

75 HAIKU

by
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2016

Friday, 23 March 2012

a pregnant ragpicker
carrying a sack
filled with waste

Monday, 7 May 2012

a convoy with jammers
my car radio
starts babbling in Arabic

Tuesday, 18 March 2014

taking his place
an elderly beggar sprinkles water
around him with a red lily

Friday, 12 August 2011

near the labourers' hutments
in a tree shrine
pint-sized Gods

Monday, 28 March 2011

spring evening
a shoeblack
as if stroking the advancing darkness

Tuesday, 29 March 2011

windy March morning
a perplexed sweeper
amid the swirling leaves

Monday, 11 April 2011

meeting an old buddy
facing him
the laughing Buddha

Sunday, 7 October 2012

a raped Dalit immolates herself
Mao said: "a single spark can start a prairie fire"
& yet...

Monday, 18 April 2011

in a poor neighbourhood
their laughter
a different ring to it

Thursday, 19 April 2012

not Lego
ask a toiler's child
the building block is a brick!

Thursday, 10 March 2011

smitten
her eyes roll
on to her sleeves

Thursday, 2 June 2011
summer storm
through the lightning
a glimpse of a still vaster emptiness

Friday, 20 April 2012

O road workers!
come hither, please
& show me thy fate line

Tuesday, 7 June 2011

in a café
lapping up heart-shaped cream
on my cappuccino

Thursday, 9 June 2011

twilight
kids bursting
rainbow-tinted bubbles

Wednesday, 29 June 2011

after the day's work
the pull of the moon
a rickshaw puller going home

Monday, 25 July 2011

during a break
the coffee house cook
picking his teeth

Friday, 16 September 2011

laughing Buddha
tell me
what was so funny about your times?

Tuesday, 27 September 2011

tell me, the laughing Buddha
the secret behind
your beer belly?

Friday, 21 October 2011

class reunion
from which victorious battles
are you back?
which just wars have you fought?

Monday, 31 October 2011

a familiar sight
by & by, a beggar grows
human features

Monday, 14 November 2011

late night hour
still the measured steps
of a waiter

Friday, 12 October 2012

must be a stage act
an old muslim labourer's bent back
hauling onion sacks

Sunday, 19 February 2012

February night
dhobans* cough
rattles the wintry silence

*the wife of "dhobi" - one who irons clothes in the Indian sub-continent

Thursday, 1 March 2012

a beggar girl
her Cinderella looks
may some prince find her!

Wednesday, 21 March 2012

World Poetry Day
mounting the stairs
dhoban's anklets drown her rheumatic heart's
heavy breathing

Saturday, 24 March 2012

spring evening
the chattering birds
perhaps sharing news
of a new world somewhere

Sunday, 16 March 2014

which weighs more?
on the one side - Gorky's Mother*
& on the other - Mehboob's Mother India**

*It tells the story of a mother who follows her son to socialism and works for it

** in Mother India, Birju is initially shown as a dimwit who later becomes a bandit & her mother kills him.

Friday, 20 April 2012

looking closely
the toilers - almost human
yet the work they do!

Tuesday, 24 April 2012

of course, Rome wasn't built in a day
but just watch
the pace at which the toilers work

Wednesday, 25 April 2012

April Fools' Day
back from the hairdresser
with a mullah look

Wednesday, 25 April 2012

a toiler's jaded eyes
I wish the moon
will lend some of its light to them

Sunday, 29 April 2012

what of a magician's sleight of hand?
the toilers have erected supertalls
in the blink of an eye!

Sunday, 29 April 2012

tete-a-tete with a toiler
his counter-question to me
what do I live for?

Monday, 30 April 2012

May Day eve
I come upon pavement vendors
playing chess

Monday, 4 March 2013

begging at the top of his voice
aah!
the freedom of speech
so cherished by the petty bourgeois

Wednesday, 9 March 2011

summer drought
the whole world
bonsai

Friday, 11 May 2012

all the attributes of a beautiful woman
& yet this high-low divide
between us

Thursday, 26 December 2013

cheerless winter evening
is it really cozy & cheerful inside a swish cafe
or my senses deceive me?

Tuesday, 29 May 2012

the massive jugs
of a pavement vendor woman
yes, yes I would love to be her baby!

Monday, 3 March 2014

bad service at my favourite coffee house
the feeling of master and servant
comes to the fore

Thursday, 31 May 2012

a poor man peering
at a jewellery display
the laughter in his eyes

Friday, 1 June 2012

a heart on my cappuccino
I pour the right amount
of sugar over it

Friday, 1 June 2012

.
you swear by your Santa
I have seen kid rag pickers
giving our world a second chance

Sunday, 3 June 2012

back again
the looney, now
with a just visible paunch

Saturday, 9 June 2012

45* heat
an old rickshaw puller
just a splodge on the landscape

Monday, 24 September 2012

a beggar
smoking, chatting
I see a human being in him

Thursday, 14 June 2012

barely on his legs
a street kid
already adept at hunting

Tuesday, 19 June 2012

looking up from the rubbish bin
a rag picker kid's eyes
as if pearls

Thursday, 26 July 2012

his mother's death
unfazed
the coffee house waiters'
all day long smile

Monday, 3 October 2011

among the stuffed toys
a smiling vendor's baby

Thursday, 20 October 2011

o regal lady!
are you sure
your place is not in a zoo?

Friday, 21 October 2011

.
you goody goody street dog
keep your loudest bark
for the wealthy!

Monday, 16 March 2014

her stately looks
in our feudal-capitalist set-up
she is just a scavenger

Thursday, 22 March 2012

first time with a gardener
in his eyes
the sparkle of dew drops

Wednesday, 25 April 2012

cloudy spring evening
a burly Sikh
devouring a coffee cake

Saturday, 7 December 2013

contradicting me
a balloon seller tells me: "a toiler too has his old times
like the day he went hungry"

Sunday, 10 February 2013

poetry pours forth from me
well, this soil has been watered
by the sweat & blood of the toiling masses

Saturday, 2 March 2013

weaving a web around his customer
this shoeshine boy has great skills
but odds are that he won't ever be a capitalist

Sunday, 3 March 2013

enshrined in the Indian Constitution
the right to life
an old beggar woman clings to life

Sunday, 7 April 2013

dhobi's flat iron in the night
& the phrase 'early to bed and early to rise
makes a man healthy, wealthy & wise'

Friday, 12 April 2013

on my morning walk once again
taking the old route
a new house stands before me

Saturday, 6 July 2013

placing my shoe on the foot rest
I sight the worn out shoes
of the shoeshine man

Monday, 15 July 2013

watching a Barbie movie
a rickshawpuller's words ringing in my ears:
'this world is hell'

Monday, 5 August 2013

at the gates of a posh locality
achtung!
nuclear radiation zone

Sunday, 11 August 2013

what a fine city!*

there is no trace of factory workers
& the sparrows have become extinct

* Chandigarh - also called the City Beautiful

Monday, 23 September 2013

in bridal dress complete with churas*
the woman's audible burp
after a hearty meal

*wedding bangles

Tuesday, 19 November 2013

venturing out
after a long time
the paved roads to heaven & hell

Sunday, 22 December 2013

on the road
on a cloudy winter day-- a jamadarni* of a nondescript age
she could be from 16 to 80

*a cleaning woman

Thursday, 16 January 2014

who pulls the strings?
dancing around like a puppet
a tiny tot begs for an ice-cream

Sunday, 16 February 2014

kids her age are in front of heaters
on a cold Saturday morning
a rag picker out at work

Friday, 7 March 2014

a little vendor girl's kohl lined eyes
like a dawn
still streaked with night

Friday, 14 March 2014

outside my window today
in place of a mynah
the hearty laughter of a scavenger woman

Saturday, 22 March 2014

a fruit seller's head
full of silver hair
I thought she was ageing gracefully
until she told me she was only 42

Sunday, 23 March 2014

my neighbours seated on the chairs
& the maid on the floor
two world views