

The Sun and Her Flowers

Rupi Kaur. Kansas: Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2017, 248 pages

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Contemporary representations of feminist activists tend to rebuff tortuous streams of earlier opinion, particularly, the Western thoughts about Third World women and the strong orientalist whim along with the powerful patriarchal system in the Indian subcontinent. In her essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, Gayatri Spivak (1988) raised a voice for the rights of Third World women and their identity and dilemma of being silenced between the double oppression of patriarchy and imperialism through critical examination of 'suttee', the self-immolation of females in Indian-subcontinent. Like Spivak, Kaur, being an Indian by origin and a representative of Third World women, also speaks for the voice of the downtrodden and the subaltern. Feminism has always been a significant part of her writings and by discussing feminist issues she makes her readers motivated. Throughout her works, she talks about oppressed and subaltern class, the women. Therefore, she discusses openly the issues of feminism and infanticide in relation to Indian society where having a baby girl is considered a curse. Rupi Kaur, a 24 years old Indian born Canadian poet, artist and theater performer in her second book *The Sun and Her Flowers* (2017) chronicles the lives of young females in a contemporary context through the experiences of migration, diasporas, revolution, love, loss, femininity, trauma, healing, and female identity. She skillfully highlighted the experiences of growing up as a girl, the objectification of the female body, experiences of sexual abuse and breakups and their aftershocks. Further, she rejoices in the traditional Indian family love through images of parents and siblings in poems and pays homage to their struggle in life being immigrants and refugees.

Feminism has always shared the big part of her poetry after *Milk and Honey* (2015), and *The Sun and Her Flowers* is also with no exception. Kaur's own life is very much present in her poems and boldly describes all traumatic experiences that would make the readers feel her pains especially if

the reader is an Indian or belongs to any South Asian regions. He/she can associate her experiences with theirs. Being an Indian, she spotlights infanticide and feminism, marginalization, suppression, and victimization through sharing experiences of her mother for being an Indian woman and an immigrant. Kaur explores both immigrant women's issues and her local Indian patriarchal culture through the illustrations of mixed emotions thoroughly eminent in all sections at once of sadness, self-loathing, frustration, happiness and anger together.

The Sun and Her Flowers addresses body dysmorphia, abuse, and rape and counteracts them with verses on feminism and self-love. However, the method she adopts to highlight the female issues is very unique in its style that there is no male-bashing in the name of feminism throughout the book and the pages are not mud with self-pity and soaked in tears. The narrative framing of this volume is a life cycle of a flower which Kaur manipulates to consider the metaphorical deaths through which we all have to go in order to finally blossom. The book is carefully divided into five sections: Wilting, falling, rooting, rising, and blooming, and each acknowledges a distinct matter and time in the author's life.

Kaur composes heterogeneously longer prose poems designed as books within the book in which she spotlights the basic causes of her mistakes, oversights, and impulses. Further, this collection spotlights her cultural upbringing and her mother's sacrifices being a traditional Eastern Indian immigrant woman and the stereotypes that females never speak up. Kaur emits a sagacity and reverence for life that she merges with the social justice ideals of feminism and egalitarianism. She also enunciates to teens' struggles to acknowledge, to exonerate, and to love with intensity and respect.

The first section, entitled "Wilting", sheds light on the author's struggle with lost love and provides not only the author's lament on a failed relationship, but also emphasizes on counteractive advice and the importance of self-love. The section begins with poems titled using bleak words and phrases such as, "Cemetery", "Jealousy", "Pretend", "Hunger" and many more. The verses called "the construction site of our future" portrays the author's relationship with her lover as an abandoned construction site, a powerful metaphor that implies that they have forsaken their love and future that they could have had. By questioning the definition of love, Kaur puts a spotlight on the hazardous obsession with romantic affection, while also solidifying the significance of other relationships like those of family

and friends, and the joy in giving and loving. Furthermore, the journey towards self-acceptance and Kaur's struggles with depression are presented in passages such as "Questions."

Whereas "Wilting" talks about heartbreak, the second section discusses a far more tabooed topic, rape mostly in the eastern part of the world where Kaur, herself, is from. The haunting poems in this portion of the book meticulously depict intense feelings of pain and sorrow. Kaur further, and far more candidly, portrays ongoing battle with depression, especially in a poem titled, "Depression is a Shadow Living in Me." Here, Kaur also states her puzzlement with the idea that *rape*, which is so common in the world, is considered a vile thing to discuss; while also illuminating her disgust with the backward idea that women should have to hide their bodies to avoid the stares of men. This section goes on to address the actions women take to make themselves appealing not to others, but to themselves in passages such as 'I am both the poison and the antidote' and 'all you own is yourself'.

The next section "Rooting", depicts the process of regaining one's strength and self-worth. The fourth section, "Rising", involves improvement and growth. The poem "Celebration" clearly summarizes the idea of the whole section as it compares humans and their lives with orange trees, implying that their trees do not bloom unless they have bloomed first. Kaur gives significance to the idea that in order to grow we must let go of our pasts and refusing to do so is simply rejecting the idea that there is a tomorrow.

The final section adorned with the title, "Blooming", reaches the climax of the author's journey. Here, Kaur acknowledges her past, observes all the sacrifices she has made. "Blooming" is the final process when a flower reaches its final form and has achieved maximum and complete growth.

All in all, *The Sun and Her Flowers* has successfully achieved multiple commendable aims. Kaur in a soft, simple but comprehensive style emphasized the basic issues of females at various stages of life in an immigrant as well as patriarchal society, flaunting multiple personal experiences. She urges readers to accept that we are not the masters of this earth; rather, her visitors for a short time and must enjoy this time with its fullest till the last moment with hope and comforts for others. This book evokes various emotions, mostly sympathy, and empathy and teaches the readers to love themselves before they love the world.

References

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