

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Poetry has consistently served as a profound avenue for human expression, particularly for navigating complex emotions such as pain, loss, and the journey toward recovery (Smith, 2015). Many poets transform their personal struggles and deep emotions into verse, allowing poetry to function not only as an art form but also as a significant means of healing (Jones, 2018). Through this creative medium, individuals can articulate feelings that might be difficult to convey in everyday conversation. Poetry thus acts as a crucial connection between a person's inner thoughts and the outside world, fostering shared understanding and emotional resonance for both the writer and the reader.

Among contemporary poets, Rupi Kaur has garnered global recognition for her emotionally resonant and widely relatable poetry. She frequently addresses significant themes, including trauma, healing, and personal growth. Kaur's poems candidly explore heartbreak, the process of self-discovery, and the cultivation of inner strength, reflecting both personal and collective experiences of pain. Beyond individual narratives, her work also touches upon broader societal issues such as gender, identity, and social justice, which deeply connects with readers who have faced similar struggles.

Her distinctive minimalist style and poignant language enable her to convey profound emotions with remarkable brevity, highlighting the relevance of her poetry for both literary and psychological discussions. This study specifically selects Rupi Kaur as its primary subject because of her distinct poetic approach, which deeply resonates with readers who have experienced trauma. Her stripped-down style and evocative language eliminate unnecessary complexities, making her work accessible yet profoundly impactful. Kaur's poetry is noted for its raw honesty and its ability to capture emotional vulnerability, aligning well with the objectives of this research. The three selected poems for analysis—"I Want to Apologize to All the Women," "The Type of Lover I Need," and "You Tell Me I Am Not Like Most Girls"—were chosen precisely because they directly engage with the themes

of emotional pain, resilience, and the process of healing. These poems collectively encapsulate Kaur's exploration of trauma from personal, relational, and societal perspectives, offering a comprehensive look at how poetry serves as a medium for psychological expression and catharsis.

Trauma is understood as a strong emotional and psychological reaction to a deeply painful or disturbing event (Herman, 1992). It can lead to various manifestations such as feelings of sadness, anxiety, or emotional numbness. In literature, the exploration of trauma is often undertaken to help readers understand how individuals cope with their pain and eventually find pathways to heal. Indeed, many trauma survivors find comfort and a sense of belonging through stories and poetry that reflect their own experiences. Poetry, in particular, allows individuals to express emotions they might otherwise struggle to verbalize, which directly relates to the concept of catharsis, a crucial psychological process where the expression of deep-seated emotions leads to significant relief and contributes to healing.

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory offers a valuable framework for understanding how poetry assists individuals in processing trauma and facilitating healing (Freud, 1920). Freud's foundational ideas concerning the unconscious mind, suppressed emotions, and the concept of emotional release (catharsis) are instrumental in explaining how painful experiences are articulated and processed through poetry. According to Freud, when a person fails to fully process a traumatic event, the associated emotions can become repressed and buried within their unconscious mind. Over time, these unaddressed emotions may resurface in disguised forms, such as dreams, creative works, or specific behaviors. Poets frequently access and bring forth these hidden emotions in their writing, establishing poetry as an important avenue for analyzing trauma from a psychological perspective. Freud's idea of catharsis, or emotional release, is especially pertinent to the therapeutic potential of poetry. Many poets, including Rupi Kaur, consciously or unconsciously utilize writing as a means to actively process their pain and move toward healing. By sharing their personal narratives through verse, they engage in a psychological working-through of their trauma, thereby initiating a path toward emotional recovery. In this sense, poetry transforms

into a form of self-therapy that enables both the poet and the reader to connect through shared emotional experiences.

This study will meticulously explore Rupi Kaur's selected poetry through a psychoanalytic perspective to understand the nuanced ways she represents trauma and healing in her work. To achieve this, the three aforementioned poems—"I Want to Apologize to All the Women," "The Type of Lover I Need," and "You Tell Me I Am Not Like Most Girls"—will be subjected to in-depth analysis. These poems are specifically chosen for their focus on themes of emotional pain, resilience, and the process of rebuilding oneself after experiencing trauma. By applying Freud's central psychological concepts, this study aims to delve into the deeper emotional and mental dimensions embedded within Kaur's poetry and to demonstrate its capacity as a powerful tool for healing, benefiting both the poet and her readership.

1.2 Research Questions

1. How is trauma represented in three Rupi Kaur's poems?
2. How is healing represented in three Rupi Kaur's poems?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the representation of trauma in three Rupi Kaur's poems using Freud's psychoanalytic theory.
2. To examine the representation of healing through poetic expression in three Rupi Kaur's poems using Freud's psychoanalytic theory.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it bridges the gap between literature and psychology, offering insights into how poetry functions as a means of expressing psychological distress and healing. The study will contribute to the fields of literary analysis and psychoanalytic criticism by providing an in-depth examination of Kaur's poetry. By analyzing Kaur's work through the lens of trauma and healing, it will offer a deeper understanding of how poetic expression helps individuals cope with psychological distress. Additionally, the findings of this study may be beneficial for individuals who have experienced trauma, as it highlights the role of creative writing as a therapeutic tool.

Furthermore, this study is relevant for educators and mental health professionals who use literature as part of therapy and counseling. Poetry has been widely recognized as a medium of expression for those dealing with psychological distress, and Kaur's work provides a rich case study of how personal narratives can foster emotional resilience. The study will also contribute to literary studies by offering a detailed analysis of the thematic and stylistic elements in Kaur's poetry that make it a compelling reflection of human suffering and recovery. Additionally, this study aims to encourage further research on the intersection of literature, psychology, and trauma studies. Understanding the role of literary expression in healing can broaden the academic discourse surrounding trauma recovery and emotional resilience. Future researchers can build upon this study by exploring similar themes in the works of other contemporary poets or by analyzing how different poetic structures contribute to the therapeutic process.

Moreover, this research can serve as a foundation for interdisciplinary studies that incorporate literary criticism, psychology, and mental health practices. By examining poetry from a psychological perspective, scholars and practitioners can gain valuable insights into how creative expression aids emotional processing and coping mechanisms. Ultimately, this study hopes to promote the appreciation of poetry as a means of self-exploration and emotional release, encouraging both writers and readers to use literature as a tool for healing and self-discovery.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

This study is limited to analyzing three selected poems by Rupi Kaur. It focuses specifically on the themes of trauma and healing as interpreted through Freud's psychoanalytic theory. Other literary elements such as structure, rhyme, and meter are not the focus of this study, though they may be considered in the analysis where relevant. Additionally, this study does not aim to generalize findings beyond the scope of Kaur's poetry. Since literary interpretation is inherently subjective, different readers may derive varying meanings from the same poem. Therefore, while this research applies Freud's psychoanalytic theory as a framework, it acknowledges that alternative psychological and literary theories could yield different perspectives. Moreover, this study does not engage in clinical psychological analysis. Although it explores psychological themes, it does not diagnose or evaluate mental health conditions. Instead, it seeks to provide an interpretive literary analysis that contributes to the broader discourse on trauma representation in poetry. The study also does not include an empirical component such as interviews or surveys; it is based solely on textual analysis. The study is restricted to English translations of Kaur's poetry, which may slightly differ from the author's intended nuances. As translations can influence meaning, this limitation is acknowledged in the analysis. Despite these constraints, the study aims to provide meaningful insights into the intersection of poetry, trauma, and healing.