

**Classic Poetry Series**

**Eunice de Souza**  
**- poems -**

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# Eunice de Souza(1940 -)

Eunice de Souza is a contemporary Indian English language poet, literary critic and novelist. Among her notable books of poetry is *Women in Dutch painting* (1988).

## <b> Early Life and Education</b>

Eunice de Souza was born and grew up in Pune, in a Goan Catholic family. She studied English literature with an MA from the Marquette University in Wisconsin, and a PhD from the University of Mumbai. She taught English at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, and was Head of the Department until her recent retirement. She was involved in the well known literary festival Ithaka organized at the college.

She has also been involved in theater, both as actress and director. She began writing novels with *Dangerlok* in 2001. She has also written four children's books.

She hints at an ancestral Portuguese conversion in the poem *de Souza Prabhu*:

No, I'm not going to  
delve deep down and discover  
I'm really de Souza Prabhu  
even if Prabhu was no fool  
and got the best of both worlds.  
(Catholic Brahmin!  
I can hear his fat chuckle still.)

Aside from poetry and fiction, de Souza has edited numerous anthologies and collections and writes a weekly column for the *Mumbai Mirror*. She currently lives in Mumbai.

# Advice To Women

Keep cats  
if you want to learn to cope with  
the otherness of lovers.  
Otherness is not always neglect -  
Cats return to their litter trays  
when they need to.  
Don't cuss out of the window  
at their enemies.  
That stare of perpetual surprise  
in those great green eyes  
will teach you  
to die alone.

Eunice de Souza

# Bequest

In every Catholic home there's a picture  
of Christ holding his bleeding heart  
in his hand.

I used to think, ugh.

the only person with whom  
I have not exchanged confidences  
is my hairdresser.

Some recommend stern standards,  
others say float along.  
He says, take it as it comes,  
meaning, of course, as he hands it out.

I wish I could be a  
Wise Woman  
smiling endlessly, vacuously  
like a plastic flower,  
saying Child, learn from me.

It's time to perform an act of charity  
to myself,  
bequeath the heart, like a  
spare kidney-  
preferably to an enemy.

Eunice de Souza

# Don'T Look For My Life In These Poems

Poems have order, sanity  
aesthetic distance from debris.  
All I've learnt from pain  
I always knew,  
but could not do.

Eunice de Souza