

haikuKATHA

unfolding the story within



Milind Mulick

Issue 40 February 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 40
January 2025

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

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

Our heartfelt thanks to:

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Xenia Tran, and Srinivasa Rao Sambangi,

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

Milind Mulick
for his brilliant watercolour painting,

our contributors
for sharing their poems.

Editors' Choice Commentary: Ashish Narain
Editor's Choice: *half moon* by Rupa Anand

half moon the tingle of a phantom breast

Rupa Anand

I picked this poem for the startling juxtaposition of images in the poem- one visual and one of sensation. In doing so it conveys a sense of vulnerability with amazing delicateness and without any recourse to sentimentality. It leaves space for the reader to explore their own feelings with little intrusion by the poet.

Consider the first two words. The moon is revered in almost all cultures for its beauty. In Greek and Roman mythology, it was represented as a goddess, the embodiment of feminine energy. The crescent moon symbolizes fertility and changing seasons.

The second half of the monoku then talks about the change- the tingle of an amputated breast. This is a well-known medical phenomenon and immediately leads the reader to think of cancer. Breast cancer affects an estimated 2.3 million women each year according to the WHO, even those with no specific risk factors. Amputation may be a solution, but I can only imagine the scars it leaves behind, both physical and emotional.

Read together, the haiku conveys a deep sense of loss. One can be grateful for the medical advancement which allows remedy, but not without paying a cost. We are left to question how a random event can so change lives, our very sense of self. How small we are and how exposed.

And yet, as the half-moon, perhaps we have within us the capability to recover and heal and become whole again with time. For me, there is also an irony the poem depicts so well. The very universe that threatens our existence with its whims, is also where we turn to for solace when faced with problems far beyond our control.

This is a truly remarkable poem that opens up so many feelings and a whirlwind of thoughts in just eight carefully chosen words. Many congratulations to Rupa!

Triveni Haikai India
at the Panorama International Literature Festival 2025
January 1 to 14 February!

Ephemeris – an animated haiga film by Sankara Jayanth Sudanagunta on 22 January 2025

Haiku Beckons – showcased children’s haiku on 8th February 2025

The Language of Water – the mingling of mainstream poetry and haibun - on 9th February, with Billie Dee’s review of the reading.

Ephemeris – an animated haiga film by Sankara Jayanth Sudanagunta 22 January 2025

'Ephemeris' (a table giving the calculated positions of a celestial object at regular intervals throughout a period) is an animated short film made in the spirit of haiga, a Japanese art form that combines paintings with haiku to create a rich experience of the haikai aesthetics. The film, made by **Sankara Jayanth Sudanagunta**, explores themes of constant change, uncertainty, longing, perspective and acceptance.

This short film was presented at the Panorama International Arts & Literature Festival 2025 by the Writers Capital Foundation in a 30-minute session by the collaborating poets who spoke about their haiku, their haikai spirit and the like. A sincere *thank you* to Kala for leading the efforts to get this presented in this festival and to Preeth Padmanabhan Nambiar for accepting the proposal to do this presentation.

The contributing poets were: **Alan Summers, Debbie Strange, Vandana Parashar, Ravi Kiran, John Stevenson, Ron Moss and Kala Ramesh.**

The session can be seen on YouTube at this link
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TLcogrm8Xhs&t=2030s>
and the poems are as below

a view
from the graffiti ...
train window

Alan Summers

marsh dusk
we pass through light
into shadow

Debbie Strange

Ephemeris – an animated haiga film
by Sankara Jayanth Sudanagunta 22 January 2025

away from home
the first snow slips off
a bare branch

Vandana Parashar

muddy waters a lotus perfumes the night

Ravi Kiran

the moon's path
and my path
home

John Stevenson

parting clouds
trees
festive with raindrops

Kala Ramesh

almost home . . .
the sound of moonlight
in a breaking wave

Ron C. Moss

Written by **Sankara Jayanth Sudanagunta**

Haiku Beckons
showcased children's haiku
8th February 2025

Haiku Beckons was an hour-long program dedicated to reading of haiku by children, at the Panorama International Literature Festival on 8th February, 2025. The panel of nine children, in the age group of 10-15 years old, read five haiku each written by them.

While the theme of this year's festival was 'Water' an exception was made for this session alone with the objective to encourage these young budding haikai. However, a sincere attempt was made by these children to inter-connect their respective sets of haiku so that the reading would be as fluid as water which was well received and appreciated. Each of them presented haiku on a particular theme. Presented below is a snapshot of each poet and one haiku written and read by them

The reading session opened with **Nairithi Konduru**, the youngest on the panel, who read her haiku on the theme of childhood:

cherry blossoms
the butterfly's flight
on a cold night

Vivan Agrawal on the theme of winter ended his set and the season with the haiku:

Sankranti
a box of sweets
for the sugar ants too

Harshavardhan Joshi, extended the theme of winter to all seasons with his set ending it with:

calling my parents
... only the waves
respond

Haiku Beckons
showcased children's haiku
8th February 2025

Noureen K Ajmal, carried forward the theme of all seasons by reading her set of haiku without naming them and urging the audience to guess the season.

mango season
our house
is filled with pickles

From the theme of seasons, the next poet **Anwitha Sudeep** stepped into the theme of senses – our five senses – with her set.

my fingers curve
around the tip of my pencil
unknown test

Aadithya Sreeraj, with his set of haiku of subtle humour, presented senryu.

holiday morning —
mom pours out
coffee and gossip

Hansini Akila Kartik carried forward the spirit of senryu with her haiku celebrating her moments of experiences.

white sleeveless shirt –
my arms seem to like
the dark side

Carrying forward the celebration, **Karthik C Setti** presented his set of haiku that has won positions in various contests including one submission that did not win but deserves to be celebrated too.

Haiku Beckons
showcased children's haiku
8th February 2025

new house
between my clothes
a sliver of memory

Ishita Manhas, the last poet of the panel, summed up the session. Though they all picked up a theme, the spirit of haiku is to write from the heart celebrating every moment, every experience.

splashing waves ...
little crabs crawl
out of the sand

The complete video of this reading is available on YouTube on Writer's Capital Foundation's channel in the name of Haiku Beckons.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4EKMSAhGpg&t=1s>

The evening promised to be the beginning of a journey for these children, their mentors and for haiku. The session ended with a Q & A between Kala Ramesh, the curator of this session and G. Akila the children's mentor about the latter's journey of teaching haiku to children and her future plans. With children being natural adapters of '*makoto*' with their close association with themselves and their surroundings, all they need is little nudge from senior and experienced haikai to keep reading and writing and to explore.

Overall, it was a wonderful session and a satisfying one giving the audience a glimpse of places haiku could travel — through the eyes of children.

Written by **Akila G.**

The Language of Water the mingling of mainstream poetry and haibun 9th February

In what was probably a first, haibun and free verse poets came together on 9 February 2025 to read their work on the theme *The Language of Water* at a live session conceptualized and curated by Kala Ramesh for the Panorama International Literature Festival 2025, the signature program of The Writer's Capital International. The panel consisted of free verse poets: **Arundhathi Subramaniam (India & USA) and Anita Nahal (USA)**, and haibuneers: **C.X.Turner (UK), Firdaus Parvez (India), Shalini Pattabiraman (Scotland), Vidya Shankar (India), and Kala Ramesh (India)**.

The theme was so versatile and inclusive that the writers could interpret it in multiple ways, using water sometimes as a metaphor for life's experiences and at other times as a medium to express emotions. As the reading progressed, it became increasingly evident that the way poetry connects was more important than where the poet came from or their play of language, form, and musicality. Mainstream poetry was no longer a distinction.

Another interesting feature of the session was a commentary on the poems by Billie Dee, former Poet Laureate of the U.S. National Library Service. Poets usually do not receive insightful impressions of their work, but Billie Dee's astute observations at the end were meaningful, giving writers pointers to think more deeply about craft and the use of language.

Poetry editor Billie Dee spoke of how language can either unfold or condense what one sees and how one perceives it. She emphasized the use of evocative imagery, rhythmic language, and subtle repetition to create a rich, resonant musicality. Referring to Luci's beautifully lyrical haibun to demonstrate the musicality embedded in it, she also pointed out how a single word can be stretched into layered writing, adding nuance and meaning — such as *drift*, which connects the body of water, the body of a person, and the body of the landscape.

The Language of Water
the mingling of mainstream poetry and haibun
9th February

In this reading, Billie observed there was a particular focus on the interplay of sound and meaning, where nature, longing, and historical memory merged to evoke deep emotional responses. Stating that raw emotion, such as lament, did not need embellishments, she went on to mention that all the poems presented had a distinct ‘Velcro’ quality — how the sensory details and carefully layered metaphors piqued curiosity, rendered each piece both immediate and lingering, and left a profound impact on the audience. Billie was particularly impressed by the specificity of the *keyhole* in Arundhathi's poem that made it accessible to the audience. Her overall statement was an appreciation for poems that were as engaging as they were thought-provoking.

The session received positive feedback and appreciation from the audience. Members of the audience not only enjoyed the reading but also hoped for more such sessions in the future.

Link to the recording: <https://www.youtube.com/live/K5bqyxyKm7Y>

Written by **Vidya Shankar**

Poetry Pea's curated session on Haiku Futures – India

The *Poetry Pea Podcast*, expertly led by **Patricia McGuire** and **Alex Massey**, collaborated with eleven talented haikai poets of Triveni Haikai India to showcase an enriching episode on the diversity and richness of the Indian haikai community.

The episode, *Haiku Futures - India*, was recorded and hosted by Alex Massey on 20 July 2024. This special episode began with a brief introduction of the poets and their remarkable work in haikai poetry. This was followed by a few thought-provoking questions about Triveni Haikai India, a website meticulously designed by Rohan Kevin Broach, under the able guidance of its conceptualiser, Kala Ramesh. The conversation delved into the tireless efforts of Kala Ramesh, the founder and director of the organisation, its inception, aims and goals. The discussion also highlighted its engaging features such as thinkALONG!, open sky :: SAMVAAD, HAIKUsutradhar, Tanka Take Home, The Haibun Gallery, triveni spotlight, Triveni Calendar and more, and how Triveni Haikai India brings together poets from India, Japan and the rest of the world to savour the sweet taste of the meeting of three sacred rivers, TRIVENI.

Not only this, the poets read out their poignant poems, published and unpublished, so effortlessly as if scattering stars into space. The poems explored the timeless essence of life, woven from memories, dreams, longings, and moments of abundance and joy. Through their verses, each poet revealed not a definitive truth, but a deeply personal discovery – the unique path that resonates with their souls.

What was fascinating was the warmth and camaraderie throughout the episode, which created a sense of connection and inclusivity among the poets. This special episode not only celebrated the thriving Indian haikai community but also promoted a cross-cultural exchange and fostered a deeper understanding and appreciation of this unique art form.

The participating poets were: **Muskaan Ahuja, Neha R. Krishna, Iqra Raza, Sankara Jayanth Sudanagunta, Srini, Saumya Bansal, Shreya Narang, Surashree Ulhas Joshi, Tanvi Nishchal, Raghav Prashant Sundar and Namratha Varadharajan.**

Link: <https://youtu.be/oOaJk8nRNSo>

Written by **Muskaan Ahuja**

Poetry Pea's curated session on Haiku Futures – India



Triveni Haikai India
at Hyderabad Literature Festival
January 2024

Poetry in (e)motion

The Hyderabad Literary Festival was held at Sattva Knowledge City, Hitech City, from 26th January to 28th January. This edition of the Hyderabad Literary Festival (HLF) marked a significant milestone by introducing Haiku, Haibun, Senryu and Tanka poetry into its esteemed Kaavya Dhaara segment. When Kala, our mentor messaged the Haijin from Hyderabad — **Priti Aisola, Ravi Kiran, Srinivas Sambangi, Sankara Jayanth, Akila GopalaKrishnan, and me (Kavitha Sreeraj)**— about the Kaavya Dhaara event, we didn't think twice before saying yes to the opportunity! Things moved at a very fast pace after that.

On the morning of 28th January, we reached the venue, even though Kaavya Dhaara was scheduled for the afternoon. Kala Ramesh, aka Masterji, as we all lovingly call her, and Anita MuktaaShourya, a renowned classical dancer, were performing a 'Saath Sangat' —interwoven with verse and dance. We took our seats, eager to participate in this experience as audience.

When Kala started reading her haiku, silence filled the hall. Her voice was meditative — it felt as if we were breathing her poems in the stillness around us. Before we could recover from the trance of her reading, we were transported to a river of emotions through danseuse Anita MuktaaShourya's Mohiniyattam. At one point, the audience was teary-eyed as she depicted the lament of a mother. As the curtains fell, we didn't want the HAIKUcharades to end.

After this stunning performance, we moved to our venue for Kaavya Dhaara, where we were scheduled to read our work. The reading took place in an open space surrounded by water. Kala introduced the form to the audience, and each of us read different Japanese short forms of poetry. Each one of us conveyed profound emotions and imagery within the brevity of the forms. We also introduced the audience to different forms, their relevance and adaptation in the Indian context through conversation and recitation.

Triveni Haikai India
at Hyderabad Literature Festival
January 2024

My set included haiku inspired by my childhood memories, along with a few lingual references. I also read my first haibun, which is very dear to me. Priti Aisola recited her tanka and one tanka prose. They were deep and rich with her experiences. The pivot in her tanka brought in an element of irony, as well as questions and/or reflections. Akila read haiku that formed a travelogue. We travelled along with her from the trip preparations to a nature trek, and finally, to the memories and wishes she carried back.

Then it was Kala's turn to read her haibun. One of her pieces explored human idiosyncrasies, bulldozing every generation with facts — or rather, with what is considered common sense. Her delivery held the audience mesmerized. Next up was Srinivas Sambangi, whose hilarious take on real-life situations shone through his haiku. His keen observations and ability to find humour even in tough situations were reflected in his senryu.

Sankara's haiku revolved around his sharp observations of natural elements. The depth of his insights, presented in a light hearted way, struck a chord with the audience. Ravi began with his award-winning haiku before moving on to delight us with haiku inspired by Bollywood romance. His occasional crooning between lines added flavour to his reading. He ended his set with some Hyderabadi zaika (flavour) infused into his haiku.

After that, we had a round robin, with each of us reading one senryu, ending Kaavya Dhaara on a high note. All in all it was a beautiful experience — for both the readers and the audience.

Written by **Kavitha Sreeraj**

Triveni Haikai India
at ArtMantram's Glass House Festival of Poetry Bengaluru
March 2024

Poets from Triveni Haikai India introduced Japanese short-form poetry to ArtMantram's Glass House Festival of Poetry held over two days in March 2024 at the Bangalore International Centre.

'*half of what I see*', the hour-long reading of haikai poetry by **Kala Ramesh, Anju Kishore, Kavita Ratna, Namratha Varadharajan, Shloka Shankar, Teji Sethi, Vani Satyanarayana, and Vinay Leo R** generated much interest among the audience. The reading was covered in Praja Vani, a leading Kannada newspaper.

Kala Ramesh's three-hour haiku workshop, '*the long and short of haiku*' elaborating the basics of the form was well-attended. Her collaborative performance with Mohiniyattam danseuse **Anita MuktaaShourya** titled '*Unknown Leaf*' highlighted the nuances of both forms of art to an enthralled audience. Kala first read out a set of haiku from which Anita chose one to express in the form of dance. The audience was then asked to identify the haiku to which Anita danced before Kala moved to the next set of haiku.

Anju Kishore's poetry film, '*Finding You*' was showcased in the 'Poetry on Film' segment of the festival curated by Dr Somrita Urni Ganguly. In the GHF 2024 poetry contests, Trivenians swept up major awards. Teji Sethi won the second place in the general poetry contest. In the 'The Charting Rainbows Haiku Contest' blind-judged by Shobhana Kumar and Geethanjali Rajan, the first place was won by Anju Kishore, the second by Baisali Chatterjee Dutt, and the third by Vandana Parashar. The prizes were given away by three-time Grammy Award winner, Ricky Kej.

Written by **Anju Kishore**

Triveni Haikai India
at ArtMantram's Glass House Festival of Poetry Bengaluru
March 2024



ನಡೆಯುತ್ತಿತ್ತು. ಕತ್ತಲಾಗಿದ್ದರಿಂದ ಕಾರ್ಮಿಕರು ಅರ್ಧದಲ್ಲೇ ಬಿದ್ದರು' ಎಂದು ಪ್ರತ್ಯಕ್ಷದರ್ಶಿ ಕಬಡ್ಡಿ ವಿಜೆ ತಿಳಿಸಿದರು.

ಕಾವ್ಯ ಉತ್ಸವ ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಅಂತರರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಕೇಂದ್ರ (ಬಿಬಿಸಿ)ದಲ್ಲಿ ಭಾನುವಾರ ಆರ್ಟ್ ಮಂತ್ರಂ ಆಯೋಜಿಸಿದ್ದ 'ಪಾಫ್ ಆಫ್ ವಾಟ್ ಐ ಸೀ' ಗ್ಲಾಸ್ ಹೌಸ್ ಫೆಸ್ಟಿವಲ್ ಆಫ್ ಪೋಯಿಟ್ರಿ-2024ರಲ್ಲಿ (ಎಡದಿಂದ) ನಮ್ಮತಾ ವರದರಾಜನ್, ಅಂಜು ಕಿಶೋರ್, ಕಲಾ ರಮೇಶ್, ತೇಜಿ ಸೇಥಿ, ವಾಣಿ ಸತ್ಯನಾರಾಯಣ, ವಿನಯ್ ಲಿಯೋ ಆರ್., ಕವಿತಾ ರತ್ನ ಪಾಲ್ಗೊಂಡಿದ್ದರು - ಪ್ರಜಾವಾಣಿ ಚಿತ್ರ

ತಾಳೆ ಪಂಚಮಾಸ ರಾಯ ಬಸವ (75) ನಿಧನ ಆ ಕಾಯಿ ಮೃತಕ ಇವರು ಗಿಯೂ ರಾ ಜಮೀನು 3ಕ್ಕೆ ಅ ಎಂದು ತಿಳಿಸಿವೆ

Triveni Haikai India
at The Chandigarh Rotary Club
November 2024

It was indeed a magical morning at Rotary Club of Chandigarh with the *Haiku Horizons* program on 29th November 2024. The synthesis of haikai and Bharatanatyam dance was an amazing experience for the audience.

After our mentor and widely known haijin, Kala Ramesh, explained the art of haiku, the poets —**Vandana Parashar, Muskaan Ahuja, Arvinder Kaur, Kashiana Singh, Neena Singh** as well as **Kala Ramesh** herself, read their poems.

Mughda Asnikar, a senior disciple of the famous Bharatanatyam dancer from Pune, Dr. Sucheta Chapekar, added charm to the reading and entranced the viewers with her spellbinding abhinaya. The talented poets captured fleeting moments through the reading of their haiku, tanka and haibun with elegance and beauty.

Through the delicate lens of these talented poets, the audience was spellbound to explore the essence of life, its impermanence, and its quiet beauty. The haiku reading and dance inspired, soothed, and connected all Rotarians and guests with the subtleties of human experience.

The program can be viewed and enjoyed here:
<https://youtu.be/NmhEQzfSmHc?si=ufBjyv7btO1XLeqI>

On 28th November, a morning session on the art of haiku was organised by the Department of English & Cultural Studies, Panjab University for post graduate and research scholars. It was a great learning for the students and faculty who took a keen interest in Kala's interesting presentation.

Both these programs were most tastefully organised by well-known haijin Neena Singh.

Report written by **Neena Singh**

Triveni Haikai India
at Chandigarh Rotary Club, November 2024



Triveni Haikai India
at the Department of English and Cultural Studies
Panjab University
November 2024



Triveni Haikai India
at Chandigarh Rotary Club
November 2024



Triveni Haikai India at The Wise Owl 'Literary Soiree' Chandigarh November 2024

Where poetry lingers long after the words have been spoken. Organised by the editor, **Rachna Singh**

The Wise Owl's journey of weaving literature and art took a luminous turn on November 28th, as poetry danced and movement spoke. Our '*Literary Soirée*' with **Kala Ramesh**, a renowned, award-winning haiku exponent, was a departure from the usual —a celebration where words found wings in rhythm, and silence was stitched with meaning.

Kala Ramesh, a maestro of haiku and tanka, lent her voice to Japanese genre, her verses rippling like pebbles in a still pond. As her poetry unfolded, Bharatnatyam dancer Mugdha Asnikar stepped into its soul, translating syllables into motion, and breath into grace. The air shimmered with an unspoken harmony, a duet of cadence and movement.

HAIKUcharades, an innovative idea conceptualised by Kala Ramesh, took centre stage, where poetry turned into a game, revealing that even the briefest verse could hold boundless worlds. But the heart of the evening was a conversation with Kala Ramesh —a trained classical vocalist who found in haiku the rhythm of breath, the quiet resonance of the unsaid. She spoke of transitions, of 'cuts', of creativity shaped by silence, of how poetry listens before it speaks.

The evening unfolded like a verse — each moment a delicate brushstroke on the canvas of memory. The Wise Owl '*Literary Soirée*' was not just an event but an experience, a fleeting yet eternal waltz between word and movement. We have shared this enchanting conversation with Kala Ramesh on The Wise Owl YouTube channel and we invite our viewers and listeners to step into its echo, where poetry lingers long after the words have been spoken.

Report written by **Rachna Singh**

Triveni Haikai India
at The Wise Owl 'Literary Soiree' Chandigarh November 2024



haiku

chimneys breathe
into the night
mulled wine

Alfred Booth

broken nib
sharpening my poem
to make a point

Baisali Chatterjee Dutt

rainy day
i still don't break
the piggy

Baisali Chatterjee Dutt

rivulets —
she runs after the lambs
the wind, after her

Baisali Chatterjee Dutt

haiku

ignoring the news
a tabby tangled
in yarn

Billie Dee

after marriage ...
under the stack of sarees
the old jeans

Devoshruti Mandal

separating
wheat from chaff
online dating

Jennifer Gurney

speaking softly
the wind, the trees
a pine-lit dawn

Joanna Ashwell

haiku

frosted
upon my window
last night's leaf

Joanna Ashwell

incessant rainfall
I am here alone
yet so much song

Joanna Ashwell

class silent ...
the presence of
his absence

K. Ramesh

home-coming ...
I get off the auto to
walk the last stretch

K. Ramesh

haiku

an old melody
in the whistle of pines
crazy autumn

Kalyanee Arandhara

spring mist
the incoming tide
lifts an empty boat

Kanjini Devi

winter seclusion
weight of the cat's head
on my arm

Keiko Izawa

the snow and clouds
becoming one ...
first fuji

Keiko Izawa

haiku

broken fiddle —
a baby spider climbs up
on the octaves

Lakshmi Iyer

hot dry wind
an echidna's hole
filling with dust

Lorraine Haig

winter pruning
the rose bush draws
first blood

Martin Duguay

stormy night
the rage
of wind chimes

Padma Rajeswari

haiku

arriving warblers —
and me, in an old
band tee-shirt

paul m.

Makara Sankranti
bobbing kites find
pieces of sky

Rashmi VeSa

park trees
rustling a wind-song
morning walk

Rupa Anand

first Lohri
a mustard flower tucked
into her cradle

Sandip Chauhan

haiku

spring drizzle ...
the faint clink of bangles
beneath the trees

Sandip Chauhan

threshing ...
the pestle's thud deepens
into the dusk

Sandip Chauhan

short day —
darkness settles
nothing

Sherry Reniker

rain
in the mountains
a long lullaby

Srini

haiku

old age home
a middle-aged couple
adopts a parent

Srini

deserted train track
a group of millipedes
going south

Srinivasa Rao Sambangi

one-line haiku

the day unturning what will be won't black box

Alan Summers

dawn wind a leaf catching light

C.X. Turner

a long note on a held breath a songbird at daybreak

Kala Ramesh

sleep deprivation the volume of a full moon

Kanjini Devi

mustard flowers colouring my palette deepening greys

Rashmi VeSa

half-moon the tingle of a phantom breast

Rupa Anand

a few nips and tucks altered autumn

sanjuktaa asopa

concrete haiku

framing
the
trellis
inch
by
inch
ripe
tomatoes

Joanna Ashwell

tanka

a dawdling day
with lazy plans to drift
in the quiet
dusk delivers a cool breeze
and a hint of lilacs

Adelaide B. Shaw

the forest
does not always resemble
la vie en rose
I am the most alive
singing sad love songs

Alfred Booth

not the whirlwind
of a Chopin etude
this winter chill
adds brushstrokes to the presqu'île
where the fog quietly lifts

Alfred Booth

tanka

the silent cries
of my heart
in the garden
a loon
belts out his song

Arvinder Kaur

reading
your goodbye letter ...
the time
it takes a single cloud
to drift across the lake

Billie Dee

the hour
between birdsong
and sunrise
just me and this monkey-mind
pretending to meditate

Billie Dee

tanka

he buttons
his faded lilac shirt —
the spaces
between his words
carry unsaid weight

C.X. Turner

on the windowsill
a fallen leaf quivers
even this
I tell myself
belongs to the journey

C.X. Turner

in the air
the scent of spring
caresses the face
of a child who has just returned
to his shattered home

Fatma Zohra Habis

tanka

I cross
the bridge at night
to the other side
dawn breaks
and all my plans are lost

Fatma Zohra Habis

trying to brush past
last night's argument,
we begin anew ...
the toast slightly burnt
around the edges

Firdaus Parvez

your words
are edged with frost
tonight
the wild wind slithers in
from under the doors

Firdaus Parvez

tanka

whispering
in cold, empty rooms
their unfettered dreams
all the things they will do
after the war

Jahnavi Gogoi

is it your aim
to annoy me
knocking
your tail on my hands
as I try to type this poem

Jennifer Gurney

refolding the linen
every stitch and hem
holding on
to the last fragrance
worn by you

Joanna Ashwell

tanka

so many trees
and fences downed
by the storm
and yet in the brickweave
bright hawkweed flowers

Joy McCall

paralysed
amputated
all I long for
is just once more
to walk on the earth

Joy McCall

I never minded
going out in the frost
now, I sit
wrapped in shawls by the fire
wishing I was young again

Joy McCall

tanka

reaped field ...
the long awaited for rain
leaves puddles
where mallards beckon me
to waddle dance

Kanjini Devi

wave after wave
this raging ocean of grief
engulfs
I hold on to the driftwood
of my prayers

Kanjini Devi

a smudged watercolour
painting in my scrapbook
I revisit
the silence of Mt.Fuji
the mountain of grief in me

Lakshmi Iyer

tanka

filtered light
through the long grass
her ashes
scattered in a place
alive with bird song

Lorraine Haig

biding time
until your words
can sting
the long shadows
of March flies

Lorraine Haig

dawn mist
settles on the river
a silver ribbon
holds back the flood
of naiad's cascading hair

Marilyn Humbert

tanka

incessant rain
brings a snake
to our doorstep —
when you spew poison
do you feel better

Mohua Maulik

after decades
of skimming tomes
trying
to break free and soak
in one word at a time

Mohua Maulik

paring away
the rotten bits of an apple
still sweet
if only you could let go
and forgive yourself too

Mohua Maulik

tanka

fading petals
scatter on the river's edge
somewhere downstream
a lotus unfurls
its roots still gripping the mud

Nalini Shetty

a crow
grips its nest
in cyclonic winds
the steady flame
of a mother's courage

Padma Rajeswari

ancestral courtyard
a little girl jumps
from stone to stone
do they remember
the touch of tiny feet?

Padma Rajeswari

tanka

the bed
speckled with shadows
merging and parting
which memory will slink in
uninvited tonight

Priti Aisola

a tender leaf
snapped by a gust ...
her deciduous self
consents to sprout
more leaves

Rashmi VeSa

spring will come
thawing the frozen fields
but for now
we're all wanderers
in this white maze

Sandip Chauhan

tanka

drifting snow
erases the deer tracks
I wonder
if they too forgot
the way back home

Sandip Chauhan

listening
to a hoopoe's song
the phonologist
drowns in her own world
of stress and syllables

Srini

stars
on a cloudless night ...
my place
in the cosmos
soothingly small

Srini

tanka

the time it takes
for a melting candle
to solidify
she wipes her tears
and fights again

Sumitra Kumar

in and out of fog
the winter sounds
muffled ...
I watch myself
become invisible

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

stroking
my sadness
as if
 it were a pet cat ...
rain showers on the trees

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

tanka

if I were a cat
sunning by the window
grooming
my glossy coat, nails unsheathed
until you walk into the room

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

a chickadee
at maximum floof
you're not
as intimidating
as you think you are

susan burch

one-line tanka

the fluidity of space caught by a swirl of her hand the ensō

Kala Ramesh

Alfred Booth
~

Looking into the Abyss

sparkling waters
in the fountain of youth
mirage

The oldest trees in the olive grove have their stories to tell, lore handed down from the generations of their caretakers. Isolated in a huge urban field, I have no legacy that will outshine my life. Now my own limbs are filling with the aches of age. I feel the wind blowing harder against me as I advance forward, whether uphill or downhill.

I have not yet felt fear, I have experienced little human suffering firsthand. I have danced with The Formidable C. and toppled her vicious tango. I have read — and wanted to believe — stories about the white light at the end of the tunnel. Could this truly be a place of peace?

a fallen man
too close to the edge
avalanche

Billie Dee
~

Heritage

End of a long day. The farm auctioneer
kicks the tires of a weathered seed drill,
rattles his pocket change.

dry Guernsey —
the Milky Way stretched
over our barn

C.X. Turner

Between the Years

The photograph, its edges soft with time, cannot contain the way the wind moves through the ruin, threading itself into the spaces where prayers once rose. But it captures the threshold — the silhouette of the Tor's gentle summit framed against the darkening sky, the quiet presence of stone shaped by hands long vanished.

I lean into the cold damp wall, its surface solid, as if it holds secrets in the layers of its stone. Above, roosting birds shift, feathers rustling in the dark. Outside, the land unfolds — a patchwork of winter fields and flooded levels, the faint glimmer of village lights in the distance.

The climb here feels like an ascent through centuries, each step lifting me further from time. Some say this hill is Avalon, a place between worlds, where Arthur rests. I listen to the stillness before descent, as the year turns over in my breath, as if I am sinking not into the valley, but into a different age.

midnight chimes —
the past drifting
into mist

C.X. Turner

The Quiet Bloom

Lives rush past in blurs, swept forward by an unrelenting tide. My world contracts, narrowing to this single moment.

A robin perches on the railing, tilting its head as I sit outside to gather myself. The air carries a hint of spring, the promise of life pressing forward, even here, surrounded by endings.

Just months ago, the room had been filled with laughter, vibrant with the energy of her 60th birthday celebration. Now, it is quieter than I imagined — a small room wrapped in whispers and soft light.

Her favorite tulips — pink, peach, and yellow — dot the room, their fragile brightness a tender rebellion against the sterility. I add mine to the least full vase in an arrangement our art teacher would have deemed worthy.

Each breath feels shallow, my lungs straining beneath the weight inside. Words come slowly, carefully, as though anything louder might shatter us both.

morning light —
her pink tulip leaning
toward my hand

C.X. Turner

Knitting Resilience

My father never believed in the cold when I was growing up. He laughed at gloves worn indoors and kicked over the radiator my mother had saved for. His breath frosted the kitchen air as he flexed his fingers. “Resilience,” he called it. At night, he slept in an unheated room, the window cracked open. I stayed beneath the blankets, breath hidden, inching my woollen hat over my ears.

empty stove —
the slow drip of ice
into the kettle

Now, in his older years, he asks me for a hat. “Green,” he says, “with a pom-pom at the end”. I knit it thick and sturdy, imagining his hands tugging it into place. He tells me he wears it, though I’ve never seen it. I picture him outside, breath rising into the still air, the pom-pom swaying—a quiet nod to the frozen wind.

winter fog —
a green flash fades
into the trees

haibun

Gauri Dixit

The Point of It

Cluttered table, crumpled pages, clammy hands.

He writes as if trying to manifest something, each entry mirrors the last. On close look, it reads like gibberish.

Why strive so hard to give chaos a form?

in each ink stain the shape of a thought

Janice Doppler

The Ghost's Gift

after the bang
a puddle of red —
no note

The widow hangs her jacket in the closet, slides the door closed on a chaos of brown paper bags, and promises herself to organize the mess tomorrow ... or maybe Saturday. It's quite late so she heads for the new mattress on her bedroom floor. She breakfasts on a bowl of oatmeal, opens the closet to fetch a bag for her lunch, finds a surprise ... an astonishing surprise.

Instead of last night's mess, all the large bags are folded into one bag. Next to it is another packed with small bags. Resting across both is one small bag with its edge folded inward as her spouse liked to do.

after the storm
the scent of wet grass ...
song sparrow song

Joanna Ashwell

Imprints

He remains in the house for months. The red velvet pouch with a poem attached is surprisingly heavy. Some days I just sit in a chair holding the tube, knowing he is still within. There is a sway beyond the window of tree light and a flame sky. On the day he passed, a double rainbow appeared, his final nod to the earth and greeting to the sky.

I choose a bush and he is scattered beneath with his favourite toy and stuffed bear.

empty leash
I walk the woodland
without a friend

Joanna Ashwell

The Whole of the Moon

I am invisible like the first mesh of groundwater. The unnoticed swell of something becoming more real. When did falling out of love take the form of transparency?

new moon
the darkest side
pulled to earth

haibun

Kanjini Devi

Wildflower

We are rehoming Uma on behalf of the local Animal Rescue. She has been returned to the center three times but she can't stay there due to her tendency to create chaos among the new puppies.

"Try not to fall in love." My husband's voice trails off as he leaves for a work trip.

the detour
to avoid thistles
wet meadow

I take Uma on long walks; she romps alongside rice fields where farmers wave, calling out her name. Today, we went on the loop road which meanders through a village and across a ravine. When we got home, Uma made a mad dash up and down the stairs.

in the shade
of a bean teepee
dandelions

A lady who responded to our ad arrives to meet Uma. Her visit is drawn out with homemade cookies and cups of tea. She is overjoyed when I give my nod of approval, my heart breaking into pieces. As she walks out the door with Uma, the lady says to me, "Did you know this dog is blind?"

her eyes
the hint of green
in hydrangeas

Linda Papanicolaou

Lark Stew

Her kitchen is simple: a sink, work table, stove, and in the far corner a narrow cabinet with postcard-sized icons atop.

“Eat bones too,” she explains in limited English. Her husband has been out hunting and brought back more than enough for everyone.

She dips a long-handled spoon into the pot. As she stirs, one then another tiny naked bird breast breaks the surface, then sinks back into the bubbling stock like souls of the damned in a Doré illustration of Dante’s Inferno.

It smells delicious, but I suppress a small jolt of horror. As an American I’m more used to plastic-wrapped meat from the supermarket.

sickle moon —
so many rising songs
cut short by gunshot

Lorraine Haig

Overflowing Bins

I hate summer. It brings in the tourists. Our old town has a narrow main street, not much wider than it would have been in horse and buggy days. They crawl through gawking, never mind the traffic banking up behind. Worse still, they stop on the road, get out and take a photo. We're too polite to toot. They open their car doors into the traffic and leave them that way until nappies are changed and kids are strapped in. It's only luck a door's not ripped off its hinges. Just when you think they're out of the way, they put their blinkers on to go left, then turn right.

trampled grass
a duck lays her egg
at the post office

Mohua Maulik

It's Not Over Till it's Over

One evening after work, I was folding the laundry while my son, then about 9 years of age, had his nose buried in a book.

“Don’t you have homework?”

“I am researching it.”

“What?” I was taken aback.

“What I want to be when I grow up.”

“And what do you want to be?”

He looked up and declared, “Actually I am luckier than you guys.”

“How so?”

“I am free to imagine what I want to be, do, to be famous or not. But you, you already know.”

spring tide
the desert rose blooms
again
and again

Mohua Maulik

Flamingo Flights ...

“Shall we go to Shimla along with them?”

“Too crowded. And cold.”

“How about Jaisalmer? The sand dunes...”

“Who’s going to drive that far?”

“Then Jaipur...”

“Been there too many times.”

“Well, I am off to see the tigers at Ranthambore.”

“I’ll be sure to let them know.”

winter shower ...
a swirl of pink descends
over the mudflats

Mona Bedi

The Whole Six Yards

“It’s mine,” my sister states as a matter of fact.

I look at her with surprise, “But mom gave it to me,” I reply.

heirloom sari

The object of desire is a beautiful chiffon sari mom wore on special occasions. The fabric is thin and breezy with lilies hand-painted all over. I remember the sari clinging to her perfect figure... the pallu sensuously falling over her ample bosom. Dad always used to let out a slow whistle on seeing her and she would blush.

the lingering aura

“You don’t even wear saris,” I tell my sister.

“Neither do you,” she retorts.

Just then my daughter enters.

Hearing our conversation she says, “I am going to wear this to my college farewell ... that’s final.”

And just like that she picks up the sari and walks out.

of her presence

Namratha Varadharajan

Tropical Travellers

Our little family was a funny sight on the train up Mt. Titlis. We were bundled up in mufflers, monkey caps, woollen sweaters, gloves, thick socks, et all, while the rest of the travellers seemed to be dressed like it was spring—which it was.

‘Brrr! If it’s this cold in June, imagine December,’ I remarked. My dad pulled out another muffler and wrapped it around his head.

The temperature fell steadily as we climbed the mountain, and we huddled together as the green pastures gave way to snow. The world was white with bright yellow dots of paragliders. I imagined Heidi, a beloved character from a book, prancing in her little frock, with her friend, Peter, somewhere on these mountains. I was glad to be indoors.

When we stepped off the train, our guide took us to a restaurant at the top of the world and handed us a bowl of steaming hot tomato soup topped with a dollop of butter and butter-toasted pav (bun).

heat spreads
through the tongue ...
a bite of green chilly

Padma Priya

Choices

a time will come
to flick off all those
masks and layers, and
be yourself —
you realise
that there are
too many of them
for a lifetime.
you walk to the mirror and,
listen to the stories they tell you,
begging to be held in place
finally, you peel them away —
one by one,
firmly, yet very gently,
to see
your true self
emerge slowly and softly

river rocks —
unheard melodies
held within

Padma Priya

Sacred Moments

Snow dust from tree tops and rooftops of houses, swirls in the strong wind. I look at the dust, which spins and squirms as if to get out of the vortex of the wind. I open the window and am hit by the dust with an unexpected force and I freeze for a moment.

All thoughts that were seeking release from my head seem to freeze too. The moment shakes me out of myself. I close the window, touch my cold face and smile.

Are my thoughts unknotted? Is there any clarity that I arrived at, about whatever I was thinking? Maybe not, but I can see those thoughts from a distance now, almost instantaneously — a freedom that I savour.

cold moon —
she knows cherry blossoms
will bloom next

Sandip Chauhan

Dew on Old Stones

The black-and-white image holds more than faces. It holds a season — early spring, the scent of earth waking after winter, the sharp brightness of new leaves. It has a sound — the last bell, distant but still ringing somewhere beyond time. It holds the absence too, though we did not know it then.

river bend
a dragonfly's shadow
without the dragonfly

We reconnect across fifty years, time resting in the creases of our hands, silver at our temples. The years have sculpted a different face — softer around the edges, the hair retreating, the shoulders no longer as square. The afternoon light filters through thinning branches, shadows shifting like the pages of an open book. A gust moves through the trees, stirring dust that settles as quickly as it rises.

faint birdsong
voices that once filled
the corridors

The chai arrives in delicate ceramic cups, unlike the steel tumblers of our childhood. The scent of cardamom weaves through the air, curling into the warmth cupped in our hands. In the teacup's reflection, I meet a familiar stranger — across from me, another. We have become the age our teachers once were.

late chrysanthemums
not every branch
holds its blossoms

haibun

We speak of the teachers who paced between desks, the ones who never raised their voices, the ones whose tempers snapped like chalk against the board. We try to recall our classmates, the ones who sat beside us year after year, the ones whose names we spoke so often they became part of our own. Some return at once, as if they had never left. Others surface briefly, slipping away before they take shape. One lingers at the tip of the tongue, a syllable away from returning.

cattle trail
some shadows longer
than the trees

Sandip Chauhan

Uninvited Guests

I hear you beneath the porch, oh little bees — your quiet stirring, the hum I can't ignore. How long have you been there, weaving your secret world beneath my feet? I imagine your wings moving in the dark, your endless gathering, the soft shaping of wax into something that doesn't belong. Did you think I wouldn't notice?

gurney wheels
a drone i can't place
in the stillness

I see traces of you now. Pollen dust lining the cracks, a honeyed scent curling through the air. One of you finds its way inside, tapping against the windowpane, frantic and lost. What do you want me to do?

autumn wind
threading through what's left
of the broken comb

Srini
~

Last Light

After my great grandmother died, her whole village, I am told, attended the funeral. After my grandfather passed away, nearly everyone in the family and extended family came home to pay their last respects. When my paternal uncle breathed his last, the immediate family and a couple of his friends were there to bid him goodbye. I often wonder who all will turn up when there is a death in the family next.

deep winter
the lone bird's song
fading

Susan Yavaniski

DemoGraphic

Their faces are featureless — no nose, no eyes, no bones — only a smooth egg-shaped skull to hint at humanity. The bodies are uniformly slender, with identical tapering fingers. They betray no particular gender. All are hi-gloss white. Dressed for a heartland winter, about half the mannequins are posed one arm akimbo, hand-on hip, a little assertive. The other hand is deep in a pocket, as if reaching for something — a phone, a credit card, a pistol perhaps. It is America, after all, and the other half are posed to bolt.

Black Friday
a family in camouflage
in the check-out line

Alfred Booth
~

so much noise with these new hearing aids

maybe last week
at the nanny's house
you did indeed purr

Billie Dee
~

metamorphosis

who guides
the suffering within
a silk cocoon

C.X. Turner
~

each day begins with the same mug of tea

dark river
my own reflection
slips downstream

Joanna Ashwell
~

every room holding silence

when did starlight
become the only way
to find your song

Kanjini Devi
~

bruised peach

the handyman
lifts the lawnmower
like a toothpick

gembun

Kala Ramesh
~

seamless sky

the light
on a trek
gift of fireflies

Lorraine Haig
~

Grief turns to anger.

watching ants
scurry on a branch
as the fire spreads

Mona Bedi
~

“home is where the heart is” that’s what they say...

a house without a roof
stuck in the old oak
my childhood home

Sandip Chauhan

My shadow stretches farther these days.

faded roses
leaning closer
to the earth

C.X. Turner

In Reverse Flow

rippling light
along the ice shard's edge
in the cold stream
a piece of winter melts
into still water

I stand at the water's curve, watching fragments of time dissolve into the current. The stream bends in ways I can no longer follow, toward a place where even memory cannot serve. Winter holds me in its delicate grip. Frost outlining remnants of the past. Beneath, silence murmurs, a slow unfolding of something lost, yet alive.

into still water
a piece of winter melts
in the cold stream
along the ice shard's edge
rippling light

Joy McCall

Yearning

Tell me friend, is there another reality where I can dance with you?
Is there an old motorbike we can ride all those miles across the land to the North
Sea?

Is there a sandy beach we can walk barefoot at the tideline?
Is there a dream place to sleep among the dunes where the larks nest?

I want another life
another place
where all
the brokenness
is mended

a quiet place
where pain
is buried
deep
underground

Is there a place for a bed-bound woman to dance and run and walk and ride
forever and a day?

Kanjini Devi
~

Golden Years

Reaching across the table, I hold Tom's hands while we wait to be served. His fragile frame informs me the end is near, yet his cyan-blue eyes have never been brighter. We both know we may never come back here again together. I get the fettucine, and Tom asks for the salad. When our meals arrive, he takes one glance at my dish and says next time he'll have the pasta.

stubble fields
I stumble along
without you
trusting somehow
all is as it should be

Lorraine Haig

Cruising

The cruise ship is anchored out on a dropping tide. Over loudspeakers we are told to collect a numbered ticket. Only when it is called may we board an orange lifeboat for the twenty minute journey to the shore. We have 921. Drinking coffee on the top deck, mum and I change our minds and decide to stay on board.

watching
a pod of whales circle
the ship
a break in their journey
to Antarctica

Marilyn Humbert

Leaving Home

Fog all around, car wipers thunk forward and back, visibility almost zero. Gripping the steering wheel, concentrating, creeping forward ... should I stop ... turn back ... suddenly I'm out the other side into a vista of green ...

turning left
into the jacaranda
tree tunnel
a pin-prick of sunlight
invites me on a journey

Priti Aisola

Hold Me Tight

My 21-month-old granddaughter is visiting us in India for the first time — just for nine days. On the sixth day of her stay she is down with viral fever. Fussy and cranky, she loses her appetite completely and pushes away the vegetable broth that she usually enjoys.

At night, when she is restless, her mother wants me to hold her, soothe her, but she cries non-stop, protesting, ‘No Dadima.’ Her sobs break my heart. During the day, she interacts with me half-heartedly from a distance but won’t let me hold her. Feverish and in physical distress, she seeks the comfort of her mama’s and papa’s arms. She pushes me away saying, ‘No Dadima, no Dadima.’

Just a day or so ago, she was in my arms as I strolled in the garden naming each tree and plant for her in Hindi. She repeated, ‘Aam ka ped, papita, sharife ka ped, neem, kadipatta, pudina, tulsi ...’

Back at her home in Luxembourg, she is quite sick again. Seeing me on the phone screen during a video call, she says firmly, ‘No Dadima.’

That night I cry myself to sleep.

a nest
full of dry leaves
I replay the moment
when she said, after me,
‘ Om Namah Shivaya’

Note: Aam ka ped, papita, sharife ka ped, kadipatta, pudina, tulsi ...’
(Mango tree, papaya, custard apple tree, margosa, curry leaves, mint, holy basil ...)

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

Monochrome

stretching into sun salutation, my body flows from fingertips into the earth

all around me
the glitter of snow
it does seem
like winter arrives sooner
but the spring, much much later

gembun with tanka

Mona Bedi
~

I turn down the heat

first snow
falls softly on the grass
still in love
I trace your name
on the foggy window

haiga



widow's weeds
black ribbons trailing
into shadow

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haiga

*waning sun . . .
what's left of the year
folds into the earth*



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haiga



zoning out
of my parents' argument ...
a walk in the park


Sankara Jayanth
Sudanagunta

image and haiku: Sankara Jayanth Sudanagunta

haiga




image and haiku: Sankara Jayanth Sudanagunta

haiga



image and haiku: Sreenath



fallow field
where once we chased
the wind
wild poppies soften
the names we carved in stone.

image and tanka: Sandip Chauhan

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with many more fine poems
from our contributors.

Team: *haikuKATHA*