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POETRY

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Nepal triptych

SHASHI

*In the house of Shashi Bikram Shah, Kupondol, Patan
with Priyankar Bahadur Chand. 19 January 2020*

Back straight, upright on the bed,
Half smile, half stern,
With and beyond us
Sculpting, sketching, dreaming?

We pour over his work,
Discuss motivation,
Meaning, intent.
He is precluded,

Excluded from the conversation,
A world acoustically sealed,
Hermetic and silent:
Unmediated by sound,

Conversing by a digital writing tablet,
Passed back and forth:
Ebb and flow,
Yes Horses. No Horses.

REFLECTIONS ON 'JHAMEL'

Saligram Hotel, Patan
20 January 2020

Mushrooming used to mean
NGOs and boarding schools,
Those densely-packed business cards:

Day job on the front,
Country's future on the back.
Passion and project knitting the two together.

Book launches, poetry readings,
Exhibit openings,
All had a formula then,

Prescribed programs, structured speeches,
A particular kind of sociality
And solidarity.

And now: online shopping,
Coffee shops with Wi-Fi,
Motorcycle taxis on demand,

Homes located with pins dropped on to online maps,
Ever fewer old men on street corners,
Cigarette in hand, to ask for directions.

DUST

Shaligram Hotel, Patan
12 January 2020

The futility of shuffling dust from
a doorstep to a pavement and then to the road.
Matter out of place, all of it.

A human hand on a home-made broom,
earnestly relocating matter.
May we speak about it?

The wake of motorbikes, the jet stream of buses
lifts up these same particles.
Matter out of place, all of it.

Positioning them back on the doorstep
whence they came.
May we speak about it?

That which we sweep out,
The wind sweeps in.
Matter out of place, all of it.

Dusty wheel of life:
Matter out of place, all of it.
May we speak about it?

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