

## ***from Poetry to Politics***

*Self-claimed introvert, Rupi Kaur is now at the forefront of several prominent social and community causes, one of them being her stance on Canadian politics.*

At 23, Canadian - Indian Rupi Kaur made her mark on Instagram, quite literally. The viral 'period stain' post on her Instagram in 2015 – a photo of her lying down with her back towards the camera, a period stain on her sweatpants and a spot on the bed was the start of a revolutionary movement.

The post was deleted twice because, according to Instagram, it did not follow community guidelines, but was eventually allowed after she called them out on misogyny and patriarchy. After much public debate on censorship and personal rights, Rupi won the battle. The post would stay.

The now 27-year-old, Kaur, has shifted gears to politics. Her recent public sit-down at Burnaby, B.C with a close friend and comrade, NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh is an example of her convictions. Aired by The Cable Public Canada Affairs, the duo discussed views on racial discriminations, grants for youth, gun violence and environmental issues. She also emphasized the importance of cultural acceptance in the conversation by stating, "I think we have to spread the idea that our differences do bring us together and our differences do help us belong and they don't separate us,"

One of her popular poems from her self published debut book '*milk and honey*' (2014) is a lovely example of her struggles of oppression on women, especially women of colour (WOC), "You tell me to quiet down / cause my opinions make me less beautiful / but I was not made with a fire in my belly / so I could be put out,"



Rupi Kaur; Verve Magazine, 2017

what is stronger  
than the human heart  
which shatters over and over  
and still lives

- rupi kaur



Her first book examines hard-hitting verses on topics of feminism, heartbreak, loss, sex, parenting, self-love and other mental and social issues. The book was officially republished with Andrew McMeel in 2015 and became the symbol of a new style of 'Insta poetry'. Currently, the book has been translated into 40 languages and has sold over five million copies. She later went on to create another series titled '*the sun and her flowers*' in 2017 talking about her struggles and growth.

Her poems are inclusive, simple and impactful. Rupi understands the relevance of her power, and just how much she can contribute to the world. Against popular assumptions that poems are mere words, she has proven time and again how a few verses can make or break norms and ancient ideologies.

Kaur rarely takes a break; from an appearance on Jimmy Fallon's talk show, scoring a spot on the Forbes '30 Under 30' List and going on book tours in India and UK over the past years is a clear indicator of her work ethics and cultural values.

In her interview with WBGO.org back in 2017, she explains the struggle of two opposing art forms, "...we have a form of art that is highly, highly traditional - meaning poetry. And then you have this other thing, which is new and quite non-traditional, which is, of course, social media,"

She conveys how her life has changed with the release of two books, third in the making and how she deals with social media criticism in her 2019 Vogue interview, "People are always going to have opinions, but I'm here to speak my truth and connect with readers, and that's it. None of the negative voices matter in the end." She makes it a point to work through the hate and move forward with positivity and dedication.

Starting from an unnoticed Tumblr account, now deleted, to 3.8 million followers on Instagram, Kaur now has fans across the globe. She doesn't follow anyone publicly, but her account is a playground for budding poets and writers following in her footsteps. In a talk on PBS's News Hour in 2018, Kaur shared why she loves sharing her work with others, "What happens when you're so connected with other people through these things, you become so disconnected with yourself, and we find it so difficult to just sit with ourselves and just be alone. I think people just want to feel understood and feel seen. It's what I want growing up. And so that's why I think the poetry works so well."

With the power to influence millions around the world with her easily accessible words and poetry, Rupi Kaur is not just some 'influencer' on social media who got lucky. Her strong sense of need to bring about change in this chaotic world with both words and actions is the right adrenaline rush for artists, writers, thinkers and everyone in between.

- Rhea Tony