

Personally speaking...

Translation is in itself a demanding undertaking and taking on the onerous responsibility of putting into my words the autobiography of one of Assam's pioneering free thinkers had initially filled me with misgivings. My experience as a translator being limited, I had grave doubts as to whether I would be able to deliver what was expected of me. To transfer into living language a book that was written about forty-five years ago, and with a backdrop that was dated yet seventy years before that, left me extremely jittery and shaken. Everything was alien to me - the language, the time scape, the society depicted, and the mindsets. The only person I could empathise with was the narrator herself, with her never-say die spirit. Living in times so blatantly restrictive and patriarchal, Rajabala Das had the courage of conviction to fight against and transcend a social system steeped in prejudice. I felt I owed it to her indomitable spirit to attempt a reconstruction of her struggle and success, her drive and passion. She worked untiringly for the fulfilment of one consuming dream - the establishment of a women's college, which today, as we all know, has become emblematic of the women's movement in Assam. With steely resolve, she sought to bring a ray of light to the darkness of a woman's existence. As I read through her exciting life story, I became progressively convinced that her inspirational life needed to be presented before a wider reading public of today, the thousands of young people whose mothers and grandmothers were the privileged recipients of her largesse. In fact, anyone, whose life has been touched and transformed by Handique Girls' College, will remain indebted to her forever. I have tried to capture the essence of this remarkable woman without taking any literary licence. Whether I have succeeded is for you to judge...

— Aditi Chowdhury

