

## **Hindi Haiku: A Study of Shifts in Moods**

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### **Abstract**

Making a grand breakthrough in the eighth century, Japanese poetry remains one of the earliest boons for the world of literature. Indian poets are some of the many writers who have been influenced by Japanese poetry. This article analyses haiku composed in the Hindi language. The analysis is based on a thematic and critical study of the works of selective haiku writers of the Hindi language. The benefits that Hindi haiku has created for Hindi literature is seen in how it adapts itself culturally, socially and philosophically which is elucidated here. The Hindi haiku poets, through restriction of syllables, gave rise to images that forced us to dwell upon their reflections. Those who deviated from its strict syllabic form also gave rise to innovative poetic compositions. This study explores the philosophical inclination, formative deviation and cultural variation of haiku as it travelled from Japanese culture to the Indian culture.

*Keywords:* Haiku, Hindi literature, Japanese philosophy, Japanese poetry, Weltanschauung, Zen thought

## Introduction

Haiku is a Japanese imagist poetic form of five-seven-five syllables that allows the writer to form reflections through images. This quality can be seen in almost all forms of Japanese poetry. According to Robert Brower, the poets of Japan utilised both personal and impersonal patterns. They needed to bring their personal lyricism into balance with such impersonal, social concerns as relations between the poet and public affairs. Work also had to be brought into balance with larger concerns of broader humanity, the world of nature and religion. These polar opposites of the personal and impersonal were essential for each other, and everything was to be gained by their popular harmony. Some critics think that a poem remains a poem only if it is able to evoke our senses and calm our mind by its rhythmic flow. This is not the case with haiku. Haiku creates rhythm through images. Regarding this statement, Brower (1975) has asserted that:

The haiku has rhythm, but it is not protracted enough to give a sense of melodic movement; it consists almost entirely of images related by juxtaposition rather than, by a coherent placement in a syntactical, rhythmic flow (p. 11).

The beauty of this poetic genre lies in the enigma it embodies within itself. The use of five-seven-five syllables is prevalent in haiku; until now. The reason behind the restriction of syllables is described by Kenneth Yasuda who wrote how:

Consequently, the length of a verse is made up of those words which we can utter in one breath. The length, that is, is necessitated by haiku nature and by the physical impossibility of pronouncing an unlimited number of syllables in a given breath (in Verma, 1983, p. 51).

This fact is equally applicable for the Hindi language. According to Verma (1983), the Japanese language is very similar to that of Hindi. He puts forth:

Japaani varnmala ki dhvaniya atyant seemit hain aur we devnaagri me suvidhapoorvak yatha-uccharan likhi jaa sakti hain (p. 64).  
[Translation<sup>1</sup>] The sounds in Japanese language are similar to Hindi, and they can be written with ease and clarity of pronunciation in Devanagari font<sup>2</sup>.

A majority of haiku poets adopted a rigid syllabic rule due to this reason. Yet according to Satyabhusham Verma, some deviated due to the intensity of the required theme, a desire to break norms, a sense of a loss of creative ability and a concern that the theme they wanted to deal with could not fit in the five-seven-five restricted syllabic count of a haiku (Verma, 1983, p. 53). Many of the Japanese poets did not follow the syllabic norms of haiku. One of the reasons behind this was an eagerness to experiment with the structure and form of a genre. As First Name Otsuji remarked: “When we try to express our emotions directly, we cannot know beforehand, how many syllables will be needed” (in Yasuda, 2001, p. 38).

This research argues that the power of a poet lies in their ability to express something accurately or allusively even after a constraint is put on the work. There is always a rationale behind placing a restriction upon a written form. A valid reason behind the giving of Japanese haiku a limitation of seventeen syllables has been offered by Yasuda who has asserted:

<sup>1</sup> All translations, unless specified otherwise, are the work of the author.

<sup>2</sup> Script used in Hindi language.

The mental state of the tension of the poet during the kind of experience [in haiku ...] durates one-breath length, for as the poet exhales, that in itself draws the haiku moment to its close, and his vision is completed. (2001, p. 40)

Therefore, a traditional haiku, conforming to its restrictions, involves the expression of one image, and this expression has to be uttered in a single breath.

### **Philosophical Impacts on Haiku**

If we talk about the structure of haiku, we are talking about what a thousand words could not say, and how something is expressed in the three lines of haiku. Precise yet deep, this poetic form through convention, adaptation and trans-creation has been elevated to a highly privileged position among the literature of other languages. The grandeur of haiku is so profound that the poets of many other countries – east and west – have adopted this form of poetry. India is one of these countries. India and Japan have been exchanging ideas and culture through Korea and China, for centuries. Buddhism is the leading religion of Japan, the origin of which lies in India. For this reason, Japanese people became internally “Indianised” without marking the gradual changes in their life and culture. According to Satyabhushan Verma, the Japanese word zen is an adapted form of Indian (Sanskrit) *Dhyan* (meditation). The basis of *zen* thought is to incarnate the Buddhist, or *Mahayana*, way in daily life (Uchiyama, 2004, p. 235). Over time Buddhism was absorbed into Confucian thought and Taoism which, together, has flourished as a natural religion in China.

The Sanskrit word *dhyan* was pronounced as *jhan* in Pali, *chan* in Chinese and the same as *zen* in Japanese. Japan came under the influence of zen thought during the seventh and eighth centuries, but its unavoidable impact was felt and realised later in the twelfth century. Gradually a zen view became part and parcel of Japanese life. It pervaded across all aspects of Japanese life and culture including architecture, painting, craft, gardening and poetry (Abe, 1997, p. 240). Zen ascetics look at every situation in life – including grief, happiness, emotion, joy and sorrow – indifferently. There is an instinctive sympathy for the entire creation, animate and inanimate alike. There is, too, a keen awareness of the ever-changing and transitory aspects of nature. Of especial note here, many zen ascetics were also poets. Japanese poetry, particularly haiku, is indebted to zen thought. Concentration, neutrality, frugality in the use of words, has generated a brevity of structure, a terseness of style and ordinariness of content for which haiku is now known worldwide and is also now known to have been derived from the same source (Verma, 1983, pp. 30–35).

### **Hindi Literature: A Short History**

A brief understanding of Hindi literature is essential in order to understand Hindi Haiku. The variation and diversity of poetic forms in Hindi literature have evolved through ages. With the evolution of many great literary works, poetry dominated Hindi literature until the 1850s. Starting with the journey of poetic grandeur in the fourteenth century and *veergathakaal* (the period of warrior song, eleventh to the fourteenth centuries) involved prominent writers such as Vidyapati and Amir Khusro. The real journey of Hindi literature is thought to have begun with *Bhaktikaal* (the period of devotion, fourteenth to eighteenth centuries). Kabir, Jaayasi, Soordas, Tulsi, Raidas and Meera are some of the better-known poets of this age. According to Vishwanath Tripathi, this age was called an age of devotion because of the attack on and the respective victory of Mughals in India. Due to various frustrations, Hindu poets started seeking solace in their devotion and the outcome of this devotion was *Bhaktikavya*. Importantly,

Hajariprasad Dwivedi calls this age as an outcome of the preconceived notion of incarnation and a belief in God (Tripathi, 2012, pp. 11–12). Some critics find Hindi haiku similar to bhakti poetry, primarily because of the shared themes and structures across between haiku and bhakti poetry. Bhakti poetry, like haiku, makes use of couplets and triplets, and involves *dhyana*. In *Reetikaal* (the age of tradition, eighteenth to twentieth centuries), the poets adopted literary techniques and devices to enhance their poetry (Shukla, 1946). The poetry of this age was enriched with *Sringar rasa* (essence of beauty). Some of the prominent poets of this age are Keshavdas, Senapati, Bihari, Dev, Bhushan and Gang. Several poets like Ghananand, Alam, Thakur and Guru Gobind Singh deviated from *reeti* (tradition) and carried their own theory of poetry (Tripathi, 2012, pp. 54–70).

With the approaching of modernization in 1850, the writings in Hindi became prose-dominant due to the rise of different ideologies, but poetry was not devoid of enrichment. *Chhayavaadi Kavya* (beginning in 1920) involved the use of images, nature, ideology, women, curiosity and other aspects of humanity. This school of poetry induced thoughts of national freedom and power which sometimes also reached the point of patriotism. Jaishankar Prasad, Nirala, Panth and Mahadevi Verma belong to this school of poetry (Tripathi, 2012, pp. 127–33). *Chhayavadottar Kavya* (post *Chhayavadi* period of poetry) followed the concerns related to the poor; their pitiful condition and dismal living conditions were reflected in the poems composed under this symbol of social concern and thought. Nirala, Ramdhari Singh Dinkar, Makhanlal Chaturvedi and Shubhadra Kumari Chauhan were the chief poets of this trend. *Pragatisheel Kavya* (progressive poetry) began to be written around 1930. According to Tripathi, it shared a rebellion against exploitation and saw the power of the exploited. The beauty of toil and inequality of class is depicted in many of the works written during this period by poets including Nagarjun, Kedarnath Aggarwal, Trilochan Shastri and Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh who adopted the progressive thought (2012, p. 143). Along with the Indian poetic genre such as Doha, kavita, Chaupai and Kundaliya, several imported poetic forms emerged in Hindi literature and moulded themselves into the nature and culture of Hindustan (Sagar, 2017, p. 12). Ghazal, Rubai, elegy, sonnet and haiku are some of these imported forms.

### **The Advent of Haiku in India**

The attraction of the poets towards *nayi kavita* (new poetry) in around 1943 (Sagar, 2017, p.12) further facilitated the acceptance of haiku in Hindi. The advent of haiku is actually a comparatively recent development in India. According to Verma, the journey of this genre began, in India, in 1919 when Rabindranath Tagore returned from a tour in Japan and wrote a book entitled *Japan Yatre*. In this work Tagore discusses his appreciation for the short Japanese poem haiku without mentioning this genre by name. Moreover, he also translated some of the haikus written by Basho from Japanese into Bengali in a collection entitled *Sfuling*, which still remains unpublished (85-86). Later on, several poets started adopting and moulding this poetic form. Agyeya and Satyabhushan Verma are some of the initial followers of this genre. Interestingly, poems consisting of three lines were present in Hindi literature well before Tagore visited Japan; only the five-seven-five syllabic use of sounds were not considered until 1919. Verma maintains:

Hindi me laghu muktako ki ek lambi parampara hai. Vedic kaal se lekar sampurn madhyakaal ka bhartiya saahitya muktako ke vishaal bhandaar se bhara para hai [...] maahiya ya tappa teen panktiyon ke Punjabi geet hain jo roop-vidhaan me haiku ke bahut nikat hain. (1983, p. 88)

In Hindi, there is an old tradition of short poems. The era starting from Vedic

period to medieval period is full of the great treasure of short poems [...] *maahiya* or *tappa* are the Punjabi songs consisting of three-lines which are very near to haiku in structure.

The impact of Western literatures on Hindi that led to the rise of haiku cannot be underestimated. Westerners have left an obvious impact on Indian people. The techniques and forms used by Western writers are mostly appreciated by Hindi poets (Trivedi, 2007), but it was the introduction of haiku in Europe that gave Hindi literature a term for a new genre: haiku. Verma maintains:

Pshchim me, vishesh roop se angreji me, haiku ki charcha se hindi kavya jagat aprabhavit nahi reh sakta tha. Chhathe dashak ke ant tak haiku hindi me aparichit chhand nahi raha tha. (1983, p. 89)

Due to the discussion of haiku in west, especially in English, the Hindi world of poetry could not remain indifferent. Until the end of 1960, haiku was not an unknown poetic form in Hindi.

Ezra Pound in America, Seferis in Greece, Tablada in Spain and many other poets from different countries have adopted the haiku form while writing their compositions (Verma, 1983, p. 84). Many readers of English literature would be familiar with the following haiku by Pound:

In a Station of Metro  
The apparition of these faces in the crowd  
Petals on a wet, black bough (1913, p. 6)

Unlike English haiku poets, the poets of Hindi haiku favoured the use of an appropriate syllable count. The Hindi language is a syllabic language. In Hindi haiku one akshar (comparable to an alphabet or letter in English) is considered to be equivalent to one syllable. Bhagwatsharan Aggarwal says:

Japani haiku ke saman, shilpa ki drishti se paanch-saat-paanch akharon ki kramwali, 17 akshariya atukant tripadi rachna ko hi hindi ke haikukaron ne sweekara hai. Isme matraon aur ardh-vyanjano ki ginti nahi hoti. (2009, p. 144)  
Like the structure of Japanese haiku, three lined verse of 17 sounds including five-seven-five sound sequence has been accepted by Hindi haiku poets. *Matra* (addition of a, ee, i, u, oo, et cetera in a sound) and *ardhavyanjana* (half sounds) are not counted.

Some of the Hindi poets strictly follow the five-seven-five framework of haiku, while others go on allowing their poetic license to interweave words playfully in a striking manner. Even after going by a strict syllable limit, these poets do not fail to achieve the desired expression and impression. Aggarwal, a present-day practitioner of haiku, for example, has written:

<i>Boond mein sama</i>	Mingled in one drop
<i>Saagar aur soorya</i>	Sea and sun
<i>Hawa le uri</i> (2016, p. 10)	Swept away by wind

This haiku has various interpretations. The impressionistic reading of these three lines yields the theme of nature, but further meanings reveal themselves as the layers of the poem are explored. Whether the sweeping away of the drop is to be lamented or celebrated, is left to the readers; the meanings that we see are both degenerative as well as regenerative. This is where

the beauty of haiku lies.

Haiku utilises the images of nature to form reflections. These reflections give rise to a number of themes. Most obviously, the inclusion of nature in haiku has seen some critics consider Hindi Haiku as nature poetry. Regarding this Verma has put forth:

Haiku ko kuch paashchatya sameekshako ne prakriti kavya bhi kaha hai. Parantu haiku me prakriti ka roop, pashchim ki kavita me jise prakriti kavya kaha gaya hai, use nitant bhinna hai. Haiku me prakriti ka paryavekshan hai jo nirantar parivartansheel aur nashwar hai. Jeevan ki kshanbhanguarta ko haiku-kavi prakriti ke gateman, nashvar roop me dekhta hai. Haiku-drishti manushya aur prakriti me bhed nahi karti. Weh manushya aur prakriti ko ek ang ke roop me dekhti hai. (1983, p. 35)

Some western critics have called haiku as a poem on nature. However, the way nature has been used in haiku differs from the way it has been used in western nature poetry. In haiku, there is an observation of nature which is variable and frangible. The ephemerality of life is seen by a haiku poet as movability and destructibility of nature. The vision of haiku does not consider difference between human and nature. It views human and nature as the same organ.

Haiku is not restricted solely to nature. Human pain, love, happiness and mortality have been reflected in haiku. The seasons of nature, sunrise, sunset and phases of the moon have also been portrayed by haiku poets. This is where the tradition of Japanese and Hindi haiku gets overlapped. Haiku written in the West does not have the same intense representation of natural surroundings getting affected due to seasonal changes.

Regarding this lack of seasonal variation in west affecting the creative faculties of haiku writers, Haruo Shirane puts forth:

Significantly, the Haiku Society of America definition of haiku does not mention the seasonal word, which would be mandatory in Japan for most schools. Maybe half of existing English-language haiku have seasonal words or some sense of the season, and even when the haiku do have a seasonal word the usually do not serve the function that they do in Japanese haiku (2000, p. 61).

The representations of nature in haiku sees this type of poetry act as vehicle to convey both human predicaments as well as joys. While doing so, personification remains a dominant technique in its composition. Hindi poets have also given different names to haiku with *tridal* (leaf pointed on three sides), *bilvapatra* (wood-apple leaf), *triveni* (river with three streams) and *trishool* (Trident) being some of these.

### **Hindi Haiku: From Images to Reflection**

In contemporary India, thousands of poets have been successfully composing haiku resulting in several haiku magazines and anthologies being published. After this genre was introduced by Agyeya in Hindi literature, several poets started adopting this method of expression. Aditya Pratap Singh (1929–2013) from Reeva, Madhya Pradesh is one of these poets. The credit of taking haiku as a movement in India is attributed to this Singh who started various haiku clubs and believed in writing pure (that is five-seven-five syllabic count) haiku. The revealing of

social issues and the unravelling of nature are his main concerns. Bhagwatsharan Aggarwal (1930–), unlike Singh, believes in writing haikus in free form and it is, perhaps, due to this stylistic preference that these two poets are considered rivals of each other. Neelmendu Sagar (1936–), a poet from Begusarai, Bihar writes haiku with the dominant themes of nature and its concerns. Shail Rastogi (1927–2007) from the Meerut district of Uttar Pradesh has also utilised nature to convey human emotions and follies. The analysis of Hindi haiku bears various interpretations. The theme of nature and time has been conventionally carried from Japanese haiku into Hindi haiku. Sometimes the Hindi haiku poets also reflect on the degradation of culture, nature and religion in their works. The surface reading of most of these haikus does not give us pleasure. Yet the more we delve into this poetic form, the greater is the pleasure. This pleasure arises from the image that a haiku creates before our eyes (Stephenson and Rosen, 2015). The generation of the image gives rise to the generation of theme. This article deals with the haikus written in both strict as well as deviated forms.

Table 1: Chronological presentation of Thematic Journey of Haiku (from Japan to India)

Time Period	Japan		United States		India	
	Poet	Theme	Poet	Theme	Poet	Theme
1670-1700	Basho	Nature, seasons, ephemeral concept of time	-	-	-	-
1700-1800	Buson, Ryota	Nature (like sun, moon, water bodies, flowers), seasons	-	-	-	-
	Issa	Nature, humanity, human emotion, misery	-	-	-	-
1800-1900	Shiki	Iconoclasm, anti-tradition	-	-	-	-
1900 to present	Kyoshi	Traditional sense of representation of beauty, propaganda	Ezra Pound	Imagination, modernity	Agyeya, Verma	Nature, seasons
	Soju	Human life	Jack Kerouac	Beat-poetics, protest	Singh, Sagar, Rastogi, Verma	Time, nature, seasons, human misery
	Sheishi, Shuoshi	New forms, rebelliousness, romantic self-expression	Richard Wright	Nature	Aggarwal, Verma, Sagar	Existence, Human predicament

The journey of haiku in India is one of deviation to the realization of its own for. Table 1 depicts the thematic journey of Haiku, which shows shifts of mood from images to reflections. One of the early experimenters, who once unknowingly wrote a poem similar to haiku, was Agyeya (1911–87). The echo of haiku in Hindi poetry was seen for the first time in his anthology of poems entitled as *Aree O Karuna Prabhamaya* (1959). Being an explorer by nature, he looked at the technique of haiku, and translated a famous haiku of Basho to Hindi:



<i>Sookhi daal per</i>	On a dry twig
<i>Kaak ek ekaki</i>	sits a lonely crow
<i>Raat patjhar ki</i> (1959, p. 76).	in the night of autumn.

At first glance, the haiku reflects on the ongoing of nature, but once we move a layer deeper, old age becomes its prominent theme. *Sookhi daal* (dry twig) connotes something old and worn-out. The word *ekaki* (lonely) further hints at loneliness that the old age brings with itself and *patjhar* (autumn) acts as a universal symbol of death. Similarly, the poem quoted below by the same poet arouses a similar image, however with a different mood:

<i>Urr gayi chiriya</i>	The bird flew
<i>Kaanpi, fir Thir</i>	Trembled, again
<i>ho gayi patti</i> (1959, p. 118).	Still was the leaf.

This poem entitled “*Chiriya ki Kahani*” (“A Bird’s Story”) records a momentary experience of the poet. The bird sat on a leaf, guessed the presence of the poet nearby and flew away at once pushing the leaf. Due to this movement, the leaf trembles and becomes firm again. These seemingly different activities are not really very different. They are indivisible parts of a single activity happening in a single moment. The poet, while writing the poem, thought that it was incomplete. The whole thing could be described in a single sentence, but the poem appeared before him in four short lines as cited above. Agyeya admitted in his *Atmanepad* (1960) that he tried to improve upon this poem, thinking it to be not a complete composition, but he failed to do so. Perhaps because he was not well acquainted with haiku at the time. Later, in 1957, when he visited Japan and became well acquainted with Japanese poetry and its aesthetics, he realised that his short poem “*Chiriya ki Kahani*” is actually a complete work in its own way (Agyeya, 1958 p. 51).

Soon after Agyeya introduced haiku into Hindi literature, hundreds of poets started adopting this poetic form. Singh, noted above, wrote multiple influential haikus. He followed the strict five-seven-five syllable (sound or *akshar* in Hindi) rule while writing haiku with his poems of this type dominated by natural imagery:

<i>Chaandani jhuki</i>	The white rays of moon bent
<i>Phool ke othon per</i>	on the lips of the flower
<i>Doodh bhari maa</i> (2016, p. 17).	like a mother about to feed her infant.

The poet, with the help of metaphor, makes the readers imagine as well as visualise the petals of a flower when the white rays of moonlight fall upon them. Like the poems of William Wordsworth, the haikus composed by Singh throw light on the difference between an indifferent and a sensitive eye while observing the surrounding atmosphere. Similarly, one of his remarkable haikus:

<i>Sitaron beech</i>	Amidst the stars is
<i>hansiya fenk gayi</i>	throwing the sickle
<i>khet ki saanjh</i> (2016, p. 17).	this evening of the field.

The composition quoted above acts as a *mélange* of various literary techniques folded gracefully into three lines. The act of throwing the sickle when the farmer is about to leave his field in the evening, has been compared to a half-moon shining between the stars. Through natural imagery, the poet delves even deeper into the link between nature and time:

<i>Oon ka gola</i>	A ball of wool
<i>Jaga, bhaga sahsa</i>	woke up and suddenly started running
<i>Arrey shashak</i> (2016, p. 17).	O, hare.

Here the sun becomes ‘*oon ka gola*’ (a ball of wool) for the poet. The movement of the sun has been compared to a hare which has all of a sudden awoken due to sunrise. Time could be seen as the hare since the movement of sun and time are closely interlinked, and time has been called as a product of the movement of sun.

What could be a more accurate depiction of reality than this image of a poor child struggling from the dogs to get the leftovers? Another haiku by the same poet depicts the pain and mental agony of old age:

<i>Chirchirata</i>	Irritated
<i>Tendoo ka koyla re</i>	like the coal of tandoor
<i>Akela boodha</i> (2016, p. 17).	is the lonely old man.

The word “irritated” (*Chirchirata*) has been linked with coal because the coal (*Koyla*) of tandoor sparkles with heat before it is extinguished; it makes a crackling sound (*chirchirana*) and its cracks are visible before its life ends. This act of extinguishing in this poem symbolises death. The lonely old man is irritated due to his fear of loneliness; his loneliness further gives rise to his decreased sense of self-worth. Coal could be seen as something insignificant and futile, and this is why the poet compares the old man with it. Some haikus of this poet also have a double meaning (Blasko and Merski 1998). The haiku quoted below exemplifies Singh’s skill in offering readers with dual meanings.

<i>Chubhta aah:</i>	Stinging ah:
<i>Toota kaanch khilouna</i>	The broken toy of glass,
<i>Bacchi ki yaad</i> (2016, p. 17).	like the remembrance of girl-child.

The first line creates an ambience of causticity (*chubhta*) and bitterness of pain (*aah*). The use of colons denotes the continuity of thought from the first line through to the next two lines, however lying at an interval. It seems as if the bitterness of pain stings the poet who sees it as the smashing of a glass-toy which is very dear to a girl child. The agony received when a very dear object breaks, like glass, tears the skin of its owner. The poet uses the expression *bacchi* (girl child) further intensifying the ambiguity. The remembrance (*yaad*) of the girl child bears several connotations. A girl lives two lives: one before her marriage and the other after it. She has to give up her dreams, her birthplace and every object associated with her childhood, when she enters into her other, new, life. This shattering of a dream and its associations has been linked to the loss of the poet. Moreover, this haiku creates a sense of nostalgia. Perhaps, it is the daughter who is away from the speaker, and this lack of presence makes him lament.

Aditya Pratap Singh, as already mentioned, followed strict syllable count; however, some of his fellow poets neglected the syllabic concept of haiku. Considered as an invective of Singh, Aggarwal believed in adopting a syllable-free technique while composing haiku. According to him, a Hindi haiku creates images through words. He espouses this view in the Encyclopaedia of Haiku-Poetry:

Weh (haiku poet) apne kavya ke madhyam se apni samvednaaon ko is prakar prasut karta hai, jisse ki uska hubahoo chitra Pathak ya shrota ke samne ubharta jaaye (2009, p. 112).

A haiku poet, through his poetry serves before us his emotions in a way so as to evoke a pictorial image in front of the readers or listeners.

Along with the creation of images, Aggarwal also offers before us a *weltanschauung* (perspective of world). This worldview is represented by him in a manner so as to lead us to a greater perspective: the ideology and philosophy of life. This haiku by Aggarwal utilises the theme of home and modifies it in more complexities:

<i>Mere ghar me</i>	My abode contains
<i>Chheh jane, char disha</i>	Six people, four directions
<i>Nabh aur mein</i> (2016, p. 10).	Sky and me.

In the following haiku, the use of the word *mere* (mine) connotes possession. However, as we move, the flow of the composition reveals itself to be universal. The speaker considers the whole world to be his home. Therefore, *ghar* (home) becomes the world further giving rise to themes of both home as well as homelessness.

Along with the evolution of haiku, ambiguity started being considered as one its ornaments. The journey of haiku in Hindi began with the personification of nature, and in this sense, the haiku poets romanticised various images by playing with words:

<i>Nabh gunjaati</i>	Mother cloud
<i>Neer- gire shishu pe</i>	Echoes and hovers around her child
<i>Mandrati maa</i> (2016, p. 10).	made wet by water.

In this haiku by the same poet, the earth becomes the child (*shishu*), and the clouds making the sky thunder (*nabh gunjaati*) becomes the mother, reminding us of the romantic poets. These lines create before our eyes the image of a mother who, after hearing the thunderbolt, runs to pick up her infant on whom rain drops are falling. Such countryside images hint towards the rustic nature of Hindi haiku. The dominance of nature on various creatures of earth has been shown here. The next haiku draws a poignant picture of estrangement and momentariness of existence:

<i>Aansoo hi kab</i>	When do even tears
<i>Saath dete vyatha mein</i>	remain with us, at the time of anguish
<i>Chhor bhagte</i> (2016, p. 10).	They run away.

Everything in life does not remain eternally with anyone. Tears, considered as the partner of anguish, flows away while we suffer. Similarly, everything and everyone leaves us. The poet has tried to show the nothingness of life through this haiku.

<i>Ret pe bas</i>	On sand
<i>Likhoon mitaaon naam</i>	I write and erase name
<i>Aur kya karoon</i> (2016, p. 10).	What else should I do.

This haiku laments the condition of a lover who after separation, is not able to forget his love. It also shows the futility of life (“what else should I do”). Here, the speaker is dependent on a part of nature (“sand”) in order to find solace (or further intensify his grief). Haikus of this kind discuss the philosophy of life and nature and show the relationship of the two.

This poetic form could not remain constricted by natural imagery. Urban, social and political themes soon started being introduced within this genre. Neelmendu Sagar (1936–) is one of the poets to have introduced other themes to this genre. One of his haikus tells a thousand words to its readers:

<i>Bhaari gatthar</i>	Heavy burden
<i>Kandhe chadhi thakaan</i>	tired, drooping shoulders
<i>Ghirti sham</i> (2016, p. 14).	evening hovers.

This haiku hints at the predicament of old age, the age in which the burden of being old forces a person to continue doing his work even when his “shoulders” do not support him. Further, the word *gatthar* (a package made up of clothes) connotes poverty in this mechanised and modern era. It seems as if the person carrying this burden has to move because there is no time to rest. These expressions remind Uda Kyioko’s experience of spending time around *satoyama* (a celebrated local rural commons, evolved from centuries of agricultural use), with scarcity of essential commodities due to the devastations of war (Kiyoko, 2004). The utilisation of metaphor as a technique by the poet, reaches the zenith of beauty in the haiku quoted below. This haiku reflects on the nothingness of time and life:

<i>Saarthak lage</i>	Seemingly relevant
<i>Paani ke bulbule</i>	the bubbles of water
<i>Chhoote hi toote</i> (2015, p. 57).	popped off when touched.

The “bubbles of water”, like an illusion that seems to be true, breaks off after a moment. The bubbles are attractive, but they end the moment our fingers touch them. It also generates the meaning that when a “seemingly relevant” and attractive thing or condition is approached, then its reality or futility is revealed to the attracted viewer. Another haiku by the same poet tells us about the journey of a writer while he is creating:

<i>Khojta tumhe</i>	While trying to find you
<i>Shabdon ke jungle me</i>	in the forest of words
<i>Khud kho gaya</i> (2015, p. 27).	I got lost.

When a writer is writing their imagination can struggle to find the right words. While doing so, he forgets himself and goes on with his voyage. It is this journey that Sagar has referred to. If seen from another perspective, this haiku is also paradoxical. Here the finder becomes the lost one. The word “forest” connotes something dense because the speaker has become lost while looking for the object. When a person struggles with his way in a forest, he compares different ways to locate the way that he must seek the way to his destination (rightful words). An accurate depiction of the journey of a writer from his existence to the existence of the written art form has been shown by the present poet. The next haiku reflects on the keen sense of observation needed in the composition of this genre:

<i>Baal Vidhya</i>	Child widow
<i>Akeli mombatti</i>	is the lonely candle
<i>Jali pighli</i> (2016, p. 14).	burning and melting.

The flame of a candle, when seen from nearby, has a blue parting-like shape within it from the very moment it begins to burn. This parting has been compared to that of a widow by the poet. The flame of the lonely candle burns and makes its wax melt by itself, in the same way as the thoughts of a widow, whether it be bodily or worldly, are restricted to herself. Moreover, the act of burning and melting of the candle hints at the manner in which the thoughts of a widow burn and melt.

This theme of burning has been used by Dr Shail Rastogi (1927–2009) in a different and personified manner in the following work:

<i>Jale alaa</i>	burning is the bonfire
<i>haath taapne lagi</i>	warming her hands
<i>kubri raat</i> (2016, p. 13).	is the crooked night.

Here *alaa* (bonfire) refers to the sun above which evening bends to warm her hands and converts itself to night, *kubri raat* (crooked night). The haiku quoted below brings in the theme of temporality:

<i>Andhiyare ki</i>	Peeling off
<i>Faliyan chheelati ha</i>	the pods of morning
<i>Kone me bhor</i> (2016, p. 13)	is the dawn in the corner.

The poet depicts the arrival of morning in a different and striking manner. The act of peeling is done so as to unravel and explore something. In this haiku, dawn has been compared to the peeling of a pod, which brings before us the seeds of night. It is broadly through nature, that various other themes are evoked in the works of these *haikukars* (Hindi haiku poets). Human nature with its nuances has been shown by her in the haiku quoted below:

<i>Umra chiraiya</i>	Age is a bird
<i>Idhar se udhar</i>	from here to there
<i>Dhoondhati disha</i> (2016, p. 13).	finding her way.

The poet tries to capture the emotions and insecurity of old age. With her growing age, she wants to secure her life and in doing so her mind roams from one direction to the other. This act of seeking her way is seen by Shail Rastogi as the act of a bird trying to find her direction in order to go to her safe shelter. The haikus written by this poet, therefore reveals the ephemeral aspects of human existence and the elements associated with it.

### Conclusion

Haiku, a Japanese imagist poetic form of five-seven-five syllables allows us to form reflections through images. Japanese is a pictorial language whereas in Hindi, pictures are created through words. Hindi haiku forms images through a careful choice of words. Several short poetic forms were present in India much before the advent of Hindi haiku, but the inclusion of haiku in Hindi poetry has led to the addition of something new in the field of Indian literature.

Hindi haiku underwent several shifts from the essential nature of Japanese haiku. Social, cultural and personal variations of the haiku poets have been reflected in their creations. Due to the differences in *weltanschauung* of the Haiku poets, the basic thematic aspects of haiku have also differed. The readings of selected haikus by a handful of poets suggest that Hindi haiku has enriched Hindi literature. It cannot be called as something separate from the mainstream Hindi poetic forms. Some critics call it Hindi nature poetry. This article has argued that putting a constraint on the thematic aspect of a genre, hinders its further development. Steve McCarthy gives the viewpoint of the Japanologist Donald Keene stating the criteria for authenticity of Haiku:

What makes a haiku authentic, in the view of this author, is when sudden changes in nature reflect deep transformations in oneself. A haiku poem is not only written but lived, with the experience preserved in verse and the perspective opening a window for the reader (2008, p. 64).

In contemporary life of mechanisation, a poet is not solely dependent on nature for their poetry. Machinery and urbanisation have separated us from greenery.

There remains an ongoing debate on the syllabic aspect of haiku. The syllabic rule in Hindi haiku can be achieved with a bit of daily practice. Many poets follow a rigid syllabic pattern while writing haiku, as they call it, but their imagination seems to be superficial. Due to this surface vision, they write meaningless lines. Those Hindi haikus that deviate from a rigid syllabic norm, but evoke the required mood through the formation of an image, lie on a much higher pedestal than the works of those poets that stick to its syllabic norm, but overlook its thematic and imagistic aspects. Whether the future of Hindi haiku is secure or not, cannot be answered. Certainly, hundreds of poets in contemporary India are adopting this poetic form. Writing haiku has become a fashion in the field of Hindi literature. The beauty of a haiku remains in the evocation of the reflection of a meaningful image, achieved by the use of apt words interlocked in five-seven-five syllables. It is by the achievement of this purity in Hindi haiku, that a poet becomes a *haikukaar*, the creator of haiku.

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