

haikuKATHA

unfolding the story within



Issue 55 May 2026

Prakash Thambre

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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 55
May 2026

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

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for sharing their poems.

Editors' Choice Commentary: by Firdaus Parvez
Editor's Choice: *Out of Breath* a haibun by Vidya Premkumar

Vidya Premkumar

Out of Breath

I step out of the station and the city rushes at me — rickshaws nudging buses, buses leaning into taxis, vendors shouting guava prices over the metallic crash of shutters, someone arguing into a phone, someone already late for something that began five minutes ago. Mornings measured by the arriving Local. Wet hair. Half-buttoned kurta. My son, still asleep. Milk, threatening to spill while I run for the 5:32 as if the whole day depended on catching that one breath of a train. After work, crossing without looking. Bags, already out as I buy vegetables from vendors near the station. Samosas, bought before the train leaves the platform.

Forty-five years of this urgency in my bones.

Now I stand at the edge of the pavement watching the choreography I once knew by muscle memory. The city has not paused for my leaving. Horns, footsteps, engines, hawkers — everything rushes into the same scene from memory.

Even the air feels hurried. Somewhere between two traffic lights, I realise that Mumbai is not a place you visit, it is a pace you survive.

And my lungs have forgotten it.

kabutar khana —
the afternoon sky
full of grey wings

Editors' Choice Commentary: by Firdaus Parvez
Editor's Choice: *Out of Breath* a haibun by Vidya Premkumar

This haibun caught my eye immediately. The prose is done extremely well. The short sentences add to the urgency and pace of a cosmopolitan city. I appreciate how Vidya has managed to bring the mundane to life — every minute detail, a brick in the building of a scene. A vivid picture unfurling. One can feel the suffocating air of the city, the noise, the mother rushing to work. Moments we all have witnessed or personally experienced come out to play. Well done.

I find it compelling how the haiku links to the bustle of the scene but then shifts away. Here, the sky is grey not because of pollution, but because of the wings of pigeons. How lovely is that? My favourite line was, “I realise that Mumbai is not a place you visit, it is a pace you survive.” Congratulations to the poet for writing this lovely haibun, I was left quite out of breath.

Firdaus Parvez

haiku

spring sunlight
watering new cuttings
with a chipped cup

Alfred Booth

in the steam
of my early morning coffee
the cow

Alicia Samson

misty morning
the stag's antlers
strike the larch

Artur Zieliński

jungle book
my son runs wild
in a red langot

Arvinder Kaur

haiku

bomb strikes
still these robins
nest-building

Bryan Rickert

it all begins
with one hug
father's funeral

Bryan Rickert

sweet scent in the air
a cinnamon peeler's hut
stands in no one's way

Dipankar Dasgupta

spring thaw —
the fence wire
sags a little

Jacek Margolak

haiku

air raid siren —
a mother smooths
the child's hair

Jacek Margolak

first frost —
a hoofprint
holding water

Jacek Margolak

sack after sack
from godown to trucks
the curve in his spine

K. Ramesh

spring getaway
the mountain echoes
my name

Kalyanee Arandhara

haiku

wind eddies
dry leaves circle
into a huddle

Kavita Ratna

quiet rain ...
a paper boat carries
news of war

Lakshmi Iyer

golden hour
a just-picked
persimmon

Lev Hart

late winter
the doctor gives it to me
straight

Lev Hart

haiku

blossom time
bins and bicycles
turning pink

Lori Kiefer

mum's 80th
the butterfly motifs
on her new slippers

Lori Kiefer

in his shoe
the hole for a bunion
first snow

Lorraine Haig

long rain ...
the garden shed's roof
turning green

Lorraine Haig

haiku

midday heat —
a lizard hangs
from the cat's mouth

Lorraine Haig

after rain ...
peach petals
on solar panels

Marilyn Ashbaugh

bones thinning ...
a house wren
lifting twigs

Marilyn Ashbaugh

woodland violets
hiss of herbicide
at the border

Marilyn Ashbaugh



World War II

stranded soldiers
still haunt

the silent hillocks

milan rajkumar

haiku

New Year's budget ...
the coffee
growing cold

Milan Rajkumar

arriving late
to the worm's funeral
winter sun

Nicholas Klacsanzky

our first kiss ...
this car momentarily
a home for starlight

Nicholas Klacsanzky

sakura tea
our second wedding vows
in a different religion

Nicholas Klacsanzky

haiku

ceasefire —
two women at the market
exchange recipes

Padma Priya

chulha embers ...
something slow-cooking
in the sky

Raji Vijayaraghavan

snuggled-up in bed
the sound of rain softens
into a dream

Ron C. Moss

blazing noon —
the coconut seller
drinks the first one

Sathya Venkatesh

haiku

straw mats
on the river bed
artisan's fair

Sudha Shetty

ongoing war —
Dionysias bloom
in the mountains of Iran

Tejendra Sherchan

mud kitchen —
the scent of hay
in warm milk

Vaishnavi Ramaswamy

winter dawn ...
a distant crow
taking shape

Vaishnavi Ramaswamy

one-line haiku

a door slams across the bluest sky a hint of thyme

Alan Summers

marching on flowers

Anju Kishore

how you led me on strolling garden

Susan Burch

early mOrning wake-Up call Charlie Horse

Susan Burch

tanka

grandfather
threaded music and God
into my heart
the unraveling began
at the cemetery

Alfred Booth

can we ever
fully embrace happiness
without sorrow's pull
tugging at the other end
a kite in stormy winds

barbara olmtak

sunrise filters
through the leaves
my morning prayers
rising up into
this cathedral of trees

Bryan Rickert

tanka

two years
grieving his loss
too soon to know
if the old cherry tree
will bloom again

Fatma Zohra Habis

sea breeze
on a humid afternoon
the feel of home
as I hold a tumbler
of filter coffee

Geetha Ravichandran

crown shyness —
a jagged line of sky
through the oaks
even the wind
keeps its distance

Jacek Margolak

haiga



pinhole
camera

the spring
sunlight

in my
brother's
eyes

milan rajkumar

image and ku: Milan Rajkumar

tanka

heavy clouds —
a single branch
bends lower
I keep adjusting
to what does not break

Jacek Margolak

a crayon poised
above the paper -
a space
for moonlit sparkle
on every tree

Joanna Ashwell

sunflower heads
upturned to the silk
of a lazuli sky
I tuck this memory close
ready for nightfall

Joanna Ashwell

tanka

first day at school ...
the clasp of her hand
over my finger,
her eyes between
 goodbyes

Kala Ramesh

walking home
barefoot on sand
after kirtan
the ocean moon and I
bursting at the seams

Kanjini Devi

and suddenly
a whirlwind of leaves
for a second
I forget myself
and swirl round and round

Lakshmi Iyer

tanka

grey clouds
heavy with moisture
at the bus stop
black umbrellas circle
my red raincoat

Marilyn Humbert

the raptor swoops
from several meters above
at his master's whistle
how i continue to dance
to everyone's tunes

Mohua Maulik

a window snail
snuggled into itself
classroom silence
a child's head lowers
on the bench

Nitu Yumnam

tanka

tired of asking
what comes next
i sit
beside the window
and let the light answer

Nitu Yumnam

the susurrus
of sudden summer rain
on pine leaves
I tilt the wine in my glass
to fold the fading sunlight

Padma Priya

I guide
the ash gourd tendrils
to climb a trellis ...
learning to walk, our grandson
ignores my extended hand

Priti Aisola

tanka

drenched in sunlight
the amaltas more golden
than ever ...
I sit under the mango tree
away from the sun's glare

Priti Aisola

Himalayan peaks
glowing in moonlight
the Gita
reveals its wisdom
under a bedside lamp

Rupa Anand

empty home —
the moon leans closer
through my window
I welcome the stillness now
and drift softly into sleep

Sathya Venkatesh

tanka

dear koel
what do you know
about to-do lists
don't you drop yours
into the crow's nest

Sumitra Kumar

ruffled clouds
in a herringbone sky
crocuses
flavor the melting snow
with saffron tinted purple

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

powdering
stale crusts of loaves
to breadcrumbs
in this way I make new
what I had to let go

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

haiga

unending war
a little boy readies a fleet
of paper planes



image and ku: Marylyn Ashbaugh

tanka

a crack
in the hull
of the vessel —
I start to see you
as you truly are

susan burch

sunlight
through the crowns
of trees ...
a butterfly spotlight
on the trail

Tejendra Sherchan

Anju Kishore
~

Subtext

Distant columns of chequered light pattern the city sky. The warm, cheerful timbre of light from one of the windows draws my attention. But who knows how coldly life is playing itself out right now on the other side. My eyes leap to the adjacent building. Strings of fairy lights in blue and white have come alive all over a balcony. I can almost hear the rustle of conversation, a thread of music, and the discreet tinkle of glass.

In a window one floor down, the light is subdued. Or shall we say, the dark gleams. Perhaps here, a battle is past its brewing, blood is past its spilling.

a million universes
turning on and off
ocean foam

Bhawana Rathore



The Wind's Vigil

In the quiet of midnight, the thought of the windmills returns to me from my afternoon visit to the dunes. Stretched across the desert, the blades keep turning, marking the direction and speed of the wind.

Here and there, a few cacti are scattered, dung beetles roll, a warm breeze sweeps over the dunes. It is picturesque, yet gritty. In the melting heat, a desert is no place to exist—or is it?

I wonder, in the dark of night, do the windmills still move, rotate when no one looks?

Standing alone in the vast desert, I imagine the hiss of the turbines echoing across the sand, as if they belong here.

summer dark -
the changing pitch
in a cricket's song

Bob Lucky
~

Dodo

I had gone to the beach and found a place to sit and admire the clouds filter the early morning light when I noticed a boy making his way toward me. He was walking a pigeon on a twine leash. “Bonzour,” I said, “Ki sa?” just to make some conversation. “Dodo,” he said, “last one,” and asked if I was interested in buying it. Having used up all my Mauritian Creole, I switched to Broken English. “Fat pigeon,” I said. “Baby dodo,” he said. He was a tough negotiator. I bought the baby dodo for 1000 rupees then sold it back to him for 200 rupees. We’re friends online now and discussing the future. There’s no shortage of pigeons.

high noon at the beach
what I wouldn't give
for a cold beer

Cathryn Daley

Scraps

'Little buggers,' Mum says.

'Funny,' I say. 'Buggers, bugs...'

A long line of sugar ants march across the table. They swarm an empty glass containing the remains of chocolate milk. The line continues down the table leg, across the linoleum, before disappearing behind the stove.

'Boy,' she says. 'What have I told you about clearing up?' It's not a question, not the way she says it.

From the sink cupboard, she grabs a tin of insect spray and delivers a continuous blast at the line of ants.

Those not poisoned drown.

formic acid
the stink of bitter lemon
wafts from a gum tree

Chen-ou Liu
~

Cyclic Pursuit of Love

I scroll through one dating app after another, and another.

snow on snow
our pot of tea steeps dark
and bitter

Beeps flurry. Messages stack up. Faces blur. I scroll until my thumb aches. The night thins out into small screens.

awake, facing
the empty side of my bed
sunrise tinged gray

A vee of geese unzips the morning sky. I reach for my phone.



Colleen M. Farrelly
~

Glitch

We ditch our devices and hike a limestone trail through the pine rock lands, weaving in and out of banyan roots dotted by a mottled canopy. We slip through slick sinkholes and don't talk much. After an hour or so, our trail winds back to the parking lot where our cell phones beep with missed messages.

pigeon plums
fading in our rearview
reboot error

Diana Webb



Eastbound Commuter

steamed up window
from a small boy's fingertip
a chink in the pane

'Wayfarers of a hundred generations'...en route from work, the student of haiku reads her 'Narrow Road'...'each day is a journey'...the landscape streaks through from ice age to bulldozers smashing that hill...'home'...what would you make of the little child's gesture; what would you make of this iron horse, Basho?

*winter sun
frozen on horseback
the priest's shadow*

*concluding haiku is by Basho in the Jane Reichold version

Dru Philippou

Benediction

Up from the valley, I come to a clearing. The ground sifts to fine ash from long-dead fires. I lean against a cairn, haunted by the harm I can't undo. Yet something here embraces me, as if delighting in my presence. Warm air stirs the wild plum blossoms, scattering them around me. A ripple spreads across the pond—perhaps a darting sunfish or a rosy-red minnow. Among the bulrushes, a marsh wren builds decoy nests and sings himself utterly away. A cicada climbs the trunk of a birch and begins to shed her papery shell. When she's finally free, the moment slips through my fingers only to shift into new light.

moonlit quartz
the forest keeps
its secrets

Jackie Chou
~

I Am Not Offended When People Ignore My Friend Requests

I too, must become a ghost to some—the apartment manager whose paper-strewn desk gives me anxiety, and so I slip out the glass door each morning without a nod or a greeting.

a failed attempt
to capture the kitten
her fleeting shadow

The boys in school I thought I was writing about for the longest time have become ghosts with blurry faces. I realized it was not them I fondled, but the words on the page.

gas station sushi
his fresh face
has become stale

The person by my side has become a ghost to me, staying quiet, unable to grasp what I'm saying.

misogynistic jokes
he forgets to put the e
at the end of blonde

Jenny Ward Angyal

The Riverbank

I sit on the trunk of a red maple bowed long ago by floods. When the dam downriver opens and the water's low, I can wade almost to the other shore, but today a torrent of thoughts tumbles toward the sea. I let them go.

catching
sparks of sunlight
this inner sky

Joanna Ashwell

Lost and Found

We have exhausted all words. Even the sky has turned grey. Nothing left to say.
The staves echo with tin can repetitions. Nothing has been solved here today.

raindrops
low stars gathering
around every doorway

We sit as two bookends cornering the remains of light. One opinion is as valid as
the other. Darkness cannot exist without light. Light cannot exist without
darkness. How to separate the threads in a lover's quarrel?

just a hint of blue
in the sky
changing platforms

haiga



image and ku: Nalini Shetty

Kala Ramesh
~

In Transit

Beyond the river, beyond the horizon ... these constant catastrophic flights into the unknown.

slanting sunrays
back home, I'm thankful
for this bowl of kanji

K Ramesh



Alive

The crushed sheet of paper on the floor suddenly shows signs of life like the quiver of an injured bird after being still for some time. Sunrays through the window gently balm the unfurling of the paper like warming the heart of the bird. I pick it up and straighten the paper and read my abandoned lines. A different perspective emerges. I see it again, how it appears as if the wounded wings are responding to another tender touch.

fading light ...
he comes home
with a discarded nest

Lew Watts



In Absentia

Lots of snow, my neighbour tells me on the phone. But the house is fine. Hasn't seen a soul this week. Except two days ago, she was pecking at my windows, staring at her reflection, eyes wild with the cold. He says her behavior was strange, yet familiar, the way she shied away from shadows — shivering in the old willow over the stream, pulling feathers from her breast.

She came back today, he says. Fluttering weakly. Her chest, an open sore. Now and then, she limped across to claw at my door. Then scrambled back to her branch. Next thing he knows, she's gone. He thinks she must have drowned.

all that's left ...
my mother's footprints
melting through my fingers

Lorraine Haig



The Orphan

opal field
a tumbler of chips
in a bottle

In the old photo you look up to the camera from where you sit on a camping stool. There's a joey in your lap. Your mouth is open, but your words are lost. Your dark eyes, like the joey's look gentle, vulnerable. Her small grey head and long eyelashes protrude from the blanket – a substitute for her mother's warm pouch. You hold a plastic dolly's bottle and you're about to feed her. But what can't be seen is the broken tail, the bone severed midway by the bullet you fired from your rifle towards the long twitching ears in the spinifex.

highway at dawn
a shallow grave
left behind

Mark Meyer
~

"Let's do the twist ..."

Not long ago I reluctantly joined the 65+ senior fitness, aerobics, and balance class at the local community center. At this age, we all have our individual infirmities: the torn ligaments, tendonitis, knee and hip replacements, frozen shoulders, trigger fingers, tennis elbows, carpal tunnels, aching backs, stiff necks, fallen arches, old ski injuries, slipped discs, arthritic ankles, neuritis, sciatica -- you name it, someone in this group's got one or more of the above. The 20 or so individual group exercises last one infinite hour, all set to varying music, good and bad, mostly from the 60's and 70's. It appears that stability issues are what most of us have in common as we huff and puff away as best we can to the music.

stork pose
for a split second ...
quasi-yoga

Neena Singh



who am i

Sometimes the quietest moments unsettle me the most. A stillness settles over the day and I become aware of the versions of myself I have outgrown. I pause in the middle of an errand, struck by the sense that someone I once was is trying to return — not the shy introvert, nor the assured adult, but someone in between, standing on a threshold without choosing.

autumn twilight
patterning the sky
birds return home

haiga



*after the convoy—
the nightingale
takes up its song*

Sandip Chauhan

image and ku: Sandip Chauhan

Priyanka Aravind P

At the Café

At the town's bustling café, we place our hands on the table, laughing softly at how different they have grown. Hers, bright with diamonds and swift decisions; mine, worn by the damp mornings in the kitchen and from rocking the cradle.

Once we ran through the same afternoons, fingers sticky with ripe mangoes and sapodillas, swearing, the world would never divide us. Now our words move politely, like china tea cups passed back and forth.

dusk to dawn –
our hands warming
different lives

Rashmi Buragohain

Change

A summer evening. Sitting on the verandah laden with the fragrance of days gone by, I wander along the lanes of memory — the pebbled road, the endless paddy fields, that huge flame tree, that pond, and that gooseberry tree. Now it is a concrete road. The fields lie empty. The flame tree is dying, and the gooseberry stands alone.

curls of smoke —
cobwebs
on the eaves

Ron C. Moss
~

Wrecking Ball

We're up on the fourth floor helping my Father with his office-cleaning job. Suddenly all hell breaks loose. We can hear our Great Dane that's only partially tucked up in the old woody station wagon outside, going off his rocker barking and snarling. We look out the open window to see a man insanelly trying to steal our car. Our brave dog is tearing the car apart trying to get to him.

Dad's in the elevator faster than superman and before you can even say phone box, he's pulled the robber out of the car just in time to save him from the jaws of Rex, our childhood guardian. Dad hauls him away with a punch for good measure yelling to shocked bystanders " I'm not worried about the car, but he tried to steal my dog as well."

barking mad
not all heroes
wear capes

Rupa Anand

Now and Then

Our daughter comes to visit every December from Canada. It's the holiday season when the annual leave worldwide is typically scheduled. It's been twelve years since she married, six years since she migrated abroad and nearly four years since she became a mother.

In the period in between, we have aged considerably, with an increasing portfolio of ailments. Still, we love to have her home with our granddaughter who brings loads of sass, a Himalayan-sized attitude and an assertive mind into our lives.

'I'm not a sweetie', she declares. 'I'm a preschooler.'

The generational gap has never been wider. And the way parenting was done in the 1980s is very different from the way it is accomplished in 2025.

When I mumble aloud at the insanity of a three-year-old being awake and going about town from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. non-stop, every day, my daughter retorts, 'But Mother, it's fine, kids today don't get tired.'

painting unicorns
we make monkey faces
at each other

Sambhu Ramachandran
~

Untethering

The field suddenly turns into a heliport for dragonflies. They hover over the stubble, their veined wings whirring. Yellow and green, they navigate the twilight as a spurt of ochre is injected into the sky.

Two dragonflies in tandem flight settle on a blade of grass.

We step into the field, clods of earth crunching under our heavy feet. Our hands imitate their aerial manoeuvres with an imprecision. It is unsure what we have learned from the way dragonflies arrive and depart, leaving no trace of their obsessions behind.

Something in us longs to pivot. Something in us cries out to untether our bodies.

field after harvest –
the moon trails
our footprints

Scott Wiggerman
~

Corpus Christi

Too much water here. Every street seems to have a waterfront view. Every direction leads to a pier, a channel, a seascape. Fine if you like water, sand, and seafood, but for a high plains boy, all this water is too much, almost frightening. Who needs so much sea-scent, so much salt? The body is more than sixty percent water, some dirty, some holy, all too much.

no waves
inside
I'm drowning

Sheila Ann Packirnathan

Lenggong

Rain fell in the footsteps of Aiyasamy, my maternal grandfather. Rubber trees stood in long, patient rows. It did not fall in haste. It gathered, as if remembering something older than us. Petrichor rose sweet from the red earth. Green leaves shone dark and slick. I walked behind him, small beneath the sky.

In the courtyard, Aiyasamy rubbed turmeric into the goat's hide. Yellow stained his fingers and the goat's side alike. The ritual moved steadily beneath the storm, precise and reverent. I hovered at the edge, watching, tasting the damp air that carried both earth and devotion.

After the prayers, he presented us with mutton curry. The flavors lingered, mingling with turmeric and rain, and the breeze slid over me, warm and heavy.

monsoon dusk
the changing colour
underneath my nails

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

Time is Elastic!

I didn't know that none of the clocks keep actual time in this house. I wake up to the chime that announces 4 AM. Assuming that it's early morning, thoughts that were temporarily at bay stretch into wakefulness, gradually bringing me back into my life.

And then another clock strikes 4 am!

Confused, I check my phone, which says it's 3.55 AM.

At which point yet another clock chimes once ...

I realize that I've been gifted several extra minutes. I relax into the uncertainty as my smile fills the darkness.

steady rain
the first azaan winds
through tree silhouettes

Urszula Marciniak
~

All the Journeys

Anika has never been far from her family home. Her illness makes it difficult for her to leave the house. She enjoys looking at photos and videos of her friends' travels. She especially loves the sea and beaches. She closes her eyes and imagines herself there.

Recently, her friends suggested a trip to the nearest seaside. It's only a few dozen kilometers away. She began preparing for the trip, but the next day it was canceled for important reasons. For a moment, she felt sad, but then she closed her eyes and almost felt the warmth of the beach. She had never been so close to the real sea as during that one day of waiting.

another summer
her whole world fits in the eye
of the viewfinder

Vaishnavi Ramaswamy



Shringaaram

A bronze Kerala nilavilakku illuminates the dark. The edakka reverberates sharply from a corner. A pair of cymbals join in. The rendition of a Swathi Thirunal Padam begins in a deep male voice in Raga Surutti.

sandalwood breeze
the soft ripple
of paddy

With hair neatly swept up sideways into a large bun, she adorns it with a string of jasmine, paints her lips a deep crimson to match the shade of vermilion on her forehead, and adds a sweep of winged eyeliner into her kohled eyes.

full moon
the quivering call
of a chakora

Looking into a handheld mirror, she smiles coyly. Her lips tremble. Her nosepin and earstuds catch and scatter this muted light.

Soaking in the scent of the Kadamba, she delicately gathers the blossoms onto her palm, strands them into a garland, and waits. Her eyebrows twitch in anticipation.

A rustle of yellow silk. The jingle of ankle bells.

flute music
the sudden weight
of a peacock feather

*Shringaaram - The aesthetic of love, romance, and beauty in Indian literature, dance and music

Vidya Premkumar
~

Out of Breath

I step out of the station and the city rushes at me — rickshaws nudging buses, buses leaning into taxis, vendors shouting guava prices over the metallic crash of shutters, someone arguing into a phone, someone already late for something that began five minutes ago. Mornings measured by the arriving Local. Wet hair. Half-buttoned kurta. My son, still asleep. Milk, threatening to spill while I run for the 5:32 as if the whole day depended on catching that one breath of a train. After work, crossing without looking. Bags, already out as I buy vegetables from vendors near the station. Samosas, bought before the train leaves the platform.

Forty-five years of this urgency in my bones.

Now I stand at the edge of the pavement watching the choreography I once knew by muscle memory. The city has not paused for my leaving. Horns, footsteps, engines, hawkers — everything rushes into the same scene from memory.

Even the air feels hurried. Somewhere between two traffic lights, I realise that Mumbai is not a place you visit, it is a pace you survive.

And my lungs have forgotten it.

kabutar khana —
the afternoon sky
full of grey wings

Vidya Shankar
~

Full Circle

billowing clouds ...
in Nishabda
the paired stars

The reflection of snow-capped mountains in the lake's crystal-clear waters is the work of a skilled artist's brush. Hovering over dense shrubbery, hundreds of dragonflies hum a gossamer lyric of guided meditation. A gentle breeze blows from distant snowfields, gathering along the way the heady fragrances of rose, champa, kadambam, magizham, and even hibiscus.

You and I have been sitting by the lake all afternoon, on a garden bench the colour of the palest straw, just staring into space. Not that it matters—time is of no consequence here. I can see you are clearly dazed by the magnificence around us. I don't blame you. This place is in stark contrast to the frightful Vaitaraṇī river you had to cross. I too felt similarly when I first came here all those years back. Alone.

A pair of waterfowl waddle along the smooth, stony bank before gliding into the lake. "Ducks!" you whisper, pointing to them with girlish excitement, your face breaking into a smile. Swans, I want to correct you. I don't. I let the smile be.

*Nishabda: a Sanskrit word with deep spiritual resonance meaning 'a state beyond words'

*In Hindu mythology, Vaitaraṇī is described as the river that separates the world of the living from the world of the dead.



image and ku: Sandip Chauhan

Joanna Ashwell



party shoes

joining the dragonfly
within a dance
of raindrops

Lorraine Haig



another argument

in a sponge cake
all the hot air
it can hold

Matthew Caretti
~

buddha words notwithstanding

emptiness
a slow gravity
of rain

Mohua Maulik
~

dithering over which gate to queue up at the toll booth

the journey
of my life dotted
with what-ifs

Ron C. Moss
~

white jasmine

in silence
the universe
smiles

gembun

Vidya Premkumar
~

uncurling mist rolls out the morning

lotus pose
the spreading warmth
of cat fur

Vishal Prabhu
~

all becoming is ever being...

New Year
turning over the logs
of a bonfire

they say
she is no more—
a bird on the branch
takes wing
into nothingness



*words & art
padmapriya*

image and ku: Padma Priya

Amrutha V. Prabhu
~

Love in the air

I walk to the bus stop and wait for the bus that will take me home. Evening settles in its usual way, until a young couple draws my attention — new to love, it seems.

She is in a burqa; he has finely shaped hands. Their fingers are intertwined, and in their eyes there is that tender brightness of a bud about to open — restless, alive.

A smile rises in me, wide and unguarded. I try to hold it back, pressing my lips together, careful not to let my delight spill too visibly into their space.

They notice. For a moment, I expect them to withdraw — shy, perhaps, under a stranger's gaze. Instead, they lean closer into each other, their ease deepening, their quiet display growing more assured.

I step back inwardly, giving them distance, as if to return the moment to them untouched.

Just then, my bus arrives.

from afar
a bride in scarlet veil
step closer
gulmohar blossoms
gather as bouquets

Amrutha V. Prabhu
~

Noise

An evening of small talk with my roommate — numbers, balance sheets, assets and liabilities drifting between us as casually as tea. Somewhere in the middle, I pause — isn't that just dressing up the truth? She shrugs, almost amused: that's what they're paid for. And just like that, the moment passes for her.

But it doesn't pass for me.

The thought lingers — if accounts can be shaped so easily, what does one trust? What do investors really read — truth, or a well-arranged version of it? Numbers begin to feel less like facts, more like narratives in disguise.

And then the question slips beyond markets.

When did we begin to reward what is loud, urgent, insistent — and overlook what is steady, quiet, sincere?
Why is it the crying child that is fed first,
while the one who endures with a smile
learns to go unnoticed?

a cuckoo calls
i hover above
pond lilies in bloom
letting go of was and will
i settle into now

C.X. Turner

42 weeks

The window won't open. Not fully. Hands keep trying, as if persistence might change the hinge. Just enough air slips through to carry cut grass, something sterile beneath it. The curtain shifts. In the corridor, a laugh cuts short. I close my eyes as they begin. A voice says relax. Again.

night ward
a moth taps
the wrong side of glass
I follow its movement
as if it might lead out

Cynthia Bale
~

Fissure

Grief seeps through the tiniest openings, even the in-store music.

I still treasure
how you belted out this song
though I wish
I could stop sobbing
in the cereal aisle

Jacek Margolak

The Space Between

In the printing house, we call it spacing — the invisible lead that keeps the letters from colliding, the silence that makes the word readable. Without it, the alphabet is just a chaotic heap of metal. I spent decades placing these thin strips of emptiness between lines of poetry, ensuring that every sentence has room to breathe.

Today, looking up at the forest canopy, I see the same discipline. The great pines reach for the sun, yet they leave a narrow, jagged trail of sky between their crowns. No branch crosses the invisible border. It is a slow, silent choreography of survival, a mutual agreement to let the light through.

the forest aisle
in gold and grey —
a narrow sky
between them
held open

Jacek Margolak
~

The Frequency of Absence

There is a specific static between the stations on my old radio. If I turn the dial slowly enough, I can hear the floorboards creaking in the house I left twenty years ago. It's a delicate calibration, a way to keep the air from tightening. I stay in this hum, adjusting the knobs until the silence feels like a choice, not a sentence.

fingertips —
no signal
holds
I rewind the years
to her breathing

Joanna Ashwell



Worry Lines

Should I be taller, smaller, smarter, prettier, kinder, more patient, fitter, tougher, louder, quieter, more accepting? On and on it goes, the anxiety train, stippling the day with rain clouds, with hailstones, with lightning strikes. I see a loop of light in the window's shimmer.

life story
the pages torn
from the root
I reweave the patterns
like rainbow bark

Lorraine Haig



The Messenger

Today I'm alone until a raven descends to the garden. First, I sense its presence before the great weight settles and the branch sags. The white eye above the sabre-curved beak surveys its surroundings. I dread this bird throwing its voice like a black cloak.

holding on
to your every word
I wait in vain
for you to say
you want to come home

Lorraine Haig



Don't put a stone over me

A rugged old gum tree halfway up the track. The one we put our arms around each time we climb. Certainly, it's a possibility. When we walk in the Botanical Gardens, you touch the trunks of the Himalayan pines. They bring back memories of your treks in Nepal. Not the sea. I can't imagine you adrift out there. It's the mountains and forests you love. This is a conversation we should have had years ago. Now the decision is mine.

autumn again —
one year since she passed
I sit with her
in the afternoon light
listening to the wind

Padma Priya
~

The Vanquished Trove

The iron rods unloaded at the construction site clang and shatter the pre-dawn quiet. As each rod hits the sand-laced ground, dust rises up like a haze. Men at work shout as they communicate. Defying the noise around, the soft song of the birds sails through, soothing my senses. The bluish-black sky slowly turns to twilight hues. I think of all those trees that were cut down for the sake of this upcoming structure.

I let go of the brooding, pick up a fallen parijata flower, hold it in my palm, and become present to its pristine beauty.

piercing
the morning breeze
a peacock's cry
for a while
I'm in the woods

Sandip Chauhan
~

How Little I Can Do

You hear the news in a city of monuments, where cherry blossoms open from tight buds into rosy petals along the Potomac River. Cardinals sit silent in the branches, as if the trees have chosen their own quiet way to be loud. Above the Gulf, dawn bleeds into the smoke, a pale band of light trying to mend a sky torn by contrails.

if i could change this
i'd unwrite all these briefings
for one wild wish
to wake where children learn
only the shapes of clouds

If the promise holds, the sky may relearn how to be only sky. The moon will rise and set, silver and aloof over cities that squint up at it and wonder if it is finally safe to breathe.

this unending war ...
i dream of a peaceful escape
to board
the first nameless train
to a world with no flags

Sathya Venkatesh
~

Between Breaths

She was a doctor who delivered my daughter into the world, her hands steady under the harsh white of hospital light as that first breath broke through. My daughter grew in those same corridors and, in time, became a doctor herself, learning the quiet gravity of held lives. My mother, once unshakeable, grew frail until one day she lay in that same hospital, calm, with my daughter at her bedside. The giver of life and the keeper met again without ceremony — only care.

autumn dusk —
a monitor's steady glow
on her resting hand
the doctor she once held
following her breath

Sathya Venkatesh
~

Fading Sweetness

The mango tree grows low, branches within reach. Half-ripe and ripe fruit fall from the low branches, rolling into dust and shade. Hands turned golden, tongues sticky, laughter rising from the shade. Now the fruit lies scattered. The shade seems wider, unbroken.

bent to their screens
in their dim glow
the fruits fall in the shade
unnoticed now ...
small joys, left behind

Sathya Venkatesh
~

The Potter's Release

I don't call them burdens anymore. They show in my need to please, in the words I hold back, in old expectations I still carry. Some I put down, but they come back. A few stay and quietly shape who I am.

earthen waterpot —
a thin crack darkens with use
at every filling
still it keeps the water cool
through every season

gembun with tanka

Amrutha V. Prabhu
~

bells on the christmas tree

dargah light
through a quiet window
a bodhi tree
with threads of prayer
swaying in colour

Mona Bedi
~

that last call from the hospital had me in tears

withering autumn
fallen leaves gather softly
around my feet
another branch breaks away
from the family tree

gembun with tanka

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

giving care, receiving care

all i need
is nothing at all
sometimes
an empty sky
and maybe a star

Results of indianKUKAI #53

hosted by Amoolya Kamalnath, Kashinath Karmakar, Neena Singh,
& Rohan Kevin Broach. Certificates designed by Teji Sethi



53rd
indianKUKAI



caressing the pebble I bring back the river

MONA BEDI
DELHI, INDIA
FIRST PRIZE

THEME : touch
APRIL 2026

HOSTS
Amoolya Kamalnath, Kashinath Karmakar, Neena Singh and Rohan Kevin Broach
organised by
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53rd
indianKUKAI



soap bubbles -
touching a rainbow
with my finger

CHRISTIANE RANIERI
WARRENPOINT, N.IRELAND
SECOND PRIZE

THEME : touch
APRIL 2026

HOSTS
Amoolya Kamalnath, Kashinath Karmakar, Neena Singh and Rohan Kevin Broach
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Results of indianKUKAI #53

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thank you for being with us.

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

Team: *haikuKATHA*