

Nepali Haiku Literature: A Landscape

By 'Godhooli' Dinesh Chapagain

Nepal: A Favorable Environment for Haiku

Nepal is a comparatively small landlocked Asian nation with about a population of thirty million people and is situated between two demographic giants of the world: China in the north and India in the south. It is a sovereign country, which has never been occupied by any other foreign supremacy since the historical period. Thus, it developed its own socio-ethnic cultures and livelihood. It can easily be called a melting pot of different cultures and ethnicities with one-hundred and twenty-six different ethnic groups living in peace and harmony. Among these diverse groups of people, there are one hundred twenty-three different languages declared as mother tongues coming from different cultures. However, more than 90 percent of its population follows Nepali as its common national language. The northern part of Nepal covers a wide range of snow-capped mountains, with the tallest Mount Everest, neighboring to Tibet. The low land Tarai region in the south (adjacent to India) spreads from east to west. Nature has given an abundant scope for artists to create their literary works, with large natural lakes, high altitude mountains, high speed streams, rivers and lakes, low land greeneries, as well as dense and minor forests. Moreover, Nature has blessed the country with six seasons of two months each: spring, summer, monsoon (rainy), autumn, falls and winter. We hear the chirping of birds and see the blooming of various types of wildflowers in spring. We feel the soft heat in summer and hear the heavy to light rain in the monsoon season as per the diversified contour of the country. The colorful festivals and withering nature in autumn and the cold breeze and snow falls in winter covering high altitude mountains are some romantic seasonal fluctuations of the country. Nepal is thus a very favorable country for haiku aspirants.

Source of Inspiration

Only about six decades back, creators of Nepali literary art understood the centuries old Japanese haiku poem, the shortest poem in the world. One can count on four Nepali poets who inspired the literary circles in the country to understand, read, and write haiku, and share with many others. Shankar Lamichhane, Ratna Sumsher Thapa, Khetra Pratap Adhikari and Abhi Subedi are taken as the four masters of haiku in Nepal.

Shankar Lamichhane (1928-1976): A famous essayist and poet of the time. He is considered to be the first haiku poet of Nepal who wrote haiku in the early sixties. After returning from a short-term literary tour in Japan, he published his haiku in a leading literary magazine named Ruprekha. Most probably, this is the first haiku written and published in Nepal.

| <u>Nepali Devanagari</u> | <u>Nepali Roman</u> | <u>English</u> |
|--------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| माकुरा जाल | <i>makura Jaal</i> | spider web |
| झोल्लिएको ओसले | <i>jholliyeke osle</i> | sagging with humidity |
| तन्काँदै गयो | <i>tankindai gayo</i> | stretched longer |

Source: Rooprekha, no.16, 1962

Shankar wrote a few more haiku poems and essays incorporating the story of famous haiku masters. He seems very much impressed with its brevity in summarizing the long essay on human life and contemplating it with nature. Later, he also wrote an essay on haiku explaining the forms and structures of Japanese haiku written by some famous poets and translated in the Nepali language. It was published in Rooprekha, no. 113, 1970. With this, he inspired many other Nepalese poets to write haiku. During the decade of the 1960's and 1970's, a few more poets started writing these micro poems and published them in various literary magazines.

Ratna Sumsher Thapa (1939-2020): One of the most popular poets and lyricists of the time started presenting haiku in different forums and was liked by many others. He wrote hundreds of haiku and published only a few. He always liked to sing his haiku for the audience. His one famous haiku in Nepali is referred here:

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| मख्ख पर्दैछन् | <i>makkha pardaichhan</i> | happy are |
| लहरको स्पर्शमा | <i>laharko sparshma</i> | touching waves |
| किनाराहरू | <i>kinaraharu</i> | the river banks |

Source: *Sahitya Sangrahalaya, archives, Sept. 10, 2013*

Ratna's sense of describing nature in an aesthetic form was liked by his audience and he added haiku in his profile of poem and song writing. He is considered to be one of the earlier popular haijin in Nepal. Being a popular lyricist, Ratna is preferred to chair many conferences and seminars on haiku programs and haiku book launching programs. He inspired many young poets in mass, explaining the importance of Nepali literature in haiku form.

Kshetra Pratap Adhikari (1942-2014): Another famous lyricist and writer gave continuous thrust and efforts on promoting haiku in Nepal. Kshetra Pratap Adhikari was invited by the Japanese Government for a short visit to learn and share Japanese and Nepali literature to Japanese people. He started writing haiku when he was in Japan.

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|--------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| सुतेकी सेती | <i>suteki seti</i> | sleeping <i>Seti</i> |
| उठेको माछापुच्छ्रे | <i>utheko machhapuchhre</i> | upstanding the <i>Machhapuchhre</i> |
| पोखरेली स्पर्श | <i>pokharelee sparsh</i> | <i>Pokhara</i> touch |

Source: *Haiku Ra Haijins, Akshar Prakashan, 2007*

Seti is a famous white-water river and *Machhapuchhre* is a fishtailed, beautiful snowy mountain, both in *Pokhara*. Kshetra's aesthetic visual touch and imagery just reached the Nepalese soul to learn and write haiku poems. He published his essay on haiku

poems in Nepali magazines. His introductory book on '*Haiku Ra Haijin*' written in Nepali was published by Akshar Prakashan in 2007.

Abhi Subedi (1945-): A popular poet, playwright, linguist, columnist, translator, critic, and professor of English language and literature is another most influential laureates who advocated haiku writing. He explained its structures and forms as well as the philosophical concerns motivating Nepalese writers.

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|--------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| रुख काटिएपछि | <i>rookh katiyapachhi</i> | after deforesting |
| थाकेर बस्न | <i>thaker basna</i> | the moon found |
| जूनले ढुङ्गा भेटेछ | <i>joon le dhunga bhetechha</i> | a boulder to retire |

Source: *Japanese Haiku: Hijo Ra Aaj*, Sajha Prakashan, 1987

He has been advocating Nepalese poets to create a real haiku with creative imagery in three lines, but not necessarily strictly following the 5-7-5 formula. He endorsed the English language haiku (ELH) structure like short-long-short writing for haiku poems. In early 1987, Sajha Prakashan published Abhi's book on '*Japanese Haiku: Hijo Ra Aaj*' (Japanese Haiku: Past and Present) written in Nepali, which helped many aspiring poets to write haiku in Nepal.

Motivators and Promoters

After the 1960s, for almost four decades, until the end of the past millennium, haiku remained as a pastime for some writers. Some writers initiated creating haiku poems and few even tried to publish. However, nobody dared to test its authenticity. Moreover, it could not attract attention of the public. Nepali people could not understand its real meaning written in a very short form, nor could readers in Nepal catch the aesthetic essence and creative minds of the writers. It remained in a dormant status in the forum of literary circles. However, the new millennium brought new vibes among the poets and readers.

Four major literary minds: Pushkar Lohani, Chetnath Dhamala, B.K. Palpali, and Ram Kumar Pandey took committed and dedicated steps to promote haiku writing. Informal gatherings of poets, publications of magazines, organizing haiku workshops and creating haiku associations were some of the major activities conducted for the promotion of haiku writing and sharing.

Pushkar Lohani (1941-): A professor, editor, famous writer, and poet who was inspired by western philosophers and poets (such as Sigmund Freud, Ezra Pound, and TS Elliot) is a popular romantic writer among Nepali readers who also started writing shijo, choka, tanka, and haiku as short poems of China, Korea, and Japan.

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|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| सूर्य छरिछ | <i>surya chhirechha</i> | Sun penetrated |
| आखे झ्याल छेडेर | <i>aankhejhyal chheder</i> | through Ankhejhyal |
| उज्यालो झर्दा | <i>ujyalo jharda</i> | as the light drops |

Source: Nepali Haiga Issue 3, Nuwakot Sahitya Pratisthan, Nepal 2018

Young Nepali poets wanted to learn more about short poems and started to assemble at Pushkar's residence for his advice and discussion. Many poets used to assemble and share their haiku with each other. His house was popularly named *Lohani Haiku Adda* (Lohani haiku office) by his supporters. From this informal office, many learned different themes, forms, and structures for haiku and experimented on their own creations of haiku.

Chetnath Dhamala (1970-): As a literary journalist and writer, Chetnath became interested in haiku from an early age. He wanted to study more about haiku and haiku poets of Nepal. He advocated for a group of interested writers who wanted to learn about haiku literature and to publish their haiku. There were limited publications of haiku in the market at that time. He tried to form an informal academy collaborating with a few poets writing haiku. It was then named Haiku Study Association Nepal, which published a few books collect-

ing haiku of interested haiku poets. On the experience of this center, Nepal Haiku association (NEHA) was established later on.

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|-----------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| एक्लो बालक | <i>eklo baalak</i> | a lonely child |
| लुगलुगी काँपदैछ | <i>luglugi kanpdaichha</i> | trembling |
| घाम छेउमै | <i>ghaam chheumai</i> | beside sunshine |

Source: *Sahitya Sangrahalaya, archives, Jan. 29, 2017*

B.K. Palpali (1975-2022): Another young literary journalist, writer and publisher who was keen on research and the study on Nepali literature and found a great scope for haiku writing. He found the necessity of writing a booklet on haiku writing. His small booklet on haiku literature and its theoretical perspective *Haiku Sahitya Ra Saidhantik Awadharana* published by Janmat Prakashan in 2003 facilitated many young haiku poets to start writing haiku. His second book *Haiku Kasari Lekhne: Sidhdant Sutra* (How to write Haiku: its principles) published by *Perol Sahitya* in 2018, gave more clarification and guidance, which motivated more Nepali poets to write haiku in Nepali.

Ram Kumar Pandey (1946-): A reputable researcher, professor, writer, and expert of Japanology. He took the task for promoting and motivating Nepali poets to create haiku poems. He is a multitalented, simple, and friendly person. He is a professor of geography, a famous writer of humorous and moral books for children, and his short story telling first motivated him to write haiku in English. Then, he pursued writing essays in haiku history, creating haiku, and conducted workshops. He visited Japan for the first time in 1989 and has been visiting Japan several times to understand Japanese history, culture, and literature more deeply. He was the first writer from Nepal whose haiku was published in the *Mainichi* (English) magazine of Japan in 1993.

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|--------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| जङ्गल माझ | <i>jangal majha</i> | amidst the jungle |
| खोलाको ढुङ्गा माथि | <i>kholako dhunga mathi</i> | a bird dancing |
| चरा नाचदैछ | <i>charaa nachdaichha</i> | on the stream boulder |

Source: Cover page of *Nepali Haiku Issue 3*, Nepal Nippon Research Centre, 2008

Ram Kumar Panday has been continuously writing and publishing haiku poems in Nepali, as well as in English, since 1993. He has written forewords of more than a dozen books of haiku collections written by seniors and young Nepali haiku poets. He has written one haiku book in English: *Flooded Gorge: collection of Nepali haiku* in 2017 and another book on haiga in English: *Hunting Haiga* in 2018.

Other haikai genre: Beside haiku poems, other genres of haikai are also found in Nepali literary circles. A few poets, writers, and artists initiated their skills to promote other forms in the haikai genre. They were motivated to promote the minimalistic literary arts of Japan. Two such types found are: (1) haibun, synergizing short story with a haiku and (2) haiga, synergizing painting with a haiku seen in Nepali literary circles. Haiku separated from these genres of haikai literature also stands by itself as a complete poem. Haibun has been the subject of Posh Chapagain and haiga has been the favorite skills of Godhooli Dinesh. They adopted haikai skills to create haibun and haiga, which motivated many other hands writing in haiku genres.

Posh Chapagai (1951-): A professor of Nepali language. He has written his haibun book *Haiku Katha* (haiku story), which was published by *Bibek Sirjanashil Publication* in 2004. *Haiku Katha* is a collection of his fifty-six haibun. It may be the first haibun book published in Nepal. One haiku from his haibun is referred here.

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| कोदो बारीमा | <i>kodo barima</i> | in the millet field |
| सगौरी खेलदै साँढे | <i>singauri kheldai</i> | oxen fight with each other |
| ताली गडड | <i>tali gadad</i> | a clapping sound |

Source: *Haiku Katha*, Bibek Sirjanshil Prakashan, 2004

Godhooli Dinesh (1945-): A professor, engineer, and artist. He started his literary career as a haiga artist. He has created more than 500 haiga art on his own and has collaborated with other haiku poets. In 2018, he published his haiga book named *Nepali Haiga: Pokhariko Dilma budho bhyaguto* (... .. on a pond mound the old frog) with seventy-five haiga. All haiga art was created with traditional-style haiku and sumi-e art with watercolor. He started his synergy of micro-poems with the simple and minimalization art of sumi-e since 2006. He shared his creation with his literary families and friends through exhibitions and social media. His haiga has been published in *Haiga on-line*, *Daily Haiga*, and other print journals. His haiku has been translated in English, Japanese, and French, and has been published occasionally in international magazines. Here one of his haiku from the haiga book:

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|-------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| उष्ण साँझमा | <i>ushna sanjhma</i> | torrid evening |
| ओढी चन्द्र सुतेको | <i>odhi Chandra suteko</i> | resting under the moon quilt |
| कान टट्टायो | <i>kan tattayo</i> | bites annoy my air |

Association and Publications

On December 20, 2003, the first haiku *Gosthi* (Symposium) was organized in a big way by the Nepal Nippon Research Centre with the assistance of the Japanese Embassy where famous haijin and lyricist Ratna Shumsher Thapa were chief guests. Ram Kumar Panday presented a comprehensive research paper on haiku at the symposium. This occasion can be considered as a jumping board for uplifting the haiku movement in Nepal. This has given a scope of forming a valid organization for promoting haiku writing in Nepal.

The first magazine of Nepali haiku *Nepali Haiku year 1, no.1* was published by the Nepal Nippon Research Centre, *Sahitya Bibhag* (Literature Department)'s haiku genre Committee in December of 2003. It was first intended to publish 'Nepali haiku' on a regular basis each month every year. Chetnath Dhamala and Ram Kumar Panday were the main players to come out with this edition.

However, since 2003 to 2015, only six issues of Nepali haiku came out in the market. It has motivated young poets to write and submit their haiku for publication. After Nepal's great earthquake, it stopped its pace of regular publications. About two dozen issues of the Nepali Haiku magazine are published as of now. Presently, Nepal Haiku Centre (in English, NEHA) has been playing a pivotal role for the promotion of haiku in the country. It is an offspring of *Haiku Adhyen Nepal* (Haiku Study Nepal) established as a literary wing of Nepal Nippon Research Centre with the collaboration of many Nepali haiku poets. Presently, Ram Kumar Panday leads this informal association called *Nepal Haiku Kendra* (NaHc) or NEHA (Nepal Haiku Association). NEHA has been providing opportunities to publish haiku poems, organize discussion forums and workshops, facilitate the haiku tours, launch haiku books, and other related matters. Ram Kumar Pandey has been regularly working for the promotion of haiku poems and haiga in the country.

A group of young writers extended their skillful writing of micro poems like *shijo*, *choka*, *tanka*, *haibun*, *haiga*, and *haiku*. Regular literary journals, magazines, and newspapers in Nepal started to search and publish haiku. Ruprekha, Madhupark, Kantipur, and other reputed national level magazines started publishing haiku poems in their publications to involve poets who write haiku. In the first decade of this millennium, many writers were motivated to write more and more quality haiku. Due to the lack of specialized magazines and real publishing houses, many started publishing and distributing their haiku books on their own.

One can find the growing number of poets and writers writing and publishing individually in regular magazines or as a book form collecting their own haiku since 2005. *Haiku Adhyen* (Study) Nepal published one thousand and one haiku of Vishnu B. Singh as *Maun Batas* (Silent Breeze) in 2005. Senior Haiku masters from Nepal Kshetrpratap Adhikari, Pushkar Lohani, Ram Kumar Panday, and Chetnath Dhamala have written forewords of this book giving their own critical knowledge on Vishnu's haiku collection.

This book with the foreword was taken as a guiding book for young haiku writers in Nepal. One of his haiku from this book reads as:

| | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| कोशी नदीमा | <i>koshi nadima</i> | at Koshi river |
| तैररिहेका माछा | <i>tairiraheka machha</i> | the swimming fish |
| अस्तित्व माग्दै | <i>astitwa magdai</i> | ask about their existence |

Source: *Maun Batas, Haiku Adhyan Nepal, 2005*

A pamphlet of few pages *Subhkamana* (greetings) with five haiku each of Pushkar Lohani, Mohan Bahadur Kayestha, and Vishnu Bahadur Singh with their English translation by Mahesh Paudel was published in 2010 by *Lohani Haiku Adda*.

Nepal faced a great earthquake in 2015. Then, a turning point happened regarding the progress of haiku writing in the country. In one way, the momentum of regular publications declined. Most of the established poets wrote haiku on the theme of earthquakes and were published in local newspapers and literary magazines.

Some recommended books written by respective haikins and publishers with the year of publications are referred here. However, this is not the exclusive list of haiku poems collection in the country. In 2016, *Nuwakot Sahitya Pratisthan* published 265 haiku of Pushkar Lohani, Vishnu Bahadur Singh, and Sri Ram Shrestha on the theme of earthquakes.

From 2016, Nepal Haiku Kendra NEHA has published more than two dozen mobile-size haiku books compiling 50 representative haiku poems by active poets in Nepal. The poets involved were Ram Kumar Panday, Bimal Giri, Manju Jnawali, Puru Subedi, Pramod Sarang, Subarna Raj Joshi, Bam Bahadur Thapa Jitali, Kishor Bajra Bajracharya, Pashupati Karmacharya, Dibya Giri, Nita Shrestha, Shanti Sapkota, Yadav Prasad Dhungana, RD Prabhas Chataut, and many others. In 2017, Nepal Haiku Kendra NEHA published two notebook-sized sets of haiku

collecting haiku by selected haijins: (1) seasonal haiku notebook *Haiku Sangraha-1 Ree* (10 haiku were selected for each of the six seasons by four haijins: Ram Kumar Panday, Mitrabandhu Paudel, Sumi Lohani, and Shushma Manandhar), and (2) socio-cultural haiku notebook *Haiku Sangraha-2 Nee* (10 haiku by four haijins: Ram Kumar Panday, Mitrabandhu Paudel, Sumi Lohani, and Sushma Manandhar on various cultural rituals found in all six seasons).

Other publications on haiku are also found in abundance: Pushkar Lohani's collection of his 18 romantic haiku *Prem Pranay* was published by *Lohani Haku Adda* (2018), Ram Kumar Panday and Prakash Paudel Maila's collection of 1,000 haiku, 500 each by both poets' haiku *Hajaar Haiku* by *Shikha Publications* (2018), Vishnu Bahadur Singha's collection of his haiku in *Khulduli* published by *Shiva Sahitya Samaj* (2018), Sriram Shrestha's collection of 500 haiku in Agoko Lapka with Nuwakot Sahitya Pratisthan (2019), Mukunda Pathik's collection 1,854 haiku in '*Pathikka Haikuhru*' by Sarala wagle (2018), Basudev Guragain's collection of 1,000 haiku in *Vasant Briksha* by Sita Guragai (2019), Gupta Bahadur Shrestha's collection of his 516 haiku *Doshi Chasma* by Tara Devi Shrestha (2019), Hari Prasad Pokharel Mansagni's 108 spiritual haiku with a short elaboration *Prarambha* published by Manasagni Nepal Mission Nepal in (2018), and Kishore Bajra Bajracharya's collection of his 1,000 haiku on different seasonal, cultural, and miscellaneous themes *Bajra Haiku* published by *Indra Chaitya Prakashan* (2018) are some examples. In 2018, Pushkar Lohani and Sri Ram Shrestha initiated three issues of *Nepali Haiga* with haiga by Godhooli Dinesh and haiku written by Pushkar Lohani, Shri Ram Shrestha, Prakash Paudel Maila, Dibya Giri, Godhooli Dinesh, and Shushma Manandhar and published by Nuwakot Sahitya Pratisthan. Bijay Raj Acharya's collection of his haiku *Pagliyeko Dharti* was published by Bibek Prakashshil Prakashan (2019). The haiku in all these books are written in the Nepali language with Devanagari script. Haiku in local ethnic languages like Newari, Maithili, Doteli, and others are also becoming popular in different local areas in the country. Newa haiku are becoming popular with the coming of young and

mature haiku poets in this language. However, the publication of a standard haiku magazine with expert editors are missing, but poets are still writing haiku and publishing on their own. The haikai genre is still in progression and after its regular publications, one can expect an improvement in the quality of haiku in the coming years.

Characteristics, Structures, and Themes

Haiku is generally considered as a universal poem. However, due to its particular seasonal fluctuations and natural demographic varieties, some poets are trying to write poems specific to the country. Nepali poets are also writing such country-specific haiku based on local observation. Haiku are either journey haiku observing the exact moments of excitement or desk haiku (or haiku based on memories from past). Nepali haiku are mostly written in traditional form and structure. It is written in three lines with five-seven-five sounds in each line. Nepali haiku are written generally in Devanagari script. A limited number of poets have written Nepali haiku in English too.

Most of the Nepali haiku may be classified in four large clusters: (1) natural world with seasonal and demographic fluctuations, (2) socio-cultural world with sadness and happiness, (3) political world with nationalism and frustration, and (4) human relations with romantics and eroticism.

In addition, there are a few other themes from which poets like to create based on their own subjects, too.

Here are a few examples of haiku, given for reference to identify the themes, structures, and forms.

Natural world: Haiku poems of three poets randomly selected on imageries of natural world with seasonal and demographic fluctuations are referred below as references.

Mitra Bandhu Paudel

| | | |
|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| नाङ्गेको वृक्ष | <i>nangeko brikchha</i> | a naked tree |
| रक्तमि अस्ताचल | <i>raktim astachhal</i> | crimson sunseting |
| सेतो कपाल | <i>seto kapal</i> | the white hair |

Source: Notebook Haiku Sangraha Issue 1, 'Ree' Autumn, Nepal Haiku Kendra (NEHA), 2017

Sunil Puri

| | | |
|-----------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| आकाश गङ्गा | <i>aakash ganga</i> | milky way |
| वर्षातको बेलामा | <i>barsatko belama</i> | in the rainy season |
| इन्द्रेणी फूल | <i>indrenee phool</i> | a rainbow flower |

Source: Gava Haiku Collection (a Nano book), 2016

Shreeram Shrestha

| | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| फूलको काँडा | <i>phoolko kanda</i> | flower spikes |
| रिसाउँछ सँधै नै | <i>rishaunchha sandhai nai</i> | angry all the time |
| घोच्न पल्केको | <i>ghochna plkeko</i> | accustomed to prick |

Source: Nepali Haiga, Issue 3, Nuwakot Sahitya SPratisthan, Nepal, 2018

Social world: Haiku poems of two poets randomly selected on imageries of socio-cultural world with sadness and happiness randomly selected are given here as examples:

Badri Dhakal Hiramani

| | | |
|--------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| मूलको पानी | <i>moolko pani</i> | water from the source |
| अछुतको करुवा | <i>achhutko karuwa</i> | waterpot of untouchable |
| प्यासी बाहुन | <i>Pyasee bahun</i> | thirsty upper caste |

Source: Theuko, Hamro Poornima Sahitya Pratisthan, 2020

Hari Prasad Pokharel (Manasagni)

| | | |
|---------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| काँडा गनुँदैछ | <i>kanda gandai chha</i> | counting thrones |
| हराएर काँडेमा | <i>harayerkandai ma</i> | being lost on thrones |
| फूल फुलेन | <i>phool phoolena</i> | a flower not blooming |

Source: *Prarambha, Manasagni Mission, 2018*

Political world: Haiku poems of one poet randomly selected on imageries of the political world with nationalism and frustration are referred below as examples:

Bam Bahadur Jitali

| | | |
|--------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| नेताको बोली | <i>netako bolee</i> | chattering of a leader |
| आज होइन भोली | <i>aaj hoina bholee</i> | tomorrow not today |
| हातमा झोली | <i>haatma jholee</i> | bags in hand |

Source: *Notebook Haiku Sangraha Issue 1, 'Ree' Winter, Nepal Haiku Kendra (NEHA), 2017*

Human relations: Haiku poems of one poet randomly selected on imageries of human relations with romantics and eroticism are referred below as references.

Dibya Giri

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| भत्तिताको चित्र | <i>bhittako chitra</i> | the wall picture |
| वगितको सम्झना | <i>bigatko samjhana</i> | to look back |
| फर्केर हेर | <i>pharker hera</i> | remembering the past |

Source: *Notebook Haiku Sangraha Issue 1, 'Ree' Autumn, Nepal Haiku Kendra (NEHA), 2017*

Female haiku poets: Female poets of Nepal are very active in creating haiku poems since the beginning. Among them, Chandrakala

Shah, Sushma Manandhar, Sumi Lohani, Shanti Sapkota, Neeta Shrestha, Manju Gynawali, Jeevan Kansakar, and many other poets are actively writing their micro poems following other senior poets of Nepal and publishing on their own or attending haiku conferences. Among them, Chandrakala Shah has been active since the beginning of the Nepal haiku movement. Here, a young poet Sumi Lohani's haiku is referred to as an example:

Sumi Lohani

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|--------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| सडकछेउ | <i>sadak chheu</i> | roadside |
| तारमा लटरम्म | <i>taarma lataramma</i> | blooming pearls |
| मोती फलेका | <i>moti phaleka</i> | on electric wire |

Source: Notebook Haiku Sangraha Issue 1, 'Ree' Rainy, Nepal Haiku Kendra (NEHA), 2017

Globalization

Many young poets have been travelling and some have settled permanently in foreign countries. They are writing Nepali haiku even in diaspora and promoting other Nepali poets to write haiku individually or through *All Nepali Sahitya Samaj* (International Literary Society), which has branches in many countries outside Nepal. Some examples of haiku by these poets are referred here. Prakash Paudel Maila, Sher Bahadur Tamang (Japan), Puru Subedi (USA), Pramod Sarang (Korea), Krishna Bajgain (UK), and Janak sapkota (Finland) are some noted haiku poets of Nepal stationed outside the country. They write in Nepalese context, hence the name: Nepali haiku. Their haiku are published in international magazines in English. They have recognition in Nepal, as well as in the global haiku literary world. Here are haiku by two such poets:

Janak Sapkota: Janak Sapkota is an award-winning poet and his haiku is published in a world contemporary anthology of haiku edited by Kala Ramesh. He writes in Nepali, Finish, and English language, and lives in Finland.

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| रिक्सा चालक | <i>riksha chalak</i> | the rickshaw driver |
| ग्राहक कुरदा कुरदै | <i>grahak kurda kurdai</i> | waiting for a customer |
| आफै सुतेछ | <i>aaphai sutechha</i> | falls asleep |

Source: *naad anunaad: an anthology of contemporary world haiku*,
(Ed.) Kala Ramesh, 2016

Prakash Paudel Maila: Prakash Paudel Maila was very young when he started writing haiku in Nepal. He was fully involved in the organization of the first Nepal Haiku Symposium in 2003. He was the editor of the first official journal of haiku *Andhagalchhi* released on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Nepal-Japan relationship. At present, Prakash is residing in Japan and is very active in promoting Nepali haiku in Japan and around the world. He has been writing in Nepali, Japanese, and English. He has co-authored *Hajar Haiku* collecting 500 of his haiku with Ram Kumar Panday's haiku.

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| झरेको फूल | <i>jhareko Phul</i> | falling flowers |
| पुतली रोइदन्छ | <i>putall roidinchha</i> | a butterfly cries |
| बगैचा भित्र | <i>bangaincha bhitra</i> | in the garden |

Source: *Nepali Haiga Issue 3, Nuwakot Sahitya Pratisthan, Nepal 2018*

Manoj Sharma: Manoj Sharma resides in Nepal and creates haiku poems in both Nepali and English. His poems are published in more than two dozen reputed and edited haiku journals.

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| अर्ध चन्द्रमा | <i>ardha chandrama</i> | the crescent moon |
| झुत्रो बादल माझ | <i>jhutro badal majha</i> | amidst the patchy clouds |
| सफेद झूट | <i>saphed jhoot</i> | her white lies |

Source: *Modern Haiku Issue 54.2, Summer 2023*

Thus, many haiku poets in Nepal adhere to the traditional form of 5-7-5 haiku in a three line structure that have at least one seasonal *kigo*. Imageries are captured by any of the five senses like eyes (seeing), ears (listening), nose (smelling), mouth (tasting) and skin (feeling) by keenly observing moments. The reference book for *kigo* is not available as of now. As haiku writing started comparatively late in Nepal, poets have experimented with neo-classical and renaissance thought and call them modern haiku with varied themes, which the traditional poets sometimes argue against. Some even give a flat message in their haiku with no emotional kick to the reader. Some haiku poems do not have a *kireji* or a juxtaposition for the reader to make their own observation on the images that resonate with the poet. However, some poets are making improvements to write haiku that allows readers be become more engaged and fulfilled, though some poems may not have the expectations of traditional haiku. After all, it seems poets should have the liberty to use creative images and poetic expressions to please their own soul.

In Summary

- Nepali haiku poem appeared for the first time in the literary magazine of Nepal almost six decades back in 1962.
- For another four decades, a few poets tried very hard with their mind, soul, and hand to learn, write, and motivate other writers/poets to create this minimalized poem originated in Japan.
- Some informal and formal organizations established like *Haiku study Nepal*, *Haiku adda*, and *Nepal Haiku Centre*. These organizations gathered poets from the eastern as well as western parts of the country and motivated them to develop their skills writing in haikai genres.
- The Nippon Nepal Research center (with the assistance of the Japanese Embassy in Nepal) organized the first haiku symposium for involving many writers to learn, discuss, and deepen their understanding of the subject.

- In December 2003, a haiku journal dedicated solely for showcasing poems of Nepali haikins was initiated, compiling haiku poems of interested young and senior poets. However, the journal could not take the shape as desired.
- After Nepal's great earthquake in 2015, many poets re-started creating thousands of short poems like haiku and publishing haiku books by themselves for the market.
- Most of the Nepali poets followed the traditional structure and forms of 5-7-5 in three lines for haiku writing. However, only a few poets could adhere to the ultimate objective of producing imageries with a 'aha!' moment. Moreover, many times these poets don't include a *kigo* (seasonal reference) or a *kireji* (juxtaposition). Sometimes, the haiku reads like a flat statement with a question after reading 'so what?'
- Themes of Nepali haiku can be clustered mostly into four major groups: natural world, social world, political world, and human relations.
- A few Nepali haiku poets have already created haiku poems with international reputation and have published in international edited journals and have achieved recognition. A lot has to be done to educate and facilitate poets in Nepal to create haiku literatures for global recognition.

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The author would like to acknowledge all the poets for their referred haiku, which are inserted as examples here in the essay. These haiku are randomly selected from the published books or journals without any bias. Published sources of each are given immediately under the respective haiku. English translation of most of the haiku that the author has selected here for references are not available in published documents. The author translated all Nepali haiku into English.

Industrial engineer by profession, Professor Dinesh P. Chapagain has been writing haiku in both Nepali and English as well as creating haiga since his retirement from Kathmandu University in 2005. He writes or paints with a pseudonym of Godhooli (sunset time) Dinesh. Godhooli went to Japan for a short training in 1970 after graduation for about six months. He was mesmerized by the minimalism he found in Japanese culture and modern technology. Since then, he has repeatedly been there and stayed for a total of about five years. He learned haiku and sumi-e art in Japan. Godhooli has created more than 1,000 haiku and 500 haiga. He is frequently invited to read his haiku and exhibit his haiga among haiku poets at different occasions in Nepal. Godhooli has published a Nepali Haiga book titled: ... on a mound of pond/an old frog in 2018. This is the first haiga book published in Nepal. His haiku are printed in several poetry journals in Nepal. Many of his Nepali and English haiku are also translated in French, Portuguese, and Japanese and have been published by Daily Haiga online, Haiga online, Grains de Vent (France), World Haiku (Japan), Haiku University (Japan) and many others.