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A Study Of Purabi Bormudoi's Novels Param Pujaniya And Eta Alibatar Itikotha

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Abstract: In the field of Assamese short story and novel literature, Purabi Bormudoi is a well-known name. She emerged as a novelist in the last decade of the twentieth century through the serial publication of her novels in the literary magazine Gariyoshi edited by Chandraprasad Saikia. Between 1994 and June 1997, her first novel, Gajaraj, Prem Aru Bonditwo (The Elephant, Love and Captivity), was published serially in the magazine. Two of her other novels, Param Pujaniya and Eta Alibatar Itikotha (The Tale of a Pathway), were also serialized in the same magazine. In addition, Bormudoi published four more novels: Baghshal, Baghjal Aru Manuh (The Tiger Trap, the Tiger Net and Man; 2000), Rupowali Noir Sonowali Ghat (The Golden Ghat of the Silver River; 2001), Purabi Bormudoi Nirbachita Upanyasika (Selected Novellas of Purabi Bormudoi; 2004), and Shantanukulanandan (2005). In our research paper, the plot and thematic aspects of Bormudoi's novels 'Param Pujaniya' and 'Eta Alibatar Itikotha' will be discussed and analyzed.

Index Terms – Historical Novel, Param Punaniya, Eta Alibatar Itikotha, Gariyoshi, war

INTRODUCTION :

The first issue of Gariyoshi, edited by Chandraprasad Saikia, was published in October 1993. Since its inception, the magazine has served as an important literary platform that encouraged a number of emerging short story writers and novelists to contribute to Assamese literature. Among these writers, Purabi Bormudoi has established herself as a notable novelist.

Bormudoi's debut novel, Gajaraj Prem Aru Banditwa, presents a broad historical canvas extending from the Burmese invasion of Assam to the post-Independence period of the twentieth century. Subsequently, two more of her novels—Param Pujaniya and Eta Alibatar Itikotha—were serialized in the pages of Gariyoshi. Param Pujaniya explores the theme of unconventional love through the relationship between its two principal characters, Aditi and Purnendu. Their love is unconventional because both are married and each enjoys a stable and happy family life. In contrast, Eta Alibatar Itikotha portrays the socio-historical milieu, the devastating impact, and the human consequences of the First and Second World Wars through the experiences of its central character, General Joe. The present research paper seeks to examine the plots and thematic dimensions of these two novels, with particular emphasis on their narrative structure and subject matter.

Objectives:

1. To highlight the plot and thematic aspects of the two novels.
2. To examine the background and setting of the two novels.

Methodology:

The study will primarily employ the analytical method in preparing the research paper.

Sources of Data:

The primary sources of this research are the novels 'Param Pujaniya' and 'Eta Alibatar Itikotha', which were serially published in the magazine Gariyoshi and were later published in book form. In addition, various scholarly articles and information obtained from relevant websites will be used as secondary sources.

Scope of the Study:

The scope of the research paper will be confined to a discussion of the plot, themes, and background of the selected novels, Param Pujaniya and Eta Alibatar Itikotha.

Presentation of the main Content :**Theme of 'Param Pujaniya' :**

Param Pujaniya is one of the novels that was serialized in Gariyoshi during the first decade of the twenty-first century. It was later published in book form under the title Param Pujaniya Aru Dukhon Upanyasika (Param Pujaniya and Two Novellas). The novel primarily revolves around the love relationship between Aditi, a college lecturer, and Purnendu, a distinguished artist. This love affair differs from conventional romantic relationships and thus forms the central theme of the novel. Through the character of Aditi, Bormudoi seeks to portray the various emotional responses, psychological complexities, and inner conflicts experienced by women. The novel presents a sensitive and nuanced exploration of the female mind and its intricate emotional landscape.

The central narrative of the novel revolves around three characters- Aditi, Abinash, and Purnendu. Aditi, a lecturer at a prestigious college, is an ideal homemaker and the mother of two highly educated children, Babli and Bapon. Likewise, Purnendu also has a happy family life. Forty-seven-year-old Aditi has always received unwavering support from her husband Abinash through every joy, sorrow, and emotionally charged moment of her life. Yet, despite being loved deeply by him, she finds herself falling in love with Purnendu, a man considerably older than herself, and longs to lose herself in the novelty of this new experience. She candidly confesses her feelings to Abinash:

"Hold on to me. Do not let me drift away. If you do not hold me back, I will be lost; I will die, do you know that? Do you know that I have become deeply attached to the painter Purnendu? Even after receiving complete love from you, why have I become attracted to that man? Why could you not keep me from this?" (Param Pujaniya, p.36)

Aditi first met Purnendu at an art exhibition, and from that moment she began to feel drawn not only to his artistic sensibility but also to the breadth of his personality, his creative spirit, and his outlook on life. Over time, this love did not remain confined to the mental or emotional realm. Purnendu stayed overnight at her home twice at Aditi's invitation, and she found herself attracted to his physical presence as well. This attraction was not one-sided; Purnendu too felt drawn towards her. While Aditi admired Purnendu's fit, strong physique and masculine appeal, Purnendu was captivated by Aditi's graceful, river-like beauty. Although social conventions, restraints, and moral boundaries initially caused turmoil and hesitation in their minds, the novel eventually presents a situation in which these barriers are overcome.

The novelist portrays Aditi as the embodiment of a liberated woman shaped by a thoroughly modern outlook. Through her, the author explores the complexities of a woman's inner world—her questions, reactions, emotional conflicts, and psychological struggles. To achieve this, the character is

endowed with complete personal freedom. After years spent fulfilling domestic responsibilities, sharing her life with Abinash, and raising Babli and Bapon, Aditi discovers a new dimension of herself upon meeting Purnendu. Having already devoted affection and emotional warmth to her family, her husband, her children, and herself, she does not hold back what remains of her love for Purnendu. Nor does she experience any regret after spending an intimate night with him. In Aditi's view, every individual occupies a unique place in her life, and each relationship carries its own distinct emotional significance.

In *Param Pujaniya*, the novelist challenges the conventional belief that love is the exclusive privilege of the young. Throughout the narrative, she attempts to establish that love is a universal human right, regardless of age. This idea is reinforced through a discussion among several neighbourhood women, held in Aditi's presence, concerning Prakash Hazarika—a widower who, despite having arranged the marriages of his four children, falls in love again with a young woman of about twenty-eight years of age. During this conversation, the opinion is voiced that "love is not the exclusive right of young men and women." Through Aditi, the novelist seeks to break the chains of conservative attitudes towards love. Although Aditi is not unhappy in her marriage, she becomes attracted to another man's personality and falls in love again after many years of married life. While the novel repeatedly discusses the spiritual and pure dimensions of love and often presents love as something transcending the physical, Aditi eventually embraces physical love as well. Overall, the novel strives to portray not only various dimensions of love but also the external realities, inner lives, psychological conflicts, and hidden emotions of characters such as Abinash, Aditi, and Purnendu.

Although the novel succeeds in presenting well-developed and nuanced characters, it must also be noted that, at certain points, it suffers from excessive and unnecessary descriptive elaboration. For example, the repeated attempts to define and explain love often become monotonous. Furthermore, some lengthy descriptive passages tend to reiterate the same ideas repeatedly, which may naturally lead to reader fatigue and irritation. Nevertheless, through its distinctive characterisation, fresh perspective, and departure from conventional narrative approaches, the novelist succeeds in presenting the subject matter in a thought-provoking manner. In this respect, the work may be regarded as a successful literary achievement.

Theme of *Eta Alibator Itikotha* :

Eta Alibator Itikotha (A Tale of a Byway), another novel by Purabi Bormudoi serialized in *Gariyoshi*, is written against a historical backdrop. The novel reflects the horrors of the First and Second World Wars while also portraying the contemporary social, political, and economic realities of the time. The central protagonist is the American General Joseph Stilwell, popularly known as "General Joe," through whom the entire narrative unfolds.

The novelist presents General Joe as the narrator throughout the novel. Having witnessed firsthand the devastating consequences of both World Wars, Stilwell serves as a credible observer of history. During the First World War, he was appointed as a military officer in the American forces fighting against Germany and played a significant role in the conflict. Through his experiences, he observed the destruction, chaos, and dehumanization brought about by war.

Later, during the Second World War, Stilwell was appointed commander of Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese forces and entrusted with the responsibility of the Southeast Asian war theatre. Through conversations between Stilwell and his wife Win, the novel discusses various historical events and issues, including the causes of war, the Treaty of Versailles, and the attack on Pearl Harbor. The novelist emphasizes that war can never provide humanity with peace or stability:

"After every war, people wish that it would be the last. They hope that the terror of war will disappear from the earth. But it never does. Another war begins. Soldiers who have no personal enmity toward one another devise ways to kill each other. War brings peace to no one; it only increases hatred." (Gariyoshi, *Eta Alibatar Itikotha*, February 2006, p.60)

The novel is divided into eleven chapters. It begins with a farewell gathering organized for Stilwell before his departure to China as a military commander in the Southeast Asian war front during the

Second World War. Upon returning home from the gathering, he reminisces with his wife about the terrifying experiences of the First World War.

While serving on the battlefield during the Second World War, Stilwell witnessed the growing brutality of the conflict. Many military officers, such as Seibert, considered fleeing in fear of losing their lives. Even high-ranking officials abandoned their posts after the Japanese occupation of Rangoon. However, Stilwell never considered deserting his responsibilities. The novel highlights his sense of duty through his words:

“I came to Burma as the commander of the Chinese forces. If I abandon my troops here and leave for Delhi, what will

happen to my country’s honour and dignity?” (Previously Mentioned, March 2006, P.43)

Although the American government arranged an aircraft to evacuate him safely from the battlefield, Stilwell rejected the offer and remained with his troops, continuing to fulfil his responsibilities as a military leader. Through this portrayal, the novelist highlights his deep sense of duty, courage, military expertise, and exemplary leadership.

The novel also presents a comparative picture of China’s glorious ancient civilization and its war-ravaged condition during the twentieth century. China had long been renowned for innovations such as clocks and firearms, and its bronze sculptures, like the pyramids of Egypt, stood as symbols of an ancient and rich civilization. Yet the devastation of war brought poverty, illiteracy, and social decline. Lack of education encouraged superstition and blind beliefs, while Western powers exploited China’s weakness. Valuable resources such as tea, cotton, and silk were exported at low prices to countries like Britain, France, and the Netherlands. Taking advantage of the people’s ignorance, foreign traders also established a flourishing opium market. The novelist suggests that illiteracy and misplaced pride contributed significantly to China’s vulnerability.

A major strength of the novel lies in its vivid depiction of the horrors of both World Wars. Amid widespread scarcity, some women were forced to sell their dignity in exchange for food and alcohol. Many suffered sexual violence at the hands of enemy soldiers. Innocent children were brutally killed. The people endured poverty, insecurity, and immense psychological trauma. Soldiers crossing forests, mountains, rocky terrain, and rivers suffered severe injuries, while decomposing corpses filled the air with unbearable stench. Stilwell describes the situation:

“Suffering from poverty and insecurity, the people had become physically and mentally exhausted. Crossing forests, mountains, rocky lands, and rivers had left many wounded. Some had lost fingers; others had lost entire limbs. Countless people died in the wilderness. Their bodies lay rotting, spreading a terrible stench. How much could the crows, vultures, dogs, and foxes possibly consume?” (Previously Mentioned, February 2006, p.61)

Towards the end of the novel, Stilwell searches for a path—a symbolic way forward that could lead humanity toward a brighter future. It is a path that can dispel the dark clouds of conflict, extinguish the flames of violence and terror, and foster unity among people. The story concludes with Stilwell’s arrival in Imphal, the capital of Manipur, after twelve arduous days of crossing forests, mountains, rocky landscapes, deep rivers, and surviving attacks from Japanese forces. With this journey, the novelist brings *A Tale of a Byway* to its conclusion, leaving readers with a message of hope, peace, and human solidarity.

Conclusion :

The novel *Param Pujaniya* revolves around the lives of Aditi, Abinash, and Purnendu. Although Aditi enjoys a happy and stable married life, she develops a deep emotional attachment to the artist Purnendu, attracted by his personality, intellect, and artistic sensibility. This relationship gradually transcends the boundaries of emotional intimacy and assumes a physical dimension. Through Aditi’s character, the novelist portrays the image of a modern, independent, and free-thinking woman, exploring her inner world, aspirations, emotions, and sense of selfhood. The novel emphasizes that love is not confined to youth alone; rather, it is a universal human emotion that can emerge at any stage of

life. Despite certain instances of lengthy and repetitive narration, the novel remains significant for its innovative perspective and compelling characterization. Similarly, *Eta Alibator Itikatha* by Purabi Bormudoi is a historical novel set against the backdrop of the First and Second World Wars. The novel vividly depicts the social, political, and economic realities of the period, while highlighting the devastating consequences of war. Through the experiences of the central character, General Joseph Stilwell, the author portrays the brutality of warfare, the erosion of human values, and the importance of duty and responsibility. The novel also presents a poignant picture of poverty, illiteracy, and foreign exploitation in war-ravaged China. At the same time, it conveys a message of hope by emphasizing the search for peace, humanity, and a brighter future amidst destruction and suffering. Thus, the diversity of themes and subject matter lends both novels a distinctive literary significance and enduring relevance.

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