

Of Duty and Decision for the Land: A Critical Study of Pijush Raut's *The Soldier* as Intertext of Asim Duttaroy's *The Play of Life and Death* and Samarjit Singha's *Map*

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Abstract

This research paper analyses the significance of duty and the decision of a soldier for his land in Pijush Raut's poem, The Soldier, which stands as an intertext to Asim Duttaroy's, The Play of Life and Death and Samarjit Singha's, Map. The series of upheavals that took place in the princely state, Tripura, since the early 1940s gave birth to a new generation of poets who contributed to essentializing the meanings of the text and that marked the genre identification and its specification. The method of Intertextual study has given the critical readers to accomplish the implied references that are present as a connective link within the texts of Tripura Bangla literature in English Translation.

Keywords: Territory, survival, conflict, warfare, first-generation writers, duty, desire, identity, determination, psychological consciousness, artifice, borrowed glory, language-narratives.

Introduction

"The long rescue operation across this desert night is entirely dedicated to you".

- ('Map' By Samarjit Singha)

Tripura, as a northeastern state was known as a territory consisting of hilly regions and plain areas. It was also known as land alongside water. The princely state of Tripura was under the reign of Manikya dynasty. The Hill Tipperah was said to be the hilly region and the plain portion was known as the plain Tripura. The hilly and the plain regions were both comparatively enriched and conscious to ensure their survival with their cultural and ethnic identity.

It was the Raipur riot of 1941 which saw many changes in this hilly region. Tripura was overflowed by a series of upheavals. Along with this, the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh gave birth to a series of writers who took the medium of literature to establish their voice and demands to narrate the events through poems, prose and drama. Therefore, the efforts of the literary figures acquired much attention for the cause of portraying internal-external conflicts. Also, the witnessing of shades of warfare such as - machine guns, gas attacks and barbed wire, intensified the writer's mindset to present the anti-combatant themes in their writing to ensure that the

psychology of an aggressive armed militant can perish generations within a short period as war and bloodshed can generate trauma which does not spare even a speck of dust. Therefore, poets like Pijush Raut highlighted the duties of a Soldier through his poem, *The Soldier*, to show that the dreadful effects should not be taken as war's gravity, but the responsibilities that a soldier has to fulfill to protect his territory and not to leave out his enemy. And inspired from Pijush Raut, there are many other poets like - Samarjit Singha and Asim Duttaroy who inspire a genre of literature in Tripura, perhaps can be referred to as 'War Poetry' presenting the anti-war theme. Hence, it was the birth of a new generation of writers, specifically a band of poets who flourished with contributions.

It is therefore a must note, which the research paper focuses on, that the sense of a soldier's sacrifice must be understood, as there lies no glory in targeting others as opponents, and also the grim reality of war should not be misunderstood.

In the global context of the twenty-first century, it is found that poets have expressed their sentiments through various languages. The trend of composing poetry on the notion of experience and intense feeling is seen in the Tripura Bangla Literature which undergoes translation and more importantly transcreation. From the first-generation

writers to the second and third generation, it is hence a syndrome of lost identity where the existing is fading and also alienated from the belonging space.

Moreover, the 'genre' specification marks the proper formation of division of the translated poems which does not constrict the critics' viewpoint. Therefore, this notion of 'War Poetry/War Poet' tends to traditionally refer to people who are actively engaged in combats, struggle for nations and anxious emotions when battling for the land. Writers like W.H. Auden, James Fenton, Rose Macaulay and Cesar Vallejo stand as the chief proponents of War poems in World Literature. However, in the case of the Tripura Bangla War poets, it can be observed that their ordered chronology falls short and improperly structured in the historical context.

Materials and Methods

For the study of the said topic, the two methods applied are the interpretation method and background study of the writers and their texts, as the sequential order is loosely attached to draw any chronological associations that can be kept forward from a structured framing of study.

This paper has gone through an investigative study of the unheard voices to uncover their critical point of view through retrospective and introspective analysis. However, it has also delved into the portions of regional literature to make sure that it is brought towards the mainstream without any external superimposition of determiners. To avoid any imbalanced output of the interpretation of the texts, the critical study has also undergone a specific process of evaluation.

Findings and Results

Intertextual Components Constructing the Concept

According to Merriam-Webster, the definition of intertextuality stands as the complex relationship between a text and other texts taken as basic to the creation or interpretation of the text. This specific intertextual mechanism brings into a new context that compiles certain commonalities in opinions implicitly or explicitly. In Tripura Bangla Literature in Translation, it can be mentioned that there are 'implicit' references in which the idea, symbol, style and genre are significant and obligatory, or they can be separated as accidental or optional.

This paper aims to bring out those unrevealed critical studies that can be traced from the texts of Pijush Raut's *The Soldier* which stands as an inter text to Asim Duttaroy's *The Play of Life and Death* and Samarjit Singha's *Map*. In the poem, *The Soldier*, the poet addresses certain questions of life that were related to courage, loyalty, duty, desire, bravery, compassion and identity. Moreover, when these inquiries are answered, the poem achieves its position with a special literary significance. It also links the immediate human experience to times of national and worldwide crisis.

The beginning lines of the poem introduce us about the soldier who stands on the routeway as an obstruction wearing a stony pair of glasses. This remarks that the soldier is a duty and decision-based person who is a national servant, serving in definite terms and that is the progressive functional attitude in the poem. Raut also portrays the physicalities of the soldier which was demarcated as :

"...His dress was a deep crimson
Like the blood of a slaughtered bull.
His voice reverberated
with the rumbling sound of a bridge crossing train".
(*The Soldier*, Line 3-6, Pg. 39)

The identity of a soldier is not only when he represents a nation on the battlefield, but to fight against conspirators. It is however clear that the soldier has to be decisive and dutiful in each and every circumstance, which is established in the continuing lines -

"... He stood
guarding the threshold of independent Tripura, like a
snow - covered mountain-
unshakable, till the British rule".

(*ibid*, Line 8-11, Pg. 39)

Raut along with highlighting the various responsibilities of a soldier, gives a slight touch of 'placing the backdrop' in the lines, where the phrase 'independent Tripura' is used with an imagery, "a snow-covered mountain unshakable" and ends the line hinting at the colonial rule. This takes us towards the unknown historical pasts that are associated with the Princely State, Tripura. This reminds us of Urvasi Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence* narrating various facets of the history of the

division specifying certain sectors of society. Butalia also meticulously depicts the narrative of dislocation, victimization, and the horrifying splintering of bodies and souls. Politics and history constantly influence how people live, but the history of division nearly eliminated social creatures from the world. They were so brutalized that they were rendered speechless. They were kept in the dark and treated like trash.

Therefore, it is still impossible to ignore the history of the division. Especially, women tried to erase the past by living a half-life. Butalia refers to the opinion of two Indian poets that it is difficult to forget the history of the partition, but it is risky to recall. It is then the savior of the national borders i.e. armed soldiers, whose active role keeps us secured and away from all the experiences of suffering and violent realities like – murder, abduction, etc. Thus, fulfilling the purpose for which they were devoted.

The images like "crow-black eyes" reveal the expression of anxiety that a soldier expresses when comes across blood slaughtering as they also have to keep themselves awakened in the continual game of war. But, at uncertain times, if the soldier is unable to deliver for his nation becomes a martyr in the eyes of the civilians, which has been expressed in the following composed lines:

"....Without his soul.

-a loving faith".(ibid, Line 14-15, Pg. 39)

The noteworthy perspective that Raut has mentioned in the poem is the notion of "power/knowledge" derived from Foucault, which tells that power is constituted through accepted forms of knowledge, scientific understanding and truth. The notion of 'meta power' gets accomplished in the domain of a national security worker, which Raut has expressed through the representative lines of the poem:

"..... he knew,

the exact meaning of love and conscience".

(ibid, Line no 17-18, Pg. 39)

Michel Foucault mentions that power is socialized and an embodied phenomenon. Therefore, P. Raut hints that behind the apparent 'large stony glasses', is the real-time experience and observation of the soldier's 'crow-black eyes' which do not miss out on any incident and underground is covered.

Some years later, to consider the sequential readings, it is also found in Asim Duttaroy's philosophical poem, titled *The Play of Life and Death*, which has a touch of textual connectivity with P. Raut's war poem, *The Soldier*. It can be hence said through the relative study of the two poems that after a soldier is armed with weapons, it is then for the soldier, the battlefield stands as a pious region like - 'the battlefield of Kurukshetra', where all the soldier warriors, commanders and armed forces move ahead with valor mindsets and surround their psychology with grit and determination to rescue their land. The following lines echo the soldier's duty since the classical epic era -

"At the end of war from the battlefield of Kurukshetra returns

Our bloody costumes, favourite shoes, broken pen, coins and genuine, heartfelt conversation".

(*The Play of Life and Death*, Line. 3, Pg. 59)

The image of 'The blood of a slaughtered bull' symbolizing perhaps the soldier, that with the dawn and rising of the sun, it marks the beginning of a soldier's journey and at the end of the day, it can be hale-hearted or heartfelt conversation, or the smoke from the firewoods which can move ahead with the passing of the night and which can bring the readers to the notion of 'sinking-shinning stars' as those soldiers proceed with their resolved psychological consciousness to fight and secure their land in whatsoever situation he is. This is where Michel Foucault's concept of 'power' comes into fruition which is stated as an embodied and socialized phenomenon.

The poem, *The Soldier* also finds its accomplishment through Samarjit Singha's narrative short poem, *Map*. In the poem, *Map*, the poet begins with the idea of reaching out to places by deciphering symbols found in the map, which is also very important for a nation's security and that is found to be well adapted in the poem, *The Soldier* as an implicit intertextual reference, where P. Raut mentions in the first line that the obstruction carried forward by the soldier, which guarded the threshold of independent Tripura and that is also to oppress the colonial dominance rising towards the extreme North-Eastern region. This asserts the concept of Julia Kristeva's Intertextual study of

the texts which asserts that - any text is an 'intertext' and the site of an intersection of numberless texts which exists only through its relation with other texts. Hence, meaning is decoded by the relational study of one text to the other, which transfers the meaning directly from the writer to the reader. The rising concept of the late 1960s was brought forward by Kristeva when her seminal work *The Bounded Text* gave the idea of stable signification and mentioned that the texts which are authors' constructs, do not come from their minds, but are a product of the previously existing texts.

Moreover, as the study of the paper progresses, it is, therefore, those launching lines from Bimal Chowdhury's short story *Anubhaab* (trans. *The Story of Experience*), where he shares the beauty of a region that is unaffected and untouched by any terror or destructive commodity and hence, the soldier is victorious and shows his legacy, as the time goes by where nature mixes no artificialities, but colors it with beautiful scenic beauties :

"On the tree branch, sits the crow and shalik bird, filled in the eyes of philosophical vision that wets off to shake away the burden of omen thoughts, and clean up like the accumulated rain water poured down the pathways that sweeps away all". (lines are self-translated from Bimal Chowdhury's *Anubhaab*, Pg. 200)

It is evident that by time and space, there lies no impossibility to comprehend that the risk taker is the soldier who can bring the exquisite color of benevolence and resist maligned substance which can become the inability of the cooperative world and much more of it, can destroy the aesthetic output of the society.

Interpretation and Discussion

This paper therefore proposes to signify the duty and decision of the soldier, who does not artifice with any borrowed glory but an earned fame, through the intertextual study of the poems. However, it is visible after a certain period, that the idea of 'genre' specification came up in Tripura-Bangla literature in English translation.

From the palace-centric literature of Anangamohini Debi, Maharaj Bir Chandra, Kamalprabha Debi, or Mrinalini Debi, it is hence seen that the next generation poets attempt to state the everyday inclusion and exclusion of different strands of society which becomes a determined

method of 'standardization' by the poets like - Pijush Raut, Samarjit Singha and Asim Duttaroy in the pages of Tripura Bangla Poetry in English Translation Studies.

Conclusion

In light of the above arguments, it is hence an important proposition to understand that through the translation of Tripura Bangla literature into English, the unheard voices become detectable, and basically, the identity that was lost in the second half of the 20th century, was in every sense recaptured.

To explore writers like - Pijush Raut and his poems, it becomes a canonical approach to deliver an independent method of recollecting the faded, and also hoping with an aim that such critical studies and perspective discoveries include much to the accountability of culture which would imbibe richness and proceed to follow emotional views from the readers. The poetry of Tripura Bangla Literature could be sub-stranded into multiple genres in which Pijush Raut's, *The Soldier*, Asim Duttaroy's, *The Play of Life and Death* stands as War poems which can be studied from the intertextual perspective along with Samarjit Singha's poem, *Map* which can be pointed to be fictitious, but generates the core base of intertextuality from the textual language which is the function of an active and creative reader as mentioned by Roland Barthes in *From Work to Text*. It is therefore to be captured that genre identification essentializes the meanings of the language-narratives. And for the readers, their works are no mere silent works as they leave in us the bohemian spirit to remain working by thoughtful and careful reading.

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