmi Iyer	19
Lorraine Haig Mohua Maulik	20
Mohua Maulik Mona Bedi Nalini Shetty	21
Nalini Shetty Padma Priya Priti Aisola	22
Priti Aisola Priya Narayanan Robert Kingston	23
Robert Kingston Srini	24
Srini Sumitra Kumar Suraja Menon Roychowdhury	25
tanka-prose	
<i>Hanging Verdict</i> by Amoolya Kamalnath	26
<i>Misalignment</i> by C. X. Turner	27
<i>Macchiato</i> by C. X. Turner	28
<i>Fossilised</i> by C. X. Turner	29
<i>Troubling Times</i> by Dinah Power	30
<i>Oasis</i> by Gauri Dixit	31
<i>Darkness no Star can Pierce</i> by Gauri Dixit	32

CONTENTS

<i>Fractured Light</i> by Nalini Shetty	33
<i>Gatherings</i> by Sumitra Kumar	34
<i>Lean on Me</i> by Suraja Menon Roychowdhury	35

haiga

Debbie Strange	36
Nalini Shetty	37
Nalini Shetty	38
Ron C. Moss	39
Ron C. Moss	40
Sreenath	41

haiku, tanka, tanka-prose and haiga

Our heartfelt thanks to:

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Lorraine Haig, an'ya, and Srinivasa Rao Sambangi,

for providing the weekly challenges
for the month of March 2025,

Milind Mulick
for his brilliant watercolour painting,

our contributors
for sharing their poems.

Editors' Choice Commentary: Suraja Menon Roychowdhury
Editor's Choice: *beloved children* by Cynthia Bale

**beloved children
I'll be with you
in fifty pages
the murderer must make
a fatal mistake**

Cynthia Bale

This lighthearted tanka made me smile.

As an avid reader, I can relate to this. Some books are unputdownable and everything else must wait until the book is done.

As a mother, I have lived this scenario several times. (Not to say that this doesn't apply to dads, too). Nothing really matters when you have that great book in your hand - cleaning, cooking, getting dinner on the table, feeding your kids ... That rush to finish the book before getting back to reality, the tedium of daily living.

I see the book as a metaphor for anything that the person finds extremely interesting and cannot tear themselves away from.

Underlying this humor, though, is a sadness. To me, this tanka showcases the desperate holding on to a dream as reality starts pressing in. *When we were young, when we had all the time in the world to do as we liked, when the possibilities were infinite.* And then responsibilities start. A job, a family to take care of - and at these altars we see the slow burn from sacrificing the things we used to love, the dreams that we lost ourselves in. Bills must be paid, dinners must be cooked, laundry must be done.

And so, mom stops reading, something that used to be her favourite pastime, because she knows that once she gets her hands on a book then everything else becomes secondary. This is not to say that she doesn't like her current life - as you can see, the first line of the tanka is addressed to her beloved children. 'I will know *Who Did It* in fifty pages, and then I'll be available to do whatever it is that you need me to do ... Give me some time,' she begs, 'because I just need to live in this exciting make-believe world for a few more minutes.' This could equally apply to a dad who used to be, say, an avid gamer ... The possibilities are endless.

Tanka is said to be an unfinished story, and that is beautifully illustrated by Cynthia Bale. What's not written here is more important than what is, because there are so many backstories that can be inferred by the reader.

haiku

fresh fertilizer
guaranteed to grow
a new crop of weeds

Adelaide B. Shaw

kitten
caught in the chaos
spring cleaning

Alfred Booth

just before dawn
the pecan grove alive
with twitter

Billie Dee

self-checkout
I thank the machine
out of habit

C.X. Turner

haiku

stone well
a frog slips through
its echo

C.X. Turner

hidden brook
the shimmer of minnows
in last year's leaves

C.X. Turner

diagnosis ...
the angst of not knowing
then knowing

Firdaus Parvez

dry leaves
crisp beneath my feet...
priming a new canvas

Geetha Ravichandran

haiku

squirrels squabbling
all the way
 winter wind

Kala Ramesh

fallen
a leaf drags
 its shadow

Kala Ramesh

blowing away
the winter thickness
— windy phagun

Kalyanee Arandhara

sap moon
the earth softened
with snowdrops

Joanna Ashwell

haiku

sunrise catches
the first few rooftops —
chimney smoke

Linda Papanicolaou

a herd of Harleys
rounding the curves
summer wind

Lorraine Haig

scent of earth
white cockatoos follow
the plough

Lorraine Haig

sloshing backpack
the fruit grower's first
pesticide spray

Martin Duguay

haiku

vernal equinox —
all the flowers on her side
of the story

Milan Rajkumar

the slow pace
of a summer afternoon
a cicada's buzz

Mona Bedi

unpaid overtime
we spend the evening
swatting flies

Mona Bedi

vernal equinox
the koel's call
from deeper shade

Nalini Shetty

haiku

still five miles
from the mountain pass
spring equinox

paul m.

tilled into the field
with the cover crop
a farmer's song

paul m.

just the right amount
of brake on the slope
spring equinox

Rupa Anand

wintering
in the wicker basket
a woolly cross stitch

Rupa Anand

haiku

Friday night ---
the working man's cologne
working

Sherry Reniker

black crow koi
beneath the footbridge
gobbling bento

Sherry Reniker

delivery room
he looks at the features
one more time

Srinivasa Rao Sambangi

a disagreement
on the colour of dad's shirt
black & white picture

Sumitra Kumar

one-line haiku

soundsovercrowding the night shelter

Rupa Anand

friends I've lost along the way wilted mums

Shloka Shankar

tanka

words
brushing the edges
of a thought
like dust motes in sunlight
too delicate to grasp

Adelaide B. Shaw

after twenty years
I know these tracks well
today
their end-station has become
my daily heartbeats with you

Alfred Booth

did you give a damn —
did all your good book angels
not chastise you
for hating my difference
and mocking my fear

Alfred Booth

tanka

the oddness
of growing old pains
never knowing
the whiplash of the wind
or the caress of the sun

Alfred Booth

super moon ...
I unpack
from Italian holiday
my parmesan wheel
now in the sky

Anjali Warhadpande

wordless afternoon
march sunshine on the back
of a napping cat
an example to follow
on this day at my age ...

an'ya

tanka

from this pass
overlooking Las Vegas
the new moon
lost in an arched swath
of star-blistered sky

Billie Dee

in that lapse
between moonset and sunrise
the muse arrives
in her pink bunny slippers
uncaffeinated, hair wild

Billie Dee

his face dims
with each passing year
... and still
that rich baritone voice
sings in my midnight mind

Billie Dee

tanka

overreaction
my mother used to say ...
but how do you
shrink a tidal wave
into one sip

C.X. Turner

half-written lines
scattered on the desk ...
outside, a wren
tugs at a thread
to weave its own song

C.X. Turner

arms tight round
his battered backpack
he sleeps
through the chimes
of eight stations

Cynthia Bale

tanka

beloved children - * ECC
I'll be with you
in fifty pages
the murderer must make
a fatal mistake

Cynthia Bale

this world
full of horror
refusing to be silent
I'll write a hundred poems
on a sea of sand

Fatma Zohra Habis

summer wind
we'll meet again
at the usual beach
you bring a rose
and I'll bring some poems

Fatma Zohra Habis

tanka

this unfinished road
between me and the moon
if nothing else
I will take
these tar marks with me

Gauri Dixit

this dried leaf
rests in my lap
for a moment
white clouds
stir the blue sky

Gauri Dixit

I have eyes
only for the moon
stars
 blink and go ...
my sleepless night

Kala Ramesh

tanka

digging
for diamonds
this mud
the colour of bloodshed ...
I give away my earrings

Kala Ramesh

summer at its peak
missing the liquid notes
of the river
I gather pebbles instead
to feel the roundedness

Kala Ramesh

grandma's stories
under a moonlit sky
where is she,
the girl who believed
all those tall tales

Kalyanee Arandhara

tanka

words steeped in sorrow
bubbling with laughter
melting in love —
I've written it all, but
did any truly move you

Kalyanee Arandhara

a broom cupboard
beneath the stairs
only the moon
knows when I confide
in make-believe friends

Kanjini Devi

rising moon
from the cypresses
a blackbird sings
won't you love me
whoever you may be

Keith Evetts

tanka

fragrant breeze
the sway of the willow's
pleated skirt
the way young women
walk in spring

Keith Evetts

the sudden flash
of a jewelled dagger
scattering rainbows
the kingfisher
is the poem

Keith Evetts

sweeping
dad's empty room
even after eleven years
his whispering words echo
'walls have ears, speak softly'

Lakshmi Iyer

tanka

after the storm
seaweed on driftwood
that feeling
my muse has left me
high and dry

Lorraine Haig

final diagnosis ...
well-wishers attempt to cheer
by talking
of world politics
and Delhi pollution

Mohua Maulik

not yet dawn
and still glowing
the gibbous moon
a little less doesn't make
you less

Mohua Maulik

tanka

horns locked
deer thrash in the bush
struggling
to rise above
our endless bickerings

Mohua Maulik

moving day
I leave behind my growing years
and carry with me
the cerulean blue
of my hometown sky

Mona Bedi

after Holi
scrubbing at the blue
on my wrist
some stains
outlast the colours

Nalini Shetty

tanka

midnight again
the pen lifts then falters
lifts again ...
somewhere beyond my window
a river keeps calling

Nalini Shetty

facing the sun
this field of sunflowers
the resilience
you've always shown me
I now find within

Padma Priya

uprooted vine
with ash gourds
disease-blighted ...
seeing her will to live
weaken bit by bit

Priti Aisola

tanka

dipping in and out
of mango tree branches
the moon in fragments
once again finding a way
to be whole again

Priti Aisola

harvest moon
the surrogate
trembles
as the obstetrician cuts
the umbilical cord

Priya Narayanan

long before
the pottery throw down
my hands in father's
shaping a bowl
I'm yet to fill

Robert Kingston

tanka

in monochrome
the colours of our youth
pegged to the line
mother's hands shaping
who we are today

Robert Kingston

I'll go now
simply close the cover
on this old book
as shadows dwell
in this darkening blue

Robert Kingston

nearing the end
of an overnight journey
the moon
that saw me off
receives me

Srini

tanka

enduring time
a rock lies dormant ...
does a sculptor
see in it a chance
to daylight his own dream?

Srini

the rising
new block next door
i can't but mourn
the short-lived sunrises
from my balcony

Sumitra Kumar

desert stars
so much brighter ...
for a change
I ignore
the moon

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

Amoolya Kamalnath

Hanging Verdict

The time is 2:10 p.m. The traffic is as heavy as always, with all the honking. The signal is red. The sun is harsh. It's my wedding anniversary, and I've just been administered radioactive iodine as part of my treatment and am in isolation at the hospital.

sometimes a river
of words flows but then
the ink dries up
and leaves no mark ...
the driftwood still afloat

C.X. Turner

Misalignment

no appetite
so I peel an orange
for the smell
the pith clings tight
like skin that remembers

The coach is warm, the seat still soft from the last passenger. I tuck my coat beneath me so it half-hugs my sides, and let the world slip past — a blur of low-roofed houses, pale hedgerows, and unfamiliar fields. I've taken this route before, I think, but never in this direction.

The air is thick with radiator heat and something metallic. The road signs shimmer, then fade. A passenger up front is speaking, but I can't catch the language. I reach for my ticket. The print has smudged, or maybe it was never clear. Was I heading north? Or home? I can't remember packing, only standing in the kitchen with one shoe on.

The driver hums along to a tune I almost know. The light above me is too bright; everything it touches seems slightly out of place. Outside, a second sun hangs low in the sky. No use panicking. I pretend I meant to do this.

a woman laughs
three seats behind me
I flinch
as if she knows
I don't belong here

C.X. Turner

Macchiato

I had never ordered one before, but something about the word felt good in my mouth. The second time we went for coffee, I said it aloud, just to hear it again. He ordered one too, with effortless certainty — a casual swirl of foam, a half-smile that settled so easily in the air between us. I let the sweetness touch my tongue first, waiting for the espresso's bite to follow.

Even now, the ritual remains — my fingers curling around the small cup, the slow lift, the warmth pressing into my palm. A few sips, and it's gone. And always, just before the first taste, his face appears in the swirl, dissolving.

the aftertaste
of something bitter
his last words
still steeped
in the cracks of me

C.X. Turner

Fossilised

The page stays blank, though I press my pen to it, waiting for words to unfurl.
Some nights, I listen to the rain, hoping it will spill a phrase into the dark.

Other nights, I pace the room, feeling for a seam in the stillness. Even the moon
holds back, veiled in cloud. But then, a flicker — a phrase, a fragment of light. I
catch it before it slips away.

a page untouched —
somewhere beyond the hush
of this night
a blackbird rehearses
its morning song

Dinah Power
~

Troubling Times

Today, the sun shines, and alerts are on pause; I venture forth for a walk. My walks take different routes within the 'hood where I have an awareness of shelters. One of these routes finds me at a park that commemorates Israel's fallen soldiers, and I pause to sit on a bench overlooking Haifa Bay.

calico cat
runs across the greens
to rub my leg
a budding friendship
gains another step

tanka-prose

Gauri Dixit
~

Oasis

The street bustles with activity. Instead of usual traffic, workers dig, pour asphalt, lay concrete sidewalks, and plant rolls of grass beside them.

words dissolve
in the warmth
of ginger tea —
the silence of a biscuit
dipped in this moment

Gauri Dixit
~

Darkness No Star Can Pierce

Why is it always so difficult to put thoughts into words?

on the edge
of this white paper
a red ant
wanders slowly
seeking sweetness

Nalini Shetty

Fractured Light

The rain slows to a drizzle as I step onto the terrace. Puddles gather in the cracks of the old stone floor, mirroring the sky. A shaft of late-afternoon sunlight spills through the clouds, catching on raindrops clinging to the bougainvillea. I raise my camera, framing the way light breaks across wet petals, searching for something I cannot name.

between showers
a butterfly pauses
on torn hibiscus —
somewhere within me too
a flutter of brightness

Sumitra Kumar
~

Gatherings

A noisy event. It's the same professional photographer I've been seeing in our circles, jumping excitedly, clicking candid shots and pleasing everyone. His quiet assistant, with a remote in hand, manoeuvres a drone. As I have on earlier occasions, I appreciate the pair for their passion and teamwork.

It's closer to midnight, and the evening is still young for many. The buffet spread of greasy food and drinks, the glitter of expensive clothes and loud music aren't making my day. I just need to go home and reread the poem I wrote in the morning.

a dragonfly
rare-apparelled, sizzling
on the sunlit ramp —
who else watches
besides me and the universe

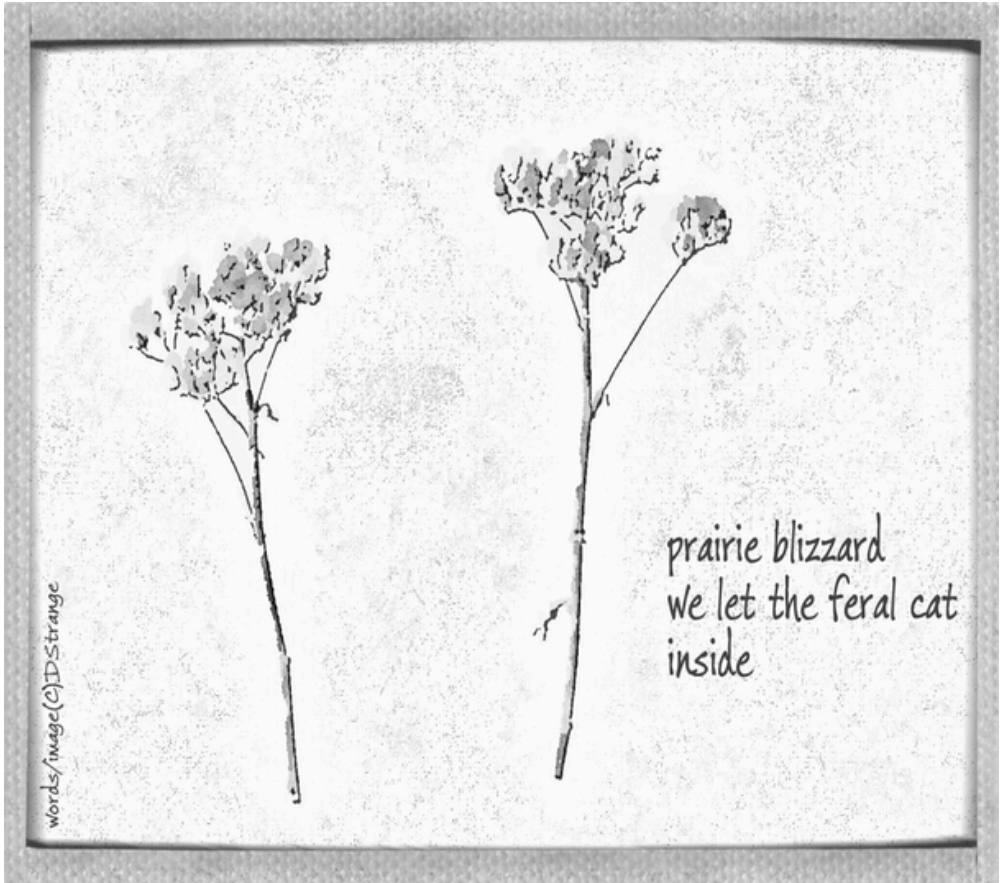
Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

Lean on Me

There is something about the rumbling of those wheels as we hurtle through the countryside, faces pressed against the window, that hypnotic rhythm, that suspends time ...

vacation
in the Atlas mountains
at last
knowing that the world
goes on without me

haiga



haiga



image and ku: Nalini Shetty

haiga



image and ku: Nalini Shetty

NS

haiga



homeless is the moon in a mountain's keep

haiga



Long life



*homeless . . .
the broken pieces
that never heal*



Paul C. Moos

haiga



charcoal art
blooming cotton
on black soil

Poem/Pic:Sreenath

Sreenath

image and ku: Sreenath

Dear Readers
thank you for being with us.

See you once again on 22 May 2025!
with many more fine poems
from our contributors.

Team: *haikuKATHA*