

# A Map Out On the Symmetrical Life Cycle of Humans and Flowers through Cyber Literature

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**ABSTRACT--** Flowers are associated with terms such as delicate, beautiful, and fragrant among other things. The transience of human life and flowers are fairly similar. This paper presents a view of the lives of two diverse and troubled individuals who are epitomized through flowers. Cyber literature is a new born among the varied genres of English Literature. This era of technological advancements help every single piece of literature to reach a wide spectrum of readers. This paper focuses on the personification of the sunflowers in the collection of poetry *The Sun and Her Flowers* by Rupi Kaur, popularly known as the Instagram poet and the enchanted rose in the Disney movie, *Beauty and the Beast*. *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) is based on the French fairy tale that concentrates on the life of a prince who is cursed by an enchantress and transformed into a monster. *The Sun and Her Flowers* (2017) is a poetry book that details the trials and tribulations the poet faces in her life, which she recites with the image of sunflowers. The paper is an attempt to entwine the idea of the different stages of a sunflower and human life, as expressed in *The Sun and Her Flowers*, with that of the Beast's connection to the mystical rose. From wilting to revival, a flower's life is identical to the essence of human life.

**Keywords--** Flower, Human life, Cyber Literature, Sunflowers, , *Beauty and The Beast*.

## I. INTRODUCTION

“A thing of beauty is a joy forever.”(Keats)

Although John Keats has made this statement in his poem, few people agree to it. Beauty is not eternal. Therefore, the joy one gathers from a beautiful thing might not last for a long while. Anyone passing a field of flowers will notice the beautiful blossoms that greet their sight. Flowers are Nature's silent gifts to a world now full of chaos and destruction. Flowers have a magical power to convey emotions and the ability to change a negative atmosphere into a much happier one. Anyone in this world can experience flower power. Though flowers maybe delicate and pure in nature, they teach us a valuable lesson about staying true to our roots and keeping our heads high come rain or shine.

Flowers have a language of their own. The world of flowers is in itself a magical realm that unifies a person's imagination and reality. For those who go deep, they open up a whole new land of wonders and sweetness by

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helping us tune to our inner being. One must learn to see beyond the outer appearance and dive deeply into the subtle, complex, yet simple, kingdom of the flora. The colors begin to seep into a dull and monotonous life and transform it into a lively and beautiful land.

Flowers are rooted to a shackled relation with humans. They remind everyone of the brevity of life. The fragile and delicate nature of flowers is synonymous with the life of human beings. Symbolism using flowers has been applied for centuries in verses, sonnets, plays, etc. Learning the undertone or nuances of flowers has been a habitual action since 1800s. People learned about the sentimental attachments between humans as well as flowers. The symbolic language of flowers is widely used to express one's emotions as well as secretive messages. In the language of flowers, each flower holds a special meaning. The orange blossoms represent chastity and purity, while the red rose stands for passion, love and desire. William Shakespeare's employment of flowers as symbols or messages in his works is quite charming. In *Hamlet: Prince of Denmark*, Act 4, Scene 5, Ophelia gives rosemary, which is a symbol of remembrance and love, to Laertes, and columbines, which represent faithfulness, to Gertrude. It is an instance of dramatic irony, as the queen is accused of being unfaithful by marrying her brother-in-law. It is a clever play made by both the author and the character.

In the English movie *Tangled* (2010), the Sundrop flower is a representation of life, as it has the power to heal and give new life; but it also took away, for a long period, Rapunzel's chance to live a free and full life. Floral personification is an impactful element in literature. It helps writers to explain the closely tied relationship between flowers and humans. In the poem *Daffodils*, through the lines "fluttering and dancing in the breeze", the poet personifies the daffodils.

In the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde begins with a rich description of floral imagery that immediately teleports the readers to the studio he describes with details.

"The studio was filled with the rich odor of roses, and when the light summer wind stirred amidst the trees of the garden, there came through the door the heavy scent of the lilac" (Wilde 2).

We can see the same introduction of the enriched floral imagery in the autobiography of Helen Keller *The Story of my Life*.

Yes, there it was, all quivering in the warm sunshine, its blossom laden branches almost touching the long grass. Was there ever anything so exquisitely beautiful in the world before! Its delicate blossom shrank from the slightest earthly touch; it seemed as if a tree of paradise had been transplanted to earth. (Keller, 26)

The usage of flora as a personification of characters brings the relationship of nature and humans closer. The cyber literature helps the reader, to boost up their imaginative skills, as it unlock a visual aid too. The rough pencil sketches, animation sketches etc creep deep into the inventive side of the human brain. *The Sun and Her Flowers* and *Beauty and the Beast* are two works that uses floral imagery and personification to showcase the characteristics of the poet and the protagonist, respectively.

## II. THE BEAST AND THE ROSE

The enchanted rose in the animated movie *Beauty and the Beast* acts as a symbol of the Beast's doom and hope. It delivers paradoxical element that encourages and discourages the Beast at the same time. The rose flower came to him first in the form of a gift by an enchantress under the disguise of an old hag. Later, the very same present

becomes the vessel of his curse. Arose is typically associated with love and passion. In this visual story the floral imagery and personification is met through the red rose that holds the fate of the male protagonist. It is rather ironical that the prince valued beauty more than anything but when he was stripped of his good looks it was entombed within the beautiful yet cursed blossom.

The Beast is constantly reminded of his loss whenever he glances at the glass-encased bloom. The fall of each petal makes the doom of the Beast even more real. Each petal's fall signifies passing time, and thus the fate of the prince draws nearer. The prince had sneered at the gift offered to him by the old woman. He only saw the woman's ugliness and quite foolishly overlooked the lovely offering she gave him. Furthermore, he disregarded the wise words of the enchantress, who told him he should not be fooled by outer appearance, and true beauty is found within. The loss of beauty made the prince depressed and angry.

The rose bloom slowly became the Beast's most valuable possession, and he was ready to go to any extent to protect it from harm. As the story progresses, Belle embodies the beauty of the rose and the hope it represents to the Beast and the other transfigured courtiers. The flower is a personified state of the Beast, as it embodies his own state of imprisonment in emotional and physical conditions. Just like the glass encasement protecting the flower, the castle is the Beast's safe haven. The story of the Beast is about the protagonist's journey of discovery and realization about true beauty and kindness.

### III. THE WILTING POET

In the poetry collection of Rupi Kaur, *The Sun and Her Flowers*, the poet compares her fraught phase of life with that of a wilting flower on the verge of falling down to its demise. The poet maps her story of heartbreak and embracing of her true self through numerous lines of her poems. Kaur's lines are full of her pain, loss, thoughts, love and acceptance. The life cycle of a flower strikes a chord deep within the poet. Kaur affirms this phase of life, in her mother's words, "the recipe of life". Her mother draws a beautiful comparison between the life of a human being and that of a flower.

this is the recipe of life  
said my mother

as she held me in her arms as i wept  
think of those flowers you plant  
in the garden each year  
they will teach you  
that people too  
must wilt  
fall  
root  
rise

*in order to bloom* (Kaur, 109)

Human life is never devoid of pain, betrayal, loss and tears. The poet found herself in a rather devastating point of life, she eventually becomes a pathway to her becoming someone more than what she was before having

this ordeal. Pain and loss can certainly change a person, sometimes for the better. Rupī Kaur's breakup leads her to a better place where she finds herself amidst "the sun and her flowers".

In this poetical collection of various poems of free verse, Rupī Kaur divulges the deepest, darkest secrets and fears that plague her mind. The poetry takes us on a journey from the point of time when she is haunted by the sight of flowers and the memories they arouse to a point where she imagines herself to be surrounded by the radiant and happy flowers of the sun. The transformation of Rupī from a lost and grief-stricken lover to a mature and sensible woman is a sight to behold. Her journey makes her realize that everything in this world is as transient as a flower. The moments, emotions, people, etc. are temporary in our lives. Her yearning to be free from heartache and hollowness is finally granted to her when she embraces her true identity and becomes yet another sunflower amidst a field of sunflowers. She emerges as strong and beautiful as the radiant sun. After being lost in a land of darkness with no flowers for a long stretch of time, Rupī discovers a sun within her that makes her see the world in a whole new light. It begins with the flower as a metaphor but, towards the end, it becomes a figure of personification of the poet and all things bright and happy.

The mentioned movie and book have two central characters, who are very similar to each other due to the situations they find themselves in. The Beast from the movie, *Beauty and the Beast*, and the poet Rupī Kaur in the poetical collection, *The Sun and Her Flowers* are both going through a particularly difficult phase of their lives which is often, directly or indirectly, connected to flowers. In the movie the Beast's life is, to a great extent, tethered to an enchanted rose. Though cursed, it is the very same rose that holds the key to his liberation from the curse placed on him by an enchantress. While the transfigured prince became a beast and hated himself due to his horrifying and ugly appearance, the poet began to hate herself after the breakup she underwent with her lover. The situations are starkly contrasting. Despite the dissimilarity in reasons that led to their states of mind, the Beast and the poet have a lot in common.

Both of these characters lost something they thought and felt to be of importance in their lives. It is the loss of these valuable possessions that made them fall down a dark hole of despair and hopelessness. It stands out as a sore thumb that makes the characters who they are at the beginning: dark, brooding, depressed, lost and expectant.

The enchanted rose reminds the Beast of what he lost: his precious beauty. Beauty was something the Beast held at a high dais, when he was a prince, as he saw beauty as something valuable and rare. It is rather ironic that his rejection of the beautiful rose led to his beauty being taken away. The rose flower has become the element that will determine the fate of the transfigured prince and his lost beauty. The lovely blossom has become the symbol of the prince's lost and cursed beauty. A red rose represents love, and it is ironic that the Beast's lack of love has resulted in this state. The selfish and cruel prince is shown as being gifted with the ultimate symbol of love, which he harshly rejects. But, in the end, the same figure of love became the reason for his understanding of true love and its power.

The flowers in the poems of *The Sun and Her Flowers*, at first remind the poet of her loss, much like the Beast is reminded of his lost beauty. The bouquet of flowers the poet received as a gift from her estranged lover made her weep for the lost love. She is thrown into a dark phase where she begins to view the sweet flowers that once stood for something loving now as casting a dark shadow. This dark shadow continues to loom over her throughout the majority of the poetical work.

i reached for the last bouquet of flowers

you gave me  
now wilting in their vase  
one  
by  
one  
i popped their heads off  
and ate them (Kaur, 11)

The poet illustrates her desolate state after the breakup through various images she drew in the book's pages. The image of her lying on the floor with a vase of wilting flowers strewn across everywhere is quite poignant. She is grasping for whatever little bits of love she can find, no matter what form it is in. Rupi Kaur quite unashamedly paints out her deepest and darkest secrets occupying her mind during that troubled time. The metaphorical use of flowers in the poetical work brings out the repressed negative emotions of the poet and she turns towards the last reminders of her lover: a bouquet of wilting flowers.

The bouquet of flowers can be seen as a representation of the crumbling relationship of the poet and her lover. The love between them has been dwindling for some time, identical to the slowly but surely wilting bouquet of flowers, which have not received any form of care or love for quite a spell. The poet epitomizes the wilting flowers as she reveals that her relationship to have been abusive in nature. Her lover did sexually abusive her. Flowers, a symbol of femininity, in the wilted stage become an embodiment of the mistreated and injured condition of Rupi Kaur.

The image of the enchanted rose is paradoxical, as it stands for both the curse and the only source of hope for the Beast and the other transfigured members of his castle. The tiny ray of hope that lingers in his mind begins to diminish with the passage of time. But the other members of the palace try to keep his hopes up. When Belle arrives at the deserted and ruined castle, she evokes the hopes of the Beast. Belle is a personified image of the enchanted rose. She becomes the new ray of hope for the Beast and his companions. She exemplifies the beauty and hope the rose flower stands for in the story. The character of Belle brings the aura of love into the shadowy and unhappy world of the Beast.

The manners in which both the Beast and the poet close themselves off from the outside world, after their experience with loss, is very similar. In, *The Sun and Her Flowers* the poet has written a short poem named *cemetery* that portrays how she secludes herself to the confines of her darkened house.

i stuffed a towel at the foot of every door  
*leave* i told the air  
*i have no use for you*  
i drew every curtain in the house  
*go* i told the light  
*no one is coming in*  
*and no one is going out*(Kaur, 12)

The castle of the Beast and the poet's darkened house represents the darkened states of their minds. Overcome by grief, both characters undergo a grave and dark phase of their lives that is reflected in their surrounding environment. The Beast prefers to keep to himself, as he is in a confused and depressed state of mind that made

him shun any kind of companionship. The setting of the castle reflects on the Beast's current state of mind. It is dark and in ruins, just as the Beast hates himself in his hideous form. The poet Rupri Kaur, also begins to hate herself after her lover abandons her. She begins to doubt her value and love. It is this self-doubt that makes her cocoon herself to a gloomy and lightless world.

. Yet, all the while, the real flower hides in her own inner heart. The poet compares herself to a flower on various occasions. She finds inspiration from their life. She marvels at the strength and positivity they exude on a daily basis, and she therefore longs to be a sunflower.

“despite knowing  
they won't be here for long  
they still choose to live  
their brightest lives” (Kaur, 85).

In this short poem, named *Sunflowers*, the poet shows how positive and bright sunflowers are and the difference they make in the lives of others despite having such a brief life span. The sunflowers are depicted as selfless beings that aim to spread their brightness and love. The poet can be seen as a sunflower from the beginning but she does not follow the optimistic route of the happy flowers. Her lover represents the sun and after his departure from her life her world plunges into darkness.

*sunflowers worship the sun i tell him  
only when it arrives do they rise  
when the sun leaves  
they bow their heads in mourning  
that is what the sun does to those flowers  
its what you do to me* (Kaur, 164)

To her, it seems there is no light left in her life, and she therefore deems it to be meaningless. The poet longs to be back with her cruel and selfish lover, and this prevents her from seeing the truth he is not good for her. The happiness and positivity that sunflowers radiate is a far cry from the bleak state of the poet. Her acceptance of her true self and original roots makes her rise from her death-like chapter of her life. From the moment she lets go of her old feelings and love, she blooms into a new and fresh sunflower with the selfless goal of making the world a better and happier place to live.

The enchanted rose and sunflower have a lot of similarities that depict how similar the situations or the states of mind are when it comes to the Beast and Rupri Kaur. While one flower symbolizes love, the other stands for positivity. But both the flowers represent the troubles the respective characters undergo. The flowers remind them of their reality and bring them back from their delusions. Although both these flowers are shown in a negative light at the beginning, they eventually play important roles in changing the lives of the characters for the better.

#### IV. THE NATURAL CYCLE CALLED LIFE

The cycle of life is very simple, it begins where it all ends. The cycle of life is quite natural, and it remains unaltered. The human life cycle is a natural process that can be seen as a journey the individual embarks on till the ride gets over. Human life seems like a long one when we begin it. It is when one reaches the end that we realize how short life has been, even though it felt like a lifetime.

The cycle of birth and death is applicable to all living things. Human life roughly comprises of birth, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, old age and finally death. The fleeting nature of human life is often compared to the flower's life cycle. Flowers are exact replicas of human life, as both undergo the same basic processes of planting, rooting, growth, blooming and withering. A human's life expectancy might be longer than a flower's in years, but the transience of both are permanent.

The stages of the poet's unhappiness and distress in *The Sun and Her Flowers* are parallel to the cycle of a flower's life. The chapters of the poetical work are divided into five stages of the flower's life cycle. The work follows the poet's states of wilting, falling, rooting, rising and blooming. From the wilted stage of a flower, she begins her descent to complete depression and tears. But she returns from her fall, slowly and steadily, as she accepts her roots and rises back to a new glory. This shows the poet's rebirth into a better version of her true self.

The stages the enchanted rose undergoes prove similar. The flower blooms till the transformed prince turns twenty-one years old. After that the petals fall off one by one, which reflects the passing time and the approaching fate of the Beast. The final petal's fall occurs after Belle confesses her love for him, and as a result, the flower rises once again. The newly risen flower transforms the Beast back into his original form of being a prince. The rose has been wilting ever since the Beast turned twenty-one. But the happiness Belle creates makes the rose less wilted sometimes. The mood and mental state of the Beast mirrors in the rose flower. The confession of love Belle makes breaks the spell placed by the enchantress.

The stages of a flower's life cycle have a close resemblance to the lives of the poet and the Beast. Both the characters are introduced in their wilted or depressed state of life. Slowly, they begin to undergo the different phases of a wilted flower. As both the characters fall into the dark and murky surroundings, they begin the descent towards depression and anger. The sunflowers become the poet's source of liberation from pain and foreboding thoughts. The poet's relationship with her abusive boyfriend is an apt illustration of a flower that is not cared or loved by its admirer. Like a flower that is not watered, the poet too wilts when she does not receive the love she craves. But she eventually rises above the boulders that hinder her growth and springs free to shine before the world. The Beast too, rises from his wilted state of sadness and anger to become a kind and loving soul. He learns to see past the outward appearances and glimpse the beauty that hides within. Both the characters' troubled phases of life make them better people. The key to their ultimate transformation is the value of kindness and selflessness. The prose-like poems of Rupi Kaur, touch the hearts of its readers, while the story of the cursed Beast is both intriguing and enchanting at the same time. In the end, the Beast embodies a rose flower's meaning of love, and the poet becomes a sunflower who found a new sun in her life—herself.

there is

nothing left

to worry about

the sun and her flowers are here. (Kaur 238)

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