Poems

Prasanta Das
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Abstract
DURGA, NEIGHBOUR'S DEATH

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DURGA

Each year they make goddesses out of straw and clay.

Each day on my way to school I saw them taking shape – like so many statues of liberty.

How reassuring is your anger, O Mother!

FESTIVE CROWDS FLOCK TO PUJA MANDAPS IN CITY

Once again was evil defeated, once again was the demon slain.

Playing truant from school, some days later, the river turned teacher explaining stuff: in the shallows were broken limbs of straw and clay.
NEIGHBOUR’S DEATH

Our neighbour died this morning.
Soon, over the widow’s wails
you could hear the sound
of bamboo being cut.
I put on my shoes
knowing now it would not be long
before they carried him past our house.

On the way curious shopkeepers
leaned out of windows
to ask the dead man’s name.
And at the cremation ground
it was good to see his other friends
who’d taken leave for the day.

There was a fine breeze blowing
but to turn a man to ashes takes time.
It was almost evening when I left.
Too late to go to the bank
or pay the electricity bill
so I only bought the eggs
for tomorrow morning.