

haikuKATHA

unfolding the story within



Milind Mulick

Issue 17, March 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 17
March 2023

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

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

Our heartfelt thanks to:

Ravi Kiran, David Terelinck ,
and Roberta Beary,

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

Artist Milind Mulick
for his brilliant watercolour painting,

Samir Satam
for gathering the poems
written for these prompts,

our contributors
for sharing their poems.

Editors' Choice Commentary: Firdaus Parvez
in her dementia by Lorraine Haig

in her dementia
mum never mentioned
my father
an old photo of her smiling
at someone outside the frame

Lorraine Haig

The first thing that came to mind on reading this tanka was that it told a story. What thoughts came to your mind? Hold on to them for a bit.

We have two completely unrelated observations. I'm splitting the two.

in her dementia
mum never mentioned
my father

The observation is a sad one (an internal reflection) and we can imagine the devastation for the narrator but it's also not uncommon. A person with dementia tends to lose random memories.

an old photograph of her smiling
at someone outside the frame

This observation (an outer reflection) in itself does not lead us to a story. How many times have we browsed through old pictures of our parents. The narrator's mum, in an old picture, is smiling at someone outside the frame; could be anyone.

Editors' Choice Commentary: Firdaus Parvez
in her dementia by Lorraine Haig

Now put them together and they click into place and we immediately have a story. A suggestion only, that makes one ponder. This is the beauty of writing tanka this way. Taking two completely unrelated observations/images and bringing them together in such a way that it involves the reader's imagination. These are the poems that tend to linger long after we've read them. It is most tastefully done here.

Cover Art: Milind Mulick
Thoughts from an art lover: Alaka Yeravadekar



Spring in the air

Some paintings tell you everything, and some have an air of mystery and give you a reason to pause, wonder, and imagine. This uplifting painting by Milind Mulick leaves one with a few questions: What are these chairs doing here? Who are those two people?

The scene takes us to Europe. We come upon some chairs scattered in a quiet cobbled lane. There appears to be little chance of an automobile coming along, blaring horn and spewing smoke. It is the sort of place where one can linger. A street-side café is a distinct possibility. The windows seem to be shut. It could be early morning. The chairs are mostly empty, except for two people deep in conversation. The café is not yet blooming, but the flowers are! The pink blossoms impart a distinct promise of romance. Spring, then, is just around the corner.

haiku

shooting star
a wish to wish
for nothing

Anju Kishore

gumball machine...
the boy's tight grip
on the prize

Barrie Levine

sticky notes
the half-life
of memory

Barrie Levine

peeling the string
off the green bean
our separation

Barrie Levine

haiku

another cracked cup...
the mosaic artist's
bag of treasures

Baisali Chatterjee Dutt

autumn solitude
a bunting's call
leaves me blue

Bryan Rickert

stories told
in the waiting room
mine feels small

David Josephsohn

writer's block
today my cat
is just a cat

David Josephsohn

haiku

on the pavement
a dog
scratching air

Dipankar Dasgupta

summer solitude...
filling my crosswords
with boredom

Hassane Zemmouri

on the way
to dad's grave
the dog's whimper

John Pappas

as if he
didn't die
birdsong

John Pappas

haiku

legos underfoot
the muffled curse
of the tooth fairy

John Pappas

mother's backyard
the comfort of distant
temple bells

Kanjini Devi

long shadows
a growing tenderness
inside her

Kashiana Singh

ceiling to floor
the slit wallpaper bleeds
cockroaches

Lev Hart

haiku

winter skylight —
the cat saunters under
my bridge pose

Linda Papanicolaou

wounded coyote –
the neighborhood dogs
know it's there

Linda Papanicolaou

twist of the wrist
of the sommelier —
Valentine's Day

Linda Papanicolaou

tug of war
a robin's song
mutes the news

Marilyn Ashbaugh

haiku

new year's day —
the half-emptied wine gourd
wobbles with its owner

Milan Rajkumar

double dusk
a flock of jackdaws
through the train window

Robert Kingston

first love
a cardinal
more scarlet than ever

Rose

tumbler to tumbler
the chai-wala measures
the height of his tea

Srini

haiku

conjuring spell
he loves me
he loves me ~~not~~

Susan Burch

spiral bound
each wasted day
a page in the bin

Vidya Shankar

one-line haiku

in the weave of her braid dark rivers

Barrie Levine

war news the woodpecker's rapid fire

Bryan Rickert

lightning spirals the boatman's oars

Mallika Chari

one-line haiku

a little more birdsong drizzling the oak

Marilyn Ashbaugh

whistle of dove wings almost spring

Marilyn Ashbaugh

spirals of blackbirds pepper spring clouds

Marilyn Ashbaugh

concrete haiku

after
the
leaves
fall
just
me
left
hanging
on

Bryan Rickert

concrete haiku

moving
a couch
up sixteen
storeys
the speed
of snails

Lev Hart

concrete haiku

maple seed your slow hurried
fall

Lev Hart

tanka

deep winter
wilted hydrangeas dress
in gold brocade
whoever said beauty fades
as we age

Barbara Olmtak

Mom's beaded clutch
lined with watered silk
the small comb
that blends the silver
of her hair with mine

Billie Dee

afternoon
dove song sweetens
the air
this bitter end
of a year without you

Billie Dee

tanka

breaking fast
with an onion
surest way
to have the day
to myself

Bonnie J Scherer

my sewing machine stalls
as the bobbin thread
breaks ...
adjusting tension,
the fabric of life mends

Bonnie J Scherer

distant suns
going supernova
he'll never
love you
the way I do

Bryan Rickert

tanka

the sharp edge
of the sickle moon
holding her
and wishing
it was you

Bryan Rickert

lightning struck
the massive banyan tree
burnt to ashes
my unkept promise
to tie her a swing

Dipankar Dasgupta

steeping tea
dusk descends
on the teapot
never to be held
by your slender hand

Dipankar Dasgupta

tanka

learning
a morning raga
at sunset
this taste of ecstasy
when I sing the flat notes

Kanjini Devi

deadheaded dahlias
in a garden grown
rampant
how I long to keep
every memory of you

Kanjini Devi

cobalt sea
and sand dunes
in the rear mirror
all the dreams
you and I once shared

Kanjini Devi

tanka

a blackbird
nests in the lime tree
among thorns
small pockets of safety
in an unsettled world

Lorraine Haig

in her dementia
mum never mentioned
my father
an old photo of her smiling
at someone outside the frame

Lorraine Haig

on the cliff
my shadow lost
to the abyss
things I should have said
when I had the chance

Lorraine Haig

tanka

homecoming ...
we pause to watch
in silence
as conversations happen
with fast-moving fingers

Mallika Chari

spring ephemerals
buried in snow
this climate change
where children attend schools
with their dying breaths

Marilyn Ashbaugh

on the road
back to you, potholes
hidden by shadows ...
the sunset fades
lavender to black

Marilyn Humbert

tanka

a bit of me
with the egret
poised
among light filtered reeds
the weight of my brush

Robert Kingston

this morning
a rose bud plucked
thoughtlessly
how we break people
before they bloom

Rupa Anand

in the reflection
of a spoon
a heartbeat
where I think
I'm pretty

Susan Burch

tanka

the black-capped
chickadee's
hey sweetie
how your heart
calls to mine

Susan Burch

a rare sighting
of the green comet
for a moment
I let myself fantasize
that it's me you love

Susan Burch

Anju Kishore
~

A Long Way

The old house is fast filling up with visiting children and grandchildren. She walks up the path to the gate with a smile, swaying as she always does, but at an unusually brisk pace. On the way she brushes aside her son's toddler who tries to grab her sari in an attempt to be taken along too. Her daughter and granddaughter have just arrived. She gathers the little girl from the taxi with squeals of delight and carries her all the way into the house.

The other child watches them till they are out of sight.

early dusk
a sandpiper plucking
the forked river

Anju Kishore
~

Kaleidoscope

I decide to watch a Tamil movie at the local kotaai, a rough structure made of thatched mud that runs shows of not so new releases. My mother, fearing the God-knows-what kind of people a city-bred adolescent might encounter there, is with me. We get our tickets from a banian and lungi clad man inside a faded tin enclosure. A beedi quivers at his dark lips when he drawls that he has no change.

We duck into the cinema theatre. As mother had warned, most of it has only the bare ground as seating. A few chairs dot the wall at the far end. We go for them but end up grabbing each other in alarm. Both chairs stand on about three-and-a-half legs. The rest that look only slightly better are occupied. We stare at the floor with rows of oiled heads, resplendent in the semi darkness with all kinds of flowers. Mother sighs and we lower ourselves on the sand among the glitter of colourful saris. The ladies pause to look at us but carry on with their high-pitched banter till the show begins. An hour or so into the movie, somebody settles down quietly into the dark beside me.

All too soon, the little door is thrown open to a burst of sunshine and a wave of gabble. Next to me, a one-eyed street dog licks my dusty fingers and presses closer.

sip of a river
the taste of everything
in its path

Bonnie J Scherer
~

Cache

Documents are found in places they shouldn't be. Stuffed in a toilet in a local park. Nestled in the linen closet at grandma's house. Hanging in the handyman's garage with the tools of his trade. And even rolled into the canister of steel cut oats at the summer home.

trail
of pinecones -
too many nuts

Bryan Rickert
~

Lovesick

I lay in bed and struggle to fall asleep. My mind drifts in and out. Wondering when we will talk next or possibly see each other again. Then, in those moments between waking and dreaming I hear the phone, set to vibrate, rattle on the nightstand. Instantly awake and alert, my first and only thought is of her.

morning sunshine
my inbox full
of birdsong

Diana Webb
~

Between the Acts

Long before the money was saved and tickets booked it was a highlight of next year's diary. A performance by a legendary dancer in the role of Virginia Woolf at London's Royal Opera House.

With five weeks to go the rail dispute continues, dates of the next strikes uncertain.

towards the horizon
outline of a bird in flight
binoculars missing

Diana Webb



Silk Thread

This chilly morning of sun withheld in mist, I watch the condensation across the pane. It resembles a kind of graph, where the undulations are steady, with here and there, a minuscule dip. It seems to record a succession of memories. Childhood days. The moments, sporadic. Moments of shame. Moments of pride. It moves towards the edge, where each thin column rises higher and higher in parallel to its neighbour until the last one soars in a peak.

pierce of a needle
through finest muslin
first yellow petal

Florence Heyhoe
~

Impending

She runs from hurting. There may come a time when she can run no more.
Overtaken, tripped up. Will she recognise the pieces, know the voice?

the stench
a dead dog on the shore
fit to burst

Florence Heyhoe
~

The City Sleeps

A few yards ahead, on a bustling San Francisco street, I notice a black wheelie bin lying on its side. The contents are spewed over the pavement: blacks and dirty greys. As I get closer I see that the ooze is long and tapering, with a wider part still in the bin. Through a crack in the quilted covering ... a small sliver of human skin.

office blocks--
on windows
the sky passes by

Lorraine Haig
~

A Kind of Madness

Her friend opened a packet of cigarettes and they both lit up. This was her first and she coughed and retched. Hanging out of her bedroom window she practiced the drawback. The risk of being caught was exciting. They'd skip school, go down to the river with a bottle. Instead of the movies they'd sneak into town to watch the boys in their hot cars. The sound of growling motors was her kind of heaven. Mesmerized by his dark eyes, she took his hand . . .

blue tattoo
a butterfly lifting
from her shoulder

Lorraine Haig
~

Tasmania: 1823

Sent to the colony to serve out their sentence, in some cases for stealing a loaf of bread, convicts, their feet shackled, were yoked to a cart loaded with sandstone. The men dragged it from the quarry through the village, past pubs and churches to where the bridge was under construction. The overseer did not spare the lash along those two miles of rough dirt.

After a long night in one of the pubs he was too drunk to drag himself home, so he lay down on the bridge's parapet. They found him the next morning, dead in the river.

sunlit arches
tourists throw bread
to ducks

Marilyn Ashbaugh
~

So Happy Together

Forty years before the pandemic there was a plague and ten years before that. . . a bookworm of a girl and a dandy of a boy played with Barbies. The boy cut Barbie's brown hair into a shag and knit mohair miniskirts to wear with her swimsuits. The girl asked if he would do the same for her and he said yes . . .as long as she ditched the John Lennon wire rims.

coming out
in his pine box
mother's favorite

Neena Singh
~

Umwelt

The unfinished house opposite ours has come under the hammer and stands demolished. Suddenly the blue sky is visible across the road, but the huge tree that guarded the house and attracted birdsong has been chopped off during the night.

Today, I hear some sounds at the gate and walk across to investigate. I find five small pups amid the debris, all coloured differently. Their mother comes running and growls at me. The dappled one looks up and tries to stand, it has a foreleg missing.

new neighbours
the trumpet vine overflows
with orange blossoms

Susan Burch
~

R(elating)

Omg! The same downy woodpecker from yesterday chirped at me the whole time I was outside like we were having a conversation. I think I love her.

summer heat
I kissed a girl
and I liked it

Vidya Shankar
~

Reaching out

Vidya, daughter,

I know this letter has surprised you and you are probably crying. It is not my intention to make you cry but I had to write to you.

Leaving you was not easy, but my time was up. Grieve not for me for I am now with your mother, in a realm beyond all suffering. My joy was boundless when I met her after so many years. The ache in my heart disappeared the minute I lay my eyes upon her beautiful face. Yes, I could see her. The cataract that had clouded my eyes is gone. My vision is clear. Your mother too is free of asthma and she is healed of the injury in her leg. So am I of the neuropathy that had afflicted my feet.

Mother and I take long walks like we did when we were young, catching up on all that we had wanted to share with each other in the years after she left us. But most often, we just enjoy in silence the bountiful delights that abound this other world. How I wish I could describe them to you. But I am no poet.

Mother enjoys all that you write and is proud that you have finally found your calling as a writer, even though it was not in her time.

Take care, sweet one, and blessings from Mother and me.

Your loving Appa

autumn dusk ...
a lone moth
taps at a closed window

Linda Papanicolaou
~

What Was Her Name?

The intercom calls teachers to the staff lounge. We stand in silent shock as the principal relates the few facts that the police have released and advises what to tell the students.

moonless night
a quiet girl who had
few friends
opening her arms to greet
the headlights of a train

Vidya Shankar
~

Cloudburst

I stand close to my husband hanging on to every sound he makes. All I can gather are some yeses and okays. I don't hear what the speaker at the other end says.

The call takes just a couple of minutes but it seems like a lifetime of waiting.

navigating
the hairpin bends
an uphill journey
in the fight
against cancer

haiga



the disorder in my life Tetris

the disorder in my life Tetris
Hassane Zemmouri

haiga



ripening grain -
all the mouths
father has to feed

milan rajkumar

haiga



at least
you still have a purpose . . .
cut flowers

milan rajkumar

haiga

shifting clouds
a patch beneath
lit with sun



teji sethi

haiga

old shrine
the sound of rain
within the cracks

teji sethi

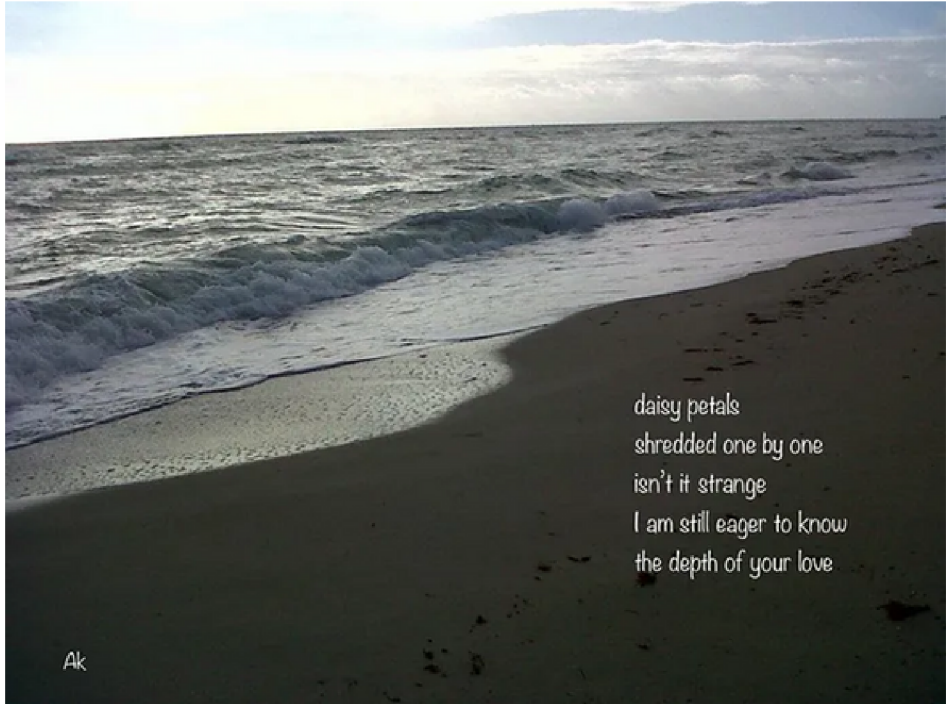


haiga

pebbled path
her pitcher spills
village gossip



art & haiku : teji sethi



daisy petals
shredded one by one
isn't it strange
I am still eager to know
the depth of your love

Ak

Arvinder Kaur

tanka-art

a bright morning
walking with friends
not much attention
given to the snow moon
looming in this blue sky



Robert Kingston

Dear Readers
thank you for being with us.

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

Team: *haikuKATHA*