

Book Review

Kaur, R. (2017). *The sun and her flowers*. Toronto: ON: Simon & Schuster. 256 pages. ISBN: 978-1-471165-82-5

Dear Reader,

In what follows, I share a childhood experience shaped within a storied world of school alongside excerpts from Rupi Kaur's (2017) beautiful compilation, the sun and her flowers. Of her work, she described:

the sun and her flowers is a
collection of poetry about grief
self-abandonment
honoring one's roots
love
and empowering oneself
it is split into five chapters
wilting. falling. rooting. rising. and blooming.
- about the book (Kaur, 2017, p. 254)

At times this poet's words serve to foil my own reminiscences and at other times, foreground my hopes, wonders, and dreams as a South Asian female Canadian. Throughout, I wish to

convey a sense, that in coming in relational dialogue with each other, there is power in sharing stories.

Om shanti, shanti, shanti,

Jinny

I made an appointment to see the school counsellor – who happened to also be an administrator – during my last year of high school. I had to force myself to make the appointment and then later to follow through with the consultation. I was wary of meeting people in authority when I was younger – something that I haven't completely outgrown – so making the arrangements to see this man to discuss my options for after high school was tantamount to an act of bravery. At home, university was not discussed as a prospect for me. Inwardly, my voice was a shriveled thing in dire need of sustenance.

as a father of three daughters
it would have been normal
for him to push marriage on us
this has been the narrative for
the women in my culture for hundreds of years
instead he pushed education
knowing it would set us free
in a world that wanted to contain us
he made sure that we learned
to walk independently (Kaur, 2017, p. 204)

Yet, at school, I pretended that I also, would be heading off to university. Outwardly, I eagerly took part in many a conversation about possible places to apply to, discussing what it would feel like to actually take courses that one was truly interested in, and imagined alongside peers, what the future would hold as an undergraduate student. And whilst, I secretly craved for the pretense to end, there did not seem any space at home to articulate my hope that I too – brown girl though I was – wished to embark on an educational path. I wanted to take the steps that would allow me to explore a new world of school, one that I had only visited vicariously through books. I knew then if I hoped to re-write the South Asian 'Good Girl' plotline that was spilling over the pages of my life, I needed to act.

i will no longer
compare my path to others
- *i refuse to do a disservice to my life* (Kaur, 2017, p. 200)

Gathering my courage, I walked into the counsellor's office and tentatively expressed my hope of applying to university. I was in the midst of soliciting his advice, when he interrupted me.

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In a tone redolent with disparagement, he spoke, “You don’t really need to worry about that do you? You’re going to get married soon and you will be too busy.” “Busy?” I had queried, bewildered. I understood I was being talked down to, but I was uncertain of the counsellor’s meaning. All I knew was, the door to his office was closed and I wished I had never entered the room. His mock-sympathetic response, “Busy with babies,” had my shy 16-year-old self, beating a hasty exit, my face tight with embarrassment. With the hindsight of experience, I recognize this man used his influence as a school official to belittle me.

trust your body
it reacts to right and wrong
better than your mind does
- *it is speaking to you* (Kaur, 2017, p. 212)

Now engaging in a multiperspectival narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013) into the curriculum-making experiences (Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2011) of South Asian girls, their mothers, and teacher (Menon, 2015), I am humbled and appreciative of the stories that have been received and shared between us. The stories, like Kaur’s (2017) poetry, ought not be flattened to monolithic under-standings but cherished for the multiplicities courted. Thinking back in time and visualizing forward, I bask in the radiating and complicating warmth of this poet’s words □ and envision (Menon, 2014) healthy, aspirational plotlines being nurtured.

i stand
on the sacrifices
of a million women before me
thinking
what can i do
to make this mountain taller
so the women after me
can see farther
- *legacy* (p. 213)

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