

# Oriental Lyrics

Selected and edited by M. Divjak

## Contents

Japanese Haiku, mostly by Issa  
Chinese Lyrics, mostly by Li Tai Po  
Indian Lyrics, mostly by Bhartrihari

## Japanese Haiku

The cherry blossoms falling,  
the minds of men  
are calm again  
(Koyu-ni / Blyth)

World made of dew,  
just a world made of dew,  
and yet, and yet ...  
(Issa / Edwards)

Though I try not to,  
I still see, still think of  
my village, my home.  
(Issa / Edwards)

Summer night –  
even the stars  
are whispering to each other.  
(Issa / Hass)

Not very anxious  
to bloom,  
my plum tree.  
(issa / Hass)

Garden by the gate,  
this is just what you wanted –  
evening rain.  
(Issa / Edwards)

A cuckoo sings  
to me, to the mountain,  
to me, to the mountain.  
(Issa / Hass)

The pheasant cries  
as if it just noticed  
the mountain.  
(Issa / Hass)

The woodpecker  
carefully estimates  
my house's value.  
(Issa / Edwards)

Come an play with me;  
we are both alone,  
you motherless sparrow.  
(Issa / Edwards)

Though life rushes by,  
even the tiniest bird  
build himself a nest.  
(Issa / Edwards)

Only the birds  
sing heavenly music  
in this troubled world.  
(Issa / Edwards)

A large cat  
waving its long tail just  
to tease a butterfly.  
(Issa / Edwards)

Having slept, the cat gets up,  
yawns, goes out  
to make love.  
(Issa / Hass)

Don't kill that fly!  
Look – it's wringing its hands,  
wringing its feet.  
(Issa / Hass)

I'm going out,  
flies, so relax,  
make love.  
(Issa / Hass)

A huge frog and I,  
staring at each other,  
neither of us moves.  
(Issa / Hass)

Mosquito at my ear –  
does it think  
I'm deaf?  
(Issa / Hass)

When chased out  
of every other place,  
come here, mosquitoes.  
(Issa / Edwards)

Clouds of mosquitoes –  
if it weren't for them  
I would be lonely.  
(Issa / Edwards)

Even with insects –  
some can sing,  
some can't.  
(Issa / Hass)

An insect on a branch  
swept away down the river  
still singing his song.  
(Issa / Edwards)

The red dragonfly –  
in some way or another  
he likes evening too.  
(Issa / Edwards)

For you fleas too  
the nights must be long,  
they must be lonely.  
(Issa / Hass)

At night in my hut,  
will all you jumping fleas  
make a bit less noise?  
(Issa / Edwards)

Don't worry, spiders,  
I keep house  
casually.  
(Issa / Hass)

A red morning sky –  
does it make you happy,  
snail?  
(Issa / Edwards)

Hold on, thin frog!  
You're not beaten yet!  
Issa is with you!  
(Issa / Edwards)

Napping at midday  
I hear the song of rice planters  
and feel ashamed of myself.  
(Issa / Hass)

Napped half the day;  
no one  
punished me!  
(Issa / Hass)

Visiting the graves,  
the old dog  
leads the way.  
(Issa / Hass)

What a strange thing!  
to be alive  
beneath cherry blossoms.  
(Issa / Hass)

Just my being here –  
it is just my being here,  
and the falling snow.  
(Issa / Edwards)

Lovely winds blow  
through the large summer room,  
not enough, we complain.  
(Issa / Edwards)

Each morning farmers  
stare greedily at their fields.  
Each loves just his own.  
(Issa / Edwards)

Her children are asleep.  
Now mother can wash their clothes  
under the summer moon.  
(Issa / Edwards)

The snow is melting  
and the village is flooded  
with children.  
(Issa / Hass)

Windy fall –  
these are the scarlet flowers  
she liked to pick.  
(Issa / Hass)

By herself at home  
my wife is surely staring,  
as I am, at the moon.  
(Issa / Edwards)

Only in a dream –  
my daughter takes a melon  
and touches it to her cheek.  
(Issa / Edwards)

Without you, truly,  
too many and too wide  
are the dark forests.  
(Issa / Edwards)

In this world of ours  
as we cross the roof of hell,  
let's search for flowers.  
(Issa / Edwards)

Pine tree I planted –  
see how old it is  
this autumn evening.  
(Issa / Edwards)

A bath when you're born,  
a bath when you die,  
how stupid.  
(Issa / Hass)

Ask the grasshopper  
to be keeper of my grave  
after I have gone.  
(Issa / Edwards)

## Chinese Lyrics

### \* Počitek na gori

Razgubile so se že meglice,  
odletele so čez gaje ptice.

Le King-Tinga mirni vrh in jaz  
zreva drug si drugemu v obraz.  
(Li Tai Po / Gradnik)

### \* Vprašanje

Ko blisk življenje naše zagori  
in traja le, dokler ga uzro oči.

Neba in zemlje večer je obraz  
in ne spreminja ga bežeči čas.

Sreča – nesreča: ni usodi mar,  
kaj nam v menjavi časa je njen dar.

Polna je čaša vina pred teboj.  
Kaj vendar čakaš? Izpij napoj!  
(Li Tai Po / Gradnik)

### \* Nevesta na stolpu

Rumeno listje brda že pokriva.  
S stolpa ozira se nevesta mlada.  
Nebo zagrinja oblakov jata siva,  
jesenska slana že na polje pada.

Tatarjev vojska zbira se v planjavi,  
na konju dirja sel, z bojišča črne  
vesti prinašajoč. Kdaj pa se vrne  
njen gospodar, kdaj jo doma pozdravi?

Ah, ko konča se vojna ta nemila,  
lepota nje bo in mladost minila.  
(Li Tai Po / Gradnik)

\* Večna pesem

Ko pišem pesem, skozi okno zrem,  
kako se v vetru šibki bambus maja,  
razgiban kakor morja val, ko vstaja

vihar in žene vode tja in sem.  
Grmičevje šumi in mirijada  
jutranje rose kapljic z listov pada.

Ko rišem črke k črkam na papir,  
se zde, da so ko cveti breskve v bregu  
vsenaokrog raztreseni po snegu.

Duh mandarin ne traja venomer  
in razpuhti, če žena ga nosila  
predolgo že je v gubah oblačila.

Če sonce srež obsije, bo skopnel.  
Le, kar na list zdaj pišem, tale spev  
bo večer, večer bo njegov odmev.  
(Li Tai Po / Gradnik)

\* Paviljon iz porcelana

Tam stoji, na sredi ribnika,  
paviljon prelep iz belega  
in zelenkastega porcelana.

Kakor tigra pisani hrbet  
boči most se iz kamnitih gred  
k paviljonu, kjer družina zbrana

pri penečem vinu se šopiri  
v pražnih haljah; pijejo, pojo  
in se živo pomenkujejo.

Drobne pesmi pišejo nekteri  
in rokavi jim nazaj polze,  
v tilniku čepe jim čepice.

A na ribnika gladini, vse:  
– most in paviljon in v njem ljudje –  
se zrcali v čudežni pojavi.

Most se zdi narobe ščipa lok  
in prijateljev živahni krog  
pije in kramlja, stoječ na glavi.  
(Li Tai Po / Gradnik)

\* Beli oblaki

Čez gore Cu, čez gore Cin,  
hite oblaki beli,  
oblaki beli vrh planin  
so me v naročje vzeli.

In kamor krene moj korak,  
oblaki beli z mano  
hite in kot prijatelj drag  
so z mano neprestano.

Na trate se zvečer spuste  
in na zeleni travi  
počivajo z menoj do dne,  
dokler nas zor pozdravi.  
(Li Tai Po / Gradnik)

\* Trije pajdaši

V cvetočem vrtu sam sedim pri vinu.  
Zakaj bi sam se dolgočasil? Hoj!  
Kaj ni nikogar, da bi pil menoj?  
Pa pride mesec: Tu sem, bratec, zdravo!  
Za njim še tretji: moja senca. Bravo!  
O senca, mesec, vražja mi pajdaša,  
kaj vaju nič ne miče moja čaša?  
Ta moja senca ziblje se kot jaz,  
prečudno bled je meseca obraz.  
Pozdravljena mi, dobrodošla druga!  
Hoj, pijmo! Naj gre rakom žvižgat tuga!

Zapojem – mesec me smeje poslušā.  
Zaplešem – senca maje se z menoj.  
Hohoj! moj mesec, senca, ljuba duša,  
bodita zvesta mi, o, vsaj nocoj,  
vsaj dokler je še v moji glavi mir.  
Potem pa, ko bo v nji že vse šumelo,  
potem, ob zori, vzamemo slovo.  
Pa ne za dolgo – jutri na večer  
na svidenje! Spet se bo vse začelo  
od kraja: hojla, hojlaridijo!  
(Li Tai Po / Gradnik)

\* Cesar

Na svojem tronu iz zlata sedi  
nebeški sin bleščeč ves v bisernini,  
krog njega pa čepijo mandarini.

Žari kot sonce zlato med zvezdami,  
ko mandarini resne z njim stvari  
razpravljajo in mahajo z rokami.

Njegove misli pa so vse drugam  
odplule: tamle, v sredi svoje ute  
iz porcelana, čaka cesarica.

Kot čudežno razcvetena cvetlica  
med nežnim listjem, dolge že minute  
nanj čaka, v vencu mladih dvornih dam.

Predolgo zdi se ji, da se mudi  
njen dragi v zboru; nepotrpežljivo  
s pahljačo mahne in zapre oči.

Vonjav presladkih dih zaveje v lice  
cesarjevo kot mehke perutnice  
in, nepokojen ves, začuti živo:

da mu prelepa žena je v pozdrav  
poslala s svojih ustnic slaj dišav ...  
In z roko migne in se dvigne v tronu.

In mirno odkoraka k paviljonu,  
ki se blešči ves v beli mesečini.  
Začudeni strmijo mandarinini.  
(Tu Fu / Gradnik)

\* Mraz

Veter veje, pada, pada sneg,  
zmrznili so bambus in mastiki.  
Ah, še bolj zmrzuje brez oblek  
bedno ljudstvo – mali in veliki –  
ki po lužah bosopeto brodi  
med zaselja tesnimi prehodi.  
Ko zasučé veter ostri meč,  
ne pomaga gladki koži več  
tanko platno, puhasta tenčica.  
Na ognjiščih slama le gori  
in robida pusta, vse noči  
prečepe tako, dokler danica  
jutra ranega jim ne oznani.  
Siromaki! Ko ponižno vdani  
mraz prenašate in žejo, glad  
in vas psi pode od naših vrat,  
v volno mehko in kožuh ovit,  
v toplem domu jaz počivam sit,  
bogu kradem čas in vsa golota  
vaša, lakota in smrt, sramota  
moja so in vaših duš bolešt:  
"Si še človek?" vpije v mojo vest.  
(Pe Lo Tien / Gradnik)

\* The Ho

How say they that the Ho is wide,  
When I could ford it if I tried?  
How say they Sung is far away,  
When I can see it every day?

Yet must indeed the Ho be deep,  
When I have never dared the leap;  
And since I am content to stay,  
Sung must indeed be far away.  
(– / –)

\* Three Cups

You've two score, three score years before you yet,  
And at the end of them your day is done.  
A thousand plans you have before you set;  
Is it worth while to weary over one?

Now, when the gods have made an idle day,  
Take it, and let the idle hours go by;  
And when the gods three cups before you lay,  
Lift them, and drain them dry.  
(- / -)

\* The Parrot

The parrot sits  
Upon his perch,  
Wrapped in gloomy thought,  
And dreams  
Of his distant home.  
His wings of brightest blue  
Are clipped;  
From his red beak  
Come words of wisdom.  
Will they never, never  
Unlatch his cage,  
And set him free once more?  
Impatient, in anger,  
He claws and tears at his perch,  
To which he has clung  
So long.  
Will the world of men  
Not pity him,  
And the freedom he has lost?  
Of what use to him in prison  
Is his coat of wondrous hue?  
(Tu Fu)

\* The Fireflies

At Wu Shan, of an autumn night,  
The fireflies come flitting  
Through the curtains  
Into my room,  
And flutter on my garments.

So warm they seem  
That my lute and book  
Are chill to my touch  
In the dark.  
They settle on the walls and eaves,  
And my room is a gleam as if with stars.  
They circle round the courtyard,  
And, in clusters,  
Cling to the old stone well-curb.  
They enter the flowers  
And make of each a tiny, glowing jewel.  
I stand, an old, white-haired man,  
By the broad Yang Tze,  
And watch you, little fireflies,  
And wonder if, when next year comes,  
I shall be here to greet you.  
(Tu Fu)

#### Indian Lyrics

- \* She needeth no instruction in the art  
Of using woman's wiles to win man's heart:  
The lily's scarlet stamens grew untaught,  
The bee came freely, wishing to be caught.  
(Bhartrihari / Brough)
  
- \* In former days we'd both agree  
That you were me, and I was you.  
What has now happened to us two,  
That you are you, and I am me?  
(Bhartrihari / Brough)
  
- \* Love goes a-fishing with the rod Desire,  
Baiting his hook with Woman for delight.  
Attracted by the flesh, the men-fish bite.  
He hauls them in and cooks them in his fire.  
(Bhartrihari / Brough)
  
- \* You are pale, friend moon, and do not sleep at night,  
And day by day you waste away.  
Can it be that you also  
Think only of her, as I do?  
(— / Brough)

- \* The moon tries every month in vain  
To paint a picture of your face;  
And, having failed to catch its grace,  
Destroys the work, and starts again.  
(– / Brough)
- \* All men alike have suffered theft:  
If a man sees her, she will steal his heart;  
Yet, if he sees her not, what has he left  
Worth looking at?  
(– / Brough)
- \* Although I have a lamp, and fire,  
Stars, moon, and sun to give me light,  
Unless I look into her eyes,  
All is black night.  
(Bhartrihari / Brough)
- \* Where are you going in the dead of night?  
'To meet my lover who is life and death to me.'  
And are you not afraid to walk alone?  
'How can I be alone? Love keeps me company.'  
(Amaru / Brough)
- \* Dearest, if you will love me true,  
What use are joys of heaven to me?  
But if you will not love me true,  
What use are joys of heaven to me?  
(– / Brough)
- \* When you're away,  
A day's a year;  
But when you're here,  
A year's a day.  
(– / Brough)

- \* The day is surely better than the night?  
Or is the night not better than the day?  
How can I tell? But this I know is right:  
Both are worth nothing when my love's away.  
(Amaru / Brough)
- \* To be apart  
From you, sweetheart,  
May yet be best.  
One thing I see  
When you're with me,  
A single face:  
From all things – one.  
When you are gone,  
I see your grace  
In all the rest.  
(– / Brough)
- \* She who is always in my thoughts prefers  
Another man, and does not think of me.  
Yet he seeks for another's love, not hers;  
And some poor girl is grieving for my sake.  
Why then, the devil take  
Both her and him; and love; and her; and me.  
(Bhartrihari / Brough)
- \* Now surely it is hardly fair  
To blame the lotus in your hair.  
Dear pretty one, do you not see?  
Your own sweet fragrance has bewitched the bee.  
(– / Brough)
- \* She fainted when she heard him say  
That he must go abroad; and then,  
Reviving, said, 'You're back again!  
My love, you've been so long away.'  
(– / Brough)

- \* She neither turned away, nor yet began  
 To speak harsh words, nor did she bar the door;  
 But looked at him who was her love before  
 As if he were an ordinary man.  
 (Amaru / Brough)
- \* The moon knows by how much her beauty fails,  
 Weighed against yours, to bring the balance even.  
 Look! In a vain attempt to turn the scales  
 She adds as makeweights all the stars of heaven.  
 (Murari / Brough)
- \* When the fever is caused by her looks and her voice,  
 The treatment of choice  
 Is a thrice-daily sip  
 Of her honey-sweet lip.  
 To avoid further harm,  
 And to keep the heart warm,  
 This follow-up treatment is known to be best:  
 The soothing and gentle warm touch of her breast.  
 (– / Brough)
- \* Dear Lotus-eyes, if in your heart alone  
 Anger now reigns, a lover, to enslave you,  
 What can I do? – But give me back my own,  
 The kisses, the embraces I once gave you.  
 (Amaru / Brough)
- \* When we have loved, my love,  
 Panting and pale from love,  
 Then from your cheeks, my love,  
 Scent of the sweat I love:  
 And when our bodies love  
 Now to relax in love  
 After the stress of love,  
 Ever still more I love  
 Our mingled breath of love.  
 (– / Brough)
- \* Blow, wind, to where my loved one is,  
 Touch her, and come and touch me soon:  
 I'll feel her gentle touch through you,

And meet her beauty in the moon.  
These things are much for one who loves –  
A man can live by them alone –  
That she and I breathe the same air,  
And that the earth we tread is one.  
(Ramayana / Brough)

\* 'Do not go', I could say; but this is inauspicious.  
'All right, go' is a loveless thing to say.  
'Stay with me' is imperious. 'Do as you wish' suggests  
Cold indifference. And if I say 'I'll dye  
When you're gone', you might or might not believe me.  
Teach me, my husband, what I ought to say  
When you go away.  
(– / Brough)

\* Although my mind  
Is sick with love, I find  
I have acquired the gift of magic sight.  
Though she is far away, and it is night,  
I see her in a foreign land  
From where I stand.  
(– / Brough)

\* If the forest of her hair  
Calls you to explore the land,  
And her breasts, those mountains fair,  
Tempt that mountaineer, your hand –  
Stop! before it is too late:  
Love, the brigand, lies in wait.  
(Bhartrihari / Brough)

\* In this vain fleeting universe, a man  
Of wisdom has two courses: first, he can  
Direct his time to pray, to save his soul,  
And wallow in religion's nectar-bowl;  
But, if he cannot, it is surely best  
To touch and hold a lovely women's breast,  
And to caress her warm round hips, and thighs,  
And to possess that which between them lies.  
(Bhartrihari / Brough)

- \* Slender at first, then quickly gather force,  
Growing in richness as they run their course;  
Once started, they do not turn back again:  
Rivers, and years, and friendship with good men.  
(– / Brough)
  
- \* For one short act, a child; next act, a boy  
In love; then poor; a short act to enjoy  
Status and wealth: till in the last act, Man,  
Painted with wrinkles, body bent with age,  
Ending the comedy which birth began,  
Withdraws behind the curtain of life's stage.  
(Bhartrihari / Brough)
  
- \* The pleasant city and its mighty king,  
The tributary princes at his side,  
The learned men that were the kingdom's pride,  
The minstrels with a ready song to sing,  
The gracious ladies of the court, the ring  
Of haughty nobles, arrogant of birth,  
Are conquered by the Lord of all the earth,  
Time, who makes memories of everything.  
(Bhartrihari / Brough)
  
- \* The great autumnal clouds pour rain  
And cool the fever of our summer pain.  
Do great lords gather riches, then,  
To ease the suffering of their fellow-men?  
(– / Brough)
  
- \* At set of sun  
Sleep closes up the eyes. But why,  
When wealth is gone,  
Does man, with equal ease, not die?  
(– / Brough)
  
- \* The sun and moon, for all their light,  
Have little reason to be proud,  
When he by day, and she by night  
Share the same ragged patch of cloud.  
(– / Brough)

- \* Rags are enough for me, silk pleases you:  
A difference undifferentiated.  
A man is poor till his desires are sated.  
Who is reach, who poor, between us two?  
(Bhartrihari / Brough)
- \* Our mind is but a lump of clay  
That Fate, grim potter, holds  
On sorrow's wheel that rolls away,  
And, as he pleases, moulds.  
(Bhartrihari / Brough)
- \* If learned critics publicly deride  
My verse, well, let them. Not for them I wrought.  
One day a man shall live to share my thought:  
For time is endless and the world is wide.  
(Bhavabhuti / Brough)

#### Glavni viri

Hass, R.: *The Essential Haiku*.  
Ecco Press, 1994.

Gradnik, A.: *Kitajska lirika*.  
Državna založba Slovenije, 1974.

Brough, J.: *Poems from the Sanskrit*.  
Penguin Books, 1987.