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## (Re)asserting the Feminist Sensibilities: Confessionalism, Christian Feminism, and the Poems of Eunice de Souza

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## **(Re)asserting the Feminist Sensibilities: Confessionalism, Christian Feminism, and the Poems of Eunice de Souza**

By Payel Pal<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

In her poems, Eunice de Souza, one of the most prominent Indian women poets writing in English, depicts women's cultural sensitivities, their developing personalities in a male-dominated societal structure, their desire for independence, and frustrations stemming from their constrained surroundings. Her poetry demonstrates a range of feminist aesthetics and efforts to chart new territory for women. Her treatment of love and sexuality confirms her discontentment with a society that necessitates a woman's silence and subservience. In her compositions, she implements an assertive and subversive tonality, and this article illustrates how the poet's confessional mood enables readers a glimpse into her hardships and tormented psychological state, on the one hand, and the moral dilemmas and diversity of the female psyche, on the other. The article demonstrates how Eunice's treatment of women is crucial in terms of how Christian women in Indian patriarchal society can interpret and carry out their own identities.

*Keywords:* Feminism, Indian women, Christianity, Confession, Eunice De Souza

### **Introduction: Modern Indian Women's Poetry in English**

The post-1947 period witnessed India's quest for a new identity shortly after gaining independence as a newborn nation. This quest can be seen in modern Indian literary works in English, and Indian women poets are no exception. The task of establishing a new identity for the Indian woman, shifting her from subjugated to emancipated, falls to post-independence women poets, and this task was accomplished successfully and effectively by Kamala Das, Gauri Deshpande, Mamta Kalia, Eunice de Souza, Imtiaz Dharkar, Sunita Jain, Smita Agarwal, Lakshmi Kannan, and many others who contributed immensely to the growth and development of post-independence Indian women's poetry in English. Their poetry is shaped by their experiences as women in patriarchal cultures. Their poetry demonstrates women's sensibilities, their rising voice in a male-dominated society, their desire for independence, and the stresses and frustrations that emerge from their imposed way of living. During this time period, many female poets made strenuous attempts to carve out new territory for themselves, and their poetry reflects various aspects of feminism (Karmakar, 2015, p. 275). From the 1950s onward, modern Indian women poets writing in English look inward at their language, their experiences, and their writings, and it is their avoidance of overt nationalism and the manifestation of an

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angst-ridden sense of identity that distinguish them as “modern.” These modern Indian women poets assert the fact that “the ‘Fair Voice’ in Indian poetry in English is not a ‘sparrow’s voice,’ it is a ‘true voice of feeling’” (Chavan, 1984, p. 1).

Patriarchal supremacy evolved centuries earlier, as Draupadi and Sita’s stories in the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* demonstrate the position and treatment of women across history. Women had to endure numerous arduous ordeals to establish their worth as daughters, wives, and mothers. The *Rig Veda* [8/3/77] notes that dogs, crows, *sudhras*,<sup>2</sup> and women all adhere to a certain class, and as women are born with sinfulness, deception, and stupidity, they should stay separate from others. While a woman is referred to as property in the *Atharva Veda*, *Manu Smirithi* [200 BC] lays out a woman’s duties and responsibilities from infancy to death. In this society, a woman is relegated to the position of second fiddle, and her “life is constantly bogged down by fear, and it is one of the main hindrances to the attempt at self-realization. One of the main reasons why women are oppressed by patriarchy is that it is capable of inducing fear into them” (Kumar, 2020, p. 71). Modern Indian women poets not only address this apprehension but also demonstrate their understanding of everyday realities and the challenges they face in the social environment. Their poetry is often confessional, and they overcome their long state of silence to embrace womanhood by liberating themselves from the constraints of subjugation and by recognising women’s life in society. These poets “have articulated as overtly and boldly as male poets” (Singh, 2004, p. 47), enlarging the range of poetic subjects for modern Indian women poets in the post-independence period (Bajaj, 1996, p. 16). Within the domain of self-realization, they form a new collective identity that transcends the plurality of cultures and religions in India.

### The Poetry of Eunice de Souza

Eunice de Souza, born in Pune in 1940 to Roman Catholic parents of Goan ancestry, published the poetry collections *Fix* (1979), *Women in Dutch Painting* (1988), *Ways of Belonging* (1990), *Selected and New Poems* (1994), and *A Necklace of Skulls* (2009) to articulate her dissent and to demonstrate women’s role in order to transform them. Her poetry combines the voices of Portuguese Roman Catholic Goa and women and features multiple poetic voices from various sections and stages of India to highlight the polyphony of Indian poetry in English. Her poetry takes on a critical, detached, and, above all, a confident tone as a result of her skilled and insightful voice. Her early poetry fused Kamala Das’s angst-ridden revelations with the repressive circle of her culture, culminating in razor-sharp and satirical poetry. Bruce King, in his review of *Women in Dutch Painting* (1988), published in the journal *World Literature Today* (1989), observes: “Eunice de Souza has started to supplant the better known, far more self-assertive and self-dramatizing Kamala Das in anthologies of female and Indian poetry” (p. 365). Her poetry unquestionably creates space for women, develops an inspiring diction and posture, and opposes victimhood in favour of self-determination by transcending religious, racial, socioeconomic, and cultural distinctions. Women in her poetry face heartbreaks, the frustrations of marriage and romance, and the need for emotional support from the outside world, and they are self-sufficient (Gomes, 2016, p. 16).

Eunice de Souza’s poetry exemplifies women’s ambivalence as well as their physical and psychological status in our society. She depicts not only one woman, but all women as distressed, broken, emotionally abused, and baffled. Like Mohanty, she believes that “To define feminism purely in gendered terms assumes that our consciousness of being ‘women’ has nothing to do with race, class, nation, or sexuality, just with gender. But no one ‘becomes a woman’ (in Simone de Beauvoir’s sense) purely because she is female” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 55). Her poetry is written in an environment that is filled with sorrow, pain, suffering,

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<sup>2</sup> A member of the worker caste, the lowest of the four Hindu castes.

difficulties, challenges, and other prominent female issues. Perhaps this is what prompted A. D. Hope to write regarding her work on the back cover of *Fix*: “What struck me at once about the poems was their immediacy, their complete impact, their unguarded sense of statement [...]. There is a marvellous irony, delicately and at the same time savagely handled. [...] I have been moved by these poems which have such directness, vigour and such a strange mixture of triumph, vision and agony” (de Souza, 1979).

### **Confessionalism and the Poetry of Eunice de Souza**

Confessional poetry is a subgenre of poetry that developed in the 1950s and 1960s in the United States, beginning with the publication of Robert Lowell’s *Life Studies* (1959). In a review for *The Nation*, M. L. Rosenthal labels Lowell’s *Life Studies* as “confessional poetry.” He uses this concept to describe a modern form of poetry that he considers to be healing and autobiographical because it “place[s] the speaker at the centre of the poem in such a way that his psychological weakness and shame [become] an embodiment of his culture” (Rosenthal, 1959, p. 69). This style of poetry reflects the poet’s distressing experiences of psychiatric conditions, sexuality, suicide, death, and trauma. Poets like Lowell, Sylvia Plath, John Berryman, Anne Sexton, W. D. Snodgrass, and Theodore Roethke share their anguish, pain, sorrows, frustrations, and failures, and their confessional tone conveys emotional uncertainties, misery, and intimate information about their lives and personalities. Robert Phillips opines that: “There is no place either for religion or morals in this [confessional] poetry. The poet does not expect any redemption or retribution as there is no remorse. It is just to bare their souls to get psychic relief. It is of some therapeutic value” (1973, p. 19). Confessional poetry grows out of victimisation by erasing the distinctions between the conscious and unconscious minds. It is woven around the literary self as its primary symbol. The poetic self is central to the events depicted in this poetry, and the poet faces a crippling self-awareness in which his/her life story becomes representative of humanity as a whole. Confessional poets transmit their experiences through art in such a way that it strikes a chord in the hearts of their readers. The poet portrays his psychic disturbances as impersonal and universal, and this method is a critical component of confessional poetry. It creates a positive and intimate connection between the poet and his readers, and in this context, E. R. Taylor aptly says:

The confessional poem seems so amiable, it is available to the reader; it makes the poet feel better yet it uses the poet shabbily; the poem that seemed to him, his very individuality tends to fall into a clinical type and its grasp of the reader deprives the reader of one chief pleasure of poetry, the feeling of having come upon a silence, a privacy upon intellect existing unselfconsciously somewhere out of the reach of camera. (2014, p. 301)

Eunice de Souza’s poetry enables her readers to penetrate both her miseries and tortured psyche and the paradox and ambiguity of the female mind. Her observations on love and sexuality demonstrate her dissatisfaction with a culture that expects silent approval from women. She is well aware of her life’s rising turmoil, which triggers her pain and suffering, and thus in her compositions, she takes a provocative and sarcastic tone. She seems to echo what Susan Bordo asserts in her interview with Goutam Karmakar: “Sexuality and race have been far more fluid than gender, insofar as despite racism, homophobia, and transphobia we’ve seen the proliferation of racial and sexual diversities. But this isn’t as true of gender, which still serves so many rigid sexist notions about [...] women” (Karmakar, 2021, p. 862). Eunice de Souza starts with a thorough knowledge of the issue of women in India, where the development of a woman is strictly controlled in comparison to the growth of a man.

In her first collection of poems, *Fix*, she portrays the Goan Catholic culture in which she grew up recognisably. Goa has a remarkable colonial history, having been ruled by the Portuguese until 1961. Her poems deftly weave in Goa's colonial history and discuss the prejudices against women within Goa's Catholic culture. Bruce King says that "the subjects of her satires are the church, marriage, motherhood, colour prejudice, sexual prudence, and alienation felt by many Goan Catholics towards Hindu India" (2001, p. 157). In the poem "Autobiographical," de Souza describes her feelings of remorse for her father's premature death, her numerous love affairs, and her failure to learn from her experiences. The opening lines of this poem illustrate the extremes of distressing emotional states coupled with a sense of disappointment on the part of the poet: "Right, now here it comes/ I killed my father when I was three/ I have muddled through several affairs/ and always come out badly/ I've learned almost nothing from experience" (2009, p. 28). In her poetry, the Goan community's treatment of women generates loneliness, resentment, dissatisfaction, and profound sorrow; she attempts suicide to put an end to her life's sadness. She confesses her suicide attempt, her frustration, her sadness, and her feeling of betrayal: "Yes, I've tried suicide,/ I tidied my clothes but/ left no notes. I was surprised/ to wake up in the morning" (2009, p. 28). She depicts the status and plight of women in this patriarchal society, and this poem echoes Butler's assertions about women's subjectivity as she opines: "The field of power structured in part by the imperializing gesture of dialectical appropriation exceeds and encompasses the axis of sexual difference, offering a mapping of intersecting differentials which cannot be summarily hierarchized either within the terms of phallogocentrism or any other candidate for the position of 'primary condition of oppression'" (Butler, 1999, p. 19).

Girls live life as unwanted animals, as Eunice de Souza describes in her poem "de Souza Prabhu," in which she categorises women as "lame ducks." She claims that her birth depresses her family members, who expected a male child. That is the baseline of a girl's life, and it is loaded with gender bias. She makes every effort to please her parents, and in doing so, she exerts control over her feminine emotions, which might also act as a barrier. However, as she states, the outcome is negative: "I heard it said/ My parents wanted a boy./ I've done my best to qualify./ I hid the bloodstains/ on my clothes/ and let my breasts sag" (2009, p. 26). Eunice de Souza's relationship with her mother is indeed a source of frustration and aggravation. In her poem "Forgive Me, Mother," she is found in a defiant state and remarks on her family and their methods for rearing a female infant. Absolute animosity and traumatic encounters contribute to a sense of anger and resentment in her voice. She believes that her birth was just an accident and not the result of affection. She reacts to an oppressive, coarse religious and familial upbringing by connecting with her growing knowledge of the repressive nature of Indian Hindus and the Goan culture towards women. She utters: "Forgive me. Mother,/ that I left you/ a life-long widow/ old, alone/ It was kill or die/ and you got me anyway/ [...] I was never young/ Now I'm old, alone" (2009, p. 24). In her poem "Sweet Sixteen," she discusses in detail how a girl is expected to adhere to societally prescribed feminine characteristics. As a girl develops physically, she becomes conscious of her own fragility and sexual vulnerability, and she is compelled by society to abandon her bodily modifications. She is instructed in the following way: "Mamas never mentioned menses/ A nun screamed: You vulgar girl/ don't say brassieres/ say bracelets" (2009, p. 6). The poet continues by describing how girls from a very young age are taught to be aware of their sexuality and to become conscious of boys and men. From an early age, girls are indoctrinated with the idea of the male gender's superiority: "Never go with a man alone/ Never alone/ and even if you're engaged/ only passionless kisses" (2009, p. 6). Eunice de Souza expresses her secret feelings in a forceful, forthright, and trustworthy way, and her "poems have the brevity, unexpectedness, and urgency of telegrams" (Mehrotra, 1992, p. 114). She articulates her aspirations and pledges to represent the views of Indian women. She thinks in line with Elizabeth Grosz that "female sexuality is immensely variable

and it is up to women to work on their own pleasures and bodily encounters” (Karmakar & Sarkar, 2021, p. 499).

Eunice de Souza also critiques the Indian wedding as being conditioned by certain conventions and procedures. An Indian girl must meet all of the requirements for marriage, and every part of her body is thoroughly investigated to assess her perfection. In her poem “Marriages Are Made,” she depicts the traditional Indian tradition of the marriage market, which treats brides like cattle. Elena, her cousin, is regarded as a product here, and “her eyes [are] examined for squints/ her teeth for cavities/ her stools for the possible/ non-Brahmin worm” (2009, p. 4). Furthermore, the poet feels horrified to see how Elena’s family is compelled to compensate with bribes to meet the standards of the bridegroom. It is worth mentioning that while poetry has “a more significant role in the reconciliation of the inner worlds with the complexities of the outer, [it] is in this context that we can place the poetry of Eunice de Souza that comes as a harmonious link between one’s self and society” (Daruwalla, 1989, p. 57).

### **Christian Feminism and the Poetry of Eunice de Souza**

Eunice de Souza’s poetry reveals that her focus is on the Goan Christian community to which she belongs. Her upbringing clashes with received ideas and notions of the Christian faith and gives her poems an unmistakable Christian tinge which cannot be confused with women writers belonging to other faiths. (Raj, 2003, pp. 157-158)

Feminists in the West dismantled patriarchal orthodoxy, revealing Christianity and the Church as one of the apparatuses of the patriarchal system that leads to women’s victimisation, and this system has also been demonstrated to have a significant and systematic gender imbalance, evident in the Christian Bible. While the Bible encapsulates the highest values or standards for people to uphold, hierarchical institutions’ selective dogmatism and erroneous implementation of these standards and regulations have been attributed to the prejudice towards Christian women. According to radical feminists, the Bible is “more of a force in maintaining the existing order than a book of liberation and the chief instrument in the suppression of women” (Alexander, 1997, p. xi). The Church and its doctrines, extracted from the Scripture, are accountable for women’s cultural colonization. As Jessie B. Tellis-Nayak aptly says in this context: “When one thinks of the Bible, the persons who first come to mind, from the Old Testament are Adam, Abraham, Moses, Kings David and Solomon. From the New Testament, it is Jesus and his disciples [...]. Seldom do thoughts or images occur of women though they have contributed to the communities of their time and place” (1997, p. iii). Feminist philosophers and intellectuals are enraged by the glaring omission of powerful women from the Bible, which has fostered a misguided perception of women’s obscurity. They point out the fact that “the Bible is a man’s book where women appear mostly as adjuncts of man” (Ralte & Rajkumar, 2002, p. 80). According to Mary Daly, Christianity is a masculine framework where God is man and man is God, and utilisation of inclusive language is inadequate to free women from the constraints exerted by Scripture, for the central symbolism of the Bible remains masculine. Daly demands a “castrating of language and images that reflect and perpetuate the structures of a sexist world” (1973, p. 9).

Christianity not only locates the source of sin and evil in the woman’s body but also expresses contempt and resentment towards it. Women are considered as “other” and the embodiment of distracting or negative qualities, and as a result, patriarchal societies place a premium on continence and purity. Beauvoir emphasises this point by recalling Tertullian’s furious allegation against women: “Woman! You are the gateway of the devil. You persuaded man whom he dared not attack directly. Because of you the Son of God had to die. You should

always go dressed in mourning and in rags” (Beauvoir, 1996, p. 184). Through Mary, Jesus’ mother, Christianity emphasises the servile and agreeable role of a woman. Mary is often portrayed in art in a subservient pose, with her head bent in reverence, grief, or compliance. This image of Mary again depicts the plight of women in the Bible because “if Mary is the model for all Christian mothers, if Mary is the type for every woman, then the qualities that such images and icons would tend to inspire are: passivity, obedience, resignation and compliance, all of which support a subordinate role for women” (Mello, 2003, p. 19). Patriarchal society and Christianity in India, like their western counterparts, have largely shaped the identities of Indian Christian women, and the structures that impact western women also influence them. Christianity in India has not given Indian Christian women more power or improved their status. Instead, it has made them more vulnerable, oppressed, and unequal.

Eunice de Souza, an Indian Christian woman poet, engages with the tensions created by feminism and Christianity in her poetry. Her treatment of women is instructive in terms of how Christian women can perceive themselves and perform in Indian patriarchal society. Christianity mandates that women be taught from an early age to be passive, subservient, docile, and obedient by nature. Christianity’s androcentric perspectives assume that women’s good behaviour should be one of the main criteria. In her poem “Visit,” she shows how a girl is disciplined from her childhood days to show calmness, smile, and hide the facts of her oppression. A girl in an Indian Christian society never gets enough opportunities to show her true self. The poet says: “I like to visit you, you say,/ You’re always calm and smiling/ Should I tell I wonder,/ I was a burly little girl/ who knocked her sissy cousins down” (2009, p. 72). Frequently, girls work on developing healthy characteristics to keep things working perfectly. In the poem ‘For a Child, Not Clever’, de Souza expresses her discomfort at the child’s reaction to her invited vilification and her inability to accept her mistakes. She instantly connects the fault or venial sin to a broader theological principle when she says: “you have pierced me with your pain/ suddenly I see/ how it’s possible in Gethsamene/ to say: I am the one you seek/ Let the rest go free” (1994, p. 14). Here the poet talks about the incident of Gethsamene, where Jesus Christ doesn’t intend for his followers to pay for his transgression when he is captured and taken into custody for trial. The poet expresses the transformative view of Jesus Christ, who does not even want his followers to be tainted mistakenly, and the poet mentions this to show how society intentionally makes a false accusation to silence the voice of Jesus Christ and the girl.

In her poem “Eunice,” de Souza recounts her experiences as a convent school girl. By referring to the “Embroidery Sister” as a “silly bra-less bitch,” she not only violates the norm of being a quiet and obedient person, but also attempts to educate other female students about that sister’s personality. Eunice feels insulted when that sister comments on her petticoat: “this petticoat you’ve cut/ these seams/ are worthy of an elephant” (2009, p. 53). However, she feels pity for her friends as they succumb to the strict rules of the patriarchal school system, which is particularly evident when her classmates lodge a formal complaint against her: “Eunice is writing bad words sister/ she’s sewing up her head/ for the third time sister” (2009, p. 53). As Christianity believes that women are taught the attributes that characterise womanhood, it is in the treatment of the household and relatives that they are most concerned. De Souza through her poems tries to go against the norms set by Genesis that considers “the woman as a nail driven into the wall. She sits at home [...] the wife should stay at home and look after the affairs of the household as one who has been deprived of the ability to administer those affairs that are outside and concern the State” (Grey, 2000, p.12). The Pauline text in 1 Timothy 3:11-15 insists that women should remain silent during church events, and this essentially silences them and denies them a voice in other domains and circumstances. In her poem “Women in Dutch Painting,” de Souza aims to convey the varying degrees of calm and voiceless women, both in Dutch painting and in real life, like her aunt and Anna. She feels pity to see how these once

lovely and generous women have become passive, like the paintings that depict subjects with a very composed and silent expression on their faces. The poet says: “The afternoon sun is on their faces/ They are calm, not stupid/ pregnant, not bovine/ I know women like that/ and not just in paintings” (2009, p. 47). This subservient nature of women “is used to justify her social status, and then her actual social status is used as a disqualification for any other status” (Kennedy & Mendus, 1987, p. 11). Eunice de Souza demonstrates how Christianity is prejudiced towards women and their actions, often finding them insignificant.

Christian patriarchy requires women to exercise extreme caution in their actions and attitudes, modesty in their expression, and submissiveness rather than determination. This system of decorum ought not to be breached in any condition, particularly in love. In her poem “He Speaks,” de Souza depicts how a lover asserts his dominance over his beloved. The poet, as an observant woman, seems to be well informed of the male attitude that tends to demean women who are considered naive, insecure, and constantly deceived by men for the purpose of sex. The poet shows this when she speaks about the woman who “was an affectionate/creature and tried hard, poor dear,/ but never quite made the grade” (2009, p. 20). In this patriarchal society, while a man may consider abandoning a woman and talk of his romantic entanglements with numerous women, a woman should remain loyal to her man even when he is not around. The poet shows this mindset of man in the following lines: “The next time we were making love/ I said quite casually:/ I hope you realize I do this/ with other women” (2009, p. 21). Through her poetic voice, de Souza slashes through the numerous gender-based stereotypes and prejudices that pervade Indian social-cultural structures and relentlessly explores them. In “Bandra Christian Group,” the poet depicts how the male voice is embedded in the patriarchal ontology that determines a woman’s behaviour through her physical traits: “What personality says Dominic/ such pink lips men and/ look at that chest” (2009, p. 9). Eunice de Souza gently belittles her Portuguese aunt for a cultural transgression and displays a sense of alienation from the Hindu people in her poem “Conversation Piece.” The poet condemns the racism, bigotry, and close-mindedness of Goan Catholic people when she says: “My Portuguese-bred colleague/ picked up a clay shivalingam/ one day and said:/ Is this an ashtray?” (2009, p. 14). The poet openly admits the hardships of being a married woman through true stories from her Catholic community. In her poem “Catholic Mother,” de Souza speaks out against excessive childbearing and widespread ignorance about family planning. The poem sets out with an incredible indictment of the stereotypical portrayal of women as frail, servile, and alluring. She criticises those sentiments, deeply entrenched in a social ethos that allows for and justifies such subordination and exploitation of Christian women. It is worth mentioning that “many of the Catholic characters which appear in [her] poems are an embodiment of the complacency, the closed heart and mind which constitutes evil in de Souza’s world because it entails the refusal of freedom, the ‘Passion for the possible’ — as distinct from the cultural religiosity she attacks here” (Sree, 2008, p. 42).

While de Souza expresses her dissatisfaction with the subservient position played by women in hierarchical social constructs in “Catholic Mother”, she bitterly criticises the patriarchal exploitation of women in “Poem for a Poet,” in which she employs language to express her indignation toward gender discrimination in the Goan-Catholic community. She feels the need to “transcend the self/ and enter into/ communication/ with the world” (2009, p. 18). Being displeased with masculine supremacy, her approach takes on an unparalleled sharpness and roughness, and her use of irony “becomes far more meaningful [...] than that of Mamta Kalia because it is the exclusive means through which she can come to terms with her Goan-Catholic identity” (Chavan, 1984, p. 200). The poet reveals in her poem “Miss Louise” how Miss Louise must face consequences for her single status. Miss Louise becomes an embarrassment and an object of ridicule in her family and surroundings, and she says: “My girl, I can’t even/ go to Church you know/ I unsettle the priests/ so completely” (2009, p. 7).



The poet feels pity for every unmarried woman who is susceptible to mockery and humiliation in a Christian family. Eunice de Souza's poetry proves the fact that "the revelatory canon for theological evaluation of biblical androcentric traditions and their subsequent interpretations cannot be derived from the Bible itself but can only be formulated in and through women's struggle for liberation from all patriarchal oppression" (Fiorenza, 1983, p. 32). She criticises the emptiness of Catholic conservatism and uses socially adept phrases to express her frustration and desperation. While her approach to the obnoxious nature of her societal and cultural surroundings is provocative and confrontational, her use of imagery and symbols enables her to illustrate the plight of women in the Christian community.

### Conclusion

Eunice de Souza's poetry shows women's battle for liberty and dignity. She demonstrates society's gender insensitivity and prejudice, as well as the struggle for self-realization. Her poetry emphasises female consciousness, and through the use of poetic tropes she strives to voice her opinion in opposition to patriarchal and hierarchical issues. Indeed, she not only deviates from the so-called tradition of her predecessors but also opens up a new avenue for emerging female poets to address these topics more effectively. Her disillusionment with society, its norms, and its gender discrimination lends her poems a confessional tone, a sense of dichotomy, and a defiant nature. De Souza leans on her own experiences and skillfully connects them to the wider framework of the social and political environment in which she lives. In her transitional journey from servitude to emancipation, from ambivalence to consciousness, and from fragility to fortitude, her poetry becomes an archive of a ruptured psyche, and she yearns for peace and tranquillity throughout her compositions.

Eunice de Souza aspires to transcend the restrictions imposed by her patriarchal Christian society to discover herself as an independent Christian woman with regard to culture, place, and personality. Her poems speak of the "liberated Christian woman" who is "free to know herself, be herself, and develop herself in her own special way" (Scanzoni & Hardesty, 1974, p. 12). As a Christian feminist poet, she embarks on the mission of deciphering the sociocultural characteristics of Indian Christian society that require immediate attention to women's needs and values. She is an example of "when women today in Christian communities become aware of their situation within a patriarchal religious institution, and, moreover, when they recognize that the Bible is a major implement for maintaining the oppression by the patriarchal structure" (Osiek, 1997, p. 960). Eunice de Souza transforms herself into a protestor against traditional patriarchal values, a secularist, a revolutionary, and a progressivist in a position to react to and acclimatise to her circumstance.

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