

## Parminder Sodhi's Haiku Poetry

Shortest poetry in the world of literature is Japanese Haiku, just three tiny lines. Parminder Sodhi who lives in Japan introduced us with original Haikus, of course translated into Punjabi. Inspired by him Amarjit Sathi from Ottawa, has come out with his and Punjabi's first original Haiku book 'Nimakh (Time taken by a flash). Sathi is so passionate about this form that he daily uploads at least one Haiku on his blog [www.haikupunjabi.wordpress.com](http://www.haikupunjabi.wordpress.com)

While Bashô, Buson and Issa were artists of *haikai*, Shiki coined the term *haiku*, and visualized it as an independent poetic genre. However both the genres, outside Japan, now are known as Haikus. Though it's difficult to precisely define a form that has taken more than ten centuries to grow and evolve, yet the *Haiku Society of America*, in 2004, put forth a working definition: "A *haiku* is a short poem that uses imagistic language to convey the essence of an experience of nature or the season intuitively linked to the human condition."

*Haiku* is rooted in Zen philosophy of Buddhism; all initial writing in this form came from Buddhist monks. Being most compressed poetry like "*Winter/Clouds/In a Hurry*"(Santoka), it says less and conveys more; multiple meaning is its fundamental trait. Away from utterances it's poetry of silence. Buson writes "*Priestly poverty/ He carves a wooden Buddha/ Through a long cold night .*" Because the originators of *haiku* were Buddhists, many Buddhist themes hang on in its tradition, including respect for life, openness to the here and now, and a deep appreciation of how precious and fleeting life is. See these traits in Sathi's poetry:

- *Spreading with the wind*  
*Fragrance of flowers*  
*And ash of Shamshaan*
- *Taking out of plane*

*Corpse in the coffin*  
*Weight of hundred dead*

- *Father's box contained*  
*Moth eaten army burgess*  
*And few copper medals*

Navtej Bharti has introduced this book by saying that Haikus like ‘*Parikarma of Harimandar/ Parents paying obeisance/ Children watching Fish*’ don’t appear to be amazing. Such poetry puts a brake on our habit of reading the usual stuff: astounding or need based. Both ways we fail to see things in totality, we just see our needs: fuel in the tree and Gulkand in roses.”

Basho is considered to be one of the best poets of Haiku who wrote: ‘*Lightning/ Heron's cry/ Stabs the darkness.*’ And the following has been translated in 100 different manners: *Old pond/Frog jumps in/- Splash.*

How far a Punjabi Haiku can go to Japan for Buddhist thoughts or, for that matter, come back to Sanghol and other sites of excavations that link Punjab with Buddhism was a question of debate at Ludhiana when *Nimakh* was released at Punjabi Sahitya Academy. Modern *Haiku* was started by Shiki in the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century; he reformed it extensively but kept its 17 syllable schema and seasonal themes intact. But Hekigoto carried Shiki's reform further with two applications: first, it should have no center of interest and second, poet's first impression is important, with subjects of daily life and local colouring. We can analyse these and other statements of *Haikuists* minutely to find that virtually everything can now be said in a *Haiku*: preciseness, freshness and present tense are only requirements left. Sathi is well within this:

- *Ghularhi runs in the village*  
*Fumes of hot Gur*

*Are spreading globally*

- *Order of the Government*  
*Put scrutiny on bridges*  
*Waves mayn't cross*
- *Thirsty soul*  
*Searches water*  
*Arid wells*
- *Blue skies*  
*White cloud*  
*The black shadow*

Like *Haikus* written all over world, Sathi's poetry has also tinge of modern vocabulary and contents:

- *Fast speed car*  
*Dancing deer*  
*Couldn't cross the road*
- *Ultrasound dictionary*  
*Word 'life' is male*  
*And death is female*

We welcome *Nimakh*; as Punjabi Dohra and Tappa are not very far away from *Haiku*.