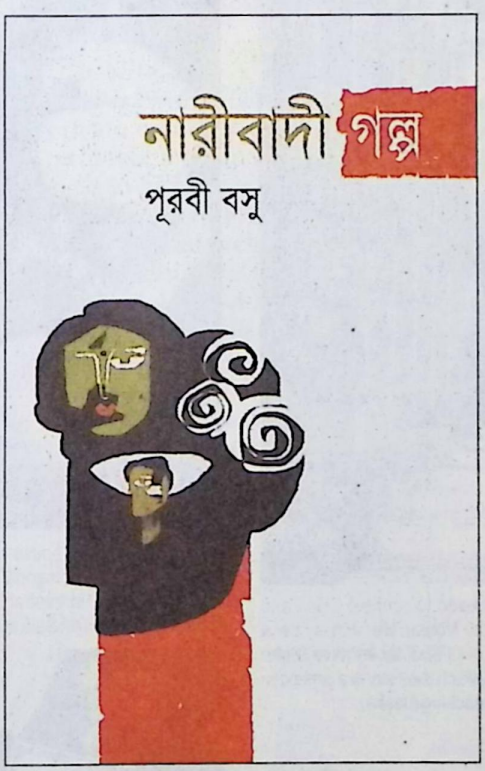
Women In Different Shades

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Purobi Basu's "Naribadi Golpo" (Ittadi publications) has received quite a good response from the readers of Boi Mela. The very title indicates the tone and temperament of the book which is a fine collection of 14 stories, all portraying women and the gamut of emotions they go through.

The first story entitled "Ekoda Ekhane Konna Santan Janma Nito" (Once here girl children were born) sets the tone of the book. The story depicts the bizarre and disastrous situation that fall upon Chandankar people after their women had been mistreated and tortured by outside men. Not only girl children have ceased to take birth in this place but also the women figures have all turned into male like figures with beards, short hair and flat chests.

Purobi Basu in her collection depicts women of different ages and classes. In "Chutordoshi" (1l4th) the protagonist is a 14-year-old girl named Rupa, who is going through both physical and mental changes. While in "Mayer Patra" (Mother's letter) we find the protagonist as an elderly woman, who in her later life realises the terrible truth that she is no longer needed or wanted in her son's household. The whole story is written in the form of 4 letters, 3 of them addressed to her children and one to her son-in-law. The women through her letters emerged as a woman of strong principals who decides to leave his son's house and pass the remaining years of her life on her own.



Purobi Basu's "Naribadi Golpo"

"Janak-Janaki" (Parents) portrays a woman who is ridden by guilt and shame as she conceived at a later age. Lying in a hospital bed she recalls past memories, her children's birth. Anger towards her husband, frustration of life long struggle torments her but at the end she again reconciles with herself and hopes to return to her home and loved ones.

Purobi Basu in her story "Protimapuran" brilliantly depicts her main character Kalanni's huge transformation from a shy, timid village woman to that of an independent, daring woman who does not hesitate to leave her house, domineering husband and start a new life with a new job.

The protagonist Radha in "Arandhan" (Not Cooking) on one fine morning decides she will not cook today. She ignores her mother-in-laws rebuke, her husband's angry looks, her sister-in law's weeping, her son's request and remains adamant in her decision and do not cook all day. The story has a beautiful poetic touch.

As said before, women come in different shades and colours in Purobi Basu's stories. We get a glimpse of ordinary village women who have the guts to stand up against all injustices, as individuals with freedom of choices. Saleha in "Salehar Iccha Aniccha" (Saleha's Likes and Dislikes) a village girl shocks the whole village by her bold and valiant work and comment. In "Aratir Ratri" (Arati's Night) Saida becomes the victim of men's lust and decides to knock at the door of justice. Zarina, the heroine of "Judishtorer Bon" (Sister of Judishtor) a factory worker changes her mind and decides to protect her own image and job after seeing her co-worker's dead body. In "Sandhay Bhorer Shishir" (Morning dew in the evening) Gita, a village ordinary housewife decides to take contraceptive when she realises that her husband is both indifferent and callous towards birth control idea.

The last story "Abosheshe Mukoshbihin" (At last without mask) tells the tale of a women who performs all day long different roles assigned to her as a wife, as a mother, as a daughter, and as a doctor and wears different masks accordingly. But when she confronts death she has to put off all the masks and comes face to face with her real self.

No doubt, this is an extraordinary collection, intelligently conceived and passionately written. The stories not only illuminate the pain, loss, sacrifices, alienation and loneliness of Bangali women but also their courage, bravery, confidence. In the colourful and varied characters portrayed in Purobi Basu's "Naribadi Golpo" we get both the form and substance of Sita, the symbol of obedience and tolerance and Durga or Ma Kali, the Goddesses of Defiance which make it a fine collection and a must read. ■