



soap bubbles

haiku by

K. Ramesh

soap bubbles

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ISBN 978-1-893959-63-7

Red Moon Press
PO Box 2461
Winchester VA
22604-1661 USA
www.redmoonpress.com

I would like to thank the editors of the following journals and anthologies in which these poems have appeared: *Still, Presence, Frogpond, The Heron's Nest, Mainichi Daily News, Mayfly, Acorn, Snapshots, Asahi Haikuist Network, Haiku Moments, Haiku Novine, Modern Haiku, Paper Wasp, Haijinx, Bottle Rockets, Tinywords.com, Road Runner, Wisteria* and other magazines that publish haiku and short poetry. Also these anthologies: *Pegging The Wind*, edited by Jim Kacian, Red Moon Press. *Wild Flowers, New Leaves—A collection of World Haiku*, edited by Susumu Takiguchi, World Haiku Club.

I am grateful to Dr Angelee Deodhar for her art work.

I wish to thank S. Rajiv, E. R. Vinayan, B. Saravanan, Geeta Ramanujam, and all my colleagues at The School, KFI for their encouragement and support.

A Soffietto Book



to Nimmi and Anita

Introduction

The haiku collected in *Soap Bubbles* clearly reveal that K. Ramesh is a man fully and sensitively engaged in the world. He is connected yet not attached. His insights are profound yet he does not proselytize. In fact, what appears most plentifully in Ramesh's work is pure joy. Everywhere he turns, it seems, he finds wonder. He sees great wealth in what far too many people would dismiss as inconsequential. How heartening then, to know that Ramesh is a school teacher in Chennai, India. His haiku give evidence that he must be outstanding in his profession for he does what only the best teachers and haiku poets do, he uses skillful means to guide our attention away from himself and towards those things which inspired him—epiphanies he knows we will best grasp when allowed to do so for ourselves. Ramesh accomplishes this through deft use of juxtaposition and subtle implication. His haiku are multi-

layered; the images on the surface naturally draw us deeper, eliciting emotions and often bringing to light truths accessible solely by intuition. Ramesh manages all of this without losing his sense of humor. I tell you truly, I have a nearly irresistible urge to ask Ramesh if he will accept me as one of his students. Undoubtedly, I am too old and set in my ways, but maybe he'll accept the child still within me, the one he conjures forth every time I read his haiku.

Christopher Herold
February 21, 2007

soap
bubbles

curve of the waterjug . . .
the whole family
eating dinner

owner's tree . . .
for the tenant upstairs,
a view of blossoms

on the eaves
of the old temple . . .
the morning sun

power failure—
closing the book
I listen to rain

summer evening—
the red fire extinguisher
gets wet in the rain

soft rain . . .
river with a bend
in the distance

evening sun
boys play cricket
on the riverbed

summer afternoon
a pail with rope rests
on the rim of the well

cloudcast afternoon—
corn popping
on the stove

rainy night—
a tortoise eats
from the dog's plate

soap bubbles
from a children's park . . .
break a traffic rule

summer morning—
a snail crosses
the hopscotch lines

vendor on the beach—
from hand to hand
the spinning pinwheel

sunrise . . .
a tiny crab quickly
avoids the waves

rainy night—
gazing at the ceiling,
jerk of a spider

dawn breaking—
between the calls
of two cuckoos

leafless trees
. . . the sea
 visible again

a yellow leaf
touching the green ones
on its way down

back from my hometown . . .
scent of ripe mangoes
in the empty bag

fading evening light—
small glow of a lamp
up in the mountain

morning breeze
a butterfly sways
with the blossom

passing by the market—
eye of the fish
facing the blue sky

breezy afternoon—
making a kite again
after many years

first summer rain—
my hand outside
the train's window

april evening—
a blossom leans
on the pillar

tossing the ball
to serve . . .
birds in the sky

a dead end—
white blossoms
over the wall

dawn . . .
the neighbour's newborn
stops crying

twilight . . .
a boy brings down
his kite

cloudy afternoon—
a chrysanthemum blooms
in the paper-folder's hand

dawn . . .
amid bird calls,
sound of a broom

a surprise—
the little girl
opens her hand . . . a shell

abandoned dog . . .
looking at the face of
every pedestrian

stars appear . . .
the flower vendor
strings jasmine

railway station . . .
a banyan tree's roots
yet to reach the ground

sunrise . . .
I let the fish
bite my toes

yellow leaves . . .
I search for
a tennis ball

scented blossoms—
a tailor sewing
in the rain tree's shade

dawn
I come face to face
with a mountain

alone tonight
light on my bedroom wall
from the neighbour's house

New Year's Eve—
a man digging a pit
strikes his shadow

dawn . . .
a truck driver washes
his face by the highway

no breeze—
children on branches
sway their legs

a village asleep—
moonlit lanes
between the houses

cloudcast sky—
the camera without
a shadow on the table

cloudy sky—
a little boy imitates
the cuckoo

dark clouds gather . . .
prayer flags flutter
on the terrace

small railway station . . .
a gypsy boy runs after
his puppy on the platform

long afternoon—
the peanut vendor's bell
jingles in another street

scent of blossoms
her house at the end
of the avenue

redwood tree...
I walk backward
holding the camera

chirping of sparrows . . .
sunrays on the buddha
in the temple

projector switched off . . .
on the white screen
shadows of bamboo

starlit sky . . .
I touch a turtle
before it enters the sea

cobwebs—
the smile on
Buddha's face

friend's house—
I make tea for
both of us

turning the page,
I turn it back again—
a little ant

conversation over
I touch a petal . . .
real blossoms

summer dawn . . .
cuckoo after cuckoo
after cuckoo

empty cowshed . . .
a little bird drinks
water from the pail

sunny morning—
his basket full
of spinning pinwheels

dusk—
chatter of frogs outside
the teacher's house

winter evening
the newborn calf
eyes everybody

summer evening—
the water I drink tastes
of the earthen pot

full moon—
everything in its place
in the kitchen

drifting clouds—
the exam hall
bright sometimes

monday morning—
a bird escapes from
the cat's grip

twilit river—
lamps glow in the temple
on the other bank

meditation over . . .
the crickets
still chirping

dawn . . .
a cuckoo's call deepens
the silence

watching the waves . . .
a stray dog settles
beside me

rainy morning—
the old beggar not there
outside the tea shop

afternoon breeze—
sound of the loom
from the weaver's house

first summer rain—
the flower vendor
lingers on the porch

dinnertime—
a grain of rice
for the praying mantis

leaves falling . . .
some on the boulder,
some in the stream

sunny morning—
the rooster challenges
the bull again

moonlit bridge—
an ant moves
on the railing

evening breeze—
hundreds of lamp flames
sway in the temple

purple dawn . . .
a flock of sheep
gives way to the bus

she says
life is . . .
as I pass by the couple

row of faces . . .
a school bus passing
by the sea

rainy afternoon—
egrets walk
in the football field

blue sky . . .
she tunes
my guitar

fading light
kicking a cracked ball
the hollow sound

misty dawn—
shutters open
in the tea shop

spring morning—
the faded cap
of the gardener

summer evening—
I join her watching rain
from the window

summer evening—
the scent of fresh loaves
as I pass the bakery

fierce bull . . .
a little bird
on the hump

soap bubbles
from a children's park . . .
break a traffic rule



poem: K. Ramesh
artwork: Angelee Deodhar

“These are poems about the edges of things—dawns and dusks, the curve of a water jug, the ocean shore. That these poems from India are so immediately available to readers around the world speaks movingly of the power of the tiny haiku in the hands of a true communicator.”

John Stevenson (Editor, *Frogpond*)

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Haiku/Poetry \$6