**Buddha’s Eyes**

Ateeb Gul

 —*in response to the mindless destruction of a Buddhist statue in Pakistan, July 2020*

**I**

Eons and eons ago—

Gautama stood atop the grey mountain.

His eyes only half open from the rising sun.

Scavenging answers from the rubble of

(in)human realities.

A few hundred miles from the desolate Hindukush.

The lifetime of Siddhartha’s contemplation

culminating in the ultimate question—

One he had to ask himself:

Is the limbo real after all?

Sitting down, legs crossed, eyes half open.

Only half open.

Years later, being grave shifted from the peak of the mountain

to the mundane and the material.

Meditating. Still reflecting.

Eyes still only half open …

**II**

Eons and eons later—

A few hundred miles from the melting Hindukush.

The land where an apartment building will stand tall and proud

elated to be inhabited by the families

who had never owned an apartment before.

Location, location, location—

The base of a rugged region where yak-meat may not be at hand

but where one goes for the view, not the cuisine.

The hammers in the hands of four construction workers

 thudding, then thumping…

all to make the apartment building stand tall and erect.

“Ahoy, is that a statue?”

“No stupid … that’s got to be a mummy, right?”

A shovel rises and then falls.

 \*crackling noise\*

No longer a statue. Or a mummy.

The shovel rises again, falls again.

Other shovels join in, dancing away in a gruesome rhythm.

“We have to complete the digging today, boys!”

With every strike, their eyes whisk shut

for a millisecond.

And Gautama opens his.

Siddhartha lays stunned.

The Buddha looks pensive—

 Eyes now wide open.