CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Feminism

Women have been struggling physically for years, due to the fact of their bodily appearances. Society tends to oppress and make the most of them and considered them as lower human beings as a substitute than man. Women were and sill viewed as an object by focusing on their physical appearances or body parts than her as a person (Bartky, 1990). The society then began to modify and stipulated the standards about the "ideal" women. This standard is very cruel as women are in some way dictated to follow these standards to be seen and valued by society. Women as human beings should have a flawless body, in order to be valued and considered as beautiful.

The kind of stereotype is not a new issue anymore. However, this can lead to serious trouble for women. The more women objectified, the more women begin to see themselves in the way society sees them. The impact of objectification will continue growth inside women's life. This is known as self-objectification; the condition where women will start to treat themselves as an object and it gives women serious psychological condition (Fredrickson &Roberts, 1997, 9). The psychological condition is influenced by the negative feeling about body monitoring consisting of

body shaming. This condition will obtain bad feelings inside themselves, such as (a) shame and (b) anxiety.

Women objectification is already existed since long time ago, without they even noticed. The stereotype that women have less power and status, it defined women way of behavior, such as their submissive (McKay, 2013, 57). Women have been struggled to fight for gender equality in society, which now known as the feminist movement or simply feminism. However, society tends to ignore their struggle. Therefore, women oppression and exploitation is existed due to their powerlessness. It means that exploitation, violence, and other bad treatments toward women are being constructed due to the fact that women are traditionally.

Alexandre Dumas, the nineteenth-century French dramatic first, use the term 'feminism' for the movement for women's political rights. Feminism is an ideology or method of thinking that seeks equality for men and girls in social, economic, and cultural fields. The feminists aim to bring about change in society to produce equal opportunities to any or all, and thence forestall discrimination supported gender (Sharma, 2009).

In general, feminism is a motion to deny all kinds of oppression for all the folks of the general population without being limited by sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, age, ethnicity, and faith. Feminism is understood as a social movement and ideology front with explicit goals that are upholding every single human for guarding their rights,

particularly in social, political and economic sectors, on the implicit aim of delivery access to enough a data to transform women for creating the responsible life decisions (Baumgardner and Richard, 2000, p.56).

The historical backdrop of this development returns to the two centuries of struggle for equal social, legal, and political rights, for the most part, the Suffrage right, which is called the first wave of feminism. Sorensen (2005: 24) argues the first wave comprised women's suffrage movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, promoting women's right to vote. First-wave feminism was a period of activity throughout the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. In the United Kingdom and the United States, it centered on promoting equal contract, marriage, parenting, and ownership for girls. By the end of the nineteenth century, the activists focused totally on gaining political power, particularly the right of women's suffrage. However, some feminists were active in a political campaign for women in sexual, generative, and economic rights.

Launched in1960-70s, the second wave was associated with the ideas and actions of the women's liberation movement beginning in the 1960s. This wave of feminism is closely associated with the unique voices of women empowerment and differential rights, and for the duration of the 1980s until The 1990s, a vital differentiation of second-wave feminism is initiated by women of color and third-world women (Krolokke, 2005). The second wave is voicing for legal and social equality for women. The term

second-wave feminism refers largely to the novel feminism of the women's liberation movement of the end 1960s and early 1970s. Inspired by the ways of a lot of activist components of liberal feminism, radical second-wave feminists also use performance (e.g., underground or Guerilla Theater) to shed light on what was now termed "women's oppression." The second wave of feminism aims to equal cultural and social rights.

The third wave of feminism began in the 1990s with the emergence of post-structural theories and supported the social construction of the topic. Many of the works are composed and being written on feminism since the 1990s. This wave brings four genres is postmodern feminism, multicultural feminism, postcolonial feminism, and ecofeminism. The third wave could be continued and a reaction to the perceived failures of second-wave feminism, starting within the 1990s. Existence of the privilege the first and second-wave feminists fought for, third-wave feminists typically see themselves as competent, reliable, and assertive social agents: "The Third Wave is buoyed by the bravery of getting a lot of opportunities and fewersexism" (Baumgardner& Semiotician, 2000, p.83). The characteristics of third-wave feminists are they are willing to embrace diversity and alter, and wanting to perceive the way gender oppression and kinds of human oppression co-create and co-maintain one another (Tong, 2009, p 270-271).

One of the issues related to feminism is women empowerment. Women empowerment is a movement to gain the equality so that women can have all their rights and opportunities to take a role within the society, and stand in this society on the same level as their male counterparts. This movement also means helping each other to complete their main agenda: controlling their own lives.

Hooks (1984: 43) mentioned that women are the group most victimized through sexist oppression; sexism is perpetuated by using social structures and by the people who dominate, exploit, or oppress. Hence, we should learn to stay and work in solidarity, learn the true meaning and value of sisterhood (so can help them to survive).Sisterhood is now viewed as a women's defend towards truth and the new version of women's support system, given that women trust that they want to love each other unconditionally, keep away from conflict and reduce disagreement, and not to criticize each other in public (Hooks, 1986).

2.2 Women Empowerment

One of the problems associated with feminism is women's empowerment. Through women's empowerment, women all over the world are having the freedom and fully in control of their rights to do everything, wear anything, and become whoever they want to be without being discriminated against or marginalized by society. However, women empowerment can be defined as the process of making a change for the

world to be better since, through this empowerment, everyone, particularly women have higher participation, more significant decision making power, and control. Sethuraman (2006, p.2) states that choices, power, and control are three main things that closely related to women empowerment. Often, women empowerment conceptualized as women's access to control over resources that extend to the capabilities in decision making regarding decisions in the aspects of the economy, social, sexuality.

Women empowerment is a movement to realize the equality, for women can have all their rights and opportunities to take a role in the society, and stand in this society on a similar level with their male counterparts. This movement additionally means that serving one another to complete their main agenda: controlling their own lives. Women empowerment has become necessities part of feminist theory in terms of increasing personal, social, and political power of burdened and marginalized populations, specifically women. Moreover, women empowerment is viewed as the act of serving women to take control of their lives (Turner and Maschi, 2015, p.2). Thus, society and women themselves capture women's empowerment as the capacity for both individuals and groups or community in gaining control of their circumstances and achieving their goals, thereby being able to work towards helping themselves and others to maximize the quality of their lives.

There are five components of women's empowerment mentioned in the United Nations' guidelines on women's empowerment in order to move a reality in women's lives. The components mentioned are: women's sense of self-worth, their rights to have and determine choices, their rights to have access to opportunities and resources, their right to have the power to control their own lives (both within and outside the home), and their ability to influence the direction of social change, both nationally and internationally, to create a more just social and economic order (www.un.org). Through these components, it has seen that women empowerment can be empowering women from every aspect of their lives so that there can be equality for both men and women in all spheres of life.

Malhotra, et al (2002, p 18) categorize women empowerment into six dimensions, which are: economic, socio-cultural, familial/interpersonal, legal, political, and psychological, and each dimension are divided into three indicators, which are: household, community, and broader arenas. Furthermore, the dimensions proposed by Malhotra et al. (2002) will be useful in supporting the analysis related to the kind of women empowerment that represented within Rupi Kaur's poems.

2.2.1 Economic Dimension

The household indicator of economic dimension, according to Malhotra et al. (2002), women’s power to control income, their access to

and control of family resources, along with women's contribution to support their families. In the community, women have access to employment, credit, market, and ownership of assets and lands, and they are involved in local trade associations. For broader arenas, it includes women's representation in high paying jobs, and women CEO's. Thus, through empowering women in the level of economic dimension, women can gain financial independence, enter the workforce, having equal opportunities in gaining positions of economic power.

2.2.2 Socio-Cultural Dimension

Malhotra et al. (2002) explain the household indicator within socio-cultural dimension is women's freedom of movement, their commitment to educate their children, and their lack of discrimination against their children. The community indicator is the access to social spaces, modern transportation, participation in extra-familial groups and social networks, and symbolic representation of the female in myth and ritual. The broader areas for this dimension are women's access to a broad range of educational options, their roles and contributions, and positive media image of women. Thus, empowering women in the aspect of social and cultural is not only giving them fully control of their body but also providing them opportunity to gain education for creating better lives.

2.2.3 Familial/Interpersonal Dimension

According to Malhotra et al. (2002) the household indicator for the familial/interpersonal indicators are women's participation in domestic decision-making, controlling their sexual relations, using contraception, access abortion, and freedom from domestic violence. On the other hand, the community indicators include shifts in marriage and kinship system indicating greater value and autonomy for women, and local campaign against domestic violence. The broader areas for this dimension are regional/national trends in timing of marriage, options for divorce, system providing easier access to contraception, save abortion, and productive health services.

2.2.4 Legal Dimension

Malhotra et al. (2002) clarify the household indicators for legal dimension are knowledge of legal rights and domestic support for exercising rights, whilst the community indicators are mobilization for rights, campaign for rights awareness, and effective local enforcement of legal rights. In the broader aspects, women are having the laws that support their rights, access to resources and options, and advocacy for rights and legislation. Thus, legal empowerment towards women gives them knowledge and awareness of legal rights in order to increasing women's right laws.

2.2.5 Political Dimension

Malhotra et al. (2002) argues the household indicators for political dimension are knowledge of political system and the access to it, domestic support for political engagement, and exercising their right to vote. The community indicators are women's involvement in the local political system/campaigns, support specific candidates for legislation and their representation in local bodies of government. The broader arenas are women's representation in regional and national bodies of government and the strength as a voting bloc. In addition, the purpose of political empowerment within women is creating female representations in political system and empowering women to support policies.

2.2.6 Psychological Dimension

Malhotra et al. (2002) states that psychological dimension is related to women's individual empowerment which is firmly in relations with social contexts, actions and interactions. Household indicators for psychological dimensions are self-esteem, self-efficiency, and psychological well-being. The community indicators are collective awareness of injustice and potential of mobilization. The broader areas for this dimension are women's sense and systematic acceptance of inclusion and entitlement.

2.3 Semiotics

Semiotics is defined as the study of signs. Semiotics studied a sign and symbol as a part of meaningful communication. Chandler (2002) expresses that semiotic is not only the observation of what we keep in mind as ‘sign’ in our everyday speech, which can be words, images, sounds, gestures, and objects, but also something that ‘stands for’ something else. Besides, social, people, events, cultural issues, and romance also can be considered as signs that can be analyzed by using semiotics.

Principally, many matters can be analyzed by using the semiotics approach. Barthes (as cited in Chandler, 2002, p 86) claims that semiotic can be used to check out various forms of text, including news, advertisement, film, poems, and track lyrics. Thus, semiotics intends to find the meanings behind signs that are implicitly contained inside text, picture, sound, or even gesture, so that people may be aware of sign and codes which are being represented.A text may be a sign that represents the object or referent in the mind of the interpreter. At the same time, the interpretant refers to the sign that serves as an interpretation of an object. Pierce (1985) argues that 'signs' can be verbal and non-verbal. In the semiotic study, text can exist and locate in any medium in the shape of verbal, non-verbal, or both. A version generally refers to a message which has been recorded in a few approaches such as writing, voice, and video recording.

Ferdinand Saussure and Charles Sanders Pierce are the two co-founders of semiotics who establish two foremost theoretical traditions. Saussure focuses on a two-part version of the sign 'a dyadic,' which is being composed as 'signified' and 'signifier' (Chandler, 2002, p. 18). Besides that, Pierce also formulates his concepts, which divided into three parts of the sign, representamen, interpretant, and object. Roland Barthes, as the French cultural theorist, also proposed his idea of analyzing signs. Barthes modifies Saussure's theory and argues that semiotics is focused on connotation and denotation stage, that are the terms to describe the link between signified and the signifier (Chandler, 2002, p. 140).

In Barthes' concept, two systems have essential roles in order to reveal meanings behind the sign, generally known as denotation and connotation. Denotation is defined as the commonsense meaning of the sign, while connotation is the ideological meaning of the sign. However, connotation is not purely a subjective meaning of a sign, since specific connotation could be recognized within a culture and determined by the codes that interpreter has access (Chandler, 2002, p 14). Both connotation and denotation stand in the level of representation or level of meaning.

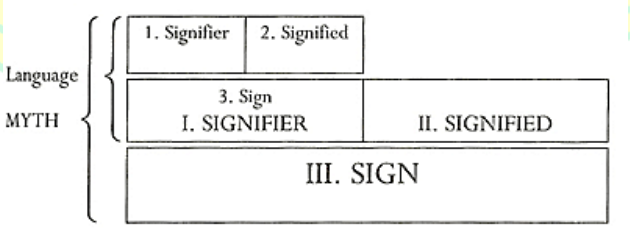


Figure 2.1. Barthes's model of semiotic

According to Bathes' concept, the first sequence of signification isdenotative level, and the second is connotative level. In denotative level, sign includes the signifier that can be words or images and signified, which is the meaning. Denotation explains the relation among signifiers in the degree of truth and a way to get the which means explicitly (literal sense). The second order is connotative level that explains the implicit meaning (figurative meaning) between the signifier and signified. Within his concept, Barthes also introduces myth after he thinks that purposes can reach the mythological repute because the text and ideology work to create a broader sense (Chandler, 2002).

Three factors help denotation meaning to be connotative meaning. First, the convention that depends on the social and cultural agreement, and second is the association that may be defined as the relation between signifier and signified, and third is cultural value sign that is determined with the regard within one sign to other sign as an entire due to the fact every place holds different values (Chandler, 2002).

2.4 Rupi Kaur

Rupi Kaur was born on October 4th, 1992, in Punjabi, Indian. She is a Canadian poet, writer, and performer. She is also an illustrator. Kaur's immigrated to Canada as a child and has since then settled in Toronto. She started drawing at the age of five. Kaur studied rhetoric and professional writing at the University of Waterloo in Canada. In 2013, she began

sharing her work under her name on Tumblr and took her writing to Instagram (@rupikaur) with more than 4M followers and began adding illustrations in 2014.

Her first debut book, a collection of poetry and prose was published in 2014, entitled Milk and Honey, it sold over 2.5 million copies worldwide and entering in The New York Times Best Seller list. Milk and Honey is a New York Times bestseller. It was published on November 4th, 2014. The poem's book is a collection of poetry and prose about the experience of hurting, loving, breaking, and healing. Milk and Honey is the experience of violence, abuse, love, loss, and femininity.

The Sun and Her Flowers is a New York Times bestseller. It is Rupi Kaur's second collection of poetry and prose was published on October 3rd, 2017. The book is a collection of poetry and prose about sadness, trauma, self-abandonment, honoring people, love, loss, femininity, and empowering oneself its split into five chapters, wilting, falling, rooting, rising, and blooming with illustrations by the author. The chapter wilting focuses on the subject of heartbreak and loss. The second falling focuses on depressive feelings following the loss of a relationship. While the third chapter, rooting focuses on immigration, murder, and borders. The fourth chapter rising explores deep love, femininity, and self-love. The last chapter blooming focuses on the joy her finally found coming to love, accept her roots, and around her.

2.5 Poetry

Poetry is any type of verbal that is a literary genre of structured rhythmically and is meant to tell a story or express any type of emotion, idea, or state of being. Poetry is used to reach this artistic expression in several ways (Olila&Jantas, 2006). Poetry is the inevitable spill of expression of emotion, compelling feeling, and it is always concerned with common human interest, with the daily problem of one's life (Wordsworth in Peck and Loyle, 1984: 11)

There are 10 selected poems of Rupi Kaur that she uses as medium to express her thoughts, feelings, and ideas related to empowering women. Those poems are: first, *Poem 1*, a poem which tells about how women must confident in themselves to make their own choices to make a decision. Second, *Poem 2*, the poem is about how Kaur empowers women to defend all of the struggles that have been made by the women before them and to create a better and more decent life. Third, *Poem 3*, a poem about women can't let the society value them just by their appearances or body parts, and also how women struggle through the cruel beauty standard set by the society. Fourth, *Poem 4* which tells readers about women need support from themselves and from other women to help each other. Fifth, *Poem 5*, the poem is about how Kaur empowers women should support each other since all women are sisters not only by blood relation but because they carry the same fates. Sixth, *Poem 6*, which is the poem Kaur writes to tell women to support other women who are strong

enough to be different in order to fight and evolve for a better opportunity. Seventh, *Poem 7*, a poem tells how Kaur empowers women to accept and be proud of themselves without depending on others' opinions. Eight, *Poem 8* which within this poem Kaur tries to tell her readers about women who struggling for their lives to be seen and treated as equal to men by the society. Ninth, *Poem 9*, a poem that tells about the impact of society's opinion on women. On the other hand, Kaur empowers women that they are already worthy and important since they were born. They need to believe it in themselves and they do not have to depend on society's opinion about their sense of selves. And Tenth, a poem titled *Poem 10* that is about women who are about to change the system and bring equality to the world for both men and women.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

The aims of the study are to analyze general meaning of the poems and to investigate women empowerments that are depicted in Rupi Kaur's poems by using semiotic theory of Roland Barthes. The poems are chosen from two of Rupi Kaur's books, *Milk and Honey* and *The Sun and Her Flowers*. The poems consist of words, phrases, and lines that indicate the portrayals of women empowerment by using six dimensions of women empowerment purposed by Malhotra (2002).