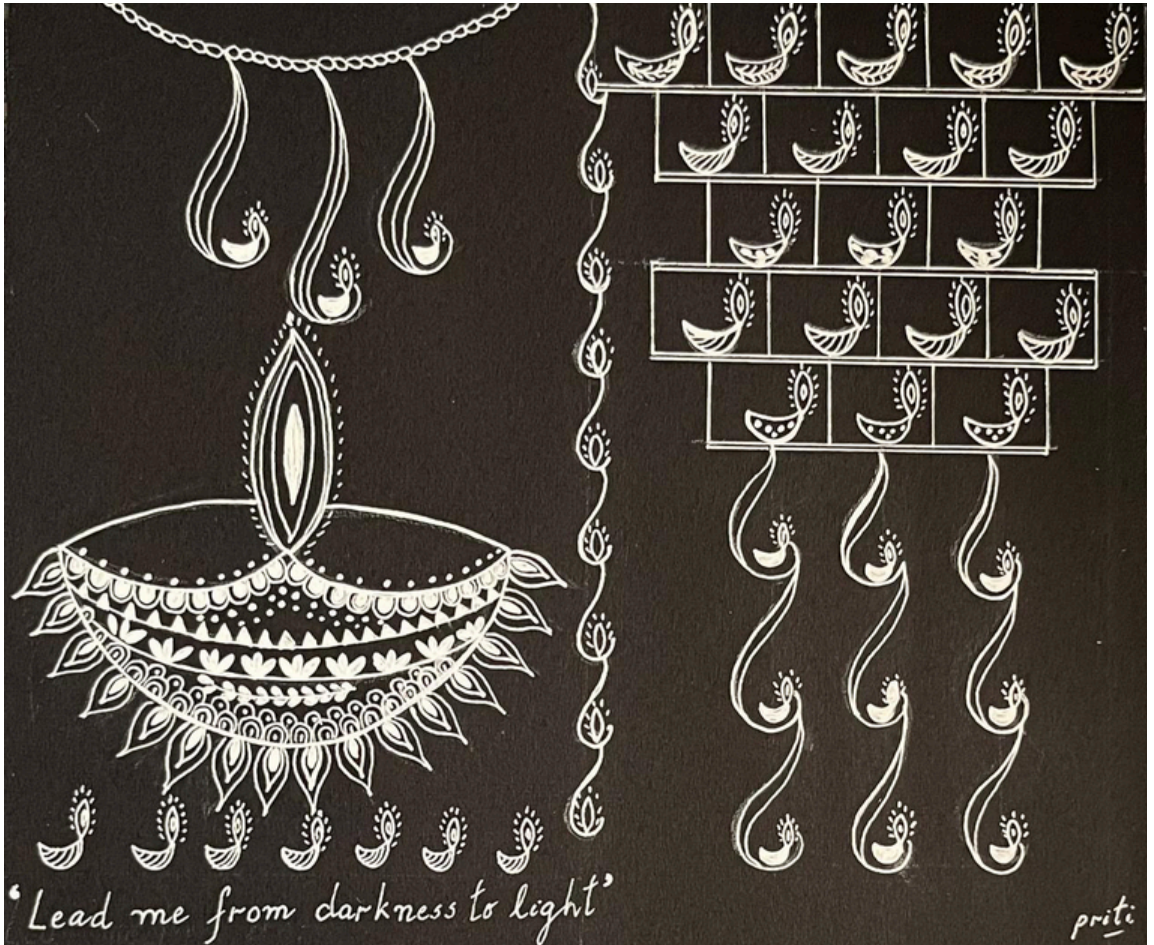


# haikuKATHA

unfolding the story within



Priti Aisola

## happy deepavali

Issue 48 October 2025

# haikuKATHA

unfolding the story within

*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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# haikuKATHA

*unfolding the story within*

Issue 48  
October 2025

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

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Our heartfelt thanks to:

Lakshmi Iyer, Tom Clausen, Nitu Yumnam,  
Anju Kishore and Padma Rajeswari,

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

Priti Aisola  
for her brilliant ink sketch depicting the Festival of Lights,

our contributors  
for sharing their poems.



## **Tejasvat Award**

Triveni Haikai India

Tejasvat in Samskrit means shining bright  
with strength and excellence just like the sun.

The tanka editors,  
Firdaus Parvez, Kala Ramesh,  
Priti Aisola and Suraja Menon Roychowdhury  
are pleased to present  
the

## **Tejasvat Award**

to a poet  
who has a set number of poems  
which hold the essence of Japanese short-form poetry  
in any one issue.

In this issue, we honour

## **Baisali Chatterjee Dutt**

for her four impressive tanka, steeped in simplicity and  
lightness. Basho would have been proud of them.

# Tejasvat Baisali Chatterjee Dutt

Triveni Haikai India

weight gain  
brain fog, hot flashes ...  
where is the pause button  
as I adjust  
to this new womanhood

playing with puppies  
my son asks me  
if his father  
is the only man  
I ever loved

long after  
my coffee is over,  
I linger on  
just to listen  
to the sound of voices

all these funeral flowers,  
white, white and more white ...  
i laugh until i cry  
because  
you would have hated it

sixth Christmas  
the first-time snow tasted  
of loss

Alfred Booth

fashioning a twig bridge  
for ants  
a four-year-old architect

Anjali Warhadpande

approaching the city  
the bird songs  
fading away

Arunachalashiva Ravisankar

little black dress  
I snapseed  
my spider veins

Arvinder Kaur

## haiku

outdoor cafe  
an ant scurries across  
the menu

Baisali Chatterjee Dutt

badger prints  
leading me deeper  
into dusk

C.X. Turner

comma butterfly —  
all the torn leaves  
of summer

C.X. Turner

delta tide —  
I follow the slow journey  
of a crab

Fatma Zohra Habis

## haiga

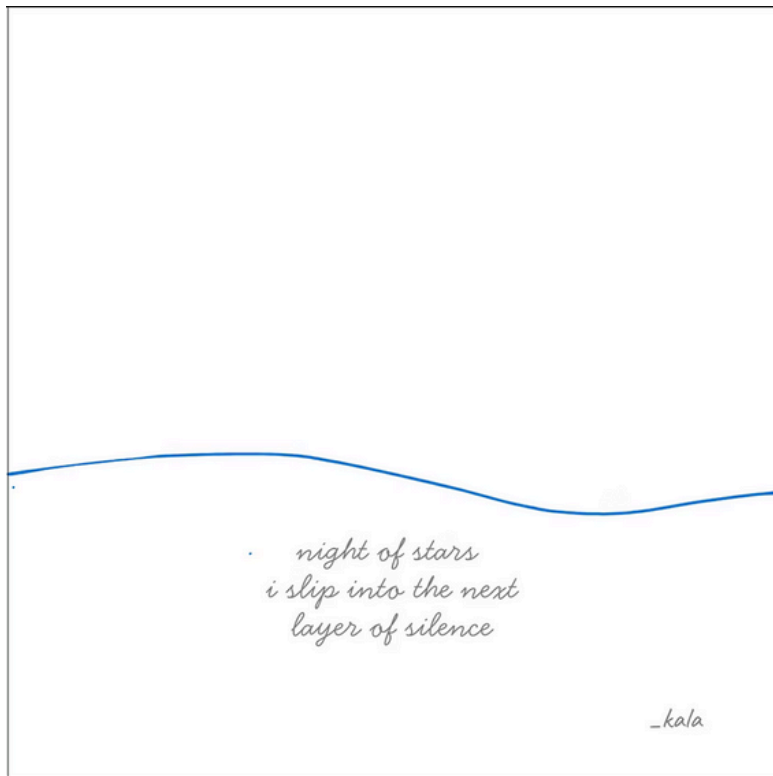


image and ku: Kala Ramesh

## haiku

a flutter of wings  
inside the lampshade ...  
ah! you too are awake

Firdaus Parvez

old regrets ...  
the tide abandons  
some starfish

Firdaus Parvez

walking on the surface  
just like Jesus  
water strider

Jennifer Gurney

evening lull  
the stray dog licks  
her wounds

Kala Ramesh

## haiku

autumn sowing  
some seeds scattered  
to the wind

Kanjini Devi

a hermit crab shifts  
without a to-let board —  
another beach day

Kavitha Sreeraj

autumn light —  
repotting the pachira  
grown wild

Keiko Izawa

soft tides  
tiny crab holes  
breathe bubbles

Lakshmi Iyer



marilyn ashbaugh

turning leaves  
the jump rope skips  
into dusk



## haiku

incense stub  
losing him  
breath by breath

Meera Rehm

astrologer's chart  
termites nibble  
at Saturn's line

Nalini Shetty

mayfly hatch  
another deadline  
flies past

Nalini Shetty

political rally  
a hornet's nest  
left untouched

Nalini Shetty

## haiku

a seed slips away  
from the beetle's grasp  
early dusk

Nitu Yumnam

soft sun  
two butterflies  
twirling as one

Padma Rajeswari

the tickling  
of receding waves  
shellfish sting

Raji Vijayaraghavan

hardware store  
a young assistant  
files her nails

Robert Kingston



image and ku: Marilyn Ashbaugh

## haiku

inland aquarium  
a stingray shows off  
its sad face

Robert Kingston

calming a wasp  
an upturned juice bottle  
on the cafe table

Robert Kingston

weather vane  
a web-stranded leaf spins  
out of control

Robert Kingston

fighting over  
a bowl of popcorn ...  
sunday movie

Sathya Venkatesh

after the thunder  
crisscross of umbrellas  
in a mushroom basket

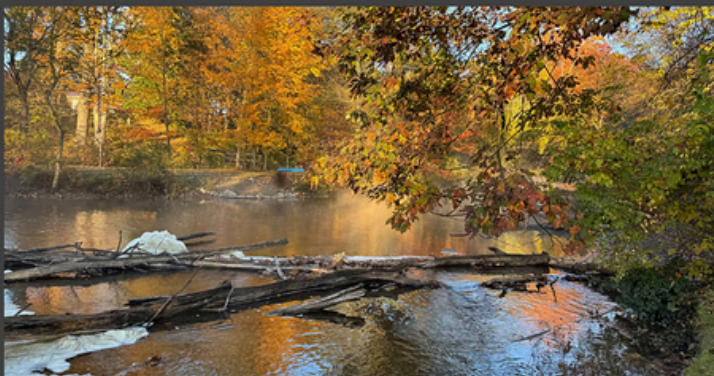
Srinivasa Rao Sambangi

porch light  
a moth falls short  
of the full circle

Srinivasa Rao Sambangi

a water strider  
touched untouched  
by the waters

Vaishnavi Ramaswamy



marilyn ashbaugh

sidewalk hopscotch  
yellow leaves  
play with the wind

image and ku: Marilyn Ashbaugh

## one-line haiku

autumnal drift the radio plays itself without me

Alan Summers

just you and me washing dishes cricket

Billie Dee

new moon shrimp boat lanterns bobbing offshore

Billie Dee

## concrete haiku

scorching sun                  dart                  beams  
yellowjackets              between

Kanjini Devi



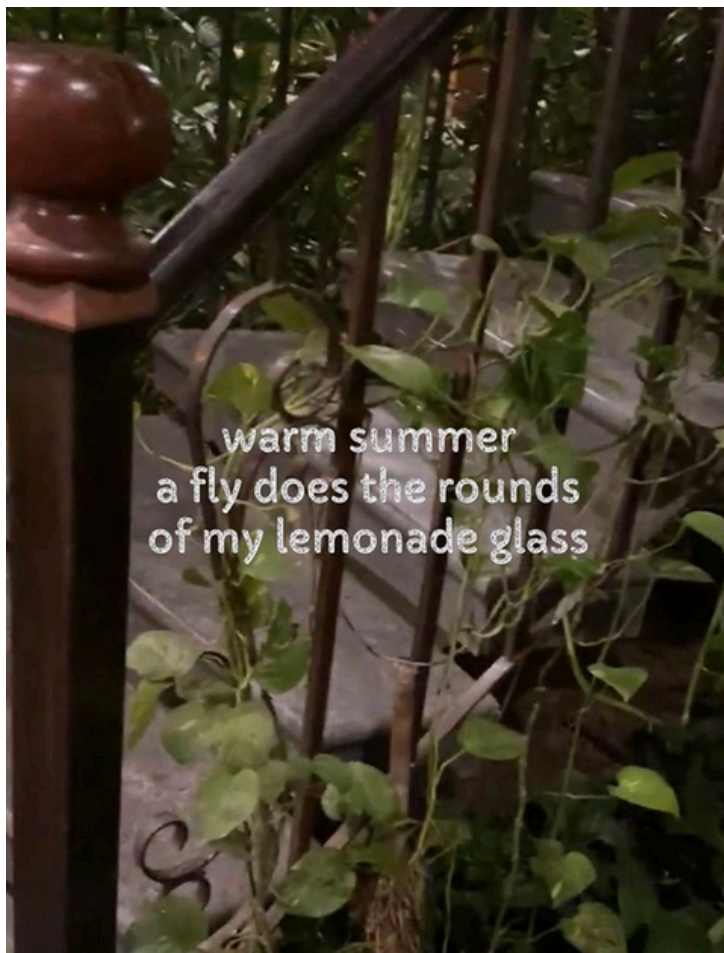


image and ku: Mona Bedi

how many sonnets  
will tell all the tales of life  
and love  
our gardens will still bloom  
when we have gone elsewhere

Alfred Booth

we almost called it quits  
until a sick kitten paved the way  
to a calmer life  
all in all  
the reasons didn't matter

Alfred Booth

the tips  
of the *micocoulier* leaves  
are bathed  
in the noon's silvery sun ...  
this too I will soon forget

Alfred Booth

## tanka

in spite  
of the heavy rain  
a skein of wild geese  
leaving only a wound  
and a scar

Barbara Anna Gaiardoni

fingers stumble over  
the black and white keys  
allegro agitato  
at the edge of autumn  
I'm slowing down

Barbara Olmtak

after the storm  
this pink-cheeked dawn ...  
hopeful  
as a nest of smiling  
matryoshkas

Billie Dee

## tanka

his eyes pass through me  
as if I am a shadow ...  
still the mirror  
shows a woman standing  
among her questions

C.X. Turner

on the porch  
russet chrysanthemums  
fade into dusk ...  
I carry their calm  
back inside with me

C.X. Turner

thistledown drifts  
through the bus window  
and takes a seat ...  
where are you going  
that the wind can't take you

Cynthia Bale

autumn breeze  
stirring war memories  
in his phantom limb



image and ku: Padma Priya

poetry  
a potluck table:  
everyone comes  
with their own meaning  
then tries all the others

Cynthia Bale

we've both gone down  
to talk to the ferryman  
about the last ride  
but I'll never forgive you  
for climbing into his boat

Cynthia Bale

this morning  
in my garden's green  
a single branch  
decorated  
with one yellow leaf

Fatma Zohra Habis

## tanka

crystals forming  
under pressure ...  
these broken thoughts  
shape themselves  
slowly into a poem

Fatma Zohra Habis

I wonder  
what the creases  
on my palm say ...  
the lifeline splits  
like a forked tongue

Firdaus Parvez

your face looms  
in the inky void  
of my closed eyes ...  
some wounds remain unhealed  
oozing with words unsaid

Gowri Bhargav

tree trunks  
rot on the forest floor  
but your memories remain  
the divide of death  
merely a veil

Kanjini Devi

a white-faced heron  
surveying my backyard  
I leap and wave  
the ways I may entice  
you to stay

Kanjini Devi

autumn weaves  
a different story this time  
the black and red spots  
back on her skin ...  
mother now wishes to leave

Lakshmi Iyer



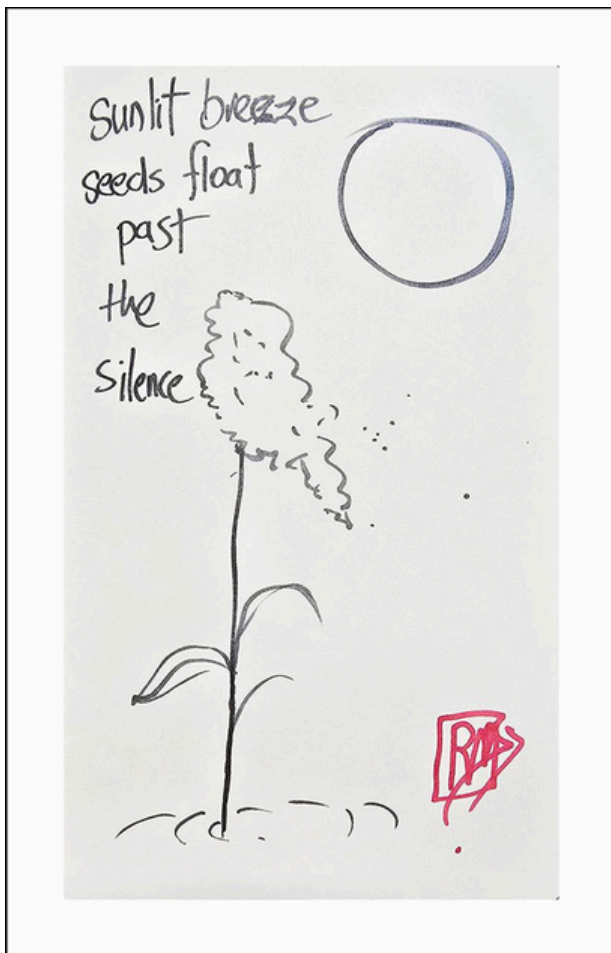


image and ku: Ron C. Moss

my grandkids  
race after their shadow  
for the first time  
the scent of tenderness  
from the blue-green butterfly

Lakshmi Iyer

moonlight  
through trembling leaves  
the shadow  
of what we were  
still on my skin

Lorraine Haig

the tracery  
of a butterfly's wing  
caught on a stem  
what remains of me  
when the light moves on

Lorraine Haig

cornrows on hilltops ...  
whistle by whistle  
we navigate home  
if this was our classroom  
no shooter could find us

Marilyn Ashbaugh

stopping for tea  
on a deserted highway  
at a village shack  
the red-veiled owner busy  
on her phone

Mohua Maulik

the fragrance  
of our wedding night  
tuberose  
don't worry i will not wheeze  
at my prayer meet

Mohua Maulik

autumn leaves  
slowly lose their glory  
after all these years  
your fragile touch still wraps me  
in a warmth I knew as love

Mona Bedi

does sorrow fade  
when I stop asking why?  
a sparrow  
startles the dusk  
with its small flight

Nalini Shetty

dust rising  
from an old violin case  
somewhere inside  
our years together wait  
to be tuned again

Nalini Shetty

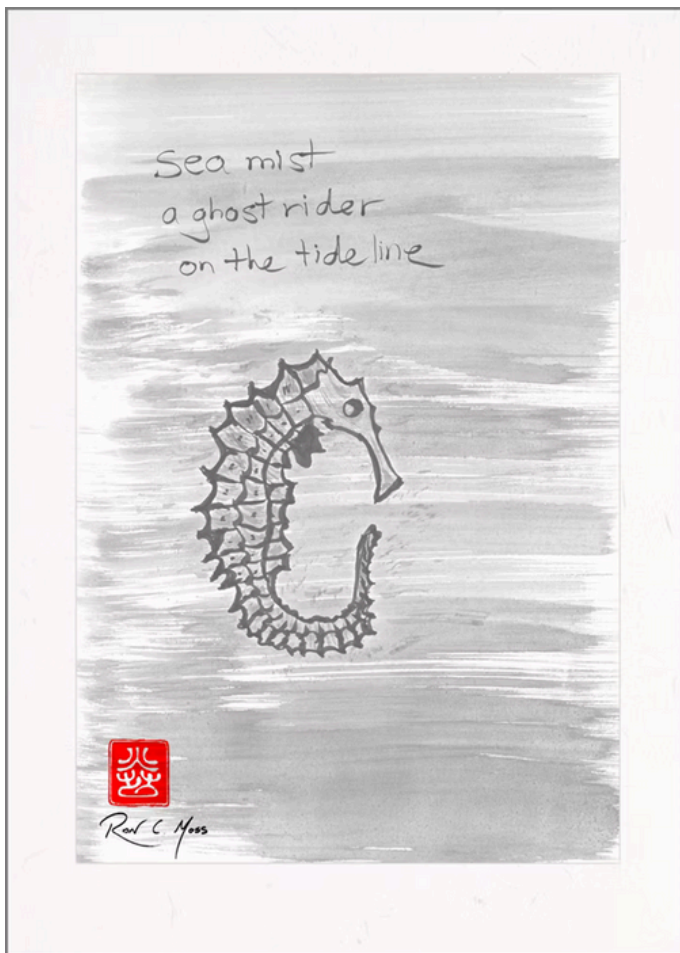


image and ku: Ron C. Moss

## tanka

stone by stone  
the old wall crumbles  
lichen holds fast  
through every season  
green against gray

Nalini Shetty

in attic light  
I sit and read  
old letters  
what more can I do  
with my past?

Padma Rajeshwari

dumped  
by the roadside  
a wasp  
circumnavigates  
a broken bottle

Robert Kingston

too late  
for blossoms to return  
in this garden  
the night holds only  
the silence of crickets

Sandip Chauhan

bursting the pupa  
for the butterfly  
to emerge —  
how a child is forced  
to become a mother

Sathya Venkatesh

autumn wind  
fanning the fire in grandma  
she stands  
upright as a child  
in the school assembly

Sumitra Kumar

## tanka

metamorphosis ...  
have i come to a point  
in life  
where memories seem  
like a previous birth?

Sumitra Kumar

the deep horn  
of a cruise ship  
awakens  
a vast unknown longing  
in a fist-sized heart

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

we say goodnight  
as goodbye looms  
tomorrow  
filled with the promise  
of another empty day

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury



I ask a cousin  
how his house is safe  
from monsoon rages  
that levitates a dry river  
in last night's dream

Tejendra Sherchan

drenched in rain  
a feral leaves her kitten  
at my doorstep  
how well she knows  
what makes us human

Vaishnavi Ramaswamy

fleeting past  
landscapes and milestones  
i remind myself  
the train in its time  
comes to a grinding halt

Vaishnavi Ramaswamy



Alfred Booth



### The Wind Brings the Sighs of the River

After her death he made a scarecrow wearing her favorite kimono, its colors attracting butterflies and kind spirits for the vast vegetable garden. Her others were given away after the daughters made their choices. In her later, more creative years, she had fashioned life-sized statues of the five of them as adults, using river stones and old branches from the forest with a sun-dried mud mortar. The elders faced east and each child watched over the north, west and south. She sketched minimal details in vivid colors, enough for each portrait to be easily recognized at a distance.

One morning she simply did not wake to greet the new sunlight. Eighty-three years of *joie de vivre*.

among the willows  
on this last lingering path  
he wanders  
a small vial of ashes  
in his pocket

Billie Dee



## Charred

After Vietnam, he never fit in — left his family behind, drifted through the back streets of a series of Midwestern cities. Hobbled by nightmares and pills, he gave what little he had to the three-legged mutt he found in a rail yard. When the Veterans' Home finally took him in, they made him give up the dog. He hasn't spoken since.

scent  
of a neighborhood  
barbecue —  
in the unlit day room  
an old soldier weeping

C.X. Turner



## Wingbeat

The day begins with his words, like the hush of low tide sweeping against pebbles. I notice the movement of sunlight against glass.

I carry him in the pauses between tasks, the quiet hinge of breath. Even over distance, his voice gathers like rain on the sill, something I can feel without reaching.

By night, soft conversation closes the circle — a murmur at my ear, and I drift to sleep.

across the miles  
I measure what cannot stretch  
the sky between us  
a swallow still returns  
to where it first began

C.X. Turner



### Between Skyline

The map unfolds in fragments, a city lit in river-light, stories edged by tower blocks and storm clouds glimmering.

Beyond the reach of streets, forests deepen and snow-peaked mountains rise, their ridgelines stitched with weather.

A threshold lingers, across these distances, unspoken yet binding.

one flock  
of starlings separates  
the other holds —  
a seam of twilight  
unravels in their wings

C.X. Turner

Between Departures

The tide has worn the cliff's edge thin, a palimpsest of chalk and root. I walk where the marram leans into the wind, the smell of kelp heavy on my hands.

Amid gull cries, a pause opens, wide enough to hold all the words I never said.

spindrift gathers  
on the wrack line  
I lean  
into the autumn air  
until it almost carries me

Along the tideline, fragments surface: a salt-rusted hinge, sea-glass smoothed to opal, the jawbone of a being once alive. Each relic speaks in a language of erasure, yet still it gleams.

The sea rehearses each leaving, each return, each wave rehearses something I cannot name.

through sea-fog  
the pier's skeleton  
extends  
I walk until absence  
becomes its own tether

Firdaus Parvez



## Alone in My Head

I wake up from a dream about my dead father. The room is filled with early morning light and I blink away the lingering remnants of his soft smile, just like my son's.

dreaded sound  
of tomorrow approaching  
footsteps  
in the hospital corridor,  
whir of a gurney

Back in the room, I'm groggy and can't feel my legs. People whisper around me; their low tones brush past, and I drift away.

awoken again  
by my father's voice  
calling my name  
hush, my son says,  
it was just a dream

At home, I've been crying on and off all day, and I don't know why. My husband thinks I'm in pain from the surgery, but this ache is hard to explain.

somewhere  
a koel starts a tune  
my son whistles  
back and forth  
back and forth



Kala Ramesh



## Reflection

Every Thursday, a day off from the clinic, he tended to his plants with great care. He would gently hold each leaf and wipe away the dust with a damp cloth. He said that after a week of treating patients, this simple act helped him recover. There was no talking, listening, or convincing. The plants also thrived under his care, and the time spent with them became a quiet exchange of love.

He lost his mother when he was three. At that time, photography was almost unheard of. He proudly says that many people in his village still say he looks like his mother.

a cow  
calls out to her calf ...  
the low moo  
rings in me even more, now  
that I am a grandmother

Lorraine Haig



### Still Searching

In that small church a river of words flowed over me knowing my daughter was already somewhere else, unhindered by her handicapped body.

standing here  
on the incoming tide  
I climb  
the stairway of moonlight  
reaching for you

**Mona Bedi**



**The Living Dead**

leaves fall  
outside my window  
in the autumn haze  
my childhood home  
appears then disappears

I remember his shoes... one bigger than the other. Dad had contracted polio as a child. A handsome boy, he was always conscious of his handicap. It was then he decided to become a doctor. Later after getting married to a beautiful girl he had three daughters whom he loved dearly. All his insecurities soon vanished and he thrived in the home he had so painstakingly built.

last rites  
thick smoke rises  
from the pyre  
long after he is gone  
his scent lingers in each room

Nalini Shetty

## Unopened

Sorting the drawer this morning, I found a small brass key. It looks like it belongs to a jewelry box. I cannot recall what it opens. Perhaps I never knew.

misplaced years  
all the unopened doors  
I pass by  
what is it I keep  
locked inside myself?

We spend our days with keys in our pockets, searching for locks. Other times, the key itself becomes the lock, holding back what waits in memory.

beneath silence  
the faint click of tumblers  
a room waiting  
for my hand to decide  
if the door will open

Nalini Shetty  
~

**Barren Note**

The afternoon light shifts across the garden wall. I pause in my chores, listening to the quiet between bird calls. There is no hurry, only this moment opening like a slow breath. I wonder how many more such pauses will come before the day carries me onward.

the old clock  
ticks without concern  
for me or mine —  
still I follow its hands  
toward another dusk

Priti Aisola



## Be Still

Kozhikode — a small Ayurvedic hospital. The small balcony of our room with a raised granite seat against one wall. A cloudy morning, and muggy, because it rained heavily last night. From where I am sitting, I have a clear view of the temple tank with its elevated banks. A road runs along three sides of the tank. At one corner is an old Shiva temple, self-contained and serene. Dried coconut husks are piled up against one of the inner walls of the temple. From the road skirting the back of the temple, through the open door, one can glimpse the soft glow of oil lamps before the lingam.

Coconut palms, a plantain tree, and a prosperous jackfruit tree are reflected in the undulating green water of the temple tank. Rain-fed, this tank has no supply of fresh water from an underground spring, stream, or connecting well. Yet, many early mornings and late evenings, I see people coming here, either to wash their clothes or bathe: a daily ritual of polluting the water.

On some auspicious days, the utsava murti from a Devi shrine close by is dipped in the waters of the tank — on the extreme opposite side where people are forbidden from using it.

silence  
of the sodden leaves  
girdling the tree ...  
a thought stirs within,  
what is sacred and what is not

Note: utsava murti — a portable idol of a deity, generally made of bronze, used during temple processions on sacred festival days.

Tejendra Sherchan



### Matriphagy

I read a post about an African spider in the Meta. She feeds and nurtures her young ones. She carries all of them on her back to protect them from predators. However, the young ones will eat her up after they grow enough to hunt alone.

breastfed  
instead we burn her  
in the solar heat  
our ever-deepening  
darkness

Vaishnavi Ramaswamy



## A Blessing

A soft rhythmic jingle of brass bells resounds through the stillness of the thousand pillared hallway of the temple as Parvathi arrives. The slant of the morning sunlight filtering through the pillars envelops her in a golden halo, as she emerges through the darkness. Fresh from a bath, the air around her is charged with the fresh scent of petrichor and sacred ash. Decorated with the traditional insignia of the Tripundra, still glistening on her dark wet forehead, she takes charge of her spot. Devotees thronging for a morning darshan, pay their first obeisance to the temple elephant.

For a moment I step into her aura. . .

an elephant's touch  
heavy yet gentle  
upon the head  
what would I not trade  
for this blessing

\*Tripundra - The Tripundra is a sacred forehead marking used by Hindu devotees of Shiva (Shaivites). It consists of three horizontal lines made from sacred ash, symbolizing Shiva's third eye and the purity of mind, body, and speech.



Dear Readers  
thank you for being with us.

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

Team: *haikuKATHA*