CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

Bannett outlines the term 'empowerment' as the upgrade of skills inside differing personal, groups, and communities for picking up control by participating, impacting, and holding a duty of their conditions to try to do their aims (Narayan, 2002). Empowerment allows women to control their own lives, manage their schedule, arrange to help each other, make demands on the state for support, and for the community itself for change. Thus, empowerment has often used as the solution for some of the current issues in today's society.Mayoux (2000:8) explain women empowerment as an effort of people to acquire the power to think and act freely, exercise choice, and fulfill their capability to members of society. Therefore, women empowerment made women able to make these efforts because men are dominant in making the efforts previously.

Since the 1940s, the constitution of newly independent countries has provided multifarious freedom and rights for both men and women without discrimination. Even then, women are still considered to be inferior by society and seem to be excellent for having a lower status than men. Therefore, they do not have the same social, political, economic, and cultural rights as men.Women were also ironically blinded, and they used

to see the injustice amongst them as something that has been 'shared,'given,' and 'preserved' from generation to generation (Sharma, 2017, p.1). In consequence, the issue of women empowerment is one of the essential concerns since the 19th century until today.

Women empowerment as one in all the most discussed international issues is an uplift motion amongst women inside the fields of economy, social, politic, caste, and gender-primarily based discrimination. It is passing off since no equality between ladies and men leads some people to do sexism, violence, and oppression. Other than that, women are usually seen as the weak figure inside the society, considered much less shrewd and greater passive than men, which additionally have come to be the essential reasons for women to cast off the inequality and reduce gender gap drastically with men. They also require empowerment to protect themselves and steady their purity in conjunction with their dignity (Hooda, 2017). Besides, they must prove that they fear no authoritative men, and can be equal with men in any spheres of life, and they are the pillars that without them, the foundation of society is incomplete (Singh, 2013).

Empowerment of women is a vital instrument for them in order to expand their ability to have resources and create strategic life choices. The movement's objectives are also to encourage women to feel secure by helping them in realizing the maximum potential within them, that they can do anything, and they are not dependent on men. So, women have to

realize their sense of self-worth, throughout understanding their rights to have power in controlling their own lives (within or outside the house) and understanding their ability to influence the social changes (Hooda, 2017, p.1).

The purpose of empowering women is also to inspire women with the bravery to free themselves, something that has limited women and social conditions that traditionally make women underrate that cannot see theirs power and beauty (Kate Young, 1993). Women have space and a chance to develop their potentials, which does not disqualify them from excellence (Geer, 1970). Accordingly, the issue of women empowerment is essential to discuss, because women are often considered as a minority, being oppressed, worse, seen as the sexual objects for men, so that they need to empower themselves and each other in order to gain equality within their society.

Until this day, oppression against women is remains happening, and this encourages feminists to fight for their rights. One of the original forms of women empowerment activities is establishing organizations that might be engaged in protecting women. National Organization of Women (NOW) is a large feminist activist organization in the United States. The organization's focuses are women's rights issues concerning economy justice, racial discrimination, women's health, and body image, family law, marriage, the illustration of women within the media, and the global feminist problems. Since its investment in 1966, the principal aim of

NOW is to taking motion on making equality to become truth among women and men through education and litigation (now.org). Besides establishing feminist organizations, women's voice for equality is also represented on their March that always done in commemorating the International Women's Day that celebrated annually every March 8th.

Although the organizations that protect and support women already existing, but discrimination and objectification towards women are still happening. The stereotypes, women's objectification, beauty standards, and the patriarchal system made by society have long been placing women in struggle (Kreydatus, 2008). Women are viewed and valued as an object by focusing on their physical appearances or body parts rather than her as a person (Bartky, 1990). The beauty standard made by society is one of the examples of women's objectification. This beauty standard is different in each country but with the same purpose: to construct the standard about the "ideal" women. If women do not participate in fulfilling the beauty standard made by society, then they are considered not "ideal". Society constructs the beauty standards for women all over the world (Priskans, 2020).

As a result of discrimination and objectification towards women, many impacts that occur in the field of economics, the capitalist system plays an essential role in here. The most benefited parties are cosmetic companies and slimming drugs. They sell the stuff needed by women and selling with quite fantastic prices. Discrimination also occurred in the

political sphere. Discrimination against women seems complicated to remove because male degrees are higher than women. Moreover, some groups prohibit women in politics because women are considered weak. The objectification of women can also have a bad impact on psychological conditions of women, it is explained by (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, 9) the condition where women start to treat themselves as an object and it gives women serious psychological condition. The psychological condition is influenced by the negative feeling about body monitoring, which can cause anxiety, spanning of body shaming.

The phenomenon of women empowerment is well captured in modern literature since women's spirit to gain equality gets responded by literary authors by creating literary works that tell about women's or the authors' experiences and struggles in speaking up their voices for equality. Rupi Kaur is one of the authors who has been vocal in speaking up her thoughts and experiences through poetry within her two released books titled Milk and Honey (Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2014) and The Sun and Her Flowers (Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2017).

Rupi Kaur is a Canadian poet and writer. Her first book ‘Milk and Honey’ is a collection of poetry and prose about the experience of violence, abuse, love, loss, femininity. While her second book ‘The Sun and Her’ Flowers is a collection of poetry and prose about the experience of wilting, falling, rooting, rising, and blooming (www.rupikaur.com). Kaur is part of an unofficial movement of young poets who have earned

their audience primarily through social media. The writer focuses on the analysis of women empowerment in Rupi Kaur's selected poems.

To support the current study, the writer has found some previous related studies as references. The first previous study is from Israt Jahan entitled "*Confessional Poetry: Voice of Oppressed Women (2015)*". His thesis analyzed Confessional poetry. Confessional poetry is famous both for female and male poets, but female poet theme writing and styles are different from male poets. This genre breaks down the traditional definition of poetry and explores a new poetic style where poets vent out their inner feelings and unspoken words through their writings. For female poets, confessional poetry is a medium where they can expose their psyche. Through this genre woman poets look self-definition. Female confessional poets struggle to find a connection between the name that was set for her by the society and the name that they want to give themselves.

The second previous study is from Saman Salah Hassan entitled *"Women and Literature: A Feminist Reading of Kurdish Women's Poetry (2013)"*. His thesis analyzed the poetry of a selected group of Kurdish women poets, which has been written in Sorani Kurdish. The poets originate from two distinct areas, yet are initially from Iraqi Kurdistan. The study chooses the time extending from 1990 to 2009 as its scope. There is an apparent reason for the selection of this time as it stands for the most hectic period when Kurdish women's poetry flourishes at a fast pace in southern Kurdistan. The study analyzed that the liberation of southern

Kurdistan 1991 from the overthrown Iraqi Ba'ath regime plays a vital role in the productive reemergence of Kurdish women's poetry after decades of silence and suppression being inflicted by the male-dominated Kurdish literature.

The third previous study is from Mahrokhsadat Hosseini entitled *"Feminist Culture and Politics in Iranian Women's Post-Revolutionary Poetry 1979-2017 (2018)"*. This study analyzed how Iranian female poets in the post-revolutionary period, through their poetry, transgress several sociocultural boundaries. This study analyzed the post-revolutionary women's poetry in Iran to show how the poems express sexual desire about notions of visibility and invisibility, and how they change male mythologies into ones from a female point of view. The study focused on the poetry of Tahereh Saffarzadeh (1936-2008) and Granaz Moussavi (1974) published in the three decades after the revolution.

The fourth previous study is from Madhuri V. Brahmane in his journal titled *Voice of Women in Indian English Literature (2016)* discusses the representation of women within the development of Indian English Literature from The Vedas, The Puranas, and The Upanishads era until Emergence of Nationalism era. This study also analyzed how women finally get out from the shadow of men and the effect of civilization changes and transformation within Indian society towards people's viewpoints on women both in real life and literature. Where they are now

equal with men and dare to walk shoulder to shoulder with men, so they are seen as partners and coworkers for men.

Whilst four previous studies have some similarities with this research, this research uses a different source of data and theory of approach, which related to women empowerment in contemporary poems of Rupi Kaur. In this case, the writer is going to analyze women empowerment within the ten selected poems of Rupi Kaur by employing the semiotic concept of Roland Barthes in order to analyze the connotative and denotative level to be interpreted based on the issue of women empowerment. Meanwhile, the six dimensions of women empowerment postulated by Malhotra, which are economic dimension, socio-cultural dimension, familial/interpersonal dimension, legal dimension, political dimension, and psychological dimension will be used to analyze and specify the messages related to women empowerment in Rupi Kaur's selected poems. The writer chooses Rupi Kaur because she is one of the modern-day feminists who care about women's right and empowering her readers through her writings and her social media platforms (Instagram, Twitter, and Tumblr) and she has her characteristics in her books that no one else has because she expresses her thoughts not only with words but also with illustrations.

1.2 Research Question

How is women empowerment depicted in Rupi Kaur's poems?

1.3 Purpose of The Study

The main purpose of this study is to analyze the general meaning of the poems and to investigate the parties of women empowerment through six dimensions of women empowerment depicted in Rupi Kaur's poems.

1.4 Scope of The Study

This study focuses on analyzing words, phrases, and lines that assert about women empowerment within Rupi Kaur's poems by applying the semiotic concept of Roland Barthes in order to search the meaning connotative and denotative level of selected words, phrases, and lines, and six dimensions of women empowerment purposed by Malhotrawill be applied to see the value and specify in details the kinds of women empowerment represented through her poems.

1.5 Significance of The Study

The finding of this study is expected to give the readers a broader understanding about women empowerment in literary works using semiotic theory by Roland Barthes. This study also give contribution to English Department for the future researcher about the study of feminism in literary works and it can be used as references and guidelines for other researchers who want to conduct another further research in the similar topic.