



FLASHES
Trilliums in haiku spirit

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Introduction by the author

HAIKU

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Not all my compositions fit easily into the tight pigeonholes of the haiku as conceived by pundits in North America, particularly in Canada. Therefore, I call them trilliums.

Three main elements unite them. One is that each trillium contains three lines. Another element is that each trillium refers to nature, time or a season. The third common element is the absence of punctuation, except for the period.

My interest in trilliums was awakened towards the end of 1988, when I was intrigued by haiku, a word I had heard and read several times, but whose definition perplexed me. When I began to explore the haiku seriously, a new vista of imagination opened.

Haiku originated and matured in Japan and remains popular there even today. Most early English writers of haiku did not know Japanese. Thus, our knowledge of haiku has been derived from translations. This ignorance of the original shape of haiku has helped to develop its variety.

In Japan, haiku has gone through several stages of development and modification. Masters disagree on approaches and philosophies and often criticize one another. This also happens in the West. Prominent figures such as Ezra Pound found fault with other English haiku writers and vice versa, and this continues even today.

One good to come out of literary bickering is the discovery of fresh pastures within this genre. Most creative artists are not satisfied adhering to established norms, because they have their own creative juices to add that establish their work as more unique and personal. This applies to haiku writers as well. I expect my haiku or trilliums to be read from this angle.

Yet, I am not against established norms as long as they serve some useful purpose. Otherwise, it would become boring to follow the pointless practice of travelling again and again along the same beaten track. It is like trying to fly in a cage.

I suggest that the introduction of new trends into an old system should be welcomed. It is to let haiku breathe in fresh air. No one should be afraid of change or experimentation. If haiku is alive today, it is largely due to its flexibility to incorporate new trends.

One piece of advice those haiku pundit in the West give is to name or suggest the seasons faithfully in their poems. This practice confines the pen. The repetition of one element without any purpose makes writing dull. Not many writers accept this practice, although I try to follow it.

Another piece of advice of haiku pundits is to use telegraphic language. I admit, brevity is the soul of poetry, but to use telegraphic language without reason does not make sense to me. In telegrams, extreme economy of

words is acceptable to avoid unnecessary cost. The message is important; beauty is of no consideration. In poetry, and haiku is poetry, there is no need to revise endlessly to get rid of articles and verbs. Too much skipping down may confuse and take away the beauty or charm or grace that it should possess.

It is said that haiku is instant-- a flash-- a revelation. A poet does not make a poem-- something else does. It appears as a burst of lightning. A.F. Scott in *Current Literary Terms* calls it "spiritual insight." This angle was taken by Basho in the 16th century Japan. He emphasized poetry as an act of the subconscious mind, not of conscious efforts. Something within compels a poet to write. Haiku is therefore a gem in rough shape. This thought gave rise to another school, which also accepted Basho as master, but urges editing to make the original language more comprehensible.

Many poets will not think in terms of these concepts because their creative force will not be content confining itself to rigid rules. In practice, both schools are right, because good poems have been created in both ways: spontaneously as well as non spontaneously.

EXAMPLES OF MY HAIKU

Rush rush rush
I see people rushing
spring makes me mad.

I surrender
to the touch of your fingers
sensuous sunrays!

Monsoons from my eyes
feed the fire of love
what a strange territory!

The rays of your dreams
saunter into my yard
joys dance again.

Snow flurries outside
lyrics from you inside...

so much paradise!

Love
a flower
among the rocks.

Dandelions scattered
words of my love
unattended.

Sun smiles
ice drops tears
path now slippery.

Garbage heavy
empty bottles and posters
election over.

