

THE FUTURE OF WORLD HAIKU AND HOPE FOR INDIA

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PART ONE: RABINDRANATH TAGORE

I wish to start with a special poet who is a national hero and pride in India but who is also a father of, inter alia, all modern poets in the world, Rabindranath Tagore (7 May 1861-7 August 1941).

Tagore wrote a brief account in his travelogue of his first visit of Japan in 1916. Brief, but in it every word is a jewel and the whole prose reads more like free-flowing poetry even in Japanese translation. It is one of the most exhilarating readings, at least to me. Exhilarating, not because it is full of praise of Japan but because every observation is told not in isolation but as a representation of deeper realities or broader universality, which seems to me to be a characteristic of this first Nobel laureate in Asia. It is also exhilarating because it teaches that one can say so much in so brief a writing. Who needs a volume like *War And Peace* to say what it is that is to be said? All we need is the best words, in the best place and in the best order. And the more one knows what one wants to say the fewer the words needed. The fewest words of all are silence. It seems as if we may be talking about haiku here, doesn't it?

However, the greatest exhilaration comes to me because Tagore sought to promote a new world culture which was based on 'multi-culturalism, diversity and tolerance', according to a study. I might hasten to add that the phrase 'multi culturalism' Tagore used had no pejorative or debased meaning which it has sadly acquired in modern Britain. This remark of Tagore is almost identical with the aim of the World Haiku Club. With such a fortunate coincidence, I am emboldened to appeal to my friends in India to take part in the world haiku movement which was started by us in 1998 but which needs to be passed continuously to new haiku poets in all corners of the world and to continue to be pursued and developed in earnest by them. Tagore showed us the way how that could be done. World Haiku Festival 2008 in which we rejoice at taking part here in India marks a high point of following in the footsteps of Tagore, in our case in the field of haiku literature.

In his travelogue, Tagore introduced two haiku by Basho, one about the old pond and a frog and the other about the withered branch and a crow. About the former, Tagore comments after citing it, "That is all. And that is sufficient". This is because, according to him, there are many eyes in the Japanese reader's mind, which can see that which is not mentioned in the haiku but only implied in the most succinct and beautiful way. Nothing more is necessary. Tagore, it seems, got straightaway to the essence of haiku, and without reading any of today's haiku textbooks or frivolous explanation about haiku at that.

About the second poem of the withered branch and the crow by Basho, Tagore made a similar comment but this time emphasised the importance of the power of intuitive understanding of the Japanese reader. Because of this, the author of haiku not only has no need to put him- or herself forward into the poem but also must indeed withdraw and step aside. This, by the way, has nothing to do with the popular assertion that ego must not come into haiku, which is all too often admonished wrongly by so many. The reason why Tagore could get to the heart of the matter in appreciating the essence of haiku so easily is not just that he was an exceptional Renaissance man. It is because

he approached haiku with unadulterated and open heart. Quoting another Japanese poem (heaven and earth are flowers/kami-god and Buddha are flowers/man's heart is the essence of flowers), Tagore introduces an almost identical Indian verse (heaven and earth/god and Buddha/these two flowers blossom from the same stalk) and points out that the beauty of things beautiful stems from human heart.

This is an important point for haiku-writing in the present circumstances where what could be termed as the 'author's right' is ignored in preference for the 'reader's right' with the former made to worry far too much about what the latter might or might not think about his or her haiku of originality and newness. It is also important because we should really leave most things to our human heart when writing haiku and not to irksome rules and regulations.

Then Tagore goes on to explore the sensibility unique to the Japanese, which he calls 'restraint of the soul'. By this he means that it is possible to increase the feeling and expression of beauty by restraining the feeling and expression of the emotion. Less is better than more. This strikes me as one of the best explanation about the essence of haiku.

If the same blood runs through all Indian poets and the same sensibility is found in them as that of Tagore, they will have already made a good start with haiku.

PART TWO: THE FUTURE OF WORLD HAIKU

I now turn to my reflections on world haiku and discuss its future.

This year, 2008, marks the 314th anniversary of the death of Basho. Since his birth, indeed, as many as 364 years have passed. If we take Arakida Moritake (1473-1549), the renowned haikai-no-renga master, it is 535 years since his birth. Compared with this long history of haikai, the world haiku as I understand it is only about 20 or 30 years old in a loose sense, and only 10 years old in the strict sense. Haiku was first introduced to the outside Japan earlier, about 100 years ago, but then it could hardly be called world haiku. What can be called as American haiku has a history of mere 50 years or so.

The phrase 'world haiku' was first used by R. H. Blyth. Takahama Kyoshi (1874-1959) was also talking about the future of haiku and envisaging the time when haiku would be written even in tropical zones and elsewhere. However, no one could imagine that haiku would become so popular and widespread across the world as now. Ten years ago I decided to use the same phrase 'world haiku' and founded the World Haiku Club to be dedicated to the development of world haiku, as I perceived that haiku by then had become what I called a genre of world literature and needed a different treatment altogether than it had been given until then.

So, what is the world haiku scene today? Until about 1900 haiku was a complete preserve of Japan, quite unheard of in the rest of the world. It is well-known that around that time the genre started to trickle out at the hands of pioneering introducers of Japanese culture, mainly to the West. However, it was only after the WWII, especially in the 1960s, that haiku began to be flowing out of Japan like streams, largely through North America.

Today, there are basically, say, four players on the haiku map of the world, according to a new classification. There is first and foremost gigantic in haiku terms but still largely closed and isolated Japan. There are many reasons for this isolation, not least the language barrier. In spite of the effort by some to improve the situation, what is happening in Japan's haiku community is little known outside it, and vice versa. This mutual ignorance and lack of will or ability of communication remain a major obstacle

to the healthy development of world haiku outside Japan.

Then, secondly, very open and ever-expanding American-led haiku nations and individual poets in the United States and across the world except for Japan. Here, I am using the term 'American-led' in a neutral and factual sense. This is the dominant force in today's world haiku community. Most of the haiku poems outside Japan are written on the model and under the influence of, or even as straightforward or blind copies of this school of thought. Of course, there are subtle variations within it but the differences are slight when looked at in terms of the trend as a whole. There are a small number of poets who are trying to break the mould, which is not easy, but that is largely due to such individuals' own efforts and talent and not assisted by the trend itself.

No doubt, this American-led haiku trend should be celebrated and congratulated for its great achievement of disseminating haiku not only within USA and other Englishspeaking countries but also in almost all other countries in the world save Japan and making it such a popular and treasured literary mascot. However, what is also more than obvious is that it cannot be healthy or natural that such wide world of ours with all its diversities and differences should be dominated by a single haiku movement.

The dominant position of the American-led haiku trend has been attained by a number of reasons. Firstly, it has been gained because of the passion, enthusiasm, energy and sheer love for haiku on the part of American poets and their faithful followers in other parts of the world who in turn have become leaders in each of their country or regions. Secondly, except for a small number of distinguished individuals with their own distinct views and opinions in different parts of the world, all other nations, especially non-English-speaking ones, have lagged far behind America which after all has been the only major pioneer in developing and spreading haiku outside Japan. This lack of competition or rivals has almost automatically ensured the American dominance in haiku. When others 'discovered' haiku it was far too late for them to do their own laborious research or to make painstaking efforts to find for themselves what haiku was all about from the primary source, which is Japan, and to resist the temptation of taking the easiest route of swallowing the American haiku trend hook, line and sinker out of the books, magazines, anthologies or any other sources coming from America because these were virtually the only source of information about haiku outside Japan. Of course, R. H. Blyth was British but it was the Americans who first recognised his worth, which was virtually unknown in Britain, and introduced his magnum opus among poets. This situation meant that the rest of the world was totally vulnerable and ready to swallow whole whatever was put on their plate.

Thirdly, on the world haiku map there are regions and nations that have not escaped the influence of the American-led haiku but are trying to make their own mark at the same time. It has become fashionable for them to call their product in their own brand name such as 'Irish haiku', 'British haiku', 'New haiku', or even 'French-Canadian haiku'. Whether such a 'logo change' reflects real difference is another matter. However, what they are trying to achieve is highly commendable and provides some hope for the future development of world haiku.

And last but not least, in fact most importantly, there are those rare individual poets who are independent-minded enough to follow their own poetic instinct to tune in to the sound, colour, smell and vibration of true haiku but at the same time humble enough to continue to learn from other people's experiences. These are the best category of haiku poets in today's world, our ultimate goal and seem to present the best hope for future world haiku. The more of them, the better. In fact, all haiku poets should be like them in the first place.

Ever since haiku was unleashed out of the two stringent and fundamental shackles, namely the traditional mould of Japanese haiku and the Japanese language itself, it has quickly begun to flourish across the world. However, there is the other side of the coin. Namely, haiku has at the same time plunged into a state of flux on the verge of chaos in every way, ranging from definition questions to style or subject matter. But, like the genie out of the bottle, contemporary haiku can neither be put back into the traditional Japanese haiku bottle nor confined to the Japanese language.

That there are different varieties of haiku is not in itself a bad thing at all. What seems to be the real problem is the widespread narrow-mindedness, intolerance or even arrogance with which people condemn other poets' works as not haiku. Once this mindset takes hold of us there is little scope for constructive interaction between and among haiku poets or for haiku itself to be developed freely. The definition of haiku, for example, is so varied and different that it has virtually become meaningless now to try to define it in the first place.

To ask what is haiku, or more precisely what is the essence of haiku is very different from defining haiku. It is productive, useful, instructive, uplifting, forward-looking, intellectually stimulating and profound. By contrast, to try to define haiku is restrictive, divisive, exclusive, limiting, backwards, shallow and intellectually very, very boring. I therefore wish to propose in deadly earnest that we should drop the preoccupation of trying to define haiku or reading different definitions of it, say, for the next ten years and just get on with writing haiku. YES, believe it or not, we can write haiku without such irksome definitions. Recently, I was walking with someone in the English countryside when he was admiring the scenery loud in a few words. And I said, 'Oh, that's a jolly good haiku!' He said, 'Oh, really? Is haiku some kind of a Japanese food?' From the purist and somewhat fundamentalist point of view, anything which is purported to be haiku but written in languages other than Japanese is not haiku. It is a deviation from or derivative of the genuine haiku at best. (Incidentally, even those haiku written in *kohgo*, or modern Japanese, used to be condemned to be not haiku at all because the real haiku had always been written in *bungo*, or old Japanese.)

It has been proved time and again that such purist or fundamentalist position of haiku cannot provide a wholly viable literary form in the modern age and modern world. However, the majority of Japanese haiku poets think that foreigners cannot understand haiku, let alone write it. Those Japanese who think differently are either academics specialising in English or English literature, or some of the haiku poets who, for their self-serving purposes, would benefit from getting involved in international haiku movement. Language is the biggest and most formidable barrier but even more seriously there is a barrier of culturally isolationist attitude of the Japanese on the one hand and what may be termed as intellectual laziness and arrogance of non-Japanese haiku poets on the other.

The hard fact that we should face up to and accept is that in terms of the world haiku we should by now have graduated from the rudimentary stages of haiku-learning which I have just outlined and made more progress in reaching advanced and refined stages. It is not too late. However, if the present situation of world haiku continues as I have described so far, it would be difficult for anyone to move on to these advanced and refined stages because that situation is extremely limiting and will work as a hindrance to their progress.

Confused or chaotic as the world haiku may look at first sight, all the haiku poems being written in today's world can in fact fall into three broad categories or areas without any difficulty. At the World Haiku Club we call them Neo-classical, *Shintai* (or new style) and Vanguard (*Avant Garde*), which cover the whole spectrum of all haiku imaginable. An

individual haiku poet can freely write haiku either in one or two of these areas, or in all three of them, depending on his or her mood, feeling, haiku stance, circumstances or subject matter. When writing, there is not even any need for the author to be conscious of these different areas. Why classify? Why define? Just write, following your sensibility, instinct, perception or emotion. The outcome may range from dust to gold --- mostly dust, perhaps. However, when you feel you have struck gold, that would be the bliss for any haiku poet.

My prediction about the future trend of world haiku is that while some stubborn and self-serving people may cling to their dogma or creed till the end of their lives and some unsuspecting newcomers will fall in their clutches, many haiku poets will sooner or later come to realise that there is indeed no need to spend a lot of their time busying themselves in defining, classifying or interfering with other people's haiku.

Many or at least some of truly good haiku will speak for themselves. The most effective and secure way of improving one's haiku is to encounter as many of these gems as possible and study them in depth, rather than wasting one's time on lesser poems.

Listen to the authors of these rare works, even if they may not be vociferous as they are rather quiet and self-effacing usually, rather than to haiku politicians or self-appointed haiku leaders. If you cannot find these true haiku poets, then listen to nature instead.

I have been involved in other people's problems of defining haiku for a long time.

Nowadays, more out of despair than choice I am even being tempted to think, considering the futility of such efforts, that anything is haiku if its author says it is, which, needless to say, has nothing to do with the condemnation of 'anything goes'. For in this case, the only question and the only question that matters is whether the poem thus written is good or bad, and not whether it is haiku or not. To put it in another way, under any definition good haiku are good and bad ones bad. We just have to be honest about it and also be humble.

What I have tried to explain above is a fundamental problem for world haiku and needs to be addressed properly. We can try to seek a solution to it, like in many other cases, by listening to some of Basho's teachings.

Let us, then, look at Basho's "fueki ryuko" (eternal value and fashion of the day). This is a far more dynamic and progressive haikai tenet than is generally recognised. It is an effective key to solving many problems which haiku poets outside Japan are faced with today. The usual explanation that permanence and change are both needed for haikai fails to convey the creative momentum and incessant quest for inspiration contained in it. Rather, "fueki ryuko" is really talking about changes, and suggesting that eternal essence of haikai should be found in these changes. It is like Hegelian dialectic whereby two opposing forces collide to create a new force. In this sense, it is talking about the same thing as Basho's other teaching of "atarashimi" (newness) which is the lifeblood of haikai.

The reason why Basho added "fueki" (eternal essence) is that the change needed in haikai should not be just any change, or change for the sake of change, but those changes which seek eternal values. In other words, he tried to make these vital changes a haikai poet's target which may be very difficult but worth attaining, thus paving the way for haikai to develop along the right and ever-improving path. To put it in the modern context, the lesson we should learn from "fueki ryuko" in our haiku composition and in haiku movement is that we should be constantly seeking changes which are likely to realise permanent poetic values. This seemingly contradictory nature of "fueki ryuko" is the creative tension which Basho was developing for himself and for his followers.

Sixteen Challenges

Any human activity will become sterile without the injection of fresh air, new blood or progressive innovation. However, it is common that such an activity becomes readily "institutionalised" and resists changes. Haiku is no exception. Therefore it is important for anyone involved in haiku to stop from time to time to reflect upon him- or herself and make sure that rot has not set in. It is a good practice to do so in order to rid oneself of complacency, arrogance and narrow-mindedness.

One of the most effective ways of exercising such a review is to challenge what seems to be doing well. For any critical reappraisal levelled against it can logically apply more profoundly to lesser endeavours. As Descartes proposed to doubt everything that he could manage to doubt ("Cartesian doubt"), so we can propose to challenge everything we can manage to challenge. The more well-established and unassailable a target seems to be, the more worthwhile the challenge would become.

It was for this reason that the process was started at the WHF2000 London-Oxford Conference to look at everything in the haiku community critically and give it a thorough re-examination and reappraisal. It is hoped that through such review we may find right paths along which world haiku can develop in the future. The initiative was taken under the two slogans, "Challenging Conventions" and "Charting Our Future". The two slogans require that we should conduct our discussion in as "critical, new, original, positive, constructive, creative, inspiring and thought-provoking" a way as possible. It is certainly not an easy task. On the contrary it is a tough exercise which needs a great deal of intellectual input, creative energy, courage, open mind, honesty and above all quite a lot of time to be completed.

Under "Challenging Conventions", we basically challenge just about everything. At the World Haiku Club we have been dealing with at least sixteen important challenges. Another essential point is that haiku, or something like a primordial sensibility for haiku, is actually in every one of us, regardless of race, culture, language or religion. It is like saying that in every one of us there is Buddha, or we only do not realise that each of us has Zen essence and that we only have to remove all those things which hide it from us. Put in another way, if we compare haiku to cooking, its ingredients are to be found in every one of us. We only have to cook it. And like food, every haiku tastes different, unless, that is, one gets it from MacDonald's. The question, then, is how to extract haiku from within ourselves. Simple, isn't it? Or, is it?

Science provides ways in which to explore scientific truths through experiments. Philosophy provides philosophical truths through contemplation. Arts --- artistic truths through pictorial or musical language. What, then, does haiku provide? I believe that haiku provides ways in which we can explore what I call poetic truths, or truths found and expressed in the haiku language. Here I am talking about what Basho was seeking both in his writing and teaching of haikai-no-renga and hokku, namely, fuga no makoto, or poetic truths. One of Basho's disciples, Hattori Dohoh, went so far as to say that haikai became capable of reaching truths for the first time with Basho because his haikai was not that of the old but haikai of makoto, namely truths.* I am sure you will agree with me when I say that haiku opens up for us a very different way of looking at things around us. You probably can never forget the first time when a haiku poem hit you and suddenly you were experiencing something totally new and different. Perhaps you remember that particular haiku by heart. As you walked along the haiku path since then and were consciously or unconsciously acquiring a different outlook from your usual views, haiku must have changed you permanently even in the subtlest kind of way. The world, it seems, would not be the same again. You would not

see nazuna (a shepherd's purse) or a spider in the same way again. You would not feel the same again when you get wet with spring rain or hit by hail. You would not look up the sky in the same way again, as you would become more conscious of the Moon or the Milky Way all the time. You would not pass narcissi by without trying to find if they were bent by the first snow.

If we can put a genuine haiku experience in a few right words, then we would probably have achieved fuga no makoto, or poetic truths. There are a number of paths leading to such poetic truths.

Firstly, as I have already mentioned, there is a path for them to recognise and learn a different way of looking at things. Though things they see may be the same as those they are accustomed to, yet it is the new way in which to look at them that is different. The second path is for them to write down what they saw in a new and different way, namely a haiku way. The haiku way of writing one's observations is different from any other writing style they are accustomed to.

Thirdly, people can be taught to realise for themselves that the subject matter of haiku is also different from that which they are used to with their indigenous poems.

Now, the word makoto in fuga no makoto is a key word to understand one of the central tenets of Japanese spiritual values in the arts, literature, ethics or philosophy. Ma in makoto means true and koto means both 'words' and 'things', thus makoto means both true words and true things, i.e. truths in words and things. In addition, makoto when not broken up like that means an ethical, humanistic or moralistic value of honesty, sincerity and truthfulness. So, when Basho uses the phrase fuga no makoto, it means not only poetic truths but also poetic honesty and sincerity both in words and subjects. There is an element of moralistic value in Basho's fuga no makoto, while for many other haiku poets such a moral dimension was neither important nor part of their concern.

In this connection, a teaching by someone who preceded Basho is instructive. It points out that haikai is indeed one body but that it can be divided into two parts. One is the haikai of heart. And the other is haikai of words. It puts the former above the latter. It would not be surprising if these words had been spoken by Basho himself. The teaching is that of Saito Tokumoto and can be found in his Haikai-Shogaku-Sho. This book, published in Kan-ei 18, or in 1641, three years before Basho was born, is renowned as the first book on haikai to be published in Edo (modern Tokyo). The remark is attributed to Sogi, a renga master, whom Basho respected.

Historically, there were three major values people sought to achieve in Japanese culture: shin (truth), zen (goodness) and bi (beauty). They represented philosophical, ethical and aesthetic goals respectively. Waka or tanka sought beauty first, followed by truth and some element of goodness. However, normally haiku looked into truth and beauty but seldom into goodness. Of course truth can be found in beauty and truth itself can be beautiful. And there is that famous adage: Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. Aesthetic values can be broad or narrow according to the thinker. No one doubts the beauty of Basho's wisteria haiku or the Milky Way haiku. But how many people would see beauty in the cicada or the roaming dream haiku?

A single haiku may not have all these values, though it is not impossible. Some haiku poems may have only one of them and still manage to be good. However, it seems to me to be essential for any haiku to have truth as a pre-requisite. This is why it is so important for us to spend some time to think about what we mean by poetic truths. Obviously, we cannot dissect haiku into these clear-cut poetic values. Nor should we really do it if we can appreciate good haiku without such irksome and often unnecessary analysis. Even so, what is important to remember is that it is haiku's own poetic values that provide us with ways in which we can reach fuga no makoto.

Let us, then, look at some of the points we need to explore in search of fuga no makoto. Firstly, about the word fuga. In the broadest sense, it means arts in general. In the commonest sense it means literature, especially poetry. For Basho, it meant sometimes poetry in general but often it meant haikai itself. So, for him the terms fuga and haikai were interchangeable.

Secondly, we are not talking about truths in general terms. The truths we are dealing with are poetic truths, and especially haikai truths. Poetic truths are those arrived at through poetic perception and expressed in the poetic language. Some of them cannot be reached in any other way. Others may be the same truths but perceived and expressed as poetry.

Thirdly, as we have already seen fuga no makoto refers to broad, deep and somewhat intangible truths, having aesthetic, epistemological, ethical and humanistic dimensions. It is a poetic branch of one's Weltanschauung and that is why I call haiku a way of life. And, significantly, it is also why haiku cannot really be taught during a very short course in the school curriculum or in a one-hour workshop.

Fourthly, fuga no makoto is not a freak phenomenon or momentary accident but holds its value over time, often forever, and becomes timeless.

Fifthly, fuga no makoto also often extends in space as well. In other words, the poetic truths thus obtained in one place can be understood, shared or repeated elsewhere in the world. This is the aspect of haiku which has universality.

Sixthly, fuga no makoto is a result or product of the dynamism of two colliding forces: fueki ryuko, which is another important teaching of Basho, as we have already seen.

Fueki simply means 'no change' and refers to values of a permanent and enduring nature. Ryuko, on the other hand, means changing fashions of the time and refers to newness, innovation, originality or unconventional values which would break with old ways in a revolutionary manner. For instance, Beethoven created new and innovative music, ushering in a new age and setting a new trend. However, he did not do so without first having been steeped in classical music of an old tradition. Thus he had fueki ryuko and left legacy of permanent value. None of us is Beethoven but all of us can become a little Beethoven! Fueki ryuko is an abbreviation of senzai-fueki ichijiryuko (eternal no-change and temporary fashion). When fueki and ryuko collide and interact in a dynamic explosion of creative haiku-writing, the result could be like a newly-born baby, taking after both parents but different from both. And there is a single ultimate value which lies beyond fueki ryuko, and that is nothing but fuga no makoto.

Seventhly, haikai jiyu. This is another extremely important teaching of Basho. It refers to the freedom which haikai came to enjoy but which had been denied to other traditional genres such as waka. However, once this freedom becomes institutionalised it ceases to be new and fresh and becomes part of tradition, creating new needs for further freedom. Western haiku was fresh but has now become laden with the burden of rules and regulations. It needs to be liberated. We need to secure and preserve the maximum freedom of poetic expression and creation all the time. It is an ongoing process and there is not a single moment in time when a haiku poet is pronounced, or regards him- or herself, as accomplished. It is his or her fate to remain an eternal learner.

Eighthly, haiku is a product of interaction between nature and man, with man as part of nature. That is why haiku is a complex literature. Such practice in the West of dividing up the subject matter into nature and man and, for instance, allocating nature to haiku and man to senryu is a gross over-simplification and a bit of criminal negligence even.

Ninthly, similar to a point we have already seen, Basho taught the importance for a haikai poet of remaining a learner and not becoming complacent about his/her skills or

experience. "Let small children do haikai" and "Poems by beginners are promising" are Basho's words to express this sentiment. To put a popular saying slightly differently: Those who teach, can't. Basho advises against haikai becoming gimmicky, contrived and boastful.

Tenthly, Basho said that there was that which could not be really taught in haikai. He is referring to what cannot be explained or theorised. Learners therefore need to learn it themselves by their intuition or sensibility. Some of them just don't get it. That is too bad. However, many of us are born with it and some of us can acquire it so long as we go about it in the right way.

There are still many more interesting points regarding Basho's teachings which are useful for our investigation but these ten points I have outlined would probably be enough for us to be going on with.

Let's just recapitulate what we have seen. One of the ultimate aims of any education is to help learners find ways to reach truths. Haiku helps them to reach poetic truths, which are truths perceived and expressed through poetic sensibility and language. Haiku truths, or haikai truths, are what Basho called fuga no makoto. Fuga no makoto has a broad dimension encompassing aesthetic, epistemological, moralistic and humanistic values. To reach this ultimate goal of fuga no makoto, a haiku poet must follow certain right paths. These include: recognition that haiku is a way of life and to learn it properly one needs to be 'brought up' by it; implementation of the dynamic process whereby fueki (tradition, permanent values) and ryuko (fashion, newness, innovation and originality) would interact and collide in a creative way; making the most of haikai no jiyu which is freedom of poetic expression and creation in haikai; true understanding of the important point that haiku is neither about nature nor about man alone but is about the interaction and relationship between the two with man as part of nature; the importance of a haiku poet to remain an eternal learner; recognition that there is something in haiku which cannot be taught but only learnt by the learner by intuition and practice.

Does this fuga no makoto of Basho make sense to you? Does it resonate with your sensibility? Does it appeal to you as something you wish to aim for? I believe it does. If it is with you and inside you in the sense Basho mentioned, you can't go wrong and you can then make it resonate with the sensibility of other people, including children.

Some non-Japanese haiku poets may never reach the Japanese haiku spirit but all haiku poets can expect to reach fuga no makoto and that is a wonderful possibility to celebrate. True haiku can have universality in time and space. Fuga no makoto is the catalyst for such universality and therefore is the ultimate aim of our learning haiku.

PART THREE: HOPE FOR HAIKU IN INDIA

Pioneers and Latecomers

In any field of human activity pioneers are normally admired and given a special place in history. Followers, or latecomers, by contrast, would not be given such a favourable treatment. This is half justifiable for obvious reasons but the other half is open to question, especially when the pioneers would be over-worshipped on the one hand and the latecomers would be unduly under-estimated on the other. Pioneers must be allowed to come down from the pedestal on which they have been forced to stand and find their right place in history. Latecomers must be allowed to be free from the pioneers' mistakes.

It depends of course on what these pioneers are of. If they are pioneers of landing on

the moon, or discovering the number zero, or penicillin, then they cannot be worshipped enough. However, if they are pioneers of discovering haiku and of introducing it outside Japan, it is a slightly different story.

Pioneers have the advantage in that nobody has known whatever they are pioneering. Latecomers have the advantage of hindsight and all the wisdom and knowledge which have been accumulated since the first discovery. Pioneers make mistakes as well as discoveries and in a sense they are allowed to make mistakes if the importance of what they discover far outweighs the ill effects of their mistakes. Latecomers on the other hand are not allowed to make such mistakes or any other mistakes which are made perfectly preventable by the wisdom and knowledge available to them. More importantly, it is the duty of the latecomers to correct the mistakes of the pioneers. This is not to belittle the latter but on the contrary to pay them proper respect rather than florid but meaningless adulation.

What, then, is the real situation in the haiku community? The answer is regrettably rather not very satisfactory, or mixed at best. The main reason is our weakness as human beings not to learn from pioneers' mistakes but to repeat them as no one around is saying they are mistakes.

All too often pioneers get excessively hero-worshipped, overly admired and wholly idolised by those who would benefit from such extravagance. Namely, they tend to do it for self-aggrandisement. This is not genuine homage to the pioneers but it does happen and happens once too often. There is no shortage of examples of this in haiku: Ezra Pound, Shiki Masaoka, R. H. Blyth and, yes, Basho himself to name but a few heavyweights. There is a serious need to review not only what Shiki achieved but also and even more importantly possible ill-effects of his reform or teaching. Blyth is at last widely admired now but this is precisely the dangerous time when we have to examine his bad influences in addition to his positive contributions to gain a balanced view of him, all in our interest.

If this is the situation with such glittering figures as I have just mentioned, how much more so in the case of lesser figures in the haiku community who nonetheless wield enormous power over the vast number of other haiku poets across the world.

What is true with individuals is also true with countries. There are pioneering countries and "late-coming" countries. I do not know if there were pioneers in India who a hundred years, or fifty years ago practiced haiku and disseminated it across the country. There may well have been some such pioneers if we dig deeply into India's modern history. After Tagore, the single important figure regarding haiku in India is Satya Bhushan Varma. However, as a country let us for the argument's sake assume that India is a latecomer in haiku. Once again, let me hasten to add that this is not to insult India in any way. Far from it, it is in fact a grand celebration as you will see soon enough from what follows.

Blessed are the latecomers: for theirs is the kingdom of haiku heaven. They have all the advantages which the pioneers were not endowed with and none of the disadvantages which were more or less all that the pioneers possessed. Latecomers have no heavy and unwanted baggage. Latecomers are like an artist's blank white canvas before the first brush stroke is placed on it. Latecomers can bring fresh views and different insight to the table. So much more so if the latecomers were countries of long and rich history of culture and civilisation such as India.

If you have a living legacy as old as Vedas and modern men as great as Tagore, India cannot be an ordinary latecomer in haiku. India is one of the countries I have a special expectation in terms of how haiku would develop in a profound way. China is another such country.

The circumstances under which haiku would or would not start to be practiced in a country other than Japan can be complex. They also can be and are different from one country to another, though there has been a common pattern whereby the same influence would penetrate into a late-coming country from a dominant haiku force. Since haiku poetry began to fly out of Japan across national, linguistic and cultural frontiers, it has been bestowed with a new potential of expanding its scope, enriching its content and celebrating its varieties to an unprecedented degree. This potential would be severely curtailed if the influence of a single dominating force would pervade all or most of the countries in the world.

This makes it so much more important for a country like India to develop its own haiku on the basis of its own study of Japanese tradition, of its own literary and aesthetic tradition and of its own perception and sensibility concerning haiku, quite independent of, but not divorced from, the dominant force. Developing haiku is not an arms race or economic competition. Smallest haiku nations should rank on a par with most powerful haiku nations. There is no hierarchy in haiku. Only quality is the judge.

If India is a latecomer in haiku, it is in fact an unbelievably fortunate gift not only for Indian haiku poets but for haiku itself. This is because Indian haiku poets can set out on a new and different journey of the way of haiku on the one hand and on the other haiku can have a chance to benefit from how it develops in India. The other side of the coin is that Indian haiku poets have some kind of a special responsibility for developing their haiku in the way they think best. For if they would develop haiku in the wrong way it would mean a great opportunity lost not only for you but also for the rest of the haiku poets in the world.

How that can be achieved would of course be up to the Indian haiku poets but some of the basic points common in all countries may be of some use. Let me hasten to add that I have not come all the way to India to preach or pontificate. However, if I say nothing but diplomatic niceties, I would be wasting everybody's time. The following recommendations are presented, shall we say, as a friendly advice, or my honest opinion based on painful observation of the experiences elsewhere in the world.

Freedom is probably the most important point. By this I do not mean political 'freedom' which is bandied about nowadays with guns and explosives. As I have already said, it is freedom of poetic expression and creation in a narrow sense and also freedom of spirit in a broad sense. However, like any other kinds of freedom it is not limitless or without some constraints or responsibility. The most crucial constraint is of course the framework within which poems should remain as haiku. Outside this framework it would become meaningless to call anything haiku. How far one would expand or limit the framework is a difficult question but is basically a practical and relative consideration and would vary according to different schools of thought.

Within the framework there is a tangible element (form, kigo etc.) and intangible element (haiku spirit, subject matter, etc.). I shall not go into details, as they can be read in the WHC archives and publications. There are other kinds of freedom, including freedom from undue influence from other haiku movements, especially dominant ones. The second point I believe to be important is the critical faculty of the Indian poet. It is a kind of creative doubt or scepticism and a capability of creative criticism, which should go along with his/her ability to keep an open mind. If some pioneers preach and pontificate, the first thing this poet should do is not to accept it uncritically. Similarly he/she should doubt any received theories, rules, dos and don'ts before truly digesting them, especially if they are no more than dogmas. The poet should also use his/her critical power to be able to tell good haiku from bad not according to the received wisdom but according to his/her own inner insight as a poet.

The third important point is Indian poets' readiness and humility with which he/she always remains willing to refer back to Japanese haiku and its tradition rather than deluding him/herself at any given time into thinking that Indian haiku has now been so well established that there is no longer any need for or point of learning anything from Japan. Such thought would be very tempting and has been witnessed in many countries as everybody wishes to celebrate the establishment of his or her motherland's own haiku. It has happened on an individual basis as well, and rather widely. However, the temptation must be resisted for the good of Indian haiku, if you can.

The fourth point is the importance of the local soil. In addition to originality and individuality which are so vital for haiku of interest and distinction, what comes naturally and spontaneously from the local culture makes the haiku more distinctly Indian. This is the most interesting aspect from the point of view of the world haiku movement. Here lies the rich soil out of which many haiku poems can be expected to flourish which are distinct from those written in other parts of the world, especially in the West.

The fifth point is closely related to the fourth, namely indigenous languages in India. A lot of good things can be expected from the development of haiku in Hindi, Tamil, Bengali, Marathi or Urdu, if not all 500 local languages. In the worst case, these languages and their literary tradition may be totally unsuitable for, or even incompatible with, the style and spirit of haiku. Even then, experiment of writing haiku in these languages will be worth trying and we may well have some pleasant surprises. A much greater possibility is that the poetic tradition in these languages will help create a new haiku trend in India which will add to the merit of haiku as well as to the Indian poetry itself.

The old anthologies such as Ettutogaiad or Pattuppattu in classical Tamil may be too ancient to be adapted to haiku (not to mention the classical Sanskrit) but modern Tamil may have a good prospect, I have been told. Unlike the classical Sanskrit, Prakrit is a vernacular language and may be more suitable for haiku-writing. The Rajasthani bards in Hindi of some 600 years ago may be an example to which Indian poetic tradition can trace its origin back and can work as references for guiding haiku in India. There is also such legacy as the Kesav Das which is erotic literature in later Hindi which can give inspiration to erotic haiku. Satirical poets such as the 18 century Saadi would help injecting a sense of humour to haiku, a possibility denied in the West, or inspiring Indian senryu. There is a well-established short form of poetry in Urdu called rubai which has a comparable rhythm, style and pathos as haiku. There was also a talk to day about an Indian short verse called vachana.

Even if English is an official language in India, writing haiku only in English would be far from sufficient not least because there are 17 other official languages. I have been told that already many haiku poems are written in these languages including Tamil, Hindi and Marathi. There seems to be no need in this country to remind people that haiku in English is not everything. Tagore would have written haiku in the Bengali-language.

The sixth point I wish to mention is the importance of avoiding any internal division or conflict within Indian haiku community. Such division or conflict is caused by negative haiku politics which any country could do without. The reality is that many countries suffer from this disease. In a country like India with such enormous linguistic, regional, social and racial differences and varieties, there is an increased likelihood of negative haiku politics leading to division and conflict. Special vigilance is therefore necessary against it. This point cannot be stressed enough as such division and conflict would sap the energy of healthy development of haiku in India, distorting it and bringing inconvenience and unpleasantness to those involved. It is hoped that this World Haiku

Festival 2008 would be the first to provide a common platform for all haiku poets in India who would flourish side by side but keeping their differences and individuality intact.

At the moment relatively small number of poets are practicing haiku independently in India. Some estimate that there are over one thousand haiku poets in India. This may look a large number but compared with India's population it is still a very small number. It is therefore important for them to communicate and help each other as much as they can in order to make the most of the limited available resources and to avoid wasteful rivalry and harmful conflict. Soon there will be a desire to form different national haiku organisations in India. However, keep it to be a single united organisation only for as long as possible and avoid any temptation to create the second national haiku organisation which is bound to be in conflict with the first. You do not need two national haiku organisations in India at least for the foreseeable future. Also, keep this single national haiku organisation as open, transparent and inclusive as possible.

Sub-haiku organisations are a different story. They can be regional organisations on a geographical basis. Organisations can be established on a language basis. The distinctions can be made according to different categories of haiku, e.g. neo-classical, new-style and vanguard (avant garde). No doubt these will evolve in India during the coming years. However, I cannot recommend strongly enough that you should continue to try hard to have only one national haiku organisation. Japan has three national haiku organisations, apart from numerous gigantic private organisations, duplicating, wasting, confusing and conflicting each other. In this respect, America could be a very good model for India with a single national organisation and many regional and state bodies, somewhat similar to their political structure.

I have celebrated the position for India of being a latecomer in haiku. Being such Indian haiku poets can enjoy the best of both worlds. Namely, they can take good things from the pioneering countries while rejecting their mistakes or things inappropriate for India. They can also benefit from the knowledge and experience which have been accumulated mainly for the last 50 years or so.

One last thing I wish to point out is something fundamental but probably seldom mentioned. I for one have never heard it said. Like so many other things in Japanese art and culture, haiku is a product which originally emanated from the socio-economic condition which we call poverty. Japan was a poor country. Everything, of course, is relative and there were, for instance, rich merchants among Basho's disciples. However, from how she was in the past, today's Japan is a miracle, an impossibility! Even until recently, say, before the Japanese economic progress in 1960s, poverty was everywhere to be seen, again relatively speaking. Japanese aesthetic terms such as wabi, sabi and hosomi and many paintings, artefact, crafts, furniture and ceramics, and generally taste for colours and interior decoration are all sophistication and refinement out of the condition of poverty. When Japan became rich such as the Azuchi-Momoyama period, or the Meiji Era, the Japanese taste became garish and crass. In rich Japan of the last fifty years, the colour and motifs of women's kimono, for example, have progressively lost the traditional elegance, subtlety and modest beauty.

What is so wonderful about human culture is that artistic inspirations or poetic sensibilities are never killed by poverty. On the contrary, there have been fine arts and literature created out of, or even because of, poverty. What is really miraculous here is that haiku was born out of poverty. The fact that Santoka, having been born into a rich family, ended up in utter poverty having only his haiku flourishing has a lot to do with this fundamental characteristic of haiku. Also, there is an inner and deep contradiction in rich and decadent countries of today indulging in haiku. Pursuit of material wealth

and individual ambition do not sit well with true haiku spirit.

India is now enjoying incredible and unprecedented economic growth and industrial progress. India is quickly becoming rich. However, try to remember that materialism, worship of Mammon and decadence are antithesis to the essence of haiku.

You may have expected from me a kind of flowery language of greetings and diplomatic niceties which are often used in a speech like this. Instead, I have chosen to mention some hard realities and cautionary tales in order not to insult your intelligence by such empty words of flattery, and to make it quite clear from the outset that there is an incredibly promising scope for haiku in India which should be made the most of without wasting time for frivolity, rivalry or imitation.

I hope you will all enjoy the next three days to the full and come away with an optimistic feeling that haiku will flourish in India and will do so in the right way, namely, Indian way! I wish to express my gratitude to H H Sri Sri Ravi Shankarji for providing us with shelter, food, serene atmosphere and friendship and to Sri Ratan Tata Trust for sponsorship. I would like to pay tribute to those who have worked so hard to make this event possible, especially to Mrs. Kala Ramesh, Director of World Haiku Festival in India.

I wish to close this speech by reading a poem from GITANJALI by Tagore. Its message seems even more needed now than when it was first delivered.

GITANJALI

from "Song Offerings"

Translations made by the author from the original Bengali.

Mind Without Fear

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up
into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason
has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and
action---
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.