

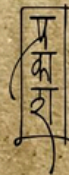
haikuKATHA

unfolding the story within



Prakash Thombre

Issue 54 April 2026



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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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Issue 54
April 2026

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

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,
for providing the weekly challenges
for the month of March 2026,

Prakash Thombre,
for his brilliant ink sketch,

our contributors
for sharing their poems.

Editors' Choice Commentary: by Priti Aisola
Editor's Choice: tanka by Kalyanee Arandhara

i know not
what the gondolier sings
back home
my heart weeps listening
to the boatman's song

Kalyanee Arandhara

Out of the many lovely tanka in this issue, I chose Kalyanee's because it touched my heart. Also, it flows beautifully with the repetition of the 's' sound giving it a gentle, song-like quality. In language that is simple, yet effective, this tanka's mood of subdued melancholy stays with the reader long after the poem has been read and re-read and savoured in silence.

The opening line stirs the interest of the reader – 'i know not' – and one reads the rest of the poem with bated breath. 'i know not / what the gondolier sings' – one guesses that the narrator is in Italy, very likely Venice. Though she doesn't understand the lyrics of the song, the reader surmises that the melody and the mood of the song appeal to her. Google tells me this: as the gondoliers navigated their gondola along the canals and narrow waterways of Venice they sang while pointing out places of interest to the tourists/visitors. Traditionally, their songs were about 'romantic love, the beauty of Venice', the boatman's life, the magical atmosphere that surrounded evening boat rides in the moonlight....

When the narrator is back home, her 'heart weeps / listening to the boatman's song'. Without knowing what the reason or reasons could be, the reader empathises with the narrator and takes in the mood of restrained, gentle sadness. What touches the narrator so deeply about the boatman's song?

Going by the boatman's songs that I am familiar with, he comes across as quite a philosopher reflecting on the meaning of life, on the idea of life as a river. The passengers he carries in his boat – each of them has their distinct, unique destiny, each of them has their own gamut of experiences.

Editors' Choice Commentary: by Priti Aisola
Editor's Choice: tanka by Kalyanee Arandhara

And yet, each of them has to go across the river of life to reach the other bank, the other end (that is life's end, as in death).

Another theme in the boatman's songs is that of God as the divine boatman, guiding each individual's boat as it navigates the river of life.

The songs could be about the boatman's own loneliness, although he does meet many travellers, who he ferries across the river and connects with for a brief while.

The boatman's song could also be about the different moods of the river, or the sad state of the rivers – their shrinking waters and their contamination.

The boatman has an intimate, strong and complex relationship with the river. It is his close companion, his mentor, his muse, his source of livelihood, and a force to be reckoned with, in times of its fury during floods.

Navigating his boat along the river, a boatman sees so much – villages on the river bank, fields and farms, farm animals and birds, the changes in people's lives through climate change and other changes, either slow or dramatic.

The boatman's song could also be about romantic longing ... unfulfilled love. Some of these songs are achingly beautiful.

There was something charming, haunting, even sorrowful, about the boatman's songs that I am familiar with, songs that centered around nadi (river), naav (boat) and maajhi (boatman).

All the above reflections or thoughts are thanks to Kalyanee's beautiful tanka which enriched my day for a brief while, and each time I recall it, I will enjoy its beauty all over again.

Priti Aisola

haiku

wisteria
the morning wash
on the clothesline

Alfred Booth

Milky Way
dad loses the trail
of his thought

Anju Kishore

swirl of leaves
grandma's turn
to be wheeled in the park

Anju Kishore

if not
for the koel's coo —
slow day

Anju Kishore

haiku

misty moon
at the roof's edge
a meow

Artur Zieliński

urban rush —
a cyclist's morning coffee
on my face

Artur Zieliński

barefoot
on sun-hot granite
first love

Arvinder Kaur

jumping fences at noon
the neighbour's loquat

Arvinder Kaur

haiku

spring contagion
a passing tune
latches on to me

Baisali Chatterjee Dutt

Good Friday
how prayer dissolves
in myrrh

Billie Dee

old jazz
the slow burn
of a whiskey neat

Bryan Rickert

hospital stay
a detailed examination
of the ceiling tiles

Bryan Rickert

haiku

ash bark
peeling back
old rain

C.X. Turner

dead phone —
the world returns
to the window

Jacek Margolak

philosophy class —
the fly on the window
graduates first

Jacek Margolak

spring breeze —
the crackle of a needle
before the song

Jacek Margolak

haiga

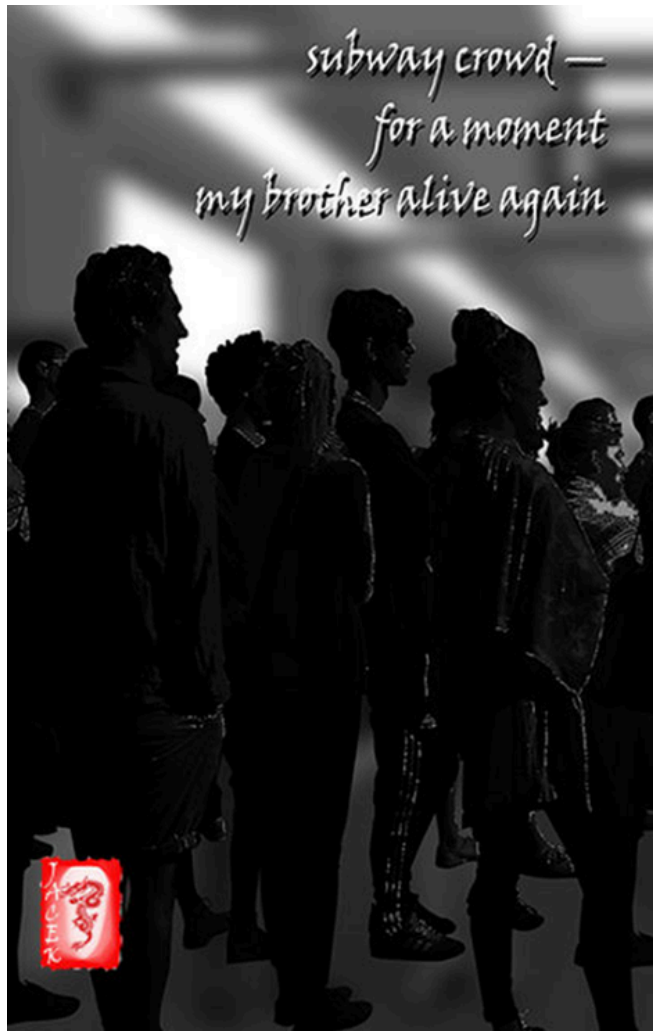


image and ku: Jacek Margolak

haiku

channel surfing
a familiar face
in a different show

Jennifer Gurney

spring lambs
the lollop of legs
scattering sunshine

Joanna Ashwell

rising sun
the megalith's slant
between two worlds

Joanna Ashwell

long journey ...
the cab driver and I
at the tea table

K. Ramesh

haiku

a long pause
of the suburban train ...
moonlit lake

K. Ramesh

India's partition
in my mother's story
drifting leaves

Kala Ramesh

rural bank
the long queue
of flip-flops

Kanjini Devi

from car
to hilltop cabin
coat hanger radio

Kanjini Devi

haiku

autumn breeze
a leaf by my side
for a few steps

Kalyanee Arandhara

traffic jam
catching up with the latest
in my son's life

Kalyanee Arandhara

march rain —
mimosas grazing
the café sign

Keiko Izawa

winter light —
a pause before my old cat
jumps onto the desk

Keiko Izawa

haiku

dentist chair ...
a mountain calendar
tilted

Keiko Izawa

train delay
pencil-shavings' butterflies
in my scrap book

Lakshmi Iyer

autumn nightfall
our dog scratching
from the other side

Lev Hart

autumn nightfall
the leaves and I rattle through
old haunts

Lev Hart



longing
for a life

that still feels
like mine ...

transit
camp

milan rajkumar

haiku

pub poetry
diners take the talk
up a notch

Lorraine Haig

willow breeze
cat's cradle
between small fingers

Marilyn Ashbaugh

three-day rain ...
watching sweet peas
sprout

Marilyn Ashbaugh

sparkling beach
her long hair forming
an enso

Milan Rajkumar

haiku

terrace dusk
bulbuls rearrange
the leftover sky

Nalini Shetty

sun on snow —
the returned soldier's voice
over the phone

Padma Priya

summer night ...
mobiles lighting our way
down the hill shrine

Raji Vijayaraghavan

Hollesley church
a spider's wrapped prey taps
at the ornate door

Robert Kingston

haiku

sun up
a medieval axe shapes
an echo

Robert Kingston

desert highway ...
a passing car's reflection
in her gold sunglasses

Ron C. Moss

spring thaw —
the smell of earth
not yet open

Sandip Chauhan

returning swallows —
a mason's wheelbarrow
parked mid-job

Sathya Venkatesh

haiku

vintage photo —
her long braid
from another era

Sathya Venkatesh

radio commentary
elder brother knows
where to hit


Srinivasa Rao Sambangi

spring breeze
laburnum street
our new landmark

Sudha Shetty

in an old town
thinking of a love
I don't know

Tejendra Sherchan



lashing rain
our conversation
veers to the war

Pic & ku: Mona Bedi

haiku

sadness
in his smile —
my favorite grocery clerk

Tim Dwyer

dandelion puff —
doodles
on the maths notebook

Vaishnavi Ramaswamy

one-line haiku

stratocumulus clouds white to grey the gaps between

Alan Summers

midnight sidewalk the depth of blue from his saxophone

Billie Dee

driftwood what the river knows

Susan Burch

sea where his footprints were

Vaishnavi Ramaswamy

tanka

waiting room —
there may be no reason
to sing and dance
either way I will hold you
tight in my arms

Alfred Booth

wars for control
fill our human world
somewhere unnoticed,
dogs trail their master
unconcerned with power

Amrutha V Prabhu

another spring
without your footprints
in drops of dew
only the scent
of wet stones

Artur Zieliński

tanka

boots and lies
Hellfire missiles
still
the indigo mountain
the fragile pinks of dawn

Billie Dee

songbirds
returning for spring
every day
a little easier
living without you

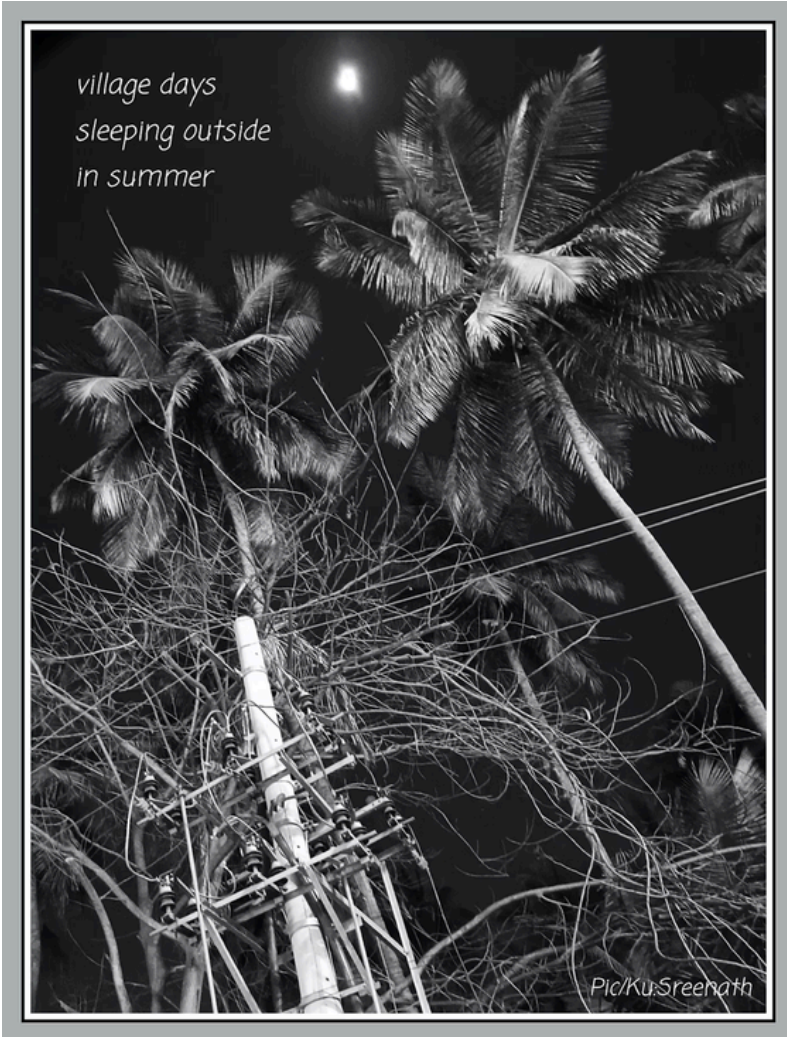
Bryan Rickert

your finger traces
the blue vein on my wrist —
the tea cold
I memorize
the way the light leaves

Jacek Margolak

haiga

*village days
sleeping outside
in summer*



Pic/Ku:Sreenath

tanka

a golden honeybee
stilled by the autumn chill
on my open palm
I feel the thrum of a life
asking only for sun

Jacek Margolak

window left open
curtains lifting —
for a moment
the house remembers
how she used to sing

Jacek Margolak

heart-shaped rocks
on the path below
broken in two
mirroring mine
still pounding, alone

Jennifer Gurney

tanka

the feel
of velvet on my face
this gentle hug
my granddaughter gives me
on her ninth birthday

Kala Ramesh

I wait
for spring thaw
each year
to witness earth find
her colours again

Kala Ramesh

i know not
what the gondolier sings
back home
my heart weeps listening
to the boatman's song

Kalyanee Arandhara

tanka

running late for work
the baby mynah
on my driveway
a neighbour says
it's only a pest

Kanjini Devi

horseback riding
at a women's retreat
the rescued mare
teaches me to trust
and feel the wind

Kanjini Devi

sankirtanam ...
the names of Krishna
flow from my lips
while my tummy rumbles
for the feast which follows

Kanjini Devi

tanka

mother's fear
of longevity
in our conversations
how I wish to tell her
'pray for a peaceful end'

Lakshmi Iyer

I sight
the Asian woolly-head stork
through thick trees
the bright strokes
of a rainbow sneak in

Lakshmi Iyer

the river trail
beside a lazy current
our footprints
shadow well-worn tracks
of songline wanderers

Marilyn Humbert



tanka

unprepared
for an autumn blizzard
I search
for words to melt
your frozen heart

Marilyn Humbert

this mad rush
for the top before
the inevitable
fall to the bottom ...
tea leaves

Mohua Maulik

edges
of the red rose
turn black
this love in my heart
tinged with annoyance

Mohua Maulik

tanka

from my father
I inherited music —
how lightly
I held his songs
now carried by the wind

Padma Rajeswari

more fissures
in our house fence wall
the cracks
in her memory
widen

Priti Aisola

the base
of Mount Baker dissolves
in a cloud haze
is it a sage who has learnt
how to levitate

Priti Aisola

tanka

azalea buds
in the rain —
a game of chess
left unfinished
on the verandah

Rashmi Buragohain

napping *gharials*
by the Chambal
from dacoits
to India's clearest waters
the way a river evolves

Rupa Anand

a sparrow
returning to the same branch
of blossoms
the twitch in grandma's hand
upon my touch

Sankara Jayanth Sudanagunta

tanka

anxious
to be the first to say it
together humming
a song over the metronome
of crashing waves

Sankara Jayanth Sudanagunta

hospital bed —
the curtain half-drawn between
your pillow and mine
I smooth the sheet once more
to keep my hands from shaking

Sathya Venkatesh

an empty armchair —
the evening light falls
where you once sat
i pause before speaking
as if you might reply

Sathya Venkatesh



huffing up the trail
his hand steadies me...
the hands
I held as he
learned to walk

tanka/image: Nitu

tanka

evening raga
drifts through
sabhas ...
house full
at the food stalls

Sathya Venkatesh

on a lone flight
where to, oh dot of a bird?
who gives you
the direction
to turn left or right

Sumitra Kumar

an octopus
bleeds blue
every day
I learn something new
about our differences

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

tanka

pain free
we wander hand in hand
in my dream
once again you trespass
where you have no right to be

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

a new spring
when I finally meet
my old love
the way music enters
coloring the sunset

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

a decade
of our faded love ...
the butterfly
keeps fluttering
beside me

Tejendra Sherchan

tanka

who invented
the Moonwalk dance
move ...
Michael Jackson or
Red-capped Manakin

Tejendra Sherchan

tanka-art



Alfred Booth
~

That Day in August 1983

We cried a lot, and I sensed your decision broke your heart as much as it did mine. But you didn't need me to hold your hand any longer. You had lifelong friends for that kind of tender loving care. It was too early for even the medical profession to fully understand the gravity of what had struck you. There was not yet a name for the treachery that forced our separation. Ute wrote only once, months later, that the only thing you refused to talk about was me. Of course: how could you speak of my broken heart when your body was slowly breaking apart piece by piece?

in the forest
a blight takes the oldest oaks
we plant new ones
giving each the same
of a departed friend

C.X. Turner

Where It Was

On the way out, just beyond the front door, the path holds something small and sudden. A blue tit, fallen into the thin margin between hedge and pavement, its body still carrying the idea of flight. The yellow at its breast catches what little light there is. For a moment, I do not move. The world narrows to this quiet weight of being here, not here.

I crouch. Lift it. The warmth is almost gone, but not entirely. A softness that resists naming. How often we step around what asks to be seen. How quickly we choose distance. In my hands, it feels like a pause I didn't know I needed.

Under the hedge, I part the leaves. Lay it there where the earth is still dark and close. A small returning.

mid-march light
on the washing line
a single sleeve
lifting and falling
without a body

Dinah Power

resets

i note in my daily 5,000 step walk (used to be 10,000 not that long ago),
my muscles refuse to take another step
my lungs join them in this rebellion
my brain commands an override ... fail

for my stomach, weirdly hunger is a distant thought, no matter how
i tempt it, its shrinkage won't allow for much and some kilos have said goodbye,
yet it is difficult to do up pants i wore a year ago ...

my spine no longer wants to hold me tall, 5 cms disappeared along with
my waistline

above it all my mind sits and confuses me,
witty repartee no longer at the tip of my tongue
the need for sleep is on a crazy schedule

and so it goes ... uncalled for, rapid changes noted in my physiology
has resulted from what?

indeed i'm older, yet this only showed up in the last few months

i think i am brave being in this country at war, where the streets no longer have
their usual bustle, yet now i jump at every loud noise

refusing to accept
the wear & tear of conflict
black clouds visible
the resilience of youth fades
in the midst of war

Jacek Margolak
~

After the Meal

We stay longer than we planned. The plates have been cleared, the waiter no longer comes by. Outside, the light is already thinning, but neither of us reaches for a coat. You twist a strand of your hair around your finger, then let it go. I watch your hands, as if they could tell me what happens next.

late afternoon —
you fold the napkin
once more
neither of us
mentions leaving

Joanna Ashwell
~

The Weekend

His eyes go deep into my soul. He knows and I know. He can barely walk, is off his food – tantamount to purgatory for a labrador; he can't even cock his leg. My eyes are a well of rivers. My limbs are flailing toward the door. One last hug.

the silence of home
as a double rainbow
fills the sky ...
my heart is a shell
without an ocean

Kalyanee Arandhara

Faces

Alongside the flock of little black birds that darken a part of the sky is a white tiny one. Maybe, he lost his clan or his way. Yet he flutters his wings with the same zest like the others. Do they speak the same language? Is he taunted by the others as he's strayed from his own clan? Or has he been given a warm welcome?

the faces
of strangers i see
on my path daily
what stories they'd tell
if we shook hands one day

Lorraine Haig

Restless Night

It isn't your voice that finds its way into my dreams. It's the rustle of leaves as you fold your wings. Through the window the moon lights up your fair hair. Your eyelids droop as they always did in the mornings, sleep still in your eyes. I wonder if you are an angel. Your spreading wings fan the darkness between us and I open my eyes to emptiness.

tall trees
line the pathway
gentle rain
mingles with tears
as someone grips my hand

Mona Bedi



A Lost Fairytale

He is all white, with a single black patch over one eye — a stray, yet deeply loved by the residents. They call him Dhuchkan. My sister looks after him too. She never wanted a dog, and yet, somehow, Dhuchkan found his way into her heart.

Once, the local authorities picked him up along with other strays and took them to a shelter. My sister and the neighbours fought to bring him back — and they did.

Now she is ill and weak, and tending to him is no longer easy. Still, she waits for him for hours. On some days, she lets him into the house, and the two of them quietly revel in each other's company.

alien winds blow
across a deserted garden
on the empty swing
dust motes arrange themselves
into a semblance of you

Mona Bedi

Fragile

The wind feels different tonight — cool, deliberate, almost aware. The temperature rests in that rare, perfect balance, neither warm nor cold. Yesterday's rain has rinsed the sky clean. The night air is thin, weightless against my skin.

And yet, something lingers.

A presence hums just beyond perception, close enough to unsettle. I can't see it, but I feel it — as though someone nearby is trying to reach me. I stretch my arms overhead and close my eyes, surrendering to the stillness.

Then it comes.

A sudden gust rushes through me, sharp and alive. I shudder, a flicker of unease tracing my spine. A familiar scent wraps around me like a distant memory. Before I can turn, something slips past, unseen.

A soft whisper follows: "Find me."

old cemetery
overflowing with weeds
on a small grave
a yellow butterfly flutters
amongst the wildflowers

Padma Priya
~

Shards of Glass

War news again. I switch off the television. A deep melancholy surrounds me. So many innocent human lives gone, just like that — how can that be explained? Will the pain inflicted ever heal? What about the deep scars? A quiet prayer wells from the depths of my heart: may this mayhem end.

heron's gaze —
sinking
into the depths
of a lily pond
dead fish

Rupa Anand

Drop What You Carry

How attached we are to the name given to us when we're born, becoming the mantra of our existence! As spiritual students, we're advised to let go of this attachment to the name.

Looking at the world, we see an endless variety of objects with a plethora of names. One meditation technique employed is to superimpose each worldly object with Om, so beings, animals, plants, birds, rivers and mountains are all divine.

By the time cancer struck, I could sense this detachment from the body, and employing it as a crutch I started to heal, transcending the limitations that destiny placed before me.

colouring the world
with the universal name
Om
i drop mine, to be the wind
that takes me everywhere

from *The Mandukya Upanishad*

Sathya Venkatesh

Still Waiting

Evening settles in — the neighbour draws the gate shut, vessels clink in the sink, a scooter slows at the corner and moves on; somewhere a latch clicks. In each passing sound I hear “I’m back,” and my body answers before thought, turning again toward the door, as if this time it might be true.

at the doorway —
the last light draining
from the neem leaves
i stand a moment longer
before the dark

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury



The Long Arc of Extinction

An asteroid crashed into the planet and killed the giants that ruled this planet for 60 MILLION years. Million, with six zeroes ... I think of the monsters that rule the planet now- with a measly single zero in their lifespan, yet acting like eternity is in their grasp.

clam shells
wash up in the waves
at my feet
almost believing I'm a toe
of the Cosmic Destroyer

Tejendra Sherchan
~

Infiltration

It's my cousin's wedding, a steaming hot day, amidst the Maoists insurgency. Driving almost half day through the hurdles of army security checks and traffic jams, we bring his bride home. A party follows. The guests dance to the music — all in their wedding dresses, flashing with all sorts of expensive jewellery.

uninvited boy
dancing with rhythm
and grace ...
a cuckoo laying her eggs
in the warblers' nest

Vaishnavi Ramaswamy
~

Manikarnika

We finally reach Varanasi. My brother, excited and sleepless, arranges his certificates and documents in his briefcase, setting his neatly ironed clothes on the table, for his first day at the Benares Hindu University. Over dinner, my aunt and uncle who have planned their dream itinerary at Kashi for Vishwanath darshan and the evening Ganga Aarti argue about which should be done first. My grandmother sits alone near the window overlooking a procession to the *ghat*. There is a strange longing in her eyes. As I place my hand on her shoulder, she looks up with a peaceful smile and says she has made arrangements to stay back until her time. For a moment I remember my parents.

spiralling smoke
petals turned to woodash ...
down the steps
bright diyas drift away
into the dark of night

My NRI cousin preps her camera equipment for a boat ride the next morning. My uncle proclaims he is giving up his favourite okra and apples. My brother-in-law, anxious to buy the best quality conch from Benares, makes enquiries by telephone.

sandalwood
in the burning pyre
i watch my anger
melt into the silence
of a wilted marigold

*Note: It is customary for every Hindu during/after a trip to Varanasi to permanently renounce a daily essential as a pledge toward spiritual growth.

Vaishnavi Ramaswamy
~

The Unspoken

A lonely stray calico. Food or no food, she follows me wherever I go. Wherever I pause, she rolls over for a tummy rub. Although I notice her often pregnant, I hardly get to see any of her babies. One spring evening on the terrace, a little ginger sits snuggled close to her. Next morning I carry a bowl of warm milk.

a still kitten
she licks her memories
of love and pain ...
i remember the weight
of a lost child in my palm

Vaishnavi Ramaswamy
~

Sting

Sunday morning. The coldness of disbelief. A tightness in the chest, a throat so constricted, unclearable. Fingers clammy and freezing around the edges of the document. A bunch of green papers, signed in blue, stamped in red. A large expanse of black print, Century Gothic, 14, Bold. Slowly the black fades. Standing alone in the expanse of white, in the wide space between you and me ...

each tear
zooming and warping
over every i and j
of our names tethered
together for 18 years

Dear Readers
thank you for being with us.

See you once again on 22 May 2026
with many more fine poems
from our contributors!

Team: *haikuKATHA*