Classic Poetry Series

C. P. Surendran

- 9 poems -

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C. P. Surendran (1956 -)

C. P. Surendran (born 1956) is a poet, novelist and journalist from India.

Biography

Born to malayalam writer and rationalist Pavanan and Parvathy, C. P. Surendran received his M.A. in English Literature from Delhi University, Delhi and taught for short while at Calicut University before working as journalist in Mumbai for many English newspaper including the Times of India , Times Sunday Review , Bombay Times besides others. He was resident editor of the Times of India in Pune for three years. He is now senior editor with the Times of India in Delhi.

A selection of his poems was included in Gemini II in 1994 . He published an independent collection of poems Posthumous Poems in 2000.

His first novel An Iron Harvest, about the Naxalite uprising, was published by Indiaink. He has also published three collections of poetry. He currently lives in delhi.

Works:

Novels
An Iron Harvest (Indiaink)
Lost And Found (HarperCollins, 2010)

Poetry
Gemini II (Penguin Viking)
Posthumous Poems (Penguin Viking)
Canaries On The Moon (Yeti Press)
Portraits Of The Space We Occupy (HarperCollins)

A FRIEND IN NEED

He sits in a chair
Whose fourth leg’s his.
He loves this chair.
They used to make love in it.
That was when the chair
Had four plus two plus two,
Eight legs. Days with legs.
Since then there’s been a lot of walking out.
Now the chair’s short of a leg
And he’s lending his.

C. P. Surendran

CURIOS

It’s three in the morning.
The house rings with alarms,
There’s someone leaning
On the doorbell. It’s her
After three years.
He lets her in,
Puts on some tea.
She lights a cigarette
With a match that might set
The house on fire.
She unpacks the weather
Which is New York.
They sit in silence.
The room turns into a museum of moods.

C. P. Surendran

Enemy

I had just fought this war and come back,
Minding my own business and drinking beer.
Then I met this girl at Joe’s
Who wrote poems on the back
Of napkins with ketchup.
Show me your heart, she said.
Don’t have one, I said.
She said hearts were what made her go.

Finally, I dug up the old, dark thing.

And she said, oh, but this is a grenade.

I told you, I said, and bit the pin.

C. P. Surendran

For The Record

A hunt for the royal pun
Took him around the room
Which was not unlike a notebook
Bursting with rough work.
The trail
Led him under the table
Where he found her old letters
Explaining her love in detail
Two years before she set sail
From him. The same day
He wrote the replies
And mailed them to himself
Regretting the delay.

C. P. Surendran

Luminous

Or consider the way we twine our hands
Under the wooded night air
So tight as if they might be chopped at wrist
By an up-sprung axe unshackled from the bleeding roots.

Or the way you search my face as you kiss
Deep enough to know what makes
The leopard’s blood leap from spot to spot
And lean back, wounded cub, shaking at the thought
This was the rumoured future
We forfeited
At assigned gatherings and waiting halls
Arrivals and departures
Where the spirit balked
And braced without hope.

And we walk the back alleys

Of this accidental town,
Past darkened doorways
And burning windows,
Between parked cars
And empty little restaurants

From future and past
Return

By land, sea and air
By sleight of hand
And turn of phrase
To this wholly present

Moment of grace.

C. P. Surendran

MILK STILL BOILS

He lies in bed, one hand
Thrown across his eyes.
This, he figures, is more like it.
He no longer thinks about her,
Or him. Just them.
And the postures they struck
Just before the milkman came.
In a minute he will be up
To put the milk on the boil
And no one the wiser.

C. P. Surendran

Prospect

While you were sleeping
A dog yawned in the sun
And in the distance,
A train, blindfolded by a tunnel,
Window by window
Regained vision.
I thought of all the things
That could happen
When we are looking away,
The universe we miss in a blink.

C. P. Surendran

Renunciation

First light on the kitchen table
Breakfast for one. Beer and wine.
Feline eyes kiss fallen tart.

Lunch's a conceit of three. My cat,
Your snapshot and me. Secret rum
In mint tea. Invalidation of the sea.

Last light comes to sup. Dinner's a feat
In Rectitude. Water and Whisky.
Campaign of shadows. No despair.

A sliver of music around the ankles

In a dream's corridor.
Endless retreat of inaccessible feet.

C. P. Surendran

THE FAMILY COURT

At the Family Court
The lift wouldn’t work.
So they walked up
Four flights
Of stairs and passed
On the fourth landing
Two toilets, one marked,
For Judges Only, and one,
For Others. They used
The first though.
But no one charged
Them with contempt of court.
Later, they sat in the hail
With some 20 others,
People come together
To be separated.
The four fans in the hall
Big as windmills
Breezed past
Their several lives.
Late in the noon
An attendant
Called out their names
And led them into a hall
Where the judge
They met in the toilet said
They were no longer
Man and wife.

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