

Hainka: A Fusion of Haiku and Tanka

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For a long time, precisely since March 2016, I have been thinking about the new concept of writing a combination of 'haiku and tanka' (*hainka*) either by the poet himself or in collaboration. The linking and repetition of the 'fragment' of the haiku as the 'pivot line' of the following tanka and its literary relevance have been conceived in the evolvement of this new genre, *hainka*.

It is poetry that encompasses all: the living and non-living beings, the most intelligent species: human beings, and the perennial flow of consciousness of the colorful nature. The essence of poetry nestles in the diligent fragrance of the flower, simplicity of flow of the river, gentle spread of leaves, the calmness of the ocean, and the embellishment of soothing shadow. The poetic ecstasies and journey of human life are parallel and perennial, beyond space and time. Like a flower, it sprinkles the hidden fragrance to fulfill the purpose of fostering peace and fraternity with the art of expression, perfection, and purity.

Hainka and the Vedic Meter

The combination of haiku and tanka is characterized by 48 syllables, 5/7/5/5/7/5/7/7 (s/l/s/s/l/s/l/l). The study of Vedic poetic meter is a part of *Chandas* which refers one of the six Vedanga disciplines. The Vedangas developed towards probably the end of the Vedic period (around the 1st millennium BCE) and later influenced the subsequent literature. *Chandas (the study of the Vedic meters)* is characterized by the specific poetic meters, including those based on a fixed number of syllables per verse, and those based on a fixed number of morae per verse. Interestingly we observe the importance of morae or sound-units in the Japanese classical haiku and tanka. In the metrical organization of ancient Sanskrit poetry, a Sanskrit stanza or *padya* consists of four *padas* or four quarters, which are designed by (i) The number of syllables in each quarter, or (ii) the number of syllabic time units or *matras* - a short sound being assigned one unit of time and the long one two units of time. The syllables in a *pada* are classified as metrically short (light) or long (heavy). Different combinations of syllables are named as Pankti (5 syllables), Ushnik (7 syllables), Pankti (10 syllables), Jagati (12 syllables), Shakvari (14 syllables), Ashti (17 syllables), Adidhruti (19 syllables), Sanskruti (24 syllables), Utkruti (26 syllables), Dandaka (27 or more syllables).

The quantitative scheme in the traditional literature of Vedic meters is classified according to the syllable count of a stanza (a stanza consists of four *padas* or four quarters) as multiples of 4. Gayatri is classified as *tripada* (8,8,8). The other majors Vedic meters with syllable structure are:

Usnih (8,8,12); Anustubh (8,8,8,8); Brhati (8,8,12,8); Pankti (8,8,8,8 +8); Tristubh (11,11,11,11) and Jagati (12,12,12,12). While studying the ancient literature, I could

correlate *hainka*, having a total count of 48 syllables, with one of the major Vedic meters, *Jagati*, which is characterized by a total of 48 syllables in each stanza.

About more than a thousand years ago, poet Ki no Tsurayuki (872-945) in the preface to the *Kokinshū*, the first imperial anthology of Japanese *waka*, wrote:

"The poetry of Japan has its roots in the human heart and flourishes in the countless leaves of words. Because human beings possess interests of so many kinds it is in poetry that they give expression to the meditations of their hearts in terms of the sights appearing before their eyes and the sounds coming to their ears. Hearing the warbler sing among the blossoms and the frog in his fresh waters – is there any living being not given to song!"

This scintillates the aesthetic essence of Japanese forms of poetry and its historic development. Before detailing the new genre, *hainka*, and its exotic style and agility, I wish to briefly narrate the historical prospect of the Japanese short forms of poetry, genetic linkage, the structural framework of the verses, and the aesthetic aroma of the minimalistic expression.

Renga, Waka, Tanka, Hokku and Haiku

The oldest Japanese poetic form, *renga*, is the nucleus of the evolvement of *tanka* and *haiku* down the literary history. The "song" (*uta*) (song in Chinese) was a *waka* which later named as *tanka*. It originated in the 7th century AD in Japan and was known as *waka* (WAH-KAH) (*wa* means 'Japanese', *ka* means 'poem') and existed already as oral literature. The *waka* was written on seasonal subjects (*kidai*). The *waka* remained as the neoclassical Japanese literature as characterized by the poets of the Man'yōshū, *Kokin Wakashū*, and *Shin Kokin Wakashū* eras.

The schemata or *morae* (sound units) patterns follow 5-7-5-7-7 (known as 'sanjuichi', Japanese word for 31). The original structure was in 5-7, 5-7, 7 and subsequently, it became 5-7, 5-7-7 during the Man'yo period. Towards the end of the twelfth century, slowly the 5/7/5/7/7 format had been modified by dividing it into 5/7/5 and 7/7. By fourteenth century, this took shape of *renga* written in sequence by the participative poets. In sixteenth century the opening stanza (starting verse) (5-7-5, *go schichi go*) of *renga* was named as *hokku* and the last two-line (second verse) as 'wakiku'.

Renga is the Japanese collaborative linked poem and its later derivative, *renku* (*haikai no renga*). *Haikai*, a type of *renga* poetry, consists of at least 100 verses with alternating stanzas, or *ku*, of 5-7-5 and 7-7 *mora* (sound unit) per line and are linked in succession by the poets during the Edo period. Matsuo Basho (1644-1694) was the pioneer of writing classical "hokku" and he had rendered aesthetic values to the verse writing with the brilliant poetic spell. Later Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902) christened "hokku" to "haiku" (ha-i-ku, 3-sound in Japanese), independent of the *haikai-no-renga*, at the end of the nineteenth century.

Haiku is more than 400 years old. The advent of haiku poetry is associated with the Zen Buddhist monks way back since in the 15th and 16th centuries. According to the *Pali canon*, Harold Stewart opines haiku as related to meditation, and says, “the longest process of consciousness caused by sense perception consists of seventeen thought-instants (*cittakkhana*) each briefer than a lightning flash”.

The Japanese haiku comprises three sections namely *kami go* (the top five-section), *naka shichi* (the middle seven-section), and *shimo go* (the lower five-section). Haiku consists of 17 ‘*on*’ or ‘*morae*’ (sound bytes), written in Japanese in a vertical single line (top to bottom). The 17 sound-unit is roughly equivalent to 12 syllables in English. Later on, in the English language, the schema is widely practiced as s/l/s form in haiku writings.

There has been an urge for literary renewal of the style and content of poetry and *Shasei* (“sketch from life”) Movement was stirred by Masaoka Shiki. Later *waka* was widely known as *tanka*, a five-line short song named by Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902). In Japanese, *tan* means ‘short’ and *ka* means ‘song’. The Tibetan origin of *tanka* means: ‘image, painting’ (t’añ-ka).

Tanka (small song) is a non-rhymed poem consisting of 5 lines of independent poetic phrases in the style of short, long, short, long, long syllable count/rhythm in the English language. Each line is one poetic expression and *tanka* as a whole is a lyric verse. The *tanka* is divided into two strophes. The first three lines (5,7,5) of *tanka* are known as *kami-no-ku* and the last two lines (7,7) as *shimo-no-ku*. The art of image building in the two strophes and the interrelationship (some juxtaposition) with a twist make a *tanka* different from the conventional five-line free verse. Sometimes there is a rare composition of three strophes. The pivot line (*kakekatoba*) or the swing line (*zeugma*) is the main characteristic of “link and shift”, that distinguishes *tanka* from the other form of poetry.

Tanka is more subjective in contrast to haiku which is objective in nature. Presently *tanka* is constructed by cohesive 5 lines or units or phrases (s/l/s/l/l) without compelling strictly on the syllable count while writing in English. But generally, the syllable counting is preferred between 21 and 31.

Jane Reichhold enumerated the wide scope of poetic depictions of *tanka* such as mystical expression and loneliness (*yugen tei*), gentle expression (*koto shikarubeki*), exotic beauty and elegance (*urawashiki tei*), human feeling, love, grief (*ushin tei*), grandeur (*taketakaki tei*), visual description (*miru tei*), witty with the conventional subject (*omoshiroki tei*) including the unusual poetic concept (*hitofushi aru tei*) and complex imageries (*komayaka naru tei*). By employing Japanese aesthetic qualities such as *wabi-sabi*, *yūgen*, *aware*, and *makoto*, *tanka* evokes a sphere of emotion without sentimentality. It is the characteristics of Japanese poetry, both haiku and *tanka*, to make avail enough room for the readers to interpret.

Fragment and Phrase

Haiku is considered as the shortest non-rhyming objective-based Japanese poetry form written in three lines, in 5-7-5 format, with 17 syllables in total. Generally, the strict syllable style is not followed in English and it is written in the form of short/long/short lines, all in lower case. Jane Reichhold discussed the fragment and phrase theory of haiku. It comprises two images or thoughts in the form of 'fragment' (Line 1) and 'phrase' (Lines 2 and 3) and they juxtapose each other either as association or contrast. Lee Gurga, former President of the Haiku Society of America, believes that the two-image haiku are the finest ones. He opines that the art of cutting is "the primary technique of haiku."

The art of juxtaposition (*renso*) is an exploration of reasoning and a poetical logic. The poet portrays his observation about the happenings in nature at present with expressive objectivity. This can be broadly referred to T.S. Eliot's term, as the "objective correlative". Between fragment and phrase, there lies a surrealist silence in the form of pause (*kireji*). Hasegawa Kai refers this temporal pause as 'ma'. In Japanese, the *Kireji* (*ya, kana, keru, nari*) is expressed by syllables, but in English, it is denoted by a punctuation mark. This infers a break and it is represented in English as a dash or ellipses. The '*Kireji*', in its sublime form, sparks the juxtaposition or disjunction of the two images (syntactic pivot) facilitating a "leap". Sometimes the natural pause itself takes care of the cutting word. The fragment is written in the first line and the phrase is expressed in the remaining two lines. The fragment could also be expressed in the third line. At times, in haiku, the Line 2 becomes common or bridging line to L1 as well as Line 3 in constituting the 'phrase', and here the fragment could be interchanged (either, Line 1 or Line 3).

Tanka and Pivot Line

Tanka contains two parts, the upper strophes and the lower strophes, in terms of rhythm structures and each of about one breath length. Tanka is characterized by one break that occurs either in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd or 4th line. The break can be indicated by a punctuation mark (em-dash, ellipsis), or it can be implied by having no punctuation. Renowned tanka poet, Sanford Goldstein opines 3/2 arrangements, seen in the traditional tanka, is the best way to compose. Generally, line-3 serves as the pivot line that distinguishes tanka as the characteristics of "link and shift" poetic form. Jane Reichhold says, "I strongly believe that the tanka in English should not be a sentence but show evidence of that switch or twist in voice, place, person, or mood and that when possible a pivot should be employed between them."

The 'pivot line' (*kakekatoba*) acts as a link line or common phrase in Line 3 with the lines 1 and 2 as well as with the lines 4 and 5, and juxtaposes both the images in a broader sense.

Brett Christensen defines, “Like the sonnet, the tanka employs a turn, known as a pivotal image, which marks the transition from the examination of an image to the examination of the personal response.”

Hainka: Assimilation of Haiku and Tanka

Haruo Shirane in his article expressed, “One of the ideals that Basho espoused toward the end of his life was that of the “unchanging and the ever-changing” (*fueki ryuko*). The “unchanging” implied the need to seek the “truth of poetic art” (*fuga no makoto*), particularly in the poetic and spiritual tradition, to engage in the vertical axis, while the “ever changing” referred to the need for constant change and renewal, the source of which was ultimately to be found in everyday life, in the horizontal axis.

I have been thinking about the new concept of writing a fusion version of ‘haiku and tanka’ since 2016. I had coined the genre as “HAINKA”, precisely on the day 21st March 2016, and scribbled down in my personal diary. While writing an essay for a journal, I happened to revisit the page again, and it reminded me of the concept of the new genre, ‘hainka’. I thought of the idea of image-shift in the form of repeating the ‘fragment’ of the haiku as the ‘pivot line’ in the following tanka for the structural entity of *hainka*.

The seventeen-syllable haiku is the shortest form of poetry, and the thirty-one syllable *tanka* is probably the second shortest format of verse. Hainka comprises of a haiku followed by a tanka. The *hainka* is to be written in such a way that the ‘fragment’ of the haiku will be the ‘pivot line’ (*kakekatoba*) of the following tanka. Interestingly, Amelia Fieldman, in her book, *Short Songs*, refers tanka as ‘intentionally fragmentary...’. Overall the *hainka* needs to portray a broader manifestation of coherency of the images keeping in view the aspect of ‘link and shift’ within the framework of the combined poem. The linked poem, *hainka*, can be composed either by the poet himself or in collaboration; haiku by a poet and tanka by another poet.

Precisely the concept of *hainka* writing is an assimilation of objective sensitivity of haiku with the more subjective oriented of tanka poetry, and further exhibiting a component of poetic fusion with the repetition or recurrence of the image of ‘fragment’ in the following tanka as the ‘pivot line’. The ‘pivot line’ in tanka is commonly preferred as L-3 (3/2 arrangement as opined by Sanford Goldstein), and it elucidates the art of link and shift by bridging the upper strophe and the lower strophe of tanka.

Unlike the continuous linked form as seen in *renga*, the *hainka* is proposed as a single and independent genre of its own. Instead of merely linking a haiku with tanka on the qualitative term, the synthesis in *hainka* is based on the image linking (the ‘fragment’ of haiku acting as the ‘pivot line’ of the following tanka) to explore human nature, love, emotion on a broader sense by juxtaposing the overall imageries. It is also interesting to see the syllabic coherency between the ‘fragment’ (5-syllable words) with the 5-syllable words of the ‘pivot line’ of tanka. The final structural configuration would be 5/7/5/5/7/5/7/7 (s/l/s/s/l/s/l/l) with the significance of the image linking. A breathing gap (swinging space) is preferred between the haiku and tanka for the reader to travel with the idea to manifest a synthesized imagery.

Rightly so, Edgar Allen Poe says, “When the poem is short, the reader must be able to understand the silence.”

Jim Kacian in his essay, “THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME”, Modern Haiku, 43.3, analyses Ezra Pound’s famous poem, ‘In a Station of the Metro’.

IN A STATION OF THE METRO

The apparition of these faces in the crowd :

Petals on a wet, black bough .

He writes, “Ezra Pound published this in Poetry in 1913, and it is full of interesting quirks: a title, for instance, and is it meant to be counted as one of the lines? What of those spaces that separate the various phrases within the lines themselves: is this simply a guide to reading, a timing device, or is it following some supposed model ? In the latter case, with its five sections, could it be -- a tanka ? But it has the unmistakable feel of haiku, whatever its vagaries.”

I feel there is an intrinsic blending of haiku and tanka in the sublime state of consciousness. Is there an allusion of hainka -like perception? The puzzle continues to strike to me.

Hainka can explore poetic interlinking objective picturisation with the subjective depiction of tanka thus embodying beauty of nature and interweaving the wide thematic values of human expression: pathos, anguish, emotion, romanticism, humour with the poetic elegance, musicality and transcendental message.

This image-linking across time and space is the art of painting an integrated poetic expression and exhibiting the fervent elucidation and elegancy of *hainka* writing. Moreover, it retains its focus on the beauty of genetic image-linking to explore the poetic spell within the broader structural framework of the aesthetic essence of the Japanese short form of poetry. Echoing the spirit of Basho’s ‘*atarashimi*’ (newness), I wish that the new verse will entwine the art of gratitude encompassing nature, living beings, non-living beings, and humanity as a whole along the vertico-horizontal axis.

I have experimented the following *hainka* for the poet lovers and esteemed readers:

melting snow
sharing warmth
each other

under sunshine
kids clap together
melting snow
unfolding the secret
gathers smiles on smiles

**** **** ****

cloud patches
a mole on the moon
and on her face

gust of breeze
unlocks her braided hair
cloud patches
descend as achromatic drops
erasing her floating thoughts

**** **** ****

a spider web
between the dry twigs
dripping icicles

memories
of painful separation
dripping icicles
pour streams of grief
from her swelled eyes

**** **** ****

rock exposure
the music of waves
rhymes on its edge

cloud sails
over the hillocks
rock exposure
gathers streams of hope
rinsing the scars of dryness
