

Muse India Vasant Ritu – Spring Issue No. 108 (Mar – Apr 2023)



Indian culture, which draws so much sustenance from nature and her seasons, has woken up to the addictive art form of haikai in a huge way. In this special collection of Japanese short-form of poetry, we have haiku (400-year-old season's poetry), senryu (human idiosyncrasies and inadequacies), tanka (1300-year-old lyrical five-line poetry), haibun (prose embedded with haiku) and haiga (artwork or photo with haiku). Compiled by Kala Ramesh, the acclaimed haikai expert, the feature presents the delightful works of almost 50 practitioners of this art, from India and several other countries. The renowned and highly respected haiku poet from Japan, Emiko Miyashita has sent a message and her impressions on the poems gathered for this feature. Glide blissfully into the world of haikai.

Muse India Haikai Special



A highlight of this Issue is the special feature on haiku and other Japanese short-form poetry, curated by Kala Ramesh. She says in her editorial, “Haikai has grown in leaps and bounds in the last decade and its brevity, succinctness and naturalness are the strengths that keep poets firmly in captivity! ... Haiku is about seasons and nature in constant flux and multi-dimensional. And it strikes at the truth of our existence.” Works of almost 50 practitioners of this art are featured. (*FEATURE*)

Editorial – GSP Rao

Dear members, friends and literature lovers,
Greetings of the season! I hope all of you are enjoying the Varsha Ritu that has set in earnestly all over India—perhaps more earnestly in some states of North India than what one would like!
Haikai is in special focus in this Issue of *Muse India*. Haiku is known for its aesthetic elegance and conciseness and has captured the imagination of poets across the world. It encapsulates the emotional response to a happening or experience of the poet - a feeling that could be any of the navarasas of Indian tradition, from wonder (adbhuta) to sorrow (karuna), from delight (sringara) to laughter (hasya). In its brevity, a haiku is suggestive and leaves much to the imagination of the reader.

*winter evening
the holes in the clouds
fill with stars*

(William Hart, USA)

Reactions to a haiku would have several variations based on the reader's experience in life and sensibility. Originating in Japan in the 17th century, the modern haiku gained wide popularity, especially after the great master Matsuo Basho elevated it to a refined and conscious art with his work. As it spread across the globe to different cultures, it shed its original rigidity of form and structure and adopted nuances of different languages. However, it retained its popular 3-line form (there are two-line and one-line haiku too), precision, and essential focus on nature and life.

Gurudev Tagore was charmed by haiku and said, “They reveal the control over the human emotions. However, they are never short on aesthetic sensibility.

Their sense of aesthetics is marked by deep appreciation yet there is a mastery over expression”. (*Japan Jatri*, 1916 as quoted by Dr Amrit Sen in his article, *Muse India* Issue 37, May-Jun 2011) Gurudev composed a short verse:

*The mist tries
To capture the morning
In a foolish persistence.*

Even the great Tamil poet, Subramania Bharati was captivated by haiku and translated several Japanese haiku into Tamil. Today, haiku is written in almost all the Indian languages.

Muse India has regularly presented haiku and related Japanese short verses Senryu and Tanka, prose-verse Haibun, and picture-verse Haiga over the years. We have had five special features on haiku and related forms in the past: in Issue 17 (Jan-Feb 2008), Issue 28 (Nov-Dec 2009), Issue 37 (May-Jun 2011), Issue 52 (Nov-Dec 2013) and Issue 65 (Jan-Feb 2016), all presented by the highly energetic and enthusiastic **Kala Ramesh**, our Contributing Editor for Haiku and Short Verse, herself an internationally acclaimed haijin. She returns in this Issue with the feature, “*Muse India* Haikai Special 2023” with a compilation of heart-warming work of almost 50 practitioners of the art, several of them from countries other than India. Commenting on the Indian flavour of this collection, the renowned haijin from Japan, **Emiko Miyashita** says, “With new flowers, new birds, and new food, the works are rich in culture and life. The collection is full of wonder, yet we can easily resonate with the moment.”

Kala Ramesh has instituted the ‘*Muse India* Triveni Award 2023’ and announced the winners. *Muse India* heartily applauds the winners and also places on record its heartfelt thanks to all the haijin who have graciously shared their work. Our special thanks to Kala Ramesh for her painstaking effort and to Emiko Miyashita for her insightful ‘message’ setting the feature's tone

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Editorial Kala Ramesh

My sincerest gratitude to *Muse India* for encouraging haikai literature. Having Japanese short-form poetry showcased in this prestigious literary journal from India is a pleasant feeling.

Surya Rao—the founder of *Muse India*—requested I become the editor of short verses in 2008 and I'm still here! Haikai has grown in leaps and bounds in the last decade and its brevity, succinctness and naturalness are the strengths that keep poets firmly in captivity! We all remain students, for this little poem defies definition! Like I keep saying, artists can never be a master of any art form and haiku is a classic example of this observation. Haiku is about seasons and nature in constant flux and multi-dimensional. And it strikes at the truth of our existence.

This reminds me of Alan Watts's quote where he says, "To my mind, this is beyond all doubt at once the simplest and the most sophisticated form of literature in the world, for the invariable mark of great artistry is artlessness." He adds, "Once again, the art is one of knowing when to stop."

The quality of submissions I received this time was stunningly breathtaking. A huge thank you to every poet featured in this issue.

I'm also excited to disclose that we have introduced the **Muse India Triveni Award 2023** with this issue.

With hands folded in namaskar,
Kala Ramesh

Muse India Triveni Award 2023

Winners

Bryan Rickert
Firdaus Parvez
Jenny Ward Angyal
Milan Rajkumar
Teji Sethi

All these poets have an eclectic, elusive style
that's surprisingly clear and lucid.
Great storytelling.
Enjoy!

**Muse India Triveni Award 2023
Winners**



Bryan Rickert
Belleville, Illinois, USA

knowing
she'll leave someday
I oil the hinges
to avoid the heartbreak
of hearing her go

Firdaus Parvez
Aligarh, India

child bride
the pleats of her saree
come loose



Jenny Ward Angyal
North Carolina, USA

day by day
I watch buds swelling
in my old age
I learn to be present
at the birth of time



**Muse India Triveni Award 2023
Winners**



Milan Rajkumar
Imphal, India

opium cultivation
a gecko sips moonlight
beside me
the burnt hills tell stories
of a lost civilization

Teji Sethi
Bengaluru, India

fading
noon
an
incision
invades
my
silence



Message Emiko Miyashita



Emiko Miyashita (1954-), a renowned haijin from Japan, studied haiku under Dr Akito Arima and Dr Akira Omine, renowned haiku masters of traditional Japanese haiku. She serves as a secretary of the Association of Haiku Poets and is a director of the JAL Foundation, known for the World Children's Haiku Contest. She is a vice-chair of the English-Speaking Union of Japan, where she judges the ESUJ-H haiku. She currently lives in Tokyo.

Her message for this Feature **Tintinnabulation**

A festival, another festival, and more festivals, they are adding deep and colorful shades to the collection, which took me on a virtual trip to India and other places. With new flowers, new birds, and new food, the works are rich in culture and life. Googling to meet them, feeling them close, and sniffing the poetry — *the glitter/ of her nose-pin/ summer sun*. The collection is full of wonder, yet we can easily resonate with the moment — *parched earth/ the clank of another bucket/ joining the queue*. And in this hectic world of unpredictable weather and conflicts, the collection reminds us of a peaceful moment — *golden hour... / the threads on the peepal/ perfectly still*. I am sure all the poets in this collection share this feeling of — *after dinner/ her humming with the sound/ of scrubbing pans!*

Sipping green tea in celebration of this quite cultural and yet universal collection of haiku, haibun, and haiga.
Beautiful!

Deep Bow,
Emiko Miyashita

Vidya Shankar



Open Window

The train pulls into Chennai Central Station, onto a platform swathed in sunlight. With our two-week holiday in Kerala completely washed out by rain, the warmth of the Chennai sun on our skins is just what we need. In a couple of days, we might join the multitude cribbing about the heat.

sambaaram—
on the square coaster
a round stain

Shadow

Next to me, Sowmya's face glows with pride as our school principal leads her mother to the two chairs on the stage. Her mother is the chief guest for this month's inter-house cultural events. She gets to occupy a place of importance on the stage with our principal and address us, the students. Last month, Kalyani's mother was the chief guest. Our principal had introduced her as a very successful businesswoman, someone we girls had to look up to for inspiration. Bertha, who is sitting behind us, leans forward and whispers, "Principal ma'am called my mother yesterday. To invite her to next month's cultural but my mother is travelling to London. She had to decline the invitation."

I look at Sowmya's mother closely. A bright blue saree with vivid pink floral prints, matching chunky jewellery, bright pink lipstick, an embellished jutti in beige, and a beige handbag.

So different from Mother. All of them.

I wish the school would invite Mother someday.

amavasya
the neon lights
everyone sees

Vidya S Venkatramani



drying vadaams -
I let the crows
have a sneak peck

kulhad chai -
I taste the soil
of a different land

Notes: vadaams - bits of spiced rice flour sun-dried and stored.
Used as fried snacks or accompaniments. Vadaam drying is done in
the summer months by the children of the household who keep a
watch on the crows.

kulhad chai - tea in an earthen cup

hillside temple-
a langur and I
share the prasad

exam fever -
ghee lamps burn bright
at the shrine

Friday morning
even the garbage truck
with a dab of Kumkum

Never Black and White

Cousins gather from various parts of the country for a family wedding. The effusive greetings, banter, and non-stop chatter. The intermingling of jasmine scents and coffee aroma. A debate of which parent I have taken after. Bonding over a grand sit-down lunch served on plantain leaves — the crunch of papads and the slurp of payasam. Gifts and phone numbers exchanged with a promise to be in touch. Of course, the highlight –

family photo session
sometimes
I am out of the frame

Vandana Parashar



deep conditioning
she tells her son
not to cry like a girl

even the dough
refuses to rise ...
Indo-Pak match

spilling over
from her balcony
chants of aum

matchmaking
we ask for the boy's
mother's horoscope

Tuyet Van Do



misty eyes —
touch of her hand
saying goodbye

Tish Davis



tintinnabulation ...
only rain dropping
into the beggar's cup

Searching for Indians

“Ohio is rich in American Indian heritage,” I tell my guest from Asia. We grab our cameras and head down the trail.

imagining
ancient tom-toms —
our beating hearts

We descend into the ravine through layers of trees - Maple, Blue Ash, Oak, Shagbark Hickory. Next to an overlook, exposed roots, and granules of dirt freshly creased. Filtered sunlight on dry limestone. Chief Leatherlips once washed in the spring not far from here. On the path, a feather tip, pointing down.

We follow the wash and slip off the trail into the empty stream. Sycamores hug the soil along the base. Instead of dugout canoes, broken pieces are stranded against the rock. Glacial erratics mark phantom tombs. Indian Run Falls is silent. For the first time in ten years, spiders hide in the crevices, dust particles lift off from their strings climbing vertical rungs straight to the top.

backbone
against vertebrae
the coolness of moss

.... Contd

Weary, my guest kicks loose another stone. We decide to look
for arrowheads. Only bear cans.

**

Today I return alone. The weight of last night's rain sends a
boulder plummeting over the waterfall. Somewhere along the
rim of this river, there was once a Wyandott Village whose
Chief signed a treaty with the white man. He was silenced by
his enemies with a hatchet made of stone.

I walk through the trees onto the trail.

under the canopy
raindrops -
Indians on all sides

where two rivers meet
a fawn
leaps

Teji Sethi



it is ...

breast
lesion
the
contorted
margins
of
a
lie

my eyes fixed
on the mammogram
thoughts wander

fading
noon
an
incision
invades
my
silence

surgeon's office
slides mounted with
traces of denial

his
pen
moves
the
elegant
curve
of
C

Award

fading
noon
an
incision
invades
my
silence

Susan Burch



shouting from the rooftops love

hammerhead worm
tunneling through
this depression

geologic era —
it has taken me
a long time
to realize
you're not my
friend

the soft spot
on a fuzzy peach —
sometimes
I'm too sensitive
for my own good

are there
superheroes
among us?
the masked eyes
of a cedar waxwing

hiding
my unhappiness
from everyone
the camouflage
of a tawny frogmouth

Desions, Decisions

So, today is the first day after a terrible migraine. I could walk, which would be healthy, but then I take the risk of it coming back. Or I could not walk, feel better, but also look like a cow.

20-year migraine the skinny me long gone.

Suresh Babu



toddy parlour
the NRI slurs
in his mother tongue

backwater boat race
the slap of oars
on the speeding river

harvest festival
the doorway festooned
with plastic leaves

Jallikattu
a man chasing the bull
chasing the man

Onam sadya
I unfasten the button
on my belly

Tricks

The street dog has the longest tail I have ever seen, and he is very loyal too. He does so many acrobatics with his tail. Sometimes he swings it like the pendulum of an old clock. At other times, he rotates it like a ceiling fan.

tightrope walker
a toddler wrapped
to her belly

Srinivasa Rao Sambangi



post Diwali day
a sweeper carries
the fallen sky

morning breeze
the temple bell drops
a sparrow's feather

morning mist
behind a duck, a duckling
a duckling, a duckling ...

spring morning
the girl next door
prunes the boxwood fence

dentist's walk
cowries on the shore
bare their teeth

Srini



in the lake sandal moon healing her blisters

dawn
in the teashop
milk rises

power cut ...
candle flame dances
to cricket's song

temple pond
the silent prayer
of lotus buds

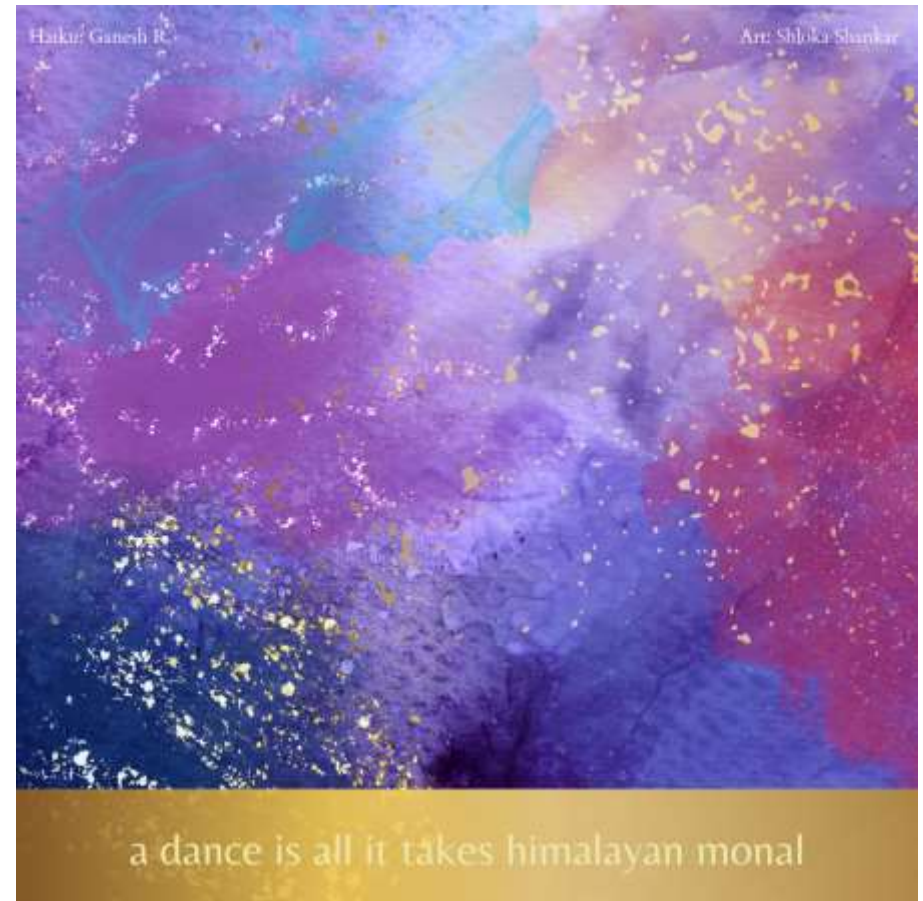
Shloka Shankar



a net for catching my days winter solitude

golden hour ...
the threads on the peepal
perfectly still

haiga



Sanjuktaa Asopa



resigned
to being marginalised ...
wild delphinium

noon wind
the deep brown swoop
of a goshawk

before dusk
a blue-winged Minla
part of the hush

where I choose
to rest my faith ...
stone deity

Rupa Anand



hill town
at every turn
ganne ka juice

early autumn —
in a jar of mango pickle
the taste of summer

temple stones
speak of Vishnu's glory
at Angkor Wat
even the sun's rays bend
in salutation to the Gods

Clockwork

The alarm rings at four. Pump on, the gush of running water fills her ears.

it's dawn —
snores of indifference
dance with the early light

She walks a mile to her job, where she sweeps, and mops.
At midday, lunch is a hot meal, followed later with a cup of tea and rusks.

Going home, the limpid eyes of a stray cow look up, as she gently nudges the papaya skins off her hand. The heavy smell of cheap rum hits her as she enters the one-room quarter. Sitting cross-legged to clean the 25 kilos of wheat grain given free at the ration shop, she sighs.

It's a holiday at work tomorrow, but she will carry the sack of wheat on her head to the chakki to be ground into atta.

dreams —
eggs from the bulbul nest
fall and crack

Reid Hepworth



poised
on the tip of a flowering
crape myrtle
the whippoorwill's lament
distills the night

a marine layer
seeps through the Garry oak
grove
how far must we stretch
to find one another

Undercurrent

deftness
of a belted kingfisher
shimmering blue

Along the shoreline, an early morning mist envelopes the decaying totems. Those that have fallen give birth to new life. Saplings and chicken of the woods sprout out of the moss-carpeted ground. Everything dew-laden.

glinting
between the molluscs
tip of an arrowhead

At the far end of the midden, a spirit bear and her cub walk the beach, pawing the sand, sniffing the air. All is quiet, even the footsteps of the poacher.

circling above
an unkindness
of ravens

Unaware of his footing, the poacher slips on a blanket of seaweed, accidentally pulling the trigger of his rifle. The blast echoes across the beach.

scattered
in the sand
bleached bones

Ravi Kiran

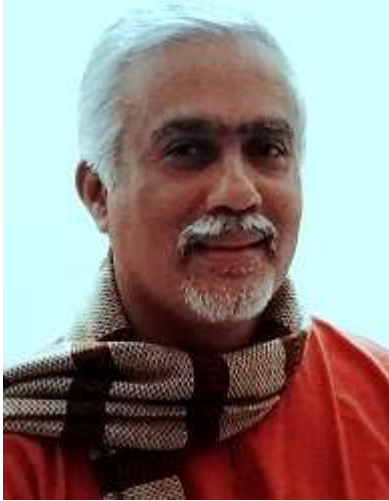


in no hurry
to go anywhere
snake molt

starlings twirl
the confession
slowly unfolds

campaign trail
all that remains
as cattle move on

K Ramesh



twilit evening ...
the farmer switches on
the pump to bathe

April morning ...
a stray cat says meow
to my question

on the way to the river ...
a baby elephant catches up
with the herd

back from the beach
sand lingers on
the labrador's nose

Raamesh Gowri Raghavan



vipassana ...
reaching buddhahood before
my waist shrinks

summer evenings
keeping the breeze out
with the mosquitoes

gudi padwa
the electricity board
takes the day off

thunderclap
under the table
with my dog

Yamagandam

Father's Day 2021 was when he took off his oxygen mask for the first time. The beeping UPS is all that remains of that time, making sure that load shedding did not cut his mortal coils. He is back to his old ways now and thinks of this as a forgettable blip. To me, the image that stays is of a man defeated, struggling to breathe, slumped in a wheelchair when I admitted him, wondering if I would ever see him again.

post covid
I let him win every
argument

Priya Narayanan



gurgling brooks
the late-night chatter
when we cousins meet

amaltas in full bloom
the crow
adds the beauty spot

decoupage -
hiding my sorrow
beneath
layer upon layer
of pretend smiles

Priti Aisola



old fault lines
smiles do not seal
the rift

seven steps
around the sacred fire
miles before they meet

all those books
crammed together
at least
they have spines and
each other to lean on

Release

I am a little less than nine and my baby sister is less than a year old. One day, I carry her in my arms and take her to our dead-end street for some fresh air in the evening. My arms begin to hurt after a while. Placing her on the bonnet of a car while still holding her with one hand, I turn my head to look at something when she makes a sudden move. As she slides down the car side, I manage to break her fall and catch her. I am jolted. She is shocked and then the heart-wrenching crying begins. I take her back home immediately. She calms down but I continue to tremble with fear.

Many years later, I start having this recurring dream: I am holding a baby by its shoulders when it starts to shrink. I tighten my grip. Soon the baby escapes my grip as it shrinks further. As it falls in slow motion, it becomes smaller and smaller till it is like a miniature doll, at which point I stretch my arm and catch it in my extended palm. My first thought is – how am I going to take care of a being so minuscule, so frail? At this point, I always wake up from my dream.

rungless ladder
the bougainvillea
scales a wall

Padma Rajeswari



parched earth
the clank of another bucket
joining the queue

Neena Singh



midsummer rain
the musk of amaltas
on our breath

doll's wedding —
grandma weaves garlands
of marigolds

tidal waves
rise and recede ...
flowing
with the moon
i live life as it comes

Namratha Varadharajan



hail storm
the children place
a bucket outside

Moonmoon Chowdhury



shiuli phool –
dadu's footsteps
lingering in the garden

shiuli phool - Bengali for night jasmine, that blooms in the autumn season

Mona Bedi



the glitter
of her nose-pin
summer sun

temple bells
the dusk softly settles
into night

Milan Rajkumar



stink bean salad
next-door aunt's gossip
in my wife's ears

writer's block –
the sweet and sour taste
of lotus seeds

lofty mountain –
hiding amid Shirui lilies
my forgotten poems

Yaoshang fest
even the poor are clad
in new dresses

crossroad
the decision I have
to take ...
far beyond the border
a glimpse of floodlight

for how long
should I bear this yearning
for you
even the wild orchids begin
to bloom on the old tree

take me
to faraway lands
azure sky
even the wheelchair
moans of my weight

not a soul
except for the lamp and I
in this old hut ...
from the deep valley
her folksongs still haunt

Award

opium cultivation
a gecko sips moonlight
beside me
the burnt hills tell stories
of a lost civilization

Marilyn Humbert



summer heat
the lettuce beds
run to seed ...
together we watch
shadows stretch

Marilyn Ashbaugh



wave after wave longing to belong

root graft
my foster child joins
the family tree

something like heaven robin's egg blue

first butterfly
what matters
and what doesn't

mosquito bite
the randomness
of gunshot

Mallika Chari



roadside hut
a calf and a cow
at rest

after dinner
her humming with the sound
of scrubbing pans

Madhuri Pillai



temple precinct
another Bhagavadgita
to my collection

shortening days
the warmth of the sun
in pumpkin soup

scurrying leaves
street light spills
on cicada songs

Lorraine Haig



harvest moon
field mice return
to the garden shed

garden path
a joey's ears
full of surprise

barn dance
a possum watches
from the rafters

a mining blast
trembles the old stand
of boab trees
since the accident
the tremor in mum's hand

Lorraine A Padden



that sweet thief

I contemplated stealing a tiny black and white blown glass dog from a coffee table in the house a real estate agent wanted to sell my parents when I was seven. Decades later I discover a milky white paw emerging from the folds of a tissue stuffed in a watch box.

dream state
the wishes and fears tucked deep
in our pockets

Note: The title is taken from a Shakespeare sonnet

haiga



Lakshmi Iyer



desert rain ...
hibernating blooms explode
in a riot of colours

off-season —
a game of gillidanda
with a dried mango seed

global warming
a cold war of words trickle
down the glass house

Keiko Izawa



morning birdsong my unfinished lyrics

fallen cherry petals
she leaves us
without a word

waking up to the first light white roses

evening breeze
the maiko's paper fan
pauses

lopsided moon
the shadow
of each weed

Kavitha Sreeraj



Ochre Sky

There are around twenty women working in this unit. The last few weeks have been hectic. All the women are working overtime to complete the wedding orders — sharing lunches, cracking jokes, and leaning on each other, as the bond grows stronger.

The kurtas for dispatch are getting ready. The artisans' hands are busy with Madhubani artwork. Just then a young artisan comes to me with her completed work. In her painting, a woman lifts her goonghat to look up at the sky.

sita kalyanam ...
from every wall of Mithila
the smell of earth

Kanjini Devi



Mettle in Steel

My husband is having a seizure: I dial emergency; receiving all the help possible over the phone. An ambulance is on its way from the nearest town and should arrive in one hour. The ferry does not operate at midnight.

driving
in the dark
L plates

My husband is having a seizure: I dial emergency; the ambulance is on the first ferry over, and as anticipated, unable to make it up our drive. The paramedics carry my husband into my car, then into the ambulance parked at our gate. This time I have enough confidence to follow the ambulance to the local hospital, which is across the harbour, I just about keep up...

hooked up
to oxygen
his shadow

My husband is having a seizure: we are in the middle of a city; two lads from across the street, run over immediately to lift him onto the passenger seat. I thank them through streams of tears whilst ensuring his safety and comfort.

No longer a learner, I attach Navman for the five-hour drive back to our home in the hills of Hokianga. Drifting in and out of consciousness, my husband smiles and says, "We're going to be alright."

knee-deep
in shallow waters
spoonbills

Jenny Ward Angyal



breathing in the birds' awakening

sunlight spilling
down the mountainside
sparrow song

shadow darner ...
the sister
I never had

dragonfly
and its reflection
which is real

unable
to paraphrase it
spider's silk

what if
I could become
transparent
like a glass frog
wholly open to the light

bobolinks
hidden in the orchard
turning
each leaf to song —
what else do I fail to see

Award

day by day
I watch buds swelling
in my old age
I learn to be present
at the birth of time

on my bare toes
a turquoise dragonfly —
I become
less than myself
and so much more

Jenny Fraser



almost dawn
tui notes
rifle the dark

the curve
of a pohutukawa limb
i am the dance

Notes: tui - a native bird of New Zealand
pohutukawa - New Zealand's native seaside tree

way of the wind
through me
the cyclone's tail

spring roundabout
our windscreen
full of wildflowers

family
return to Europe
the blue of distant hills
the emptying
of the bay

a rubbish truck
stops by the kerb
a crisp
autumn breeze
coaxes me to let go

haiga



haiga



Ganesh R



The Wait

a loose thread
I choose
where to belong

As a child, Makar Sankranti was my favourite festival. Preparations for the kite flying season started in October or November of the previous year and entailed making several important decisions, including the quality of the thread we were going to use, the number of kites that needed stocking, creating a playlist of songs to blast from our terrace, and, most importantly, the mouth-watering foods and sweets we would require for the entirety of those two days.

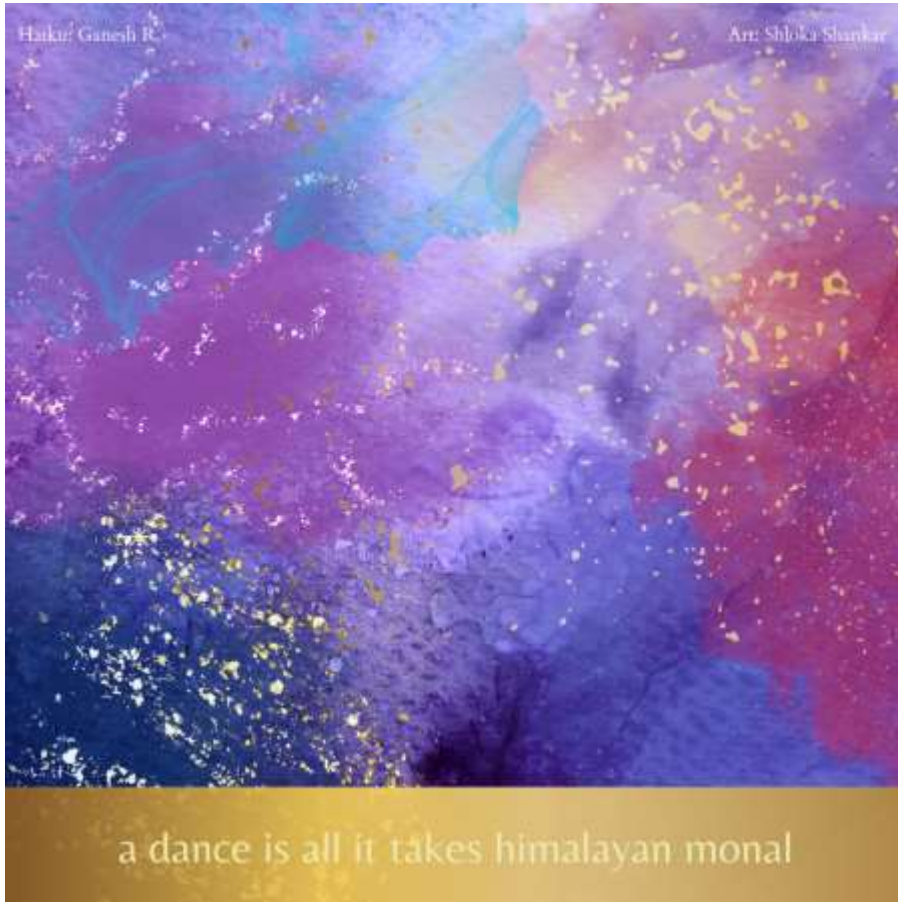
Even in the coldest of winters, when temperatures hovered close to 3 degrees, we were ready for the yearly battle. In multiple layers of clothing, our first kites would be sent up into the sky at 5:00 a.m. It was a futile exercise, as the heavy dew ensured that the kites came down in a soggy heap. The point of this failed attempt was akin to blowing a war horn of sorts. After laying down the marker in our neighbourhood for being the first to scale the sky, we waited with bated breath for sunrise.

Colourful kites in different patterns and sizes dotted the vastness. I used to crane my neck and check the breeze to judge which way the wind was blowing. Armed with medical tape around my fingers and the sharpest of threads, I was ready to take the battle into the aerial enemy camps. Everything was fair game: you could cut the kites of inexperienced fliers, preen your skills unashamedly and shout “vo kata” at the top of your lungs, or jump from terrace to terrace to get the highest vantage point. My stock of kites would eventually dwindle when the opposition increased with time. The hostilities continued until the skies darkened. It was a wrap. My friends and I exchanged scores and licked our wounds. Before retiring to bed, I would vow to myself that I would come back stronger next year.

But things change with increased awareness. Once I realized the amount of injury we were collectively causing the birds by using the sharp manjas, I decided to shelve kite flying for good. Yet the memories linger to this day, fresh as a daisy.

coming of age the barriers I am yet to cross

haiga



Firdaus Parvez



parijaat night blooms with possibilities

tight alley ...
the exposed brickwork
of family ties

rush hour ...
the antiseptic warmth
of a stranger's smile

autumn silhouettes
yet another synonym
for loneliness

shadow puppet
were your stories
false too

in plastic chairs
on a moonlit porch
the dog and I
and only the chonk chonk
chonk of a lone nightjar

it is said
fruit scarred by birds
are the sweetest ...
my heart too has been left
exposed right to its seed

Award

child bride
the pleats of her saree
come loose

Endings

There's nothing beautiful about pigeons fluttering in the fibre dome of a hospital. But they do promise that there's a world outside, away from the stench of pain.

How much harder can life be from here?

after the storm still these shadows still

daddy,
now only a word —
monsoon rain

Origami

a single paper flower, folded, unfolded, then folded again.
permanent creases pressed in by the back of thumbnails until
the will is bent – broken. made to fit and adorn an imitation
world.

a single paper flower nodding in the breeze; scentless and
colourless soul.

child bride
the pleats of her saree
come loose

Debbie Strange



haiga



Debbie's explanation for the reason she split the word "moonlight":

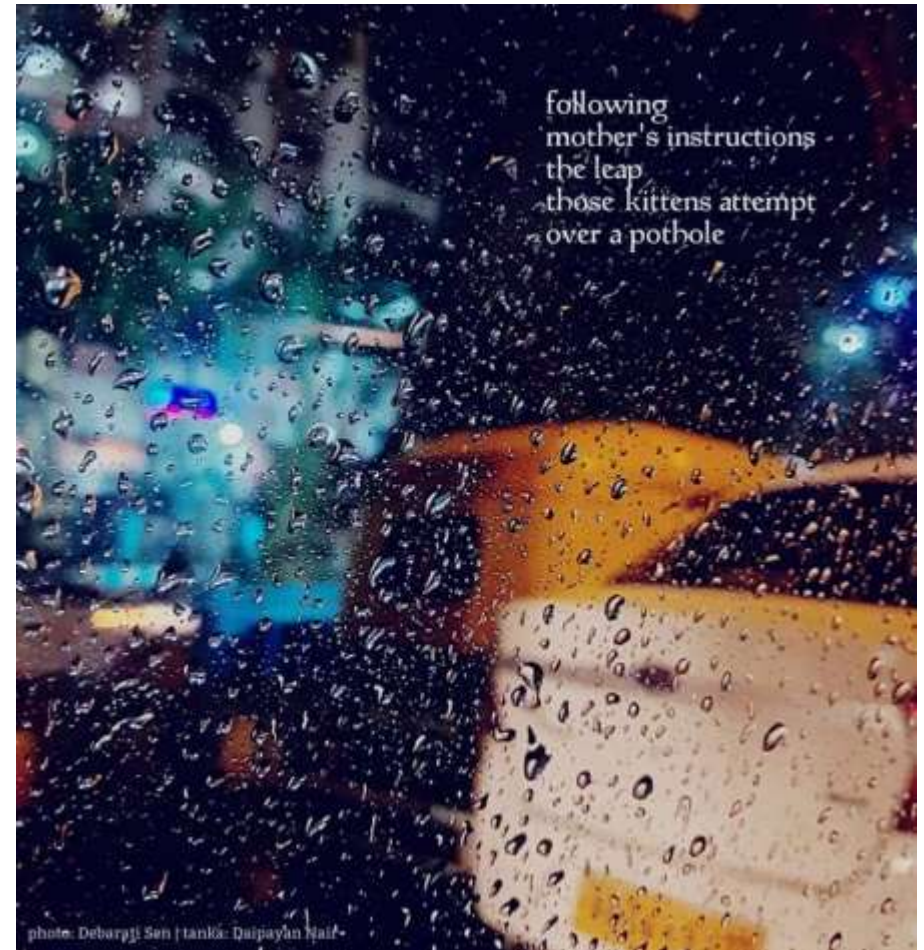
"Moonlight" is one word, but a "long night moon" is the full moon in December near the solstice, and "light pillars" are optical phenomena, so they are two separate images. I have written this one-liner to take advantage of dual-reading:

long night / moon light pillars punctuate / the city skyline
long night moon / light pillars punctuate / the city skyline

Daipayan Nair



haiga



Bryan Rickert



morning sun
through the frost
the moss's green

noisier
in the stream
last night's rain

late autumn
ragged but still
a butterfly!

light snow
on the windowpane
moth dust remains

frozen sunrise
a buck and I exhale
as one

saying
our goodbyes
the sudden
awareness
of the rain

this new penny
losing its shine
how long
till she gets tired
of loving me

Award

knowing
she'll leave someday
I oil the hinges
to avoid the heartbreak
of hearing her go

in spite
of the warnings
I fly
too close to you
becoming Icarus

a crow
through barren trees
never a time
when melancholy
didn't follow me

Barbara A Taylor



brakes on!
a clutch of ducklings
makes it to safety

spring breeze
freesia scents smother
the smell of decay

our universe
an atlas of
human suffering...
a joey skips back
into mama's pouch

from the ridge
 kookaburras call
but since you left us
I have forgotten
how to laugh

Baisali Chatterjee Dutt



mum's wedding sari —
the rustle of the night sky
in every step

the winds bring news
of the coming rains...
is that why the trees dance

fisherwomen
washing their saris...
the warp and weft of water

your wedding invite
from a decade ago...
why you sent it
— I don't know —
why I kept it

midnight bazaar
on the beach
the necklace
you buy me
smells of your sea-kissed skin

Arvinder Kaur



dragonflies my grandson holds sunshine on a thread

a family karaoke
of her favourite songs
mother's day

Antara Roy



floral tablecloth
salt spilt over the deep red roses

Anju Kishore



vishukkani
the kitchen garden
appa left me

scissor heat
crunch of watermelon
in the cow's mouth

margazhi mist
temple bells shaking
the dark out of darkness

Seasons

The air is bursting with the whoops of children. Almost every terrace in the colony is alive. Kites of all sizes and colours compete for a slice of the sky. Soaring, darting, tottering, tumbling, but jerking back to position under deft hands, unseen in the hullabaloo.

election news

A scramble and hushed voices crawl towards the parapet. A strategic pause later, a stone tied to a string is flung into the air across the thread of the kite flown from the next building. The steadily rising newspaper contraption held together with the midrib of a coconut frond, is yanked downwards, the thread cut and pulled to capture the kite.

the rolling dice

Meanwhile, a flamboyant kite with a fancy tail is ruling the sky with its suspected manja thread. The air has subsided into an uneasy silence. The dandy flaunts its flight until sunset mutes all colours.

of snakes and ladders

Alaka Yeravadekar



at breakfast
grandpa eagerly awaits
yesterday's crossword answers

a gentle tap
on my shoulder
falling leaf

Akila G



haiga



haiga



MUSE INDIA TRIVENI AWARD 2023

knowing
she'll leave someday
I oil the hinges
to avoid the heartbreak
of hearing her go

Bryan Rickert

Belleville, Illinois, USA

Surya Rao

Managing Editor, Muse India

Kala Ramesh

Director, Triveni Haikai India

MUSE INDIA TRIVENI AWARD 2023

child bride
the pleats of her saree
come loose

Firdaus Parvez

Aligarh, INDIA

Surya Rao

Managing Editor, Muse India

Kala Ramesh

Director, Triveni Haikai India

MUSE INDIA TRIVENI AWARD 2023

day by day
I watch buds swelling
in my old age
I learn to be present
at the birth of time

Jenny Ward Angyal

North Carolina, USA

Surya Rao

Managing Editor, Muse India

Kala Ramesh

Director, Triveni Haikai India

MUSE INDIA TRIVENI AWARD 2023

opium cultivation
a gecko sips moonlight
beside me
the burnt hills tell stories
of a lost civilization

Milan Rajkumar

Imphal, India

Surya Rao

Managing Editor, Muse India

Kala Ramesh

Director, Triveni Haikai India

MUSE INDIA TRIVENI AWARD 2023

fading
noon
an
incision
invades
my
silence

Teji Sethi

Bengaluru, India

Surya Rao

Managing Editor, Muse India

Kala Ramesh

Director, Triveni Haikai India