

Dear Friends, we continue this beautiful journey of Japanese genre poetry. After discussing haiku and senryu in the previous columns of Haiku Blossoms, this week I bring you haiga—a magical combination of image and poem.

I draw from the article on “Looking and Seeing-How Haiga Works” by Jim Kacian published in *Simply Haiku* 2:5, Autumn 2004 which I share with his kind permission:

“Of all the contributions to world art to have come from the Japanese, haiga is perhaps the most unique. It is, by definition, a combination of visual and verbal elements which work in ensemble to create an aesthetic experience quite distinct from either element taken by itself.

Specifically, I would like to consider these two questions: “What are you looking at?” and “What do you see?” “What are you looking at?” “What do you see?”

Looking is a direct apprehension: it is neutral, specific, representative. Looking is the act of an observer, and accepting of the reality observed. Looking makes sense and value based on the positing of an objective world “out there” and our ability to perceive it accurately. We act faithfully to that objective world, even if it is not certain that we are seeing it so. If I show you an image and ask you to identify it, and you can’t, you might respond “I’m still looking.” And your looking is taking place in the realm of the objective world where you might have seen such a sight before.

Seeing, on the other hand, is an act of choice. It is the contemplation of not just things, but the relationship between things, and between things and ourselves. It is the act of an imaginer. Seeing is not satisfied solely with what is objectively noted, but seeks to make connections. It is

intellective and categorical. It is associative, and “knows more” than the simple face of reality. It is subjective.”

The above highlighted questions of Jim have stayed with me and whenever a haiga comes up I ask myself these questions.

Dr Pravat Kumar Padhy in his well-researched article has delineated his experience on the magic of haiga and on my request has shared the following abridged and slightly revised version of his essay:

“**The Magic of Image and Muse of Words: My Experience**”, published in *Positive Vibes, Edition LXVIII, May 15, 2020*.

The poet while composing a poem tries to transform the image into the art of words. This is an intricate communication between the expressive art and the image as he visualizes it. A new dimension of the fusion emanates when the poet merges the image with poetic expression. The poignant subtle revelation explores something beyond the image or the piece of art. This is the essence of the art of haiga (HIGH-GAH). Haiga (haikai drawing) is the style of Japanese painting accompanied by a haiku. Stephen Addiss puts haiga as “An artwork drawn by an artist’s imagination, collaborated with a Japanese poem (haiku, tanka or haibun) or contemporary forms either in calligraphy or computer typefaces.” Etymologically, the term Haiga is composed of two terms, “*Hai*” means comic or humorous/ light- hearted poem and “*Ga*” means traditional painting or drawing with a brush.

A poem with painting tradition was in existence long ago. In ancient China, painting, poetry and calligraphy were called ‘Three Perfections’ during the Tang Dynasty (618-907). As early as the 6th century, the Chinese try to combine paintings, and calligraphy with an expression of poetry. Later during the 7th century, the late Edo period, the form of Japanese painting was more of Kano school painting, Zen painting, and often was influenced by the aesthetic values of the *nanga* tradition. Shozo Sato is known as the master of Zen arts or painting, *sumi-e* (*sumi* means black ink and *e* means painting). Haiga (verse-painting) was

developed as a combination of art, calligraphy and poetry together. Originally paintings with sumi ink were monochromatic in nature on handmade paper. It was introduced to Japanese people by the Chinese Zen Buddhist monks in the fourteenth century. The Chinese painters, Tsung Ping, Wang Wei and others emphasized the aesthetic visual magic of the art of paintings.

Nonoguchi Ryūho (1595-1669), a student of Kanō Tanyū, is considered the founder of haiga style. Western poets started using photo with haiku (photo-haiga) which is identical to that of the Japanese *Shahai* (photo with haiku poem). It is synonymous with Haiga depicting an image (*sha*) with haiku (*hai*) poem. Slowly the concept of digital photography, conventional photos, computerized images has been adopted for haiga incorporating contemporary themes. Yosa Buson was amongst the pioneers of developing the literati art of writing haiga using Japanese aesthetic values. Occasionally in a simplified form, Basho, Issa, and Shiki, and others added paintings to their haiku.

Both image and haiku have got an independent entity and are expressed separately. Art painting or photo-image has its own manifestation of surrealistic meaning. Marion Clarke says, “Regardless of how the visual and verbal elements of a haiga are produced, both have the same objective – to produce a piece of art that will resonate differently than if either the photo or the haiku were presented on their own.... It is always interesting to hear how a particular combination of words and image has been interpreted by the viewer, as often it is far from what the poet had in mind when producing the photo haiku.” The haijin tries to associate the image with the haiku to generate a higher level of literary recreation of the product (here assimilation at thinking or preserving level). I feel, if you paint a full moon, let the haiku be the passionate wave bridging the sublime relationship. This is the art of haiga. The combined psychoanalytical entity would genetically associate with the image along with haiku and extends to a new expression for the reader’s imagination. There needs to be a symbiosis between the image and haiku. The associated haiku should explore the touch of emotion in different layers

by embedding the art of senses like smell, touch or sound rather than by mere narration of the image. There needs to be a reflection of creative synergy between the image and haiku. The haiku should not repeat or narrate the image, contrary it needs to have the *fusoku – furi* (not too far, not too close) which is the art of the haiku-photo genre. There has to be a creative link and shift between image and haiku. Sean Martin writes “The words and images say something together that neither of them can say alone.” Addiss says haiga at their best display the “virtues of a good haiku.”

Ray Rasmussen has written widely on haiga and its ethical value. Steve Wilkinson explored the avenue “TanshiArt” to combine art with tanshi which represents haiku, senryu, tanka , gogyoshi, sedoka, lunes, lanterns and other short forms of poems. Tanka with artwork is widely getting popularity and it is named “Taiga” (Tanka-Photo).

“Looking and Seeing: How Haiga Works” by Jim Kacian (Simply Haiku 2:5 Autumn 2004) is widely referred to as one of the scholarly articles. Daily Haiga is an important online journal that exclusively publishes haiga. The Haiga Galleries of The Haiku Foundation, Under the Basho and others are some of the excellent sources of haiga literature. There are many leading online and some print journals also publish haiga.

The followings are some of the selected haiga by Pravat Kumar Padhy with special comments:



A Hundred Gourds 1:2 March 2012

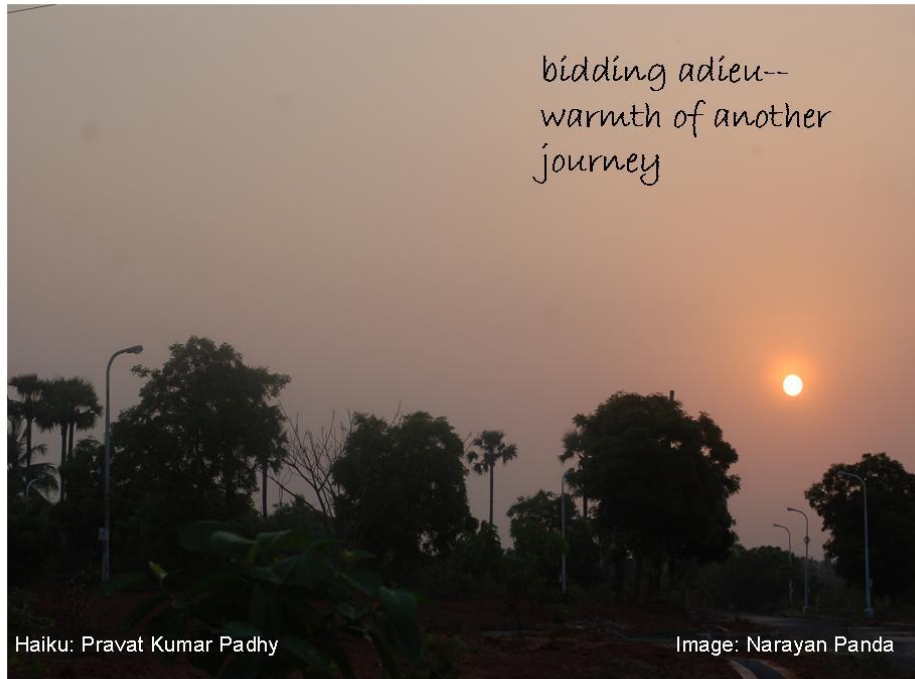
Melinda Hipple, Haiga Editor of 'A Hundred Gourds' says, "*It epitomizes the fabric of colour around living organisms with dark sea.*"



Haiku: P K Padhy

Image: Smita Padhy

Haigaonline, Vol 13, Issue 1, 2012



World Haiku Association, 106, March 2013

Kuniharu Shimizuon, Editor of “The World Haiku Association” comments it
“*as surreal in expression*”.



Daily Haiga, 2nd April 2016

India(インド)

Pravat Kumar Padhy

**wall painting
the colour spreads blue
beyond blue**



Photograph: Smita Padhy

**Honourable Mention, 7th Setouchi Matsuyama Int. Photo Haiku Contest,
Japan, 2017**



Haiku: Pravat Kumar Padhy

Photograph: Smita Padhy

Cattails, October 2018

Lavana Kray Haiga Editor notes: *“a new home” for the next issue is perfect and the best one I receivedI very much appreciate people who have emotional intelligence. I found it in your haiga.:)”*



Haiku : Pravat Kumar Padhy

Photo: Rupa Padhy

Contemporary Haibun Online, 17.3, 2021



Haiku: Pravat Kumar Padhy

Image: Jacquilene Pearce

**Presented by Jacquilene Pearce, editor 'Last Train Anthology' at Haiku
North America Conference, 15-17, October 2021**



Haiku: Pravat Kumar Padhy

Art: Aditri Mishra

Contemporary Haibun Anthology 18, 2023 (Red Moon Press)

Special comment by Ron C Moss, Editor, CHO:

“We all seek that beginner’s or child-like mind, especially when we create, and this father-granddaughter team has found it. I was enchanted by this collaboration from the first moment I viewed their haiga.

I love the elephant family in watchful. The colours and shapes have been handled with such joy, we can only smile looking at them. The haiku beautifully captures the humour and love of wondrous things. What can be more magical than making a rainbow?”



way home ...
the floating shadows
ferry the twilight sun

Art: Hemanta Misra (1917-2009) Haiku: Pravat Kumar Padhy

**Exhibited at the Indian Museum, Kolkata, August 2022 under the aegis
of Azadi ka Amrita Mahostava.**



Taiga (Tanka with Image), Tanka Society of America, April 2020

Grateful to Jim Kacian and Dr Pravat Kumar Padhy for their generosity in sharing their knowledge with our readers. Try and work on a Haiga or two and feel free to share your work.

See you next week!

Neena Singh