

haikuKATHA

unfolding the story within



Issue 3 January 2022

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 and haiga.

Each month's issue will be put together by a team of editors who will 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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haiku, tanka,
haibun, tanka-prose and gembun

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CONTENTS

Editors' Choice Commentary by Kala Ramesh 1-2
The story behind my poem by Śuraja Menon Roychowdhury

haiku

Agus Maulana Sunjaya
Akila G. 3
Akila G.

Marilyn Humbert
Mona Bedi 4
Subir Ningthouja

Kashiana Singh
Priti Aisola 5
Teji Sethi

Vandana Parashar 6
Vandana Parashar

tanka

Kenneth Slaughter
Lakshmi Iyer 7
Lakshmi Iyer

Mallika Chari
Marilyn Humbert 8
Marilyn Humbert

Mona Bedi
Mona Bedi 9
Priti Aisola

CONTENTS

Priti Aisola Srinivas S. Suraja Menon Roychowdhury	10
Teji Sethi Teji Sethi Tish Davis	11
Tish Davis Vandana Parashar Vandana Parashar	12
haibun, tanka prose & gembun	
Akila G.	13
Diana Webb	14-15
Gauri Dixit	16
Karen Harvey	17
Kavya Janani	18
Ken Slaughter	19
Mona Bedi	20-21
Priti Aisola	22- 23
Tish Davis	24
indianKUKAI	25-28

haiku, senryu, haibun, tanka, tanka-prose and gembun.

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for sharing their poems.

Editors' Choice Commentary

when the wind blows
through holes in a bamboo
does it know
my heart too was pierced
with notes of our song

— Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

This richly layered tanka caught my attention on my very first reading and my enjoyment of the poem has only been increasing with each reading. Waka (as the present day tanka was once called) was traditionally known as a love song. I find strong traces of waka in this tanka – both in the lyricism and intuitive construction and in the lightness and suppleness of the lines. I'm also reminded of Akiko Yosano's tanka.

Leaving something to the imagination: each time I reread this tanka, I realized anew how it is possible to convey more when you do not show everything at once.

when the wind blows
through holes in a bamboo

Simple and clear enough; and being an Indian, I've often listened to ragas played on the bansuri (Indian bamboo flute).

The next line, in italics, stopped me in my tracks. Line 3 captured my attention:

does it know

In Hindu philosophy, and more so in our cultural memory, the concept known as advaita — non-duality, oneness of consciousness — is deeply entrenched. Yes, that blade of grass, that mountain, you and I, and the wind blowing through the bamboo — all are one pulsating consciousness.

Editors' Choice Commentary

Next we come to the lower verse – the poignant lines 4 & 5:

my heart too was pierced
with notes of our song

These lines express the Japanese concept of *yugen*. *Yugen* is defined as *a profound awareness of the universe that triggers a deep emotional response*. Here it opens out to layers of interpretation. Is there a lover intended here? Or is the poet talking about oneness in nature? Or does the disappointment of unrequited love lurk between the lines?

"Between what is said and not meant, and what is meant and not said, most of love is lost." – Khalil Gibran

Tanka, the pundits say, convey only the “middle” of a story, the rest happens in the reader's mind. How well this has been handled here. This tanka can be a metaphor for life too, suggesting that nothing is irrevocably broken and that our lives remain entwined somehow; the residue of each person we meet is left behind and from time to time we are reminded of them.

– Kala Ramesh

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury tells her story:

Music can pierce my heart, move me to joy and give me solace. I once walked through a bamboo forest with my daughter on the beautiful island of Maui. The rustle of the bamboo as it swayed in the breeze felt like I was in the middle of a forest of flutes.

The bamboo flute is an important Indian classical instrument, that has become synonymous with Krishna, playing it in the gardens of Vrindavan. Imagine the wind blowing through the bamboo holes, breath moving through our bodies — the wind is mindless, but the heart gives it intention and creates song.

haiku

April sun
water beads slide down
the cormorant's bill

— Agus Maulana Sunjaya

battlefield
f e a t h e r s
on the window sill

— Akila G.

a green chilli
stings my tongue –
first fight

— Akila G.

haiku

the grab
and smash of wind
tornado sky

— Marilyn Humbert

hourglass
I slip with the sand
into time

— Mona Bedi

evening
a flute's tune swirls
with the mist

— Subir Ningthouja

haiku

your perfume inside our shrivelled silence

— Kashiana Singh

rising incense ...
what if each breath
were a prayer

— Priti Aisola

Gandhi ashram
the silent sounds
of a loom

— Teji Sethi

haiku

broken pot
a handful of earth
to the earth

— Vandana Parashar

receding flood
a still cow still
tethered

— Vandana Parashar

tanka

slipping
from one dream
into another ...
the scent of your hair
as you rest in my arms

— Kenneth Slaughter

the moonlight sheds
its glow everywhere —
hardly anyone
greet the special needs
kid next door

— Lakshmi Iyer

just when
everything seems to go right
mood swings
between the possible
and the impossible

— Lakshmi Iyer

tanka

thick forest ...
 lying alone
in the midst
of traditional roots
her eroding beliefs

— Mallika Chari

the moon
waxes and wanes
in endless cycles
this loveless marriage
our pretend happiness

— Marilyn Humbert

evening breeze
ripples my floating world ...
I search for love
beside weeping willows
beneath southern stars

— Marilyn Humbert

tanka

i wait for
the phone to ring
it's not everyday
you promise
to remain in touch

— Mona Bedi

dad's typewriter
a half-typed sheet
stuck inside
I wonder about the words
he wanted to write

— Mona Bedi

waking
to the sound
of temple bells
once again a reason
to leap out of bed

— Priti Aisola

tanka

each day
this lineup of chores ...
I pause
before each rose in bloom
and those about to wilt

— Priti Aisola

first rains ...
and yet the petrichor
fades too soon
like the relief
of finally being home

— Srinivas S.

when the wind blows
through holes in a bamboo
does it know
my heart too was pierced
with notes of our song

— Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

tanka

Wagah border
the vigil of night guards
all these years
still the moon slips in
through the fence every night

— Teji Sethi

the weariness
in my father's eyes intrudes
time and again
the space between
our silent conversations

— Teji Sethi

sleet
pelting the windshield ...
never once
did you say
that you loved me

— Tish Davis

tanka

first morning
without my worry beads
how green
these pine boughs
catching all the snow

— Tish Davis

braving
all the storms and then
like an autumn tree
he lets me go
without a fight

—Vandana Parashar

keeping my shoes
at their proper place
I wonder
would I have listened
to him if he hadn't died

— Vandana Parashar

haibun, tanka-prose and gembun

Portrait

Her smile is a well sharpened outline. The little
nose stud dazzles when she guffaws to expose the
crimson stained teeth that rolls out words and the
remnants of betel leaf. That, she claims, shapes
her present.

dental appointment -
Grandma writes
to the tooth fairy

— Akila G.

haibun, tanka-prose and gembun

Fingering the Pane

In her bag her newest find. A brand new journal
for a brand new year. A page for each day with an
illuminated margin ready for her to write her brand
new thoughts. Except it's second hand.

misted bus window
the views
that disappeared

— Diana Webb

haibun, tanka-prose and gembun

Not Taken

Just as it happens every Sunday morning, my bus stops briefly outside the inn at the base of the hill where the poet Keats wrote in a letter to a friend that 'nothing startles me beyond the moment.'

glimpse of the gate
once again
it passes by

— Diana Webb

haibun, tanka-prose and gembun

Colours of Fall

As she puts her foot down a sharp pain travels up making her sit back on the bed with a thud. She had never truly understood the meaning of debilitating before this. Nothing better than experiential learning they say.

The wall is out of reach, or so it seems. In a desperate attempt to reach the wall for support, she stretches her hands and accidentally knocks the water bottle down. The ruckus only makes him grumble in his sleep.

"Stand on your toes first," she remembers this advice from the hundreds of blogs she read last night. This reduces the pain a bit. She then hobbles towards the wall.

Finally, some support! Now what? To walk towards the washroom or spend the rest of her life leaning against a wall, or on someone?

dawn chorus -
a mynah matches notes
with the falling branch

— Gauri Dixit

haibun, tanka-prose and gembun

Making Waves

The holidaymakers have left now and there is a chill in the air, so I have the whole beach to myself. Last night's storm has churned up lots of seaweed, so I find myself swimming through fragments of all shapes and colours. There are those long stringy bits reminiscent of shoelaces, and lots of small pieces which have broken away from the deep sea forest to bob up and down in the surf.

towelled dry
warming myself
by a log fire
I dive into a bowl of
minestrone soup

— Karen Harvey

haibun, tanka-prose and gembun

Untraceable

My daughter and I open the new storybook titled,
'The Pizza Cat'. We are excited to unravel the story.

On the first page, there's a handwritten message,
'To Jude, with love from Grandma and Grandpa.'

We flip through the pages to find some hint about
Jude and his life, but we don't find anything else.
The mystery of the stranger increases our
anticipation to read the story.

wooden stool
the only clue
of a tree's existence

— Kavya Janani

haibun, tanka-prose and gembun

Footsteps

I had just started smoking again. In the kitchen at Mom's house with my brother Steve. He hollers upstairs to Chris in the bedroom: "Ken started smoking again!"

"I know." The smell on my clothes. Chris with his dry humor.

I'm in the family room, again at Mom and Dad's. Some classical piece on the record player – can't remember what it was. Chris is upstairs in bed. I hear his clumsy steps bounding down the stairs. "You the one playing that music? No wonder I couldn't wake up." We laugh.

Many years later. Bach on my stereo. "Sheep and Lambs May Safely Graze." Pretty sure that was it.

your footsteps ...
did I hear them
on the stairs

— Ken Slaughter

haibun, tanka-prose and gembun

Not so Perfect

He tells me I am beautiful.

I rush to the vanity mirror to check myself out.
My nose is slightly crooked, my skin not so fair,
I can see the crow's feet near my eyes. Deep frown
lines make it look as if I am angry all the time.

bare oak
a clinging ivy hides
the bald spots

— Mona Bedi

haibun, tanka-prose and gembun

vows of marriage are never to be broken ...

lonely winter
wind bells
bells in the wind
I look up to see
if it's you

— Mona Bedi

haibun, tanka-prose and gembun

A Beginning

A framed painting (acrylic on canvas) suddenly comes crashing down on the floor and the glass splinters. I am shaken and upset. I hadn't asked the person at the frame shop to put glass. He did it on his own, covering the painting with cheap glass, thus ruining its appearance and effect.

Done in various shades of brown, primarily burnt and raw umber, red, black and silver-white, it is a vibrant painting of a cascading waterfall and two canopied boats.

After cleaning up the mess on the floor and mopping it several times, I put the painting away safely on a chair under the staircase. Some broken pieces of glass are still entrenched inside the frame. Four days later, I request my gardener to help me remove the broken glass that remains wedged in the frame grooves. As he does this for me most willingly, I watch over him, telling him to be cautious and not hurt himself. He laughs and says that I mustn't be anxious for him.

After the job is done, the gardener asks me with a shy smile, 'Your painting?'

'No, this is by an artist from Vietnam. I had visited his studio when we went to the city of Hội An.

'Vietnam? Hmm ... Africa?'

'Southeast Asia.'

haibun and tanka-prose & gembun

‘Oh ... sorry! I also do some sketching ... portraits.
But all this gardening work in different houses ...
my mind gets disturbed.’ (He uses the words ‘mind’
and ‘disturbed’ in English while the rest of the
conversation is in Hindi.)

‘I know that you draw. But you have never showed
me your sketches.’

‘Next time,’ he says, beaming.

jigsaw pieces ...
my son rolls out
chapatis

— Priti Aisola

haibun, tanka-prose and gembun

Feather Dusting

Another sibling has passed. My sister and I meet
to clean out his sparsely furnished apartment.
What's left of the family albums we children used
to rummage through for school projects, unexpectedly
discovered. On one of the black pages, the black
and white photo of our parents cutting their wedding
cake. Two hands joined around one knife.

sharp
red tacks in random order
on the cork-board

— Tish Davis

36th
indianKUKAI

Namaste! Hello!

indianKUKAI has been playing an important role for almost a decade now - of exploring, promoting, enjoying and sinking deeper into the intricacies of this beautiful art form, i.e haiku.

In December 2021, we conducted the 36th edition of indianKUKAI and the results were announced on 6th January 2022.

The theme for this edition was "the year passes", and we are very happy to say we had over a 100 entries from all over the world.

The winner is CARMELA MARINO with 26 points!

winter solstice
I become a memory
in every photo

— Carmela Marino

36th
indianKUKAI

In 2nd place is EDUARD TARA with 18 points!

snowflakes
day by day a pine twig
gathers more light

— Eduard Tara

In 3rd place is SANJUKTAA ASOPA with 17 points!

the white pages
of last year's diary ...
my stillborn poems

—Sanjuktaa Asopa

In 4th place is MONA BEDI with 16 points!

year after year
outside my window
the same sky

— Mona Bedi

36th
indianKUKAI

In 5th place is ARIE DE KLUIJVER with 14 points!

old log
still glowing
your arms around me

— Arie De Kluijver

Congratulations to all our five winners!

Our deepest gratitude to all the poets for their warm-hearted
and enthusiastic participation.

This event was organised by the IndianKUKAI Team, Aparna
Pathak, Kashinath Karmakar and Neena Singh, for Triveni
Haikai India.

36th
indianKUKAI

36th
indianKUKAI



winter solstice
I become a memory
in every photo

CARMELA MARINO

Rome, Italy

FIRST PRIZE

theme: the year passes
December 2021

hosts: Aparna Pathak, Kashinath Karmakar and Neena Singh

organised by

TRIVENI HAIKAI INDIA

flya created by teji sethi

design by Teji Sethi

Dear readers,
thank you for being with us.

See you once again
on 22 February 2022
with many more fine poems
from our contributors.

Team haikuKATHA