CHAPTER-V

ASPECTS OF LIFE OF AUTOBIOGRAPHERS
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5.1 INDIVIDUAL LIFE OF AUTOBIOGRAPHERS

5.1.1. Rasosundari Devi

Since nineteenth century, both the society and literary life of Bengal were stirred centering round the realisation of the new dignity relating to womanhood. In this century the prominent male persons of Bengal took lead or revolted against the oppression of women in that male dominated society. The different views of the social and religious movements were discussed in many valuable books.¹

From Rammohan to Vidyasagar and even long afterwards, the social revolution of Bengal was centred around woman. These two great and courageous men, the priests of the movement for liberation of women and for their social dignity, became vocal against the social injustice to women. But the right received from others does not make one the possessor of that right. One must earn the strength to defend the right. The recognition of others was not enough to establish the women on their own rights. Her mental preparation or self confidence was essential.

"The sensibility of awareness of women about their circumstances can ensure through the language"²

1. For reference-
   i. Bose, Nimaisadhan-The Indian Awakening and Bengal, 1960, Calcutta.

From this perspective, the life of Rasosundari Devi was attractive and encouraging. At the age of 88, she started a revolution in the field of woman's progress by writing an autobiography of the type of 'Amar Jiban'.

In order to know Rasosundari Devi, the first mention must be made of the assertion made by her famous grand daughter, a remarkable writer of Bengali literature, Saralabala Sarkar.

"My grand mother's life story is so wonderful that such events are perhaps not found in fictions and fairy tales".

Rasosundari Devi was born in 1216 B.S. (1810 A.D) in the month of Chaitra in the village Patajia in the district of Pabna, in a thriving noble kayastha family. Her father's name was Padma Lochan Roy. Rasosundari's father died in her childhood when she was the age of four.

In her childhood and young days, Rasosundari Devi was of timid nature. This timidity was not about herself, but in most cases about the dangers that may befall others. She heard from her mother that mischievous boys and girls were kidnapped, that is why, during her young age, she used to bear silently even the slightest event.

she was beaten without reason by her mates, test they were
kidnapped or scolded by their guardians.

What specially attracts attention to
Rasosundari Devi is her quality since her younger days of
being afflicted with sorrows of others and the large heart
ready to forgive.

At the time of Rasosundari, women’s
education was not easy. Even though she was very much fond
of the every member of the family, inspite of that, nobody
ever dreamt of giving her education. It was a family rooted
impression that widowhood and various other misfortunes
would be fall, if women learnt education. But Rasosundari was
lucky in one respect because in her own paternal house, a
Bengali medium boys school was there, where she used to go
at the age of 7 or 8 for time passing. She learnt few basic
things like learning alphabet without anybody’s knowledge
in that school.

"I learnt all lesson in my
mind. Nobody else knew about it." ⁴

(ami je ai sakal para mane mane shekhich-
taha keha ar janita na).

Influence of pious and virtuous
mother in the life of the God-devoted Rasosundari Devi is
endless. The seed of incantation about the devotion to and
dependence on God was planted in her mind at her childhood
by her mother.

(Bhay haile Dayamadhabke dakia, amade-
Dayamadhab achen).

'We have *Dayamadhav, why fear’? This
was initiation mantra given to her by her mother. All
through her life, she depended on this faith. She came from
a staunch Vaisnava family.

⁴ Devi, Rasosundari - Amar Jiban, P-8.
* The name of House deity of Rasosundari’s paternal house.
At that period, the place of women in the Hindu family was not very honourable. They were considered as burden. It was a matter of great relief to be free from the duty of giving away the daughter in marriage somehow. But this is not applicable in case of Rasosundari Devi, because she was extremely beautiful and adorable. To get rid of the burden by giving her away in marriage was nobody's desire, but custom cannot be defied either. At the age of twelve, rather late according to tradition of that time, her marriage took place.

But Rasosundari was so simple that she had no particular idea of marriage. Though she felt grieved at the prevalent custom of girls going to the unknown place of father-in-law leaving the familiar surrounding of paternal houses, she ultimately got solace, thinking the event as God-ordained.

"Really, it is not a matter of little sorrow to leave one's mother and others who are near and dear ones and to live in a different place accepting subordination of others—parents being of no consequence, but it is God ordained event and therefore praiseworthy."^5

(Bastabik apanar na o apanar sakalke charia bhinna desho giya bash, ebang jabajjiban tahadiger adhinata swikar, apanar matapita keha nahemeti ki samanya dukher bishay, kintu iha Iswaradhin karma, aijanya iha prasamsar jogya bate).

Rasosundari was married to a rich family. In fact for sometime after marriage she was not required to be busy whole day with household chores. Maid servants did all the work. To enjoy leisure, she used to spend time doing varied artistic work.

"All household works were done by maid servants. Mother-in-law was there for household..."^5

chores. Besides that there were other maid-servants. At that time, girls were not taught reading and writing. I was at a loss to find work. At that time there were only coir (shells); present 'paise' was not there - all business were carried by this coir. I started making various articles with those cories. Making chandelies, lotus, mirror, umbrella, dress-hanger, loop of strings etc. I kept them hanging in the room".


The story of her artistic mind and proficiency in handicrafts was mentioned many times by her grand daughter, Saralabala Sarkar.

But inspite of all these works, she was not satisfied - she would think that she was wasting time for nothing. In the meantime, mother-in-law of Rasosundari Devi became ill suddenly and lost her eyesight. In the changed circumstances, the responsibility of the family fell on her. In the very young age, she gained the status of a responsible house wife. Her writing reveals the limitations on the freedom of women, especially the subjugation of house wife at that time.

Though Rasosundari Devi was not respectful to this prevalent custom, she did not oppose it. It is true, she accepted all the customs and habits of that time but at the same time thirst for knowledge always made her rest less.

At that time even though her age was only fourteen years, but she could understand the discrepancies of the rights and duties of man and women in the society and that is why it was very painstaking for her.

The keen desire for learning makes her impatient. At last her thirst for knowledge and indomitable desire for learning made Rasosundari more God-dependent.

"Oh supreme God, you teach me to read and write. By dint of learning I could read books."7

(He Parameshwar, tumi amake lekhapara shikhao, ami lekhapara shikhia puthi pariba).

At the age of twelve years she came to Ramadia village as a bride of a respectable Sarker family. She got love and affection from her father-in-law's house. At the same time, she was also too much conscious about her duties towards them. At the age of 18 years she became the proud mother of her first child 'Bipinbihari'. Gradually she became the mother of eleven children and she was very grateful to supreme God because child bearing did not spoil her good health. These children namely, Bipinbihari, Pulinbihari, Ramsundari (daughter), Pyarila, Radhanath, Dwarakanath, Chandranath, Kishorilal, Pratap Chandra, Syamsundari (Daughter), Mukundalal were born in about three years interval from her 18 years to 41 years age.

Her social consciousness nowhere wore grab of a rebellion or an angry demonstration, but lack of independence of women encumbered her heart with pain. She repeatedly ventilated her painful feelings through her autobiography.

Her domestic life, children, duties towards all could not give her full mental satisfaction. Apart from doing her essential duties, Rasosundari always had a strong desire for learning.

God believe Rasosundari depended on God for receiving education even in the midst of adverse situations. It was really a miracle that education was bestowed upon Rasosundari Devi by the grace of God. A lone housewife in an alien surrounding and in a society adverse to women's education, became a self-taught woman only by her faith in God and solely depending on Him just in a miraculous way.

"One day while in sleep, I dream that I had opened the book 'Chaitanya Bhagabat' and was reading ......... It is really surprising, neither did I ever see nor did I know this book 'Chaitanya Bhagabat', still in dream I read this book even though I knew nothing of reading or writing".

(ek dibas ami nidrabashe swapna dekhitechi - ami jena 'Chaitanya Bhagabat' pustakkhani khulia path karitechi ......... ki aschya ei chaitanya Bhagavat pustak ami kakhana dekhi nai ebang ami chinio na. Tathapi swapnabeshe sei pustak ami path karilam. Ami motei parite jani na).

But in the midst of innumerable number of books in Rasosundari's house who could help her to recognise 'Chaitanya Bhagavat'? In this matter she had to depend again on God. Her unflinching devotion led towards the path of emancipation.

'Oh, what a miracle! What an extraordinary majesty of the grace of the God of Kindness: .... While cooking in the kitchen, my husband called the son and told - 'Bipin, I am keeping here my book 'Chaitanya Bhagabat'.
Bhagavat'..... Extremely delighted I hurried there and saw that the book 'Chaitanya Bhagavat' was lying there.9

(ah ki aschariya;Dayamayer ki aparup dayar prabh;........ Amd paker ghere pak karitechi,itimadhye karte asi ei cheletike dakia balilen;Bipin,amar Chaitanya - Bhagavat pustakkhari ekhane thakila..... ami atishay pulakita mane taratari giya dekhilam se Chaitanya Bhagavat pustakkhari bidyaman).

Next part of her life was a history of self castigation. She had to pass out so many hurdles, so many hazards to become literate herself. It's really an amazing story to see how she became self educated.

"As soon as the book was kept inside a room, I opened it and one of the pages of the book was kept hidden".10

(Pare pustakkhari gharer madye rakhile ami ai pustak khulia ekti pat lukaiya rakhilam).

'But where can I hide it? says Rasosundari! If anybody watches it! In those days of turbulent hurdles of society, supression of women liberty, at last she kept that page under the fire wood in the kitchen.

Her indomitable desire for learning made her more dependent on God. She had firm trust on supreme God.

"As God gave me so much hopes and aspiration, so, he will never disappoint me....... At the time of cooking, I used to keep that page in the left hand and watch it from inside my veil. Even though I watch it, I cannot recognise the alphabet".11

(Parameshwar jakhan amar mane etakhana nirasha kariben na...... Jakhan pak kari, ai samee se pustaker patati ta hater madhye rakhi ar ek ekbar ghomtar madhye diya dekhi.Dekhile ba haite pare, ami mote kona akshar chinite pari na).9

10. Ibid, P-29.
It may be either by divine power
or by her untiring efforts she was gradually able to read
'Chaitanya Bhagavat', Chaitanya Charitamrita, Jaimini-Bharat,
Gobinda lilamrita, Bidogdha Madhab, Premobhakti Chandrika,
Balmiki Puran and other books. This is the history of how
she gradually learnt the art of reading.

As because she did not know how
to write - it always gives her pain and this unfulfilled
desire made her restless day and night.

'It is not a little matter of
grief that I can't write. You please teach me to write -
always used to cry and pray to God day and night'\^12

(‘Ei ekta katha amar mane bhari akhaped
bisay ji ami likhite jani na,'Tumi amake likhite shikhao'. Parameshwark
nikat dibaratra e bala kadam).

Rasosundari reached to the stage
of writing more or less surprisingly by the grace of God.
Her seventh son earnestly requested Rasosundari to write a
letter to him. He also supplied all the necessary things
for writing such as ink, pan, paper to his mother before
leaving for Calcutta. But how could she practice writing
doing all the household duties? Above all she was conscious
about the subjugation and limitation of housewife at that
time. But by the grace of God, she could get that
opportunity. All on a sudden her husband became ill and he
had to be taken to the residence of her fifth son
Dwarakanath in Kathalpota for his treatment. Rasosundari
also accompanied him. She had very little household work
there and as a result she got lots of freetime to culture
and practice the art of writing and gradually became a
successful writer.

"I learnt reading and writing nu
in an easy way but with great difficulties. I amaze with

wonder when I remember those days of learning reading and writing. It is as if God has taught me with his own hand."

(amar lekhapara sahaj kashte nai, jake bale kashta. Se lakhaparar katha amar mane uday haile bhari ascharya bodh hay. Amake jena parameshwar nij hate dharia shikhaiyachen)

It is really enchanting that though Rasosundari's sentiment and sensible mind was much purturbed by the suppression of contemporary society towards women, but she had no complain against her husband rather she was very much devoted towards him.

"He was really a good person under whom I spent so much time".

(ami je loker adhini haiya ekai parjanta dibas gata kariachi, bastabik tini besh lok chilen).

In the mean time, the mental and familial life of Rasosundari Devi changed a lot, childhood to adolescence than from newly married bride to a responsible mother and head of the family. Even though she was the mother of many children, she was a sense lucky that she was happy with her children. She did not suffer for her children's deed.

At the age of 40 years her eldest son Bipinbihari got married and she became mother-in-law. But inspite of being mother-in-law at that time, she had no liberty to read books in front of everybody. She expressed her feelings of perturbations for domination of women in the society in her autobiography 'Amar Jiban' repeatedly.

Rasosundari Devi did not ignore the worldly feelings. Her writings reveal in weeping cry, the pathetic wail of a affectionate mother on the separation of her son.

14. Ibid, P-30
her son. But due to her God attachment she accepted all the worldly sorrows and sufferings.

At the age of 69 she wrote for the first time her memorable book 'Amar Jiban' (my life). The third edition of 'Amar Jiban' is also published at her 89 years of age. The second part of 'Amar Jiban' is a chronicle of her devotional life. In this portion her pure desireless and deep devotion to God raised her above the worldly attachments as if to the level of Goddess.

Despite much obstructions and confinement her strong desire for learning and belief in God enabled her to be educated and also to be the author of an autobiography.

As regards actual time of Rasosundari Devi's death, her grand-daughter Saralabala gave a vivid description with proof.

"When my grand-mother died, we were in Deogarh. So my father could not meet her at that last moment.... After receiving the telegram, my father started immediately but could not reach in time".15

(Thakurma jakhan paralokgaman karen, amara takhan Deogarh chilam. Tai sesh samay thakurnar sahit babar dekha hay nai.... Baba telegram paiya raona haiyachilen, kintu samaymata pnauchite paren nai).

After suffering from remittent fever for 7 or 8 days, came the end of the journey of this magnanimous soul.

"The last of her (Rasosundari) life could be known from the reminiscence of her grand-daughter Saralabala Sarkar. Rasosundari died in 1900 A.D.".16

(Pautri Saralabala sarkarar smritikatha

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5.1.2 Nalinibala Devi

In the nineteenth century A.D. in Bengal as well as in India, a new epoch dawned as a result of which the modernity had its inception. The preliminary element of modern consciousness had been the unalloyed humanism. This undivided humanism engaged the progressive stalwarts of Bengal namely Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar in the tasks of reformation of religion and the society. Specially they had been more desirous of emancipation of women and their progress. In that period a great many persons of Assam welcomed and greeted this victory march of progress of women in Bengal. But before a century from now, female education was not an easy thing in Assam either in any systematic school or college. Though uneducated in the traditional education of school and college, the woman who earned reputation and respect in the mind of the people of Assam and India was Nalinibala Devi, the recipient of the Sahitya Academy award and the most renowned mystic poet of Assam.

Nalinibala Devi was born in well established, learned and rich Brahmin family of Assam. Her father was the well known politician of Assam namely Nabin Chandra Bordoloi and her mother was Hemanta Kumari Devi. Her grandfather Rai Bahadur Madhav Chandra Bordoloi was a high ranking officer in the British Government and was the first publisher of the Assamese Ramayana. He was the Deputy Commissioner in Barpeta in 1897 A.D. where she was born.

"In 1898 A.D. (Sakabda 1819) in the month of Chaitra before the Sunrise of the Madan trayadashi tithi (Lunar day), I was first introduced to the mother Earth. My grandfather called his first grand daughter by the name 'Padmini', which was later changed to 'Nalinibala' by my father". 17

17 Devi, Nalinibala - Eri Aha Dinbor, P-2.
The first residence of Nalinibala's ancestors was in the district of Sibsagar, later they migrated to Guwahati during the ravages of the Burmese invaders and then settled in North Guwahati.

Nalinibala's grand-father was a great personality with affluency, high tastes and interest. He purchased the garden house of the Ahom ruler Kaliya Bhomara Barphukan with which he annexed a few more plots and built his house to stay there with dignity and glory in the area known as Uzanbazar in Guwahati.

Nalinibala passed her childhood in such a surrounding of prosperity. In the life of Nalinibala Devi, the influences of her grand-father are not all to be trifled with. Although brought up in her childhood in the environment of ample wealth and weal, Nalinibala acquired the spiritual and moral training from the same family heritage.

"In those days the worship of the tutelary God 'Gopal' was regularly performed in our grand father's home. The feasting and the thirteen festivities were observed in such a grand scale that I find it like the difference between the heaven and the hell when I remembered those days."

Female education was not easily available in the Assamese society in the past. But as the grand father of Nalinibala Devi was a very progressive and...
free thinking person, so he sent his grand daughter Nalinibala and her younger sister Mrinalini to the well known teacher Swarnamoyee Dutta, for theory lessons in art, culture and literature in which they expressed some knack and interests while in his residence in Tezpur. Later, as per the desire of her father Nabin Chandra Bordoloi, the education life of Nalinibala under competent private teachers began in their own residence. She obtained knowledge in all subjects including Assamese, Bengali, Sanskrit, English, History, Geography and Mathematics remaining indoors. The librarian of the Curzon Hall (now Nabin Bordoloi Hall) namely Gopal Krishna Dev, was a scholar well versed in Sanskrit. It was he who opened Nalinibala's door towards the vastness of Sanskrit. He was not only the private teacher of Nalinibala Devi, he was at the same time preceptor, friend and fatherly guide of Nalinibala Devi. The impact of this Guru on the life of Nalinibala Devi was immeasurable. Besides Nalinibala acquired knowledge in various subjects from Gajneswar Barua (the retired Headmaster of the Collegiate School, Guwahati) and Nishi Kanta Sen, another teacher of the same school.

The influences of her grandmother on the life of Nalinibala Devi were immense and intense. This lady indirectly contributed to Nalinibala's attraction to and deep connections with literature, religion and fine arts in her later life.

Her father Nabin Chandra Bordoloi was learned, elegant and musician. In the life of Nalinibala Devi, the immense influence of this mighty person is beyond description. She learnt Bargits along with the Brahma sangeets in her childhood from him. Her childhood was moulded in an environment of high test and refined culture.

After the completion of her primary education, Nalinibala started her study of Sanskrit poetry to become familiar with the classical literature.
under the teacher Gopal Krishna Dey. Her childhood and adolescence were modelled in an ideal atmosphere -- the influence of which brought her in the later period of her life as an educated lady of refined tastes and high interests.

In a way Nalinibala Devi can be described as a fortunate woman since she acquired a great mass of learning with the help of private teachers in an age when the women had not the unhindered right to have education. Not only that in the age when learning of music was considered as a social crime, instead of reckoning it as a category of art, Nalinibala learnt music with the help of her father Nabin Chandra Bordoloi.

Nalinibala Devi was well versed in painting also. That she had not forgotten the art of painting was evinced by the pictures in her book 'Biswa deep' which she herself had drawn in her concluding part of life. To love nature was another feature of her character. The birds, beasts and the nature were her unique mates of childhood.

Yet another virtue which Nalinibala acquired was her knowledge in Homeopathic treatment obtained from her association with her father. The child mind of Nalinibala was ever imaginative and when she read a particular book of poetry, she got absorbed in the book so deeply that she very often fancied herself to be the heroine of the book.

"After reading 'Raibatak' by Nabin Chandra Sen, I fancied myself to be heroine 'Subhadra' of the book for some days. Gopal Krishna Dey was then my teacher in Sanskrit. He started teaching me 'Shakuntala' when I began to imagine that I was none but Shakuntala myself." 19

Her tendency to be imaginative even in her adolescence gave her the opportunity to establish herself as a poet in her later life.

"The impact of the poetry books started to generate poetry in my mind. Anything that entered my mind deeply became rhythmically musical which I loved to recite, thus I thought of writing poetry."\(^20\)

The first poem of Nalinibala De, entitled 'pita' was composed on the subject of the supreme Absolute-Being Sri Krishna. Only at the age of 10 years she composed this poem in the year 1908 A.D. Thus in the juncture of her adolescence and youth, her life of a poet just dawned. Slowly and steadily, she composed a good number of poems at the age of twelve years. In her later life she became one of the famous mystic poet of Assamese literature.

"The poetry of Nalinibala De delivers the message of peace and tranquility to the burn society."\(^21\)

In accordance with the social custom of the day, Nalinibala got into wedlock even at the age of 20.

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twelve years. On July 16, 1909 A.D. Nalinibala's marriage was celebrated with pomp and grandeur with Jibeswar Changkakati who belonged to the rich and respectable family of Nityananda Chaturvedi of Sibsagar.

The familiar place of her paternal home known since her birth was to be deserted and the unfamiliar place of the father-in-law's house to which she had to depart made her sad and hesitant at first. But the genial behaviour of her husband and other relatives attracted her soon with love and affection. The married life of Nalinibala was full of happiness. The sweet memories of the conjugal life made her rapturous even in her old age.

'Those days which I have left behind in the house of my husband, replete with many memories are never to be obliterated from my mind. They are still lingering in my mind like a gold-tinged heaven of joy showering peace and tranquility'.

(mor swamire gharar sukh smritire upachithaka sei pahariba nawara eri aha dinbor mor manat ekhani santir amiya sukh swargar dare ajio son sourani hai jiliki ache).

Nalinibala Devi became a mother at her age of fourteen. The first son heralded to her mind a flood of joy along with the responsibility of the mother to near the baby which made her instanteaously wise.

But it is true that incessant joy or relentless happiness never perpetuate in the man's life, every thing changes with time. In Nalinibala's home the first agony appeared in the guise of the untimely death of her elder brother in law; next, the death of her affectionate father-in-law the entire responsibility of the household came down on her and her husband's shoulders. But her

22. Debi, Nalinibala - Eri Aha Dinbor, P-50.
husband's co-operation and love opened her door to joy even in the midst of carrying on the duties of life.

But darkness deepened on her suddenly even within all peace and merriment when like a bolt or comet the cruel death hurled his weapon on her husband. His death on the Mahastami day (within Durga puja) in the month of Kartik in 1917 A.D. made her frantic. She returned to her father's home with the five children orphaned at the husband's death.

In her husbandless forlorn life of the widow, the books became her only companions. The influence of her father on the life of Nalinibala is unbounded. Her helpless widowed life was steered by the help of her father in the course of her movement towards metaphysical and spiritual goals.

When Nalinibala, a widow of nineteen years, returned to her paternal home, every member of the family raised a hue and cry at the miserable sight. But Nabin Chandra Bordoloi with his heart though heavy with pains, preached to her about the high ideal life of sacrifice and religion.

Subjugating herself at the feet of the Absolute Almighty, Nalinibala Devi tried to pass her days bereft of the husband in rigorous austerity and tolerance. She sought peace in the association of saintly and noble person and in the study of holy books. In place of worldly desires for pleasure, the 'saffron tract' (gairikpath) gave her the words of peace. Nalinibala produced her famous book of poetry 'Sandhiyar sur' - expressing the realisation of the supreme moments of her life in the medium of poetry. In this period of her life the influence of 'Gitanjali' by Tagore was remarkable.
"A few songs of Gitanjali became the words of my meditation."\(^{23}\)

(Kavi guru Rabindranathar gitanjalir geet keitaman jibanan dhyenswarup hal).

Although spirituality covers a wide range of her life inseparably, in the same manner, a wide area of her life is occupied by politics. Her political father made her interested and conscious in politics with his association. In the surging waves of struggle for freedom and tides of non-cooperation movement of Mahatma Ganghi, Assam also merged with the other provinces of India. Nalinibala's mother 'Karmavir' Nabin Chandra Bordoloi was the pioneer leader in this movement in Assam. His undaunted personality and patriotism moved the heart of Nalinibala also. In the autobiography of Nalinibala, a continuous historical narration of the contemporaneous movement is found. The basic events of the organisation of the congress in Assam are recorded in an appropriate way in the work 'Eri Aha Dinbor' by Nalinibala Devi. Nalinibala got involved in the sacrament of the freedom movement indirectly if not in a direct way.

Nabin Chandra Bordoloi along with Deshbhakta Tarun Ram Phukan had suffered imprisonment many a term. During the second term of imprisonment of Bordoloi, another painful calamity occurred in the life of Nalinibala, when her five years old younger son 'Putali' died of an accident. In this unbearable affliction of Nalinibala, her father Nabin Chandra comforted her with such words of consolation from imprisonment in the form of letters, that divulge the realization of his mind acquired through long penance. That Nabin Chandra Bordoloi was the helmsman of the mental and spiritual journey of Nalinibala can be known when one reviews these letters.

"It is difficult to say with what a great purpose the Lord has given you so much pains of suffering. The disgrace and humiliations among men are but trifle matters before that great purpose. The prayer by poet Tagore is the just expression of that nation. 'Please lower my head under the dusts of your feet'."

(Kone jane prabhuwe ki mahan uddeshyat tomak enekai dagdha kariche. Prithevir manuhar acharat lanchana, opaman sito ati tucha katha. Kavi Rabindranath thor parthanar mulei ache-'Amar matha nata kare dah he tomar charandhular tale).

The bereaved widow, burnt with the flames of the loss of the child; Nalinibala was counselled by her father Nabin Chandra in such a way that was possible of an ascetic who was also a house holder at the same time.

The dark clouds of helplessness once again covered Nalinibala's sky when her illustrious father, the iron man Nabin Chandra Bordoloi breathed his last on February 16th, 1936 A.D. Under the shadow of whose reliance she passed her long span of widowhood, now found herself on the ground of reality at his sudden departure. Her first son Upen Changkakati was studying at Calcutta at that time was summoned back to Guwahati to look after the establishment of the Gauhati Bank. The Almighty God or the cruel fate kept welded another invincible weapon for Nalinibala. That was the most unbearable pain of the death of her second son, Pabitra (Makhan).

The second son of Nalinibala was an embodiment of vigour, enthusiasm, boldness and moral courage. He did never compromise with the evil. At the
loss of such a dauntless adult son with good conscience
Nalinibala completely broke down. But on the other hand
she maintained her feeling of glory and pride for the son.

"As a symptom of this deep
love for literature, Pabitra collected the important
matters and articles from the newspapers. Unless he
could collect the cuttings of the newspapers at the death
of my father, I would not have been able to bring out
'Smrititirtha'-the reminiscences of my father". 25

Nalinibala became restive
for going out on a pilgrimage in order to regain peace in
her wounded heart. She realised with her wounded life
that in order to have a glance of Supreme-Being, one must
forgo everything of her or his life and sacrifice every
belongings. In the later life, Nalinibala involved herself
with various social, cultural and political activities of
Assam. She got the opportunity to be familiar with the
great artist and literateur Jyotiprasad Agarwala while
she stayed in Tezpur on the occasion of the service of
her son Upen Changakati there. The stream of her poetry
began to flow while she resided in Tezpur.

In the years 1941 and 1942
Nalinibala engaged herself in various political and
social activities. In this period, the thought of the
country or the community as a whole became more important
for her than the thought about herself. In 1943 she went
to Calcutta where her son Upendra was in service and

25. Devi, Naminibala - Eri Aha Dinbor, P-134.
stayed there continuously for four years. In 1947 India achieved freedom from the thraldom of a foreign rule. Nalinibala Devi was in great expectation for this sublime moment since her father, the life long fighter for freedom ended his life with this expectation in his heart. A self composed poem by Nalinibala Devi was broadcasted from All India Radio, Calcutta on that occasion which was not a trivial matter.

The absence of female education and obstruction before the same hurt the feelings of Nalinibala again and again. At the later stage of her life, Nalinibala engaged herself in manyfold activities relating to the progress of women, possibly for her deep sympathy towards the neglected women's progress. She was later chosen as the President of Assam Mahila Samity for women and the President of the Kasturba Samity.

The closing chapter of her life is marked by the keen desire of Nalinibala Devi to spent her leisures and energies in the activities of the social welfare. This part of Nalinibala's life was packed with activities. In 1958 A.D. Nalinibala received the title of Padmashri. As a recognition of her genius as a poet, she was honoured with the Sahitya Academy award for her book 'Alakananda' in 1958.

Following is the list of poetry and other books by Nalinibala Devi mentioned in 'Eri Aha Dinbor' in a chronological order.

1. Sandhiyar Sur (poetry) 1928 A.D.
2. Saponar sur (do) 1948
3. Parashmoni (do) 1955
4. Yugadevata (do) 1958
5. Jagriti (do) 1962
6. Alakananda (do) 1964
Writing in Prose

1. Smriti Tirtha (life sketch of her father Nabin Chandra Bordoloi) 1948.
2. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel 1966
3. Eri Aha Dinbor 1976

Published articles
1. Viswadeepa 1961
2. Santipath 1971

Published plays
1. Shesh puja (children drama) 1958
2. Parijatar abhisek (do) 1958
3. Pralhad (do) 1958
4. Mirabai (play) 1968

Unpublished work (poetry)
1. Meghadut (translation from Sanskrit verse)
2. Mandakini

Unpublished article
1. Naradiya bhakti sutra
2. Manash tirtha
3. Bhasanabali

Unpublished plays
1. Ruprekha (dance drama)
2. Ahom ausi (historical drama)
3. Pnuwati paharar knapani.

The following plays of Nalinibala Devi were broadcasted from All India Radio.
1. Mahisasura-mardini
2. Nabajanma
3. Holi
4. Netai dhubani ghat
5. Bharat-hidushi

Indian culture and Indian tradition were the nerve-centre of Nalinibala's work in verse and prose. It is evident in her own words.

"My educational life started without sighting the school and college - under the guidance of private teachers. Indian philosophy came to my view through study. In Indian philosophy, I have discovered the path of peace in the life wounded by numerous pains and disappointments. ... I feel happy at the thought that I have been heir to the great Indian cultural heritage. The waves of the great thought and concept of my ancestors have infiltrated the small lake of mind. This has been the source of my poetry." 27

Nalinibala Devi became tired at the end of her active life due to the injury of pain and suffering. The old age exhausted and fatigued her body and mind. She introspected herself at the end of the long journey, thus this tired life looked for rest:

"Now this life tired of treading such a long distance, seeks and end to this journey. .... The rest is for the soul, restless so long." 28

The Supreme blissful being responded to her great call. On Dec. 24th of 1977 came the end of the journey of the great soul in her own residence 'Swapnachali' at Guwahati.

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28. Ibid, P-367
5.2

Religious Life of Autobiographers

5.2.1 Rasosundari Devi

In the introduction to the book 'Amar Jiban', Jyotirindranath Tagore made a significant and thoughtful estimate of the spiritual life of Rasosundari Devi.

"Her autobiography reveals her to be an ideal woman. She was as much adept in household chores as she was religious and God devoted. ... Another notable trait of her life was her sincere desire to acquire knowledge. Thurst for religion kindled her desire for learning - not for reading books of fiction or drama. Her immense desire for learning was to enable her to read Chaitanya Bhagavata. Her religion was not reduced to pompous external ceremonies. Her religion was vibrant spiritualism. She saw the hands of God and felt His kindness in every happening of life. She utterly depend on Him. In her own word God was her whole thought. Such higher religious life is not usually seen."29

to God. Her spiritual began with the baptism or 'diksha' by her mother's word. - "Why fear,... when we have Doyamadhab. Pray to Dayamadhab when you are afraid, all fear would vanish if you pray to him"  

(Kiser bhay, ... amader Doyamadhab achen, bhay ki? Tomar jakhan bhay haibe, takhae tumi sei Doyamadhab ke dakio, Doyamadhabke dakile tomar ar bhay thake na).

Rasosundari Devi's first spiritual guide was her mother. Her mother instilled very firmly in the heart of her daughter deeper truth of religion by easy and simple language. This became the foundation of the subsequent spiritual thinking of Rasosundari Devi.

"That Supreme God has created all of us. He listens to whoever calls him, from wherever, in elaborate ways or in a simple manner. He listens even when we call Him silently. That is why He is Supreme God, not man"  

(Sei Parameshwar amadigake sristi kariachen, thake je jekhane thakia dake, tahai tini sunen. Baro karia dakileo sunen, chota karia dakileo sunen; mane mane dakileo sunia thaken, ejanya tini manush nahen, Parameshwar)

From the version of Rasosundari Devi we find, "From that day mother's supreme spell - the idea of Parameshwar (Supreme God) entered my heart".

(Sei dibas haite mayer mahan mantra Parameshwar namti amar hridae prabesh kariache).

Of the three ways of attaining God described in 'Bhagavat Gita', Rasosundari adopted the

30. Debi, Rasosundari - Amar Jiban, P-8
31. Ibid, P-12
32. Ibid, P-12.
path of bhakti(devotion) as the best and the only way. In her reminiscences, Saralabala Sarkar, the worthy granddaughter of Rasosundari Devi has drawn an intimate pictures of her grand-mother.

"Her paternal house had the deity of Dayamadhab. In her father-in-law's house she found the manifestation of Dayamadhab in form of the deity of 'Madanmohan'. My grand-mother's entire life is an example to show how one can realise the lives presence of God in a deity".

From her early childhood it was firmly embedded in her mind that all deeds of life, good or evil, are ordained by God and everything is being performed according to God's will. As a result, after marriage when she left the familiar surrounding of her father's land and was finding it difficult to adjust with the unfamiliar surroundings of the father-in-law's house, she remembered at that moment.

"In fact, it is not a matter of little sorrow to leave one's mother and all other close ones and live for ever in a different land under control of them where parents cease to be relevant. But it is praise worthy because it is God ordained act".

33. Sarkar, Saralabala - Amar Thakuma, Rachana Samgraha, Part-1, P-757.
Her thirst for knowledge and unyielding desire for learning made Rasosundari more dependant. How a lone house-wife in an alien surroundings and in a society against women's education became a self-taught woman by her faith in God and depending Him in a miraculous event. "Oh Supreme God, you teach me to read and write. By learning I could read books."

(he parameshwar amake lekha parha, sikha ami lekha parha shikhia puthi pariba).

Amazing! Rasosundari's learning was achieved super naturally by the grace of her supreme God. She narrated her experience like this.

"One day in sleep, I dreamt that I had opened the book and reading 'Chaitanya Bhagabhat'. Never did I ever see nor did I know this book, 'Chaitanya-Bhagabhat'. Still in dream I read this book. This was a serious book and I knew nothing of reading or writing."

(ek dibash ami nidrabor swarna dekhitechi, ami jena Chaitanya-Bhagavat pustak-khali khulia part karitechi.... ei Chaitanya-Bhagavat pustak ami kakhana dekhi nai ehang ami cinia na. Tathapi swapnabeshe sei pustak ami path karilam, ami mate kichui likhite parite jani na, tahate ica bhari pustak).

Her worthy grand-daughter Sarala bala Sarkar thus mentioned the absolutely devoted Rasosundari Devi's trust in God. "She had firm trust in supreme God. That is why she hope that by the grace of Him who could perform miracle, her desire would be fulfilled."

Her indomitable desire for learning made her more dependent on God. In the midst of multitude of books in Rasosundari’s house who could keep her recognise ‘Chaitanya Bhagavat’? In this matter she bestowed everything to God. Her unflinching devotion led her towards the path of emancipation.

"Oh, what a miracle! What an extraordinary majesty of the grace of God of kindness!

while cooking in the kitchen, Master called the son and told, ‘Bipin, I am keeping here my books ‘Chaitanya Bhagavat’. Extremely delighted, I hurried there and saw the book ‘Chaitanya-Bhagavat lying there’.

Instances of such supernatural events in Rasosundari’s life are mentioned many times. Saralabala Sarkar had mentioned many such supernatural events happening in the life of this extremely devoted lady. "Our ancestral house is in the village ‘Bor Ramdia’ in the district of Faridpur. The deity there is ‘Modanmohan Rumur has it that this deity used to appear perceptible before grand-mother and conversed with her’.

(amader paiktrik bari Faridpur jel antargata ‘Bor Ramdia’ namak grame. Sekhane ‘Modan-mohan’ bigraha achen)

sunite pai sei bigraha naki thakurmar sahit prayakshya bhabe darshan dia katha barta baliten).

Rasosundari Devi has striven to understand the Almighty by her fine analytical sense. She felt the touch of the invisible hand of God in every deed and in every occurrence of life.

"Why am I bound in the world who has kept me absorbed with the charming prowess! or, is it temptation of material wealth that has kept my mind deluded? No, it can not be; it will be a travesty of truth. Where will be the mind, if some one has not bestowed it. He who has given us everything in his kindness, has kept us absorbed in infatuation".40


In Bhagabat Gita we find in Jnanajag,

"Jogasanyasta karmanang jnana sancchinna sanshayam.
Atmabantang na karmani nibadhnanti Dananjaya".41

'But he who has renounced (the fruit of) actions through yoga, whose doubts have been destroyed by knowledge and who is self possessed. Dhananjaya, is not bound by actions.' The path of knowledge of Gita became a reality in the life of Rasosundari Devi. Though infatuated with worldly attachment and performed her daily duties unerringly, she remained free from desire and temptation. In her later life, we find her somewhat liberated.

Many pangs and agonies one after another troubled and afflicted the life of Rasosundari Devi. But Rasosundari Devi's boundless tolerance and earnest devotion to God kept her steady amidst the ocean of sorrows. Perception of a lofty philosophical path enabled her to rise from the worldly pangs of sorrow to the pure environs of the spiritual world.

"If I remember these deaths then my sorrow knows no bound, my ocean of agonies overflows. To worldly people, Almighty has given fortune and calamity equally, some people remember only sorrows and suffer always. But such people are still there who do not cast their eyes on the hundreds of calamities facing them." 42

Rasosundari's devotion to and dependence on God are scattered all over her book 'Amar Jiban'. In every deed, she felt the touch of God. She did not reject the sensitivities of the manifest world. Her writings reveal in weeping cry, the pathetic wail of a love-lorn mother on the separation of her son. But because of her God attachment she accepted the worldly sorrows as blessings. Observation of her grand-daughter Saralabala Sarkar supports this view.

"We find in the life of this woman her blazing faith in God. This faith gave her at all times a serenity like a saint."

42 Devi, Rasosundari - Amar Jiban, P-38,39.
timely, the strength to proceed faithfully in the world's path. Many miracles happened in her life, but she remained utterly humble.43

The way she bore the agonies of the world, especially the severe application of grief over the son's death with transcendental perception by the will of the God, rises her to the level of a 'grihi-sannyasi' (householder ascetic).

"Though my heart was smouldering day and night over the terrible grief over my son, it could not overpower me in one sweep. Before the development of my intelligence, my mother told me about the great charm, the name of 'Doyamoya', the great remedy has penetrated my bones. When my body and mind become overwhelmed and benumbed by the multiferious material demands, then that bone piercing pancea grows very powerful and removes all ills of my body and gratifies my mind with joy. Then these venomous torments cannot enter my mind."

(Putra-shok probal jantrana jado
amar antare diba ratra dhak dhak karia jvaliteche, tathapi ekkale pati a korite pare nai; amar buddhir chalana sakti na haitei amar ma amase mahamantra 'doyamaya'nanti balia diachen. ei mahoushad amar asthi ved haiya rahiache, amar sarir man jakhan bishoyer holalale ekkale acchannya o abash haia pare, takhan amar ei astibhedi bisholyakarani prabal hoiya amar sarirer samudai byadhi santi karia, anandarase manke paritosh kare).

43. Sarkar, Saralabala - Se kalar Meye Rasosundari Devi, Rachana Samgraha, Part-II, P-637.
44. Devi, Rasosundari - Amar Jiban, P-40.
The underlying meaning of the following sloke of Gita's sankhya yoga seems to be the inner voice of Rasosundari Devi.

"Jatasya hi dhruba mrityu dhurbang janma-mritasyacha
Tasmadpari hayerhathe, na twang shochitumarhasi."

(For to one, who is born, death is certain and to one who dies, rebirth is certain. Therefore over this inevitable fact, you ought not to grieve.

Devotion to God was her life's fundamental cant, her life's resource, strength and belief. Rasosundari Devi accepted the event of her self-education as a miraculous prayer to God.

"I am struck with wonder when I think of this. It is a wonder that I could be able to read books when I was totally unlettered and uneducated. In fact it is nothing but the manifestation of the magnanimity of the very generous God."

(Ami maner madye ei kathati bhabile amar mane ascharia badh hay. Jakhan ami lekhapara kichui jani na, takhan ame je abar pushtak parhite pariba iha ekti aschariya byapar, Bastabik emai abasthay lekhapara siksha kara kebal sei Jagatpita 'Banchakalpataru' namer mahima mantra).

At the root of Rasosundari's faith was her belief that everything in her life happened at the signal of auspicious God. Her worthy grand-daughter Saralabala Sarkar also stressed this view in her writing. "Many miracles happened in her life. But she was utterly humble, she could directly perceive the God's will and compassion in every happening.”

47. Sarkar, Saralabala - Sekaler Meye Rasosundari Devi, Rachana Samgraha Part-II, P-637.
Devotion to and faith in God enabled her to rise above the worldly fettters and perceptions and gained the right to enter heavenly world. Death of Rasosundari's husband was very painful and she felt for the first in her life the helplessness. But such affliction was also accepted by her as the will of the Almighty.

"My husband died on the 29th Magh 1275 B.S at 2-30 pm on the day of 'Siva-chaturdashi'. I was wearing a golden crown over my head; it beitel after a long time. But I am not perturbed; whatever circumstances the Almighty prescribes, in the best".

All her life Rasosundari, who offered herself to God, was devoted to Him. But in the old age the thought of God made her even more eager. "Oh, saviour of troubles, deliver this weak child to yours from this world. I cannot live without you. Oh, eye of my eye, Oh, colour of my eye, do not leave my eye. Let my eye remain immersed in that fascinating beauty of yours. Oh Lord my mind, be united with my mind. Let there be not even a little space in my mind without you".

(Tnahar jibane anek, aloukik ghatana o ghatiache, kintu tini ekanta niromani chilen. Jaha kichu ghatiyache sakaler bhitare bhagobaner iccha o kripa prayakhya bhabe anubhab kariten).

(he bipadtarini Tomar e Jurbal santan ke bhabararanga haite par karo. Toma chara thakite pari na, he nayaner)

49. Ibid, P-46.
nayan he nayanjan tumi amar nayanantar hai o na, amar nayan jeno
tamar ei mohan rupe sarbada nimagna thake,he maner manadhipati amar
maner sange sommilito how. Amar man jeno tomachara tilercha na thake

Excluding vaisnab padhobali,such
pure unity of feeling with God is rare in real
life. Subsequent life of Rasodundari Devi is sprinkled with
devotion to God. Undivided devotion to God was her only
desire.

"Whatever be the circumstances
you put me in, Father, that is the best. My prayer is that I
may remain fulfilled in the bliss of your name". 50

(jaha hauk,pita,tumi amake jakhan je
abasthai rakhibe tahai uttam. ami jeno tomar namanandeiparipurno thaki
amar ei pprarthana).

By her desireless worship
of
God,she attained supernatural powers. She could get hints of
many events of future before hand and she witnessed many
events sitting in her house. Before the death of her third
son Payarilal, she had a presage of events in her dream. She
witnessed while in her house the accident that happened to
her eldest son.

"I witnessed that those events
which I saw throughout the day in my mind had actually
happened. What a wonder! I saw that affair clearly in my
mind. Tears rolled down rapidly from eyes out of joy
remembering this. Actually those tears were not for my son
I was crying seeing the miraculous performance of the
Almighty". 51

(ami samasta dibas maner madye je
sakal kando dekhischilam, sei prakar samudai kando ghatiache. Sunilam
bayapare ami maner modye spastarupe dekhiachi, ki ashchor'ya e katha
mane bhabia anando rashe amar chakherjal jhar jhar karis paride

51. Ibid, P-53,54.
Her pure and desireless devotion to God raised her above the worldly attachments to the level of a Goddess. From the writing of Saralabala Sarkar of her own experience, we came to know the nature of her miraculous devotion.

"I have seen grandmother many times and have spent together many days and nights. The image of that rare Goddess has been imprinted in my mind. Throughout the night grandmother lying in bed and keeping the beads on her bosom used to mutter prayer. I was sleeping by her side. Whenever I woke up, I saw lips of grandmother moving slowly and counting beads softly. Struck with wonder, I used to think 'there is no sleep in grandmother's eyes?'"  

Rasosundari had a very long life. Nearing the end of her long life, when all her contemporaries were gone, she was counting days on the hope of acquiring supreme fruit. "Almighty has given every man, the tree of hope as the strongest of all. In the pursuit of that hope man's day and night has gone. I have been living all these years for that eternal fruit. Oh, giver of the fruits, what result have you prepared for me?"

52. Sarkar, Saralabala - Amar Thakurma, Rachana Samgraha, Part-I, P-76.
"Preview of death before dying is possible only by wise and self denying sannyasi. But that rare vision happened to the wholly worldly Rasosundari Devi, she conquered the fear of death, saying, "Majority of the people I have seen in this world, are terribly afraid of death. But if we reason well, there is nothing to fear. Out of ignorance, people always remain alarmed. I have very directly perceived that there is not the least fear in death. I will never forget this in life".54

This same thought, we also see in Ishoponisod'.

"Sombhutishnya binasaya jasta dwandabhayam so:
Binashena mrityu titwa sambhutyamritamannute'

(He, who knows death and eternity together, transcends death to secure eternity).

Her perception of God was nourished by the experiences gained within the parameter of her house and the world. Her consciousness of God was tinged with devotion, not knowledge. Religion occupies a major part of the life of Rasosundari Devi. She tried to analyse religion by her own consideration.

55. Ishoponisod - Chapter-15.
"Oh, what a wondrous thing is this religion. There is nothing in this world so rare like religion. See how King Yudhisthira risked his life for religion, but never deviated from religion. Oh, what a wondrous greatness of the Almighty! Far from seeing Him with own eyes, even if a particle of His ordained deed appears in mind it benumbs the body and mind."  

Possessor of the quality of goodness, the second part of Rasosundari Devi's 'Amar Jiban' is devoted entirely to the account of her spiritual life. It is the eager self offering and prayer of God intoxicated Rasosundari Devi to be united with the Almighty. Approaching the last part of life, Rasosundari realised that by spending the days in worldly infatuations, she could not make effort to secure the closeness to God.

"What a pity, my human birth went in vain. To born human is a rare birth. Having got that rare human life, my mind, instead of worshiping the feet of Radhakrishna remained engrossed unfruitfully. My life night has come to an end, no more time is there."

57. Ibid, P-61.
In Ramprasad Sen's devotional song we can get the same type of uttering.

'Oh mind you do not know how to cultivate my human ground remained fallow. Gold would have fruited if you had cultivated'.

(Man tumi krishi kaj janana. Aman manab - jamin rai blo patit abad karle pholto sana).

Conservation with mind was one of her way of self-analysis. In the last part of her life she fought with the mind. In the life of Rasosundari, we discern that the realisation is a higher stage of spiritual path.

"Oh, you, heretic mind, Oh vile mind, you are set to destroy me. Be careful, be careful, be careful. My ancestral treasures one gifted by my mother when I was young, before development of my intelligence, my mother told me the chant of 'Dayamoya'. That chant 'Dayamoya' has remained penetrated into my heart and bone as a supreme charm and panacea. My mind! Entreat you with your feet in my hand not to be oblivious":

(Ore man pasando, ore man maradhan tumi buji amar swarbanash korite boshiacho. Sabahan! sabadhan! sabadhan! amar paatik dhan, amar matridatta dhan, ami ati balikakale amar buddhine amkur haite na haite amar ma amake am dayamoya namti bolia diachen. Sai namti mahamantra o maha aushodhi bisholyakarani haia amar antore asthibhedo haia raciche, man re khabardar! khabardar! pralaya daityagan chaturdike sab ghiria rahiche .... man tamar charan dhoria minate karia balitechi jeno biswaran hai o na).

Being influenced by the eternal Indian spirituality, she chastised her mind many times.

This world is shrouded with delusions, but as soon as the play end, you have to go back to where from you come. "Play of this world is play with dust. We are benumbed with false pleasure. Oh mind! knowing it, are you not becoming aware? Oh mind! know it firmly that from whom you have come, who has sent you in this world market; you will have to return to him. Have you forgotten this?".  

Rasosundari Devi's religious consciousness arose not out of knowledge, but by her very fine philosophic outlook and the knowledge gained out of her own realisation and experiences. She analysed the activities of the Almighty beautifully and charmingly.

"Oh God, the pervadar, guardian of this world, the creator, protector and destroyer! You are lord of this worldly process. Oh Lord! You are the will! Whatever You will it happens that way. You have brought me to this world process and kept me waiting in this stage for so long. I am waiting in this same seat of this play-stage for 88 years".

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60. Ibid. P-70.
In Bhagavat Gita we find,

"Twamadidevo purusa puranstwamasya bishwasya porong nidhan
Bettasi bedoncho parancho dham twawa totaog Biswamonontorupo".61

(You are the imperishable, the supreme, the thing to be known, You are the supreme resting place of the universe, You are undecaying and preserver of the eternal religion; I regard You as the primeval being).

Tasting the venom and nectar of this blindly ignorant infatuation, she analysed and described often cruel activities of God beautifully and attractively.

"Oh Lord, there is no end to the wonderful happenings. I have been witnessing in this world process, You are presenting me in so many different attires drawing out of my own. In this play of Yours, You have presented in the stage attired with sons, daughters, grand-sons, grand-daughters and then taken away almost all"62

But Rasosundari Devi did not retreat from the struggle of life. Both inside her mind and outside, she unceasingly fought to realise God. Worldly sorrows and agonies occasionally made her forgetful of the difference between the eternal and transitory. Sometimes perhaps she was touchy about God.

"Oh Lord, one of the epithet by which You are known as 'Dayamaya' (full of kindness). This epithet is famous in three world. Even if You are cruel, will call You 'Dayamaya'".63

(adhikari mahasay, tomar ekti nam 'Dayamaya', ei Dayamaya namti trijagate bikhyataaache, tumi birday haite o baliba Dayamaya).

We find the story of the self struggle of man in the word of Saralabala Sarkar. - "Men are born fighter. Individual life of man is being developed through unceasing struggles. In his individual life he is constantly engaged in struggle. With him are reported both the obstacle and strength to overcome the obstacle. He will have to remould himself of his own".64

(Manush ajanma joddha manusher byaktigata jibane anabarata juddher madhya diyai bikashita haiteche. Manush nijer byaktigata jibaneo aharaha samgramshil. Tnahar nijer bhitare badha abong badha kataia uthibar sakti, duo rohiache. Tnahar nijekoi nije bhangia gohria tulite haibe).

Devoted Rasosundari Devi offered herself at the splendourous feet of God overcoming the strife and doubt, sorrows and agonies of the world. - "Oh Lord, You know what You would do at the end chapter. Whatever You do, will be good. But while approaching the end allow me at Your beautiful feet".65


64. Sarkar, Saralabala - Monusyater Sadhana, Sristi o bikash, Rachana-samgraha, Part-II, P-391.
In the next chapter, the supreme devoted Rasosundari Devi saw the vision of God in every manifestation, in all life and in the world. She believed that God took birth again in Kali-yug: God as a abatar sometimes as the form of Rama, sometimes as Krishna and lastly as Gauranga to absolve universe of sin.

The writer of the book 'Amar Jiban' ended the second chapter after communicating her last desire. - "Second part of my life story is ended here. After my death any one of my lineage, whoso desires may write my last chapter. If my book is published, then the small amount that remains out of the sale-proceeds of the book after deducting the cost of printing will remain deposited. My prayer is that every year out of that fund a grand festival shall be held for 'Modan Gopal'."

(Amar Jivan charit dwitio-bhag ei parjantai khanto thakilo. amar jibananta haile amar bamsheer madhye jini iccha karen tini amar shesbhag likhiben amar ei balkhani chapana haile ei bai bikrai haiya chapanar dam dia, pare je kinchit thakibe, ai taka amanot thakibek. amar cheledet to kothai rai, pare amar boshber madhya je thakibe, prati batshar Modan Gopaler n'kon ei taka dia mohoutsaba haibak ei amar prarthana).

The writing of autobiography by self taught Rasosundari Devi after overcoming the opposition of a hostile society is as surprising and even as the last desire of the writer at the concluding chapter which indicates there, her mind belong to higher transcendental plane above the material world. This is really surprising and enchanting for a house wife of a conservative family of that age.

Nalinibala Devi was essentially a poet, the main theme of whose poetry was spiritualism and transcendentalism. Her ulterior motive was to unite with satyam, sivam and sundarum (Truth, Bliss and Beauty) which remains concealed in the divergent in the colourful manifestations of the world. Her spiritual conceptions were partly inherited from her predecessors.

"The great ideals of my God-like grand-father, the attractive association of the saintly teachers with their ideal teachings, my acquaintance with Mahabharata, Ramayana and the Kirtana-ghosha which I attained through the behest of my wise grand-mother and the recitations of the fascinating epics and folk-tales by my grand uncle Kirti Nath Bordoloi created a dream world around my child mind".  

(Devatulya kakadauta aru deutar mohan adarsha, rishitulya sikshakar adarshaniya sikshar akarshaniya paribeshat, jnanabati aiter adhesat Mahabharat, Ramayan, Kirtan ghoshar lagat howa mar parichaye kirti mamadeutar jadukari kabya aru sadhukathar sonowali rajyar mohalaga sonkathie mor sishumokar chaupase ekhan sonawali swapon rajya garhi tulichil)

She was allured to the devotion of God and His worship from her very childhood on account of an atmosphere of unpolluted peace and tranquility in which she was born in an educated, aristocratic and refined Vaisnavite family of high taste and moral order.

"Ours was a family of Krishnnite devotees owing to the lessons taught us by our grand mother since our childhood. The stotras (hymns) were

read even in our bed; and reciting the 'Dhyana-Varnam' chapter of 'Kirtanghosa', she painted the magnificent picture of Krishna even in our child heart.  


The influence of her paternal grand mother on Nalinibala Devi in moulding her spiritual life, which was full of wisdom and sentimentality, was beyond measure. It was she who first sowed the seeds of devotion to God in her heart. In her later life, her deep attachment to literature, music, religion and the fine arts is due to the indirect influence of this grand great woman.

"My paternal grand-mother had taught us a great number of strotras (hymns). My grand mother was the daughter of an erudite scholar who taught her lesson even in those days in our house itself by our family priests. She could quote from her memory the book like Gita, the Mahabharata, Ramanaya and innumerable Sanskrit strotras".

(Naitai amak bahut strotras sikaichil supandit pitakar chawali aitak sei purani dinto ghar purohite parhaichil Gita, Mahabharata, Ramanaya aitar mukhate asankhvo stratrabor mukhastha).

Nalinibala's father Nabin Chandra Bordoloi was learned, progressive, religious and a man of high taste. Nalinibala learnt from him even in her childhood the 'song celestials' (Barageet) in Assamese and the Brahma-sangeets.
Although she passed her childhood and adolescent days in a pure, progressive and fine environment, her marriage was performed at the age of twelve years according to the prevalent social rules. Her teacher Gopal Krishna De, enlightening with wisdom taught her lesson which left indelible marks in her pre-marriage and post-marriage life.

Probably the teacher was a seer and as such he presented her with such things and blessings in her marriage through which he indicated his readings of the days to come in her life.

Among the things he Presented the first was the book entitled 'Bibah-mangal' - so that Nalinibala Devi could delve deep into the significance of marriage. Secondly a white silken handkerchief significant of a future which would remain white and spotless forever. Thirdly a hand fan made of sandal wood from which a sandal-like aroma oozes out as one fans with it.

"From the beginning of your life with this auspicious day of marriage may your entire life remain full of sandal-like and pure odour. This is the blessing from my heart, my dear daughter".70

The husband with unequal charms, virtues and peerless in all affairs, the heart's relatives of the family of the father-in-law could not prevent Nalinibala from entering the darkness of agonies after only a period of eight years of unhindered happiness.

70. Devi, Nalinibala - Eri Aha Dinbor, P-45.
and joy. The darkness deepened all round Nalinibala as her husband suddenly passed away leaving her afloat in the sea of sorrows. The five orphaned children enhanced her burden of sadness to a great extent which made her restive and helpless. As she approached her large-hearted father Nalin Chandra Bordoloi, she heard the eternal words of fearlessness as follows.

"Rise, my child, do your duties. The miseries and happiness are inevitable in life. To be tolerant is all affairs and circumstances is the real achievement of the life of a man".71

(utra bacha karatbya kata, manabjibanar dukhastukh anibariya, sakala sahiba paratehi ranab jibanar sarthakata).

In Srimad Bhagavat Gita the Almighty God incarnate Sri-krishna Himself counselled the penitent and pensive Arjuna (afflicted for his relatives) to busy himself in the duties with just these words of encouragement.

"Matra sparshasthu kaunteya shitancho sukha dukhuda
Agamapayinaha nityastang stitikhyaswa Bharata"72

(Oh, kaunteya (Arjuna) the sense the conceptions when joined with certain matters, produce happiness and woe and feeling of cold and warmth. These are transitory since they are generated and then decay. Therefore bear with them).

Nalinibala's heart became impatient in search of an everlasting peace above worldly desires. A new chapter thus began in her life. That time, at the sight of Nalinibala's pure-white garment -

befitting, a recent widow, her paternal relative raised an outcry, but her father, Nabin Chandra Hordoloi possesses of a strong mind and bold with a spiritual outlook told her with a stout voice removing her fears thus -

"From now on my life of a father will be worth-living as I behold the image of the all white deity 'Mahashweta in my daughter".73

(etiarepara mor bachar baga saj pindha 'sarbashukla-mahashweta' rup chabalai tale mor pitrijiban dhanya haba).

A radical change was brought about to the life of Nalinibala Devi after the dictation of her father towards her future. This new realisation helped her in the self-amelioration of her spiritualism. The particular term 'Mahashweta' (all white deity) stirred her mind constantly. A celestial image with pure white attire, sinitless and stainless, started to abide in her mind permanently. "I am 'Mahashweta; no strain or stigma of the world would ever touch me. I must trained on the long distant and forlorn path of action which is lying ahead of me - upholding the high principle (mantra) or percept ordained by my father".74

(mai Mahashweta, mai Mahashweta, prithivir kano kalimai mok sparsha kariba noware, sammukhat bistirna karmapath, kartavyapath xalshare atikram kariba lagiba, pitrioutta mahamantrar samman rakhiba lagiba).

Subjugating herself at the feet of the family idol 'Gopal' installed in her

73. Devi, Nalinibala - Eri Aha Dinbor P-61.
74. Ibid, P-71.
parental-home, she used to pray wreathing the garland of tears. "Accept this entire burden of my life. I offer at thy feet, oh Lord! kindly lead me by the purest path."

(grahan kara prabho mor sarbabhaan, tamar charanat ai jibanar sarbaswatwa ucharga karilnu, tamar charanat utsargita ei jiban, lai jawa mok sarbasuddha pabitra pathere).

Her father Nabin Chandra Bordoloi with his pure mindfulness strength of spiritual realisation showed his hapless widow-daughter the 'saffron tract' for the attainment of everlasting peace. "There was no end to the efforts of my father to make his dear widow-daughter forget the agony by inspiring her to the path of spiritualism. Offering a copy of the 'Srimad-Bhagavat-Gita', he said - 'Gita will throw light on your path'."

( sei sadya bidhaba maramchawalijanak adhyatma pathere anupranita kari tulibalai deutar jatmar sima nachil, Srimad Bhagavat-Gita, ekhani di kale, Gitai tamak bat dekhuaba').

She herself realised a vast world above the woes and worries accepting the great message of the Gita as the supreme ideal of his life.

"Yang hi na bythayontyate purushang purushasharbhaha
Samadukhasukha dirang sohamritatwatya kalpate".

(Oh the best of men, the person who with his equanimity of mind regards every sadness and joy generated by the contact with worldly affairs, but is not moved by them, achieves immortality).

75. Devi, Nalinibala - Eri Aha Dinbor, P-61.
76. Ibid, P-61.
The spiritual outlook of Nalinibala was moulded by the great principle or mantra (precept) taught by her father. He initiated her with the principle of sacrifice as he was a traditionalist and wise person.

"Then arose a keen desire in my mind to worship God. Where should I go and whom to approach? My mind became restless with such an idea for the right path to peace. As though it was a great unquenchable thirst. Seldom appears such a thirst in man's life. My mind grew detached to the worldly enjoyment. Detestation surrounded me. I felt as though everything in the world was vain".


A new chapter in the life of Nalinibala has just begun with the realisation of the spiritual quietude. She sought peace by the means of noble companions and associations, and by the study of noble books. "I searched for peace in the books of religion. While going through every page of the books my mind remained in suspense to know whether that page contained what I sought".

(Bibidha dhamagranthar majat bichari phuribaloi dharilnu santipathar sandhan. Pratikhani granthar pratyekti pat lutiwaote manalo ahe ki janiba ei pattot kiba santir batari pharo.)

78. Devi, Nalinibala - Eri Aha dinbor, P-60.
79. Ibid, P-61.
The book entitled 'Veda Vani' in 3 volume by Swami Purnananda Gir of Swargashram in the Himalayas, finally directed her towards the goal of peace. Sorrows helps man to identify that reality of life; in the state of pain man gets the necessary relief to know and realise God. Nalinibala came to know this from her own experiences and by the study of book 'Veda-Vani'.'Pain teaches man to subjugate himself at the feet of God removing pride and conceit. The wounds of pain purifies man's soul. Pain therefore is the real guide on the right path of man.'\(^{80}\)

(Dukhe manuhak ahangkar mukta kar bhagabanar charanat atmasamarpan karibaloi shikai. Dukhar samgat manuhar atma shuddha kare. Dukh manu-jibanar satya patha pradashak).

Her mind was then soaring high in the attitude of subline spirituality, no earthly desire could then attract her. The 'saffron' tract (gairik path) carried the message of peace to her. Her faith on Indian philosophy and consistent Vedic religion remained intact and constant for ever."My mind became restless for the extreme thurst of the life full of wounds and injuries by the fire conceptions or the saffron tract. During this period no worldly longing could touch my heart. Although concealed under the cover of pains and sorrows, these subline moments of life, as desired by me, God themselves transformed into rhythmic images as the poem in the 'Sandhiyar Sur'(my first collection of poems)"\(^{81}\).

Nalinibala revealed herself as a poet in these extreme moments of sorrow. Her spiritual notions made her a mystic poet.

\(^{80}\) Debi, Nalinibala - Eri Aha Dinbor, P-62.

* Comparable: Tagore said like wise,

\[
\text{Aguner parash mani chhayao prane} \\
\text{E jiban punya karo dahana dane} \\
\text{(Ghaloi, No.-18).}
\]

\(^{81}\) Ibid., P-62.
"Each an every poem in 'Sandhiyar Sur' is the outburst of my heart pressed down under the unbearable pain. These are the restraintless expressions of a lonely and bleeding heart which searched for a refuge at the feet of one who removes all the bereavement of life. These are the waiting moments for one who offers silent companionship to one exhausted in lonely yearnings. .......

There is no comparison with that secret gratification which I got in my mind as I embraced the 'Saffron tract'.\(^8\)

(sandhiyar surar pratyak kabita mor samghatmay jibanar hriday mathi alaywa bedanar argha. Jibanar asray asabharasabihin,nisang,jibane bisari phura sarba-santap-harir charan asraylai agbarwa antarar ekanta akuti.Jibanar sok dukhe abara nisanga jatrapathat nirabe jopane agbarowa param ashraylai apaksha. ... sei samayat mane 'gaurik pathak' sabati lai ji pabitra tripti labh karichil,sei triptir tulana nai).

Nalinibala's great thirst for meeting the supreme Almighty and her rapturous for the same expressed in the poem entitled 'Anahuta'(the uninvited) in the collection of mystic poem 'Sandhiyar-Sur'.

"I have not sought thee in the sweet, and secret moment of the dawn of my life; To day,in the dusk of abysmal pain on this endless sea-shore, I remember thee!
Oh my supreme beloved! where art thou,where art thou?\(^8\).

(Tomak tichara nai suwadi puwar jibanar sudhamay pabitra khanat aji ei jibanar endhar parat gahin endhare dhaka simahin sagarparat tumalai pariche manat!
O mar parampriya,tumi kat?tumi kat?tumi kat?)

---

82. Devi,Nalinibala - Eri Aha Dinbor, P-291,292.
83. Ibid, P-292.
Above the mundane merriments and enjoyments, Nalinibala became strongly impulsive for reaching an unworldly plane. "I now search in every page of Gita and Upanisad for that ever lasting peace".84

((Upanishad, Bhagavadgita adir pate pate bichari phuru shantir sandhan).

Nalinibala tried to get peace by studying the philosophic and religious book. "In Indian philosophy I have found the path of peace in my life bruised by painful injuries".85

((Bharatia darshanar majet rri bichari paishno samgate abara mor jibanar shantipath).

Nalinibala Devi attempted to pass her days bereft of the husband and in companion of the orphaned children in the rigorous tolerance after subjugating herself at the feet of merciful Almighty. During that period she came to the association of a number of saintly people amongst whom Swami Sureshananda was one whose influence heralded a new chapter in the life of Nalinibala Devi. It was he (Swami Sureshananda) who blessed her with the possession of a profoundly wise life'. This blessing showed her the path of peace in a heart burnt with agonies and wounded by pain of loneliness." These nectar-like words glowed like the effulgence of sacrifice in the 'saffron path' of a forlorn journey".86

((El amrit bakyai dekhiulc nisanga jatrapathat tyagaujjwal gairik pathar pohar).

Her thirst for Almighty made her unrest. "Thirsty of the unquenched thirst for the absolute,

84. Devi, Nalinibala - Eri Aha Dinbor, P-63.
85. Ibid, P-335.
86. Ibid, P-64.
my heart started moving ahead along the shore in quest of the end of the saffron tract, where might lie the nectar of the Great life.\textsuperscript{87}

(param trishnat-trishita pāne shanti
pathar sandhanat gairik jatrar ajan par bīwari gati
karilu, māhajibanar amritar sandhanat param trishnar pare pare).

Swami Abhedenanda, a disciple of Ramkrishna Paramahansa, Swami Sureshananda and an ascetic aunt of Nalinibala and Swami Jagadananda Paramahansa influenced Nalinibala in moulding her spiritual as well as personal life. Gradually her mind began to shore to the limitless sky of spiritual eschewing the world of joy and merriments.

In the formation of the spiritual foundation of Nalinibala, the influence of Rabindranath is beyond measure. Rabindranath's spiritual consciousness is compact with the principles of magnanimity of the Upanishads. The poet of universal love realised the manifestation of the Absolute in all beings - 'Sārva khalwédang Brahma'. This universal realisation dawns upon a mind only when the sense of ego is avoided and the woes and agonies are regarded as the highest knowledge necessary to fill the touch of Absolute everywhere in the universe. In 'Gitanjali' of the master poet, it is only the prayer and worship of the universal-self. The book entitled 'Gitanjali' occupied the place of Vedas in the life of Nalinibala burnt down by the flames of agonies.

"A few songs of Gitanjali became the spells of incantation for my life."\textsuperscript{88}

(Kabiguru Rabindranathar 'Gitanjalir geet kaitiman jibanar dhyanamantra swarup hol).

\textsuperscript{87} Devi, Nalinibala - Prī Abā Dinbor, P-64.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid, P-62.
The first poem in 'Gitanjali'

'Amar matha nata kare dao he tomar 
charana dhular tale 
sakal ahangkar he amar 
dubao chakher jale'

Expresses an unprecedented passion for self-surrender. The false self-pride must be subdued and submerged in tears in order to reach and touch the feet of the Almighty. This great song reached Nalinibala Devi with a strong spiritual implication. Being absorbed in it she forgot all the deceptions, humiliation agonies of the world which she had to face.

"I sing this song in sorrows and humiliations welling up all conceits - 'Amar matha nata kare dao he tomar charana dhular tale".89

Nalinibala viewed the truth in the extreme sadness of her life. The worldly pleasures and luxuries are rather hindrances against the achievement of the desired peace. In the movement of sadness the grace of the desired one can be attained. "If the longing for happiness and enjoyments can be removed from the mind, then in remembering God all the pains are dislodged. There can be no greater thing of desire than the grace of the benevolent one".90

(Sukh bhogar akansha jadi manar para tyag karib pari, bhagabanar swaranat sakalo dukh dur hay. Sel param mongalmayar kripa labh kariba parile tatkai aru ki bandhania haba pare).

This can be compared with Tagore's song.

"Dukhera bese esecho bale tomare nahi dariba he. 
Jekhane byatha tomare setha nibira kare dharibo!".91

89. Devi, Nalinibala - Eri Aha Dinbor, P-63.
90. Ibid, P-63.
91. Tagore Rabindranath - Swarabitan, 25, (Brahma Sangeet-5).
These songs were true companions of life of Nalinibala Devi. The mystic thoughts underlying the 'Brahma-sangeets' were the real messages of comfort and consolation of her desire.

"Chiro sakha he, cherona, more cherona
samsar, gahane, nirbhay, nirbhar, nirjan sajane samge rane
Adhaner hau dhan, another hau he nath, aboler bal.
Jarabharature nabin kara sudhasagar".92

We find in Nalinibala's word:

"The songs are the great consolations of the heart. The prayers are the words of the heart that have taken the shape of rhythmical compositions as the melodious songs. The tears roll down incessantly. The heart becomes a haven of peace during those moments. ...... Along with the melodies of the songs the mind, the heart and inner beings set out to an unknown transcendental world".93

(geetbar pranar param santawana.
Prarthanarupe pranar kathabar chanda ruplai geetar surat rup lai.
chakur pani dhara sara bai pare, seikhini samay swantire niyam upachi jai.... sangeetar sure sure mon pran satwakhan atindriya jagatalai gatikare).

This transcendentalism or mysticism is the main theme in the poetry of Nalinibala and the basis of her spiritual consciousness. Therefore she endeavoured to find the formless in forms, the endless within the end of things and beings, the infinity in the finite entities and the great peace in worries and agonies like Rabindranath. In her book 'Sandhiyar-Sur', she has expressed her great feelings of thirst for the attainment of the highest station in the midst of her pain at the loss of everything. She asked herself-

92. Tagore, Rabindranath - Swarabitan-4, (Brahma sangeet-4).
93. Devi, Nalinibala - Eri Aha Dinbor, P-63.
"Who calls me everyday,  
with a voice so tremulous in rapture  
From an unknown distance?".94

(konemusuadimate  
akulutalamate  
kondur sudurara para?)

After the death of her husband when she returned to her parental home she had to bear more pain beyond tolerance. With the immature death of her two sons, her mind became more bent upon God. The immense pain, naturally imbued with poetic feelings generated number of poetical works. "The poems in my 'Sandhiyar Sur' are nothing, but the outburst of feelings of heart smashed by the wounds and injuries of pain. These are the moments of waiting for the supreme refuge at the end of this lonely end sacred journey... Although the search is full of griefs, still this sacred journey on the 'saffron tract' is peaceful beyond the limits of senseperceptions".95

(sandhiyar sur mor samghatmay  
jibanar hridaya mathi olowa bedanor argha; ..... Jibanar snoke-dukhe abara nisamga jatra pathat nirabe gopane agbarhowa param ashrayalai apeksha.... sei sandhan jadio bedanamay, tathapi param satya shanti asweshaner supabitr a gairik jatra jen atindriya shantimay.)

In the later poetical works of Nalinibala Devi such as 'Swapanar Sur', 'Paishmani', 'Alakananda' (awarded by Sahitya Academy) and 'Anuran Sur' etc., we see the expression of the same spiritual consciousness.

Nabin Chandra Bordoloi, her father, a freedom fighter, wrote her a bunch of letters from the prison, which reveals his spiritual lessons loaded

95. Ibid, P-291, 292.
with valuable counsels. Bereaved after her sons premature death, Nalinibala received her spiritual guidance in such words - "In fact you are burnt by the fire of agony; the flames of sadness and pathos have engulfed you. It cannot be known for what a great purpose God has burnt you thus".

(Tumi dagdha haicha, shok, karur dukhe tomak jangul di dhareche.... konen, jane probhuwe ki mahat uddyeshe tomak enekai dagdha kariche).

Nalinibala's renowned father gave her spiritual lessons quoting from holy Gita - "The Gita says, 'you should be unworried in agony and rendered apathetic in joys and disaffected in fear and anger'... Man sacrifices everything for the love of man. If we cannot sacrifices everything of ours for the Lord, then how can we expect to get Him? Siddhi or real success cannot be achieved unless one becomes a sinceremost devotee. You practice austere (sadhana) or penance with no lapse or break. His objectives or endeavour is to redeem one (a being) from the bondage or imprisonment of the world in a general manner".

(Gitae kaiche - 'Dekheshu anudbignamana, suksesu bigataspriha, bitarag bhaiyang kradha'.... Manuhar premar nimitte manuh sabtatyagi hay, yadi prabhum nimitte sarba tyagi haba para najay, tante tnek poya jay kenekai? Ekaniesta bhakta nahaleta siddhi nahay. Tumi sadhana kariba. Tanar pratham chestai haiche samsarar bandhan lahe lahe khandan kara)

Her father's valuable advice is the source of Nalinibala's mental upliftment - "Associate your finite soul (self) with the infinite soul".

(Nijar khurda satta bishwatmar laga milai dita).

96. Devi, Nalinibala - Eri Aha Dinbor, P-97.
97. Ibid, P-98.
98. Ibid, P-99.
The mind of Nalinibala was then anxious to rise to the spiritual attitude leaving below the joys and sorrows of the world. The heart wounded by sorrows was then in quest of peace treasured in the sublimity of the 'Namghosha' (a book of devotional couplets by Sri Madhabdeva, a saint of Assam) and 'Bargits' (high type devotional songs composed by saint poet Sankara Deva and others).

"In my bereaved mind the nectar welled up from bottom of the Namghosa and Bargits by Mahapurusa Madhavdeva showering cool feelings with their serene melodious tunes removed the burning".99

(shok santapta pranat mahapurusa Madhavdevar Namghosamrit aru Bargitsamuhe antarparsa kakuti ghoshar hiya sitalaya sure santapta pranat santir amiya baki dichil).

The opinion of Dr. Maheshwar Neog on the spirituality of Nalinibala Devi is remarkable. "Whenever we remember Nalinibala Devi, we visualize as though, an image of a mother. She was first introduced to us through a poem entitled 'paramtrishna,' a sublime spiritual composition - in which the eternal and the solitary journey of the soul is described following a traditional Indian way".100

(Nalinibala Devilai mant arar lage lage egoraki 'Ai' matir swaran manalai aha jen lage. Tner pratham parichay paichilo 'paramtrishna' namer udatta, adhyatmik kabitar jaged: - jat nisango ekaki atmarr chirabicharanar katha bhаратiva adhyatmik aitijyar dristire burnowa haiche).

The literary and spiritual currents of the life of the great Nalinibala Devi have

100. Neog, Maheshwar - 'When I remember the mother Nalinibala', [Sharma, Hemanta (Ed) - Nalinibala Devi,] 1st Ed. 1979, Jcrhat, P-4
mingled together to make one torrential flow. Coming to the end of the journey of life, she has passed such remarks on her by gone
days that appear to be the final disclosure of her
spiritual search.

"In the midst of a great number of woes, thousand strives, grief and afflications and in the midst of successes, failures and honours beyond expectations, I have been experiencing a feeling in every moment, throughout trivial life and along every thought, a radiant graceful and delicate touch of the beaurious glance of the evervigilant guide of my life. This unique, incomparable glance has been the director of every action of my life."  

(Ei jibanat powa bahu dukh, hejar samghat shokbedana, saphalata, biphalata, ashatit sanmaner majat prati muburte anubhab kari achicho - mor jibanar sundar satter, jibanar sh jag prahati jibanar mor ei akincitkar jibanar anre anre, prati cintar pare pare, eti ujjwal sundar snigdha sneha komal drishtir parash. Atulania ei anupama drishti ei, mor jibanar pratikarma patha pradarshak).

3 Familial, Social and National Life of Autobiographers

5.3.1 Rasosundari Devi

The principal characteristic of the art of an autobiography rests on the expression of self-perception and self-development, creating a trend by the description of recollections and narration of events of familial, social and personal life. Rasosundari Devi's autobiography entitled 'Amar Jiban' evinces in its first part, her full realisation of this art, although it remains 'Half hidden from the eye'. Although an autobiography is the description and analysis of one's own life, the

101 Devi, Nalinibala - Eri Aha Dinbor, P-367.
familial and social events are fabricated in its texture lengthwise and breadthwise. The real evaluation of the life of Rasosundari is to be done on the backdrop of her familial and social life. It is really a wonder-story how she evolved an epoch-making style of writing in Bengali literature, learning the alphabets secretly. Like other members of her 'tribe' she too was a housewife confined in a prison of veils, a mother of many children, a God fearing lady with a zeal and enthusiasm for learning.

She completed writing her autobiography in the age of eightyeight years in which she recorded a beautiful documentary of her contemporaries' womenfolk in their family and social life where they had to loose their identity, position and value. For the convenience of discussion, the family life of Rasosundari Devi is here divided into two sections, namely her pre-marriage and post-marriage days.

Pre-marriage days

Although it was regarded as a very serious offence for women to get educated in those days, she devoted herself in self-education and in writing her autobiography, but in her personal and familial life she followed the existing tradition of Bengali society. She was calm and quiet from her childhood and was little timid in nature. But her feelings of deep sympathy to others' sufferings was particularly a quality, which drew others' attention. Coming towards the conclusion of her life also her kind and merciful eyes fell on others - a fact that can be known from the writings of Saralabala. The deepest sympathy for every person irrespective of guilt or non-guilt remained unabated throughout her life.\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{102.} Sarkar, Saralabala - Sekaler Banglar Meye: Rasosundari Devi Rachana Sangraha, Saralabala Sarkar, Part-II, P-633.
In her childhood and young age also Rasosundari Devi was very much fearful. This fear was not for herself alone; most of the time she remained excessively apprehensive in the thought that anything untoward might happen on the part of others as well. In childhood she heard from her mother that the boys and girls who indulged in wanton activities or tortured others were apprehended by the child-lifters. As such, in her childhood when her mates used to beat her for no reason, she bore it silently since she feared lest that they were lifted by the child-lifters or their elders scolded them at the report of their offence.

"When I played with my neighbouring girls, they used to beat me without any fault of mine. I was so fearful in my mind that I did not cry ever when I was beaten. Only tears rolled down from both the eyes. When I was pained very much then I cried a whit. But the main reason of mine yelling was in the thought that who beat me would be scolded by every member of our family".

(Takhan ami pratibesini balikadiger sange dhulakhela karitam, ei sakal balika bina aparadhei amake marita amar mane ekta bhay chila je, ami mar khaiya o bara karia kaditam na kebal dui chakkher jai paria bhasiya jaita. Amar jadi atisay bedana haita se janya o katak knaditum, kintu amar knadar bishesh karai ei je je amake mariache, amader batite sakale sunile uhake gali diben).

Another notable characteristic of the character of Rasosundari Devi was her detestation for self-publicity. She was the centre of affection of everybody. She lost her father at the age of 4 years, yet she remained the pivot of endearment of every member of her parental home. She had not to do any domestic work in her house but she secretly helped one ailing aunt of her

village whenever she felt it necessary. Afterwards when her secret service to the aunt was divulged, then she was showered with affection by her parents, instead of rebukes.

Rasosundari may be described as fortunate since in those days when women could neither touch a paper nor could busy themselves in learning. Considering it as an unpardonable offence, even then at the age of 7/8 years, she was allowed to attend the private school for boys maintained by their family, during the classes.

A grand devoted wife and religions minded lady Rasosundari Devi’s spiritual aspirations also originated in the family circle. In her very infancy, the faith in God and the feelings of reliance of Him were implanted in her mind by her pious and pure-hearted mother. In her entire life Rasosundari Devi depended of this faith.

In the nineteenth century as well as in the early part of twentieth century the place of women in the Bengali society or in the Hindu family at large was not highly respectable. They were treated as a burden to a great extent. Somehow to get rid of them by marrying out was regarded as a great work of relief. But as regards Rasosundari this assertion is not applicable, since she was as exceedingly beautiful as the centre of deep affection for all the members of the family. So it was not desired by any of them to get relief of her by marrying out. But none could dare to go against the strong inhibitions of the contemporary society. Her marriage therefore was performed at her age of twelve years—little over the average marriage age. That even at the age of twelve years Rasosundari Devi was much innocent and childlike in her mind is evident in her own description.
"I have already heard as everybody told me that all men and women get married but no description of marriage was known to me. That marriage took place was the only knowledge I gathered.\textsuperscript{104}"

(ami itipurbe suniachilam sakal lokei balita je, sakaleri bibaha haiathake, kintu bibaran ki, taha ami beshesh kichu janitam na; bibaha hayai matra jani).

But when afterwards she realised that she would have to leave her parental home and would have to set out for a strange place like the house of her father-in-law then she was really shaken by an unknown fear and horror.

"Then I was so afraid that the whole body shivered in fear and I felt in such a condition that I could not utter a single word. Even then I spoke to my mother, crying relentlessly - 'mother, would the Almighty accompany me? Mother replied 'yes, he would definitely accompany you and would abide with you, you need not cry anymore'.\textsuperscript{105}

(Takhan am ar eta bhay haiache je bhaye amar sarir thar thar karia kanapiteche, amar eman haiache je mukhe katha balite parina. Tathapi kadite kadite balilam 'ma parameshwar ki amar sange jaben? ma balilen hnya, jaben boi ki, tini sangei jaben, tini tomar sange sangei thakiben; tumi ar kadio na)."

**Post-marriage days**

Although she was sad to leave her familiar place of the parental home for the unknown place like home of her father-in-law, she finally consoler herself considering this custom as an act of God Himself.

"In fact, to leave one’s own mother and all the kith and kin in order to stay in a different place admitting their domain for the rest of life

\textsuperscript{104} Devi, Rasosundari - Amar Jiban, P-14
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid. P-15
and to think that one's parents are no longer related to one - is not a trivial matter of pain. But it is an act according to God's will; hence it is to be appreciated.106

(Bastabik, apanar ma o apanar sakalke charia bhinn deshe gia bash ebang jabajjiban, tahadiger adhinota swikar, apanar matapita keha nahen - eti ki samanya dukher bisay; kintu iha Iswaradhin karma, ei jannya iha prasamsar jogya bate).

As she was the centre of affection of all in her parental home, so she was in the house of her husband also, although she was pained all the hours of the day and night by the remembrance of her parental home. "I wept silently remembering all persons of my parental home. Tears did not leave my company. Whenever I saw a bird, a tree, a dog or a cat - everything evoked in me a notion as though it came from the land of my parental home. This notion brought tears to my eyes.107

But Rasosundari Devi was so fortunate that her father-in-law and mother-in-law helped her adapt the new environment with their affection. "My mother-in-law made me sit on her lap and consoled me with sweet words, thus Oh I thank Almighty. What a queer incident is this! I admire His tact. The bark of a strange tree is put around this one!"108

(Takhan amar swasuri thakurani amake kale laiya madhur bakye santana karite lagilen, aha! parameshwar kedaanyabad di, aki apurba ghatana, kausaler balai laiya mari, kon gacher bakal kon gache lagilo).

106. Devi, Rasosundari - Amar Jiban, P-15
108. Ibid, P-18
The delicate sentiment of women's heart is equably expressed here. Rasosundari Devi was married to a rich family: as such, she had not to keep herself busy with domestic tasks, all the hours of the day.

The menial servants managed all the affairs of the household. Besides, the mother-in-law supervised every thing. To spend her leisure hours Rasosundari Devi engaged herself in such artistic work as making dolls with silk-pieces and shells for decoration of the interior of the house. Her grand-daughter Saralabala Sarkar mentioned the fineness of her grand-mother's artistry at several places.

"She was competent in fine artistic work. She grew expert in doing such things as cutting stones, to transform them into several designs such as decorated creepers and leaves etc. She could mould various dolls and figures with clay. In doing these she became a skilled woman and could make a replica of whatever came to her view".109

(Tini silpi-kusala chilen, pathar katia latapata ankan, pat dia karukarja maya sika prostut kora, aiguli khub bhailoi pariten, abar mati dia nanarup murti gothon kariteo pariten, ai karje tini emon nipuna haiya udiachilen je, jaha dekhiten taha abikal garhite pariten).

But meanwhile circumstance changed. As all of a sudden, the mother-in-law of Rasosundari lost her eyesight. She had to bear the responsibility of the entire household. Although inwardly she considered contemporary social customs as improper, still outwardly she adhered to almost all of them. She came into an understanding with everybody for which she became

everybody's favourite. At the age of twelve years she came
to the village Ramdiya as a daughter-in-law in the family
house of the respectable Sarkars. The fortunate Rasosundari
could win the love and affection of every member of the
family - the servants and the individuals of the village
not excepted. This can be known from her own 'confession'.

"I came to Ramdiya village at
the age of twelve years leaving my parental home..... All
the members of this family were noble enough who treated me
with great endearment. All the servants of the house as
well as the neighbours expressed their affection in such a
way that made me think that God the Almighty had told them
to do so.... In fact, nobody expressed even an iota of
dissatisfaction towards me. In actually all the people of
that locality were noble persons". 110

(Ami bara batsarer samaye pitralav
tyag karia Ramdiya grame ashiachi. Ar ei parjanta sei Ramdiya tel achi
kintu ei batir samudai lok bara sajjan chilen, amake bhari sneha
kariten.... ei batir chakar chakrani ebang gramer pratibashin:
probhriti sakal lok amake eto sneha karito je, amar nischoy badh haita
jena parameshwar ihadigake taha balia diachen.... Bastabik amar prate
keho kakhona asantosh prakash karen nai. Bastuto ei desher samuha lok-
baro sajjen).

In the familial as well as in
social life she earned popularity to the fullest
extent. This can be conjectured without any effort. Meanwhile
she became the mother of a few children, she served the
children, her husband, all other members of the family
without fail. The servants remained busy in the outside
duties. She, therefore, had to engage herself in all other
tasks such as in the preparation of meals, worship of the
tutelary deity, hosting the guests etc.

"There was then no hand to assist me in the domestic affairs. I was all alone in the home. I performed all the duties of household according to the prevailing rules and system that existed there since before my coming. On account of these activities I had no moment for leisure or rest either in the day or in the night also".\textsuperscript{111}

\textit{(se samay gharer kajer lok chiol na. ghorer madye ami eka chilam. ami purber ei niyam mato samarer samudai kaj karitam. adikintu ei koekti santan palan karite hai, ei sakal kajer gatike amar dibaratri bisram chilo na).}

Mother of many children. Rasosundari Devi had to look after them besides the management of all the household affairs single handed. On certain days she had to remain without food when she hosted the guests.

"One day after entertaining all when I proposed to sit for dinner, a guest arrived in the home. There was no time for cooking a new for him. When I was out of wit, I served the guest with the dish kept for me".\textsuperscript{111}

\textit{(ekdin ei sakal khaoa daon mataia am jakhan bhat laia khaite bosibo, ei samay ekjan lok ashia atithi haila... ami je pak karia dibo, sai samayo nai. ar ke kariba, amar mukhor bhatguli chilo. sei bhatguli ei atithike daria dilam).}

She was so quite that nobody knows her secret sacrifice. "I did not disclose the matter but kept it secret within my mind. For two days I remained so and thought it to be a matter of great shame that people would know about my meals".\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{111} Devi, Rasosundari - Amar Jiban, P-24.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid, P-25.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid, P-26.
In spite of her heavy burden of duties and responsibilities of the home and hearth, often and on her mind remained impatient with the thirst for knowledge. Otherwise happy in all respects, her mind was repeatedly pained by a single feeling of remorse that education was not easily available for women in those days.

"There was no reason to lament for the domestic world. Always to perform the tasks of the home and to please one and all with whatever their demand and choice, was my only aim and effort. But one thing pained me immensely with remorse that I was prohibited from learning lessons since I was women."

The pen-picture of her family drawn by Rasosundari gives us a detailed and realistic view of the housewife in a Bengali home in the nineteenth century. The women of the time remained in constant thralldom. They had no right to move here and there according to their sweet will. This same plight may be sighted from the fact that Rasosundari was deprived of seeing her mother at her death-bed since she was a woman.

The domestic life, the children, the family and the duties towards it were no way neglected.
by her. But none of these could give her the mental fulfilment which she sought. There was the burning desire for education in her mind even in the midst of all the absorbing duties.

The God-fearing Rasosundari Devi depended on God for receiving education even in the midst of adverse situations. "Day and night I called upon the Almighty 'Oh Lord, kindly give education, I shall earnestly learn. If you desist from teaching me, who else is there to do that? Thus I prayed to Him within my heart". \[115\]

(Kebal dibaratu parameswar ke dakin balitam - 'Parameshwar! tumi amake lekha para sikhao, ami nitanta sikhibo; tumi jadi na sikhao, tabe ar ke shikhaibe, ariupe mane mane sarbada balitam).

As though it was a miracle that education dawned upon Rasosundari Devi by the grace of God. Meanwhile a great change took place in the mental and familial circumstances of Rasosundari Devi. After the death of her mother-in-law she occupied her place of veneration. Mother of many children her fortune in relation to them can be described as good enough. She had not to suffer for the doings and misdoings of her children.

"My sons and daughters were all of the same nature. All of them grew good looking, good character, wise, generous, kind and religious minded. They never did anything wanton" \[116\]

(amar putra kanyay je kr- okti santan haiachilo, tahara sakalei ekmata haiachilo. Tahara sakhe sundar sachitra bidwan, data, dayaban, dharmik ebang kakhana garhita karma karita na).

116. Ibid, P-34.
All the material happiness required in a domestic world were there in the home of Rasosundari Devi. There was no dearth of social recognition of status and familial happiness in her life.

"God, Himself was partial to me in granting the requirements of the worldly life to some considerable extent. In this respect, I have no grudge or grievance against Him. Sons and daughters, servants (both male and female) survived people, relatives and kinsmen, respect and honour, amusements and entertainments were given to me by the gracious God not in a very less quantity".  

A good number of bereavements and sorrows tortured Rasosundari Devi's mind again and again. During her lifetime, six sons and a daughter, several grandsons and grand-daughters expired. But her great patience and reliance upon God saved her from drowning in the sea of sorrows.

It is essential to know the mental attitude of Rasosundari Devi as a married woman towards her husband, and it is also equally necessary to note that an important and vital period of her life is covered by the influence of her husband and that her devotion towards him.

"A few things have been written about the story of my life; but nothing so far has been said."

117. Devi, Rasosundari - Amar Jiban, P-34.
within it about my husband. Thereby I think the book remained maimed. However it is not that I shall ever be able to describe all his virtues. But in brief I can say that he was a magnimonious person. It is not possible to find a person of his similitude".  

(Amar jiban britanta jat kinchhī likhita hailo, kintu amar jiban chariter madhye kartar sambandhiya kora katha likhita hainay. Tahate ei pustakkhanī angahani bāiache. Jaha hauk, amije tnahar gunabarnane samartha haiba, ami eman yogi nahi......) 

She adds again with respect -
"He was a kind hearted man. So was his generosity...... His manner, kindness towards his subjects is not a thing to be gauged.... In the same manner, he was exceptionally adept in administrative work. In fact, my husband was a great personality in an extraordinary way. Performing only the noble deeds he bade adein to this life of the world".  

(tini bara dayalu chilen, tini jemar dayalu chilan, temani data o chilen. Prajader sakaler prati tnahar kata daya chila.... Tini rajkarje obilaksman tatpar chilen;..... Bastuta karta bishes bara lok chilen, tini anek satkarja karia ihalok haita abasrita han). 

In these words her highest tributes and deepest feelings for her husband have found expression in reality. 

The veiled house wife Rasosundari Devi performed a number of courageous deeds in which her rigid personality was evinced and truly, in an age of staunch conservatism, these can be reckoned as acts of exceeding wonder.  

118. Debi, Rasosundari - Amar Jiban, P-57. 
119. Ibid, P-58, 59.
Near the village Findiya the husband of Rasosundari Devi had a criminal litigation with a Mohammedan Zamindar, under instigation of various sorts, it came to be known that the Zamindar used to torment the subjects of the estate of Rasosundari Devi's husband. Once during the absence of her husband when the subjects appealed to her for justice, she sent a letter to that Zamindar in the name of her son. The zamindar was pleased receiving the letter and released the captive subjects and agreed to the litigation that has continued for generations. Although she was somewhat rather afraid of doing such a responsible thing during her husband's absence he was rather satisfied at the news. In the description of her grand-daughter, Saralabala Sarkar, it is thus found.

"During the absence of her husband she was apprehensive of coming to such an agreement yet she did not hesitate to sign on it with the intention of rescuing the distressed people recalling. 'Madan Gopal their family deity. The husband, on his return home was rather satisfied at the brave action of my grand-mother and jested with her calling her 'Choudhurani'".  

(Kartar Anuposthitite eibhabe chuktiboddha haite jadio tnahar mane bishwa haiachilo, kinita ashahay prajader bachalbar jannya tini itasthata na karia Madan Gopak ke swaran karia swakshar dilen. karta bari ashia ei guatana suni: santusthoi haiachilen ebang 'choudhurani' balia thakurnake upahasta kariachilen).

Patriotism was deeply ingrained in the heart of Rasosundari. In her book 'Amar Jiban' there are several instances of her patriotism. She had a sense of deep-love for Mother India which was then a universal feeling since India remained a thral under a foreign power. As such, although she lived in a village of Bengal, she had a keen desire to introduce herself as an Indian.

"I came to India and spent here such a long period of my life and still continue to live here. I minutely observed all the matters relating to the beginning and the end and found that here no body used any bitter word, but everyone spoke only sweetly to me."

(ami bharatbarshe ashia etakal ja par karitam ebang ekhan parjantao achi. Ihar modye adya,anta sakal katha ami prithak prithak karia prokristorupe mane karia dekitam je, amake keho kakhon madur bakyai bai katubakya be nai).

It is surprising that she could realise with her limited knowledge and inadequate learning the greatness of India as the breeding ground of ancient philosophy and spirituality.

"Oh my mind, this India is full of gems. She treasures so many mines of priceless jewels. SO many hundreds of panpers came here and became enormously rich with the possession of a particular of those riches. Being a wretched slave I lie in the cavity as regards this."

(Rasosundari Devi enjoyed a considerably long span of life. As regards this she refers to India.

"In 1216(Bengali era) I was born. In this year (1304 B.E) I am now aged 88 years. I have come to India for such a long period. I lived here really a

122. Ibid, P-61.)
very long time. Now it is not definite whether I shall have to stay here any longer or depart from here (at any moment)".  

(1216 sale amar janma haiache,aikhan 1304 sal,amar bayakram 88 barcher haiache.Ata dirghakol halla am bharatbarshe ashiachi,bharatbarshe,ahedkina bashe kara hallo,ekhan it jaite haibe ki thukite haibe tahar nirmay nai).  

Sushil Roy has specially mentioned about the patriotism of Rasosundari Devi. "When Bengali prose had been unable to stand on its legs, this simple prose written during those years awakes surprise. In that same way it is equally surprising that a simple Bengali lady could introduce herself as an Indian. It may conjectured that Saralabala inherited her love for literature and the country from her grand-mother".  

(Bangla gadya jakhan nijer par dhare shekheni takhan kar lekha pranjal Bangla gadya dekhle jeman ascharjya bodh hay,ekjan sacharan Bangalalonar pakshe nijek eikhon Bharatbasi bale parichay deoa thik tatata bismaykar,Saralabala sahityanurag o deshapriti ubhai tnar pitamahir kach theke peyecher bale mane hay).  

5.3.2 Nalinibala Devi  

Nalinibala Devi was a great luminary in the firmament of Assamese literature. Though she attained no traditional school education, but following the spiritualism profounded by the Upanishad, her mind was filled with the philosophical consciousness of India. She was able to draw the respects and regards in the Assamese as well as Indian societies and was able to win the Sahitya  

Academy Award. She was honoured with the 'Padmashree' title conferred upon her by the Govt. of India and the Presidentship of the Asom Sahitya Sabha.

She passed a long life of struggle with pain and penitence. Nalinibala was born in a well established, educated, rich and aristocratic family of Assam. Her grand-father Madhav Chandra Bordoloi was a high ranking officer under the British Government of the time. Her father was the uncrowned King of the contemporary of Assam and helmsman in the freedom struggle in Assam - popularly known as 'Karmaveer' Nabin Chandra Bordoloi. She got the association of the members of the family in which she was born - all of whom were educated, refined, aristocratic and religious having high test. Their impact moulded Nalinibala throughout her life.

**Familial life:**

Her family envisages Nalinibala's personal identity which was deep and integrated. It cannot be denied that in the framing of her literary and spiritual visage, her family history stands as the backdrop which was in no way trivial. In order to know Nalinibala more intensely and to be intmate with her realisations, it is essential to discuss about her family surroundings, the closest relations and familiarity between the members of the family, each and every event of her pre-marriage and post-marriage life also.

At the outset of her autobiography Nalinibala Devi expresses her regards and pride regarding her parental home which she got by virtue of her birth. - "I deem it to be great fortune that I have been able to grow up in the midst of eighty family units as the eldest grand-daughter in the house with spacious room belonging to a highly respectable family of Assam". 125

125 Devi, Nalinibala - Erî Aha Dinbor, P-1.
Nalinibala was born at divine grace. At that time her grand-father Madhav Chandra Bordoloi was working in Barpeta town on official duty. - "In 1894 A.D (saka era 1819) before the sunrise, of Madan trayadashi day I came in touch with mother earth. My grand-father christened me as 'Padmini', the first grand-daughter of the family and later on my father called me by the name Nalini".  

The ancestors of Nalinibala have been at first the resident of Sibsagar district in upper Assam. - "They migrated to Guwahati during the onslaught of Burmese and started to live in North Guwahati permanently. The first ancestor of my grand-father belong to the family of Rudra khari Suryya Vipra who migrated to Assam from Kanauj".  

The grand-father of Nalinibala Devi was then the omnipotent patriarch of the family. After leaving North Guwahati, he came to Guwahati and purchased...

127. Ibid.
the garden house of Kalia-Bhomara Barphukan belonging to
the Royal family of Ahoms and annexed some area there too.
There is he began to live in the Uzanbazar locality with
great might and honour. He was as rich as was a person of
refined taste. Of the senior members of the family Madhav
Chandra Bordoloi, Nalinibala's grand-father exercised his
intensive influence upon her. The solvent and luxurious
grand-father was a benevolent and well-wisher for all. The
devoted Nalinibala inherited her faithfulness towards God
from her family. Her childhood and adolescence days were
passed in pure religious ceremonies. - "In those days the
worship of our deity God 'Gopal' was observed in my grand-
father's house. When I remember those festive days and the
numerous celebrations herewith, I find these days as
different, as the hean from underworld".  

( sei dinat kakadeutar gharat Gopal
bigrahar puja chale. Bhog aru baramahat terata parbanar utsavbaralat
manat parile ajir din aru sei dinar tulana akash patal jen lage).

A large portion of the life of
Nalinibala Devi is eclipsed by her grand-father's influence
in the matters of ideals and tastes. He was also interested
as well as exponent in the arts and literatures. The whole
Assamese song patterns such as 'Durgavari' and other
lyrical point (of the saint poet) were collected by him and
taught to her daughter to preserve these. Besides he
collected a number of valuable manuscripts and enhanced the
glory of Assamese literature with his prefaces attached to
them. Mentioned must be made of such books as the VII canto
Ramayana of Madhava Kandali and the work of Ratna Kandali.

Nalinibala Devi was much
endeared by her grand-father, Madhav Chandra Bordoloi. He
was ever ready to please the mind of grand-daughter. In
those days there was no facility for the traditional female
128. Devi, Nalinibala - Eri Aha Dinbor, P-5.
education in Assam. But observing the keenness of Nalinibala for learning, Madhav Chandra reared a hope in his mind that one day she would definitely become a highly educated woman.

"In those days particularly in Assamese society, there was the dearth of facility for female education. Even in such a period in the efforts of my father and of the private teacher, I advanced a lot in learning, although my medium was poetry. Hence my grandfather reared the hope that I would be able to become educated in higher learning."

(Sei dinat bisheshkai Asomiya samaj: srti sikkhar kano subidha nachil:ene dinat dauter jatnat, grihasikkhakar jatnat mor sikkhar agragati dekhi bisheshkai se kam bayasate mok kavya sikkhar madhyamat parhawar phalat uchhasikkhari sikkhita hai uthim buli kakaduate manat eta hablsh rakhichil).

Thus, the childhood days of Nalinibala Devi's passed in happiness and solvency. Then there appeared the first unbearable agony in her life in the form of the death of her most revered grand-father. He bestowed on her his blessings in a garland of tulsi (basil) leaves at the moment of his final departure from life. - "I could not know the value of the garland of blessings of my grand-father at the age of 9 years. But today I am in a position to know that perhaps my grand-father put the blessing garland on my head, reading 'mantras' to keep it ever spiritful with a view to maintaining the chastity of his grand-daughter. I am now restive at the death of my grand-father. This is the first attack of affliction in my life." 

(Sei na bachar bayasate kakadautar pabitra ashirbadi malar mol buja nachil. kintu aji bujichnoo, mor.

130. Ibid, P-23.
bhabishat jibanar pabitrata rakkha karibalai haite kaka-deut.
ashirbadi 'Tulsimala' pindhaichil, japamantrat sanjibita kari maranat
natinir sirat. Kakadeutar biyagat mai, asthir hai parichoo. Seye ma-
jibanar pratham sok).

In the joint family in which Nalinibala grew up, not only her grand-father, but also the
grand-mother considerably influenced upon her. Her interest
and deep attachment to music, religion and fine arts in her
later life is generated by this grand lady.

"Our grand-mother taught us
many sanskrit hymns. The daughter of an erudite scholar, my
grand-mother was taught in the house by a priest of the family. A large number of 'slokas', 'stotras', were in the
memory of my grand mother. This hymns etc. were drawn from
the sources of Gita, Bhagavata, the Mahabharata and
Ramayana".  

(Aitai amak bahuta stotra sikaichil.
Supandit pitakar chauali aitak sei purani dintat ghurar purhar
parhaichil. Gita, Bhagavat, Mahabharat, Ramayana aitar mukhate asankhya
sanskrit stotrabor mukhastha).

Her mother was a silent
woman, whose influences could not be directly viewed on
Nalinibala. She was a tolerant ideal woman who loved to
live hidden although she offered her helpfulness to one and
all at the time of need and necessities. Nalinibala admitted
these facts after her mother's death.

"My mother contributed towards
the development of my father's genius in a various
complicated way, with her still and tolerant habits of life.
His political life was assisted by her tolerant ways.

she could be an ideal woman for all as the wife of a great
husband bearing silently all the wounds and injuries of
life. Her admirers respected her as an universal mother
throughout Assam". 132

(mor deutar jatil rajnaitik jibanar
majat mor aie dhir, sthir, dhairjyashil swabhavere deutar bahumukhi
prativar bikashar khetra arihona jagachil.... Jibanar hejar ghat
pratighat nirabe sahi prakrita mahan swamir sahadharminireupe ji adarso
nari dekhuwale, sei adarsamugdha, sadau Asomar raijar matristhania hai
uthoba parichil).

In the familial life of Nalinibala it was her father's ideals and behaviours which
influenced upon her immensely after her grand-father. It was
her father who helped her to be well-versed in literature
and made her interested in music and fine arts. Moreover he
also helped her to become a purely religious minded woman
in her future life.

Nalinibala's grand-father was
transferred to Tezpur on some official business for a period.
Nalinibala had to stay for some time alongwith her family
members in Tezpur. Two Bengali educationist ladies exercised
some influence on the child Nalinibala which lasted in her
life as a permanent feature.

"There was a Bengali higher
primary school for girls in Tezpur. The school was managed
by Guru Prasad Dutta and his wife Swarnamoyee Devi as
teachers.... As there was some loss my studies, my grand-
father offered to Dutta couple the charge of my and my
sister Mrinalin's studies. Sometimes we studied under Srimati
Kiranmoyee Dutta, daughter of the grand-mother Swarnamoyee
Dutta". 133

132. Devi, Nalinibala - Eri Aha Dinbor, P-362
133. Ibid, P-16.
In the childhood of Nalinibala there was not the vogue of extensive female education in Assam. In the Panbazar area in Guwahati, there was a higher primary school for girls. But Nalinibala's father was not for the school education although he was interested in the female education. Hence, Nalinibala's life of education was started in the home under the guidance of private teachers.

"The education of we two sisters was started under the guidance of selected teachers of Guwahati in accordance with the new system of our fathers choice. The librarian of the Curzon Hall, Gopal Krishna Dey, a good literateur and sanskrit scholar was our first teacher".  

After completing her primary education, Nalinibala started her studies in Sanskrit literature and poetry under the preceptor Gopal Krishna Dey, to become acquainted with classical literature. The influence of this teacher of Nalinibala is immense. Besides, she studied English, Mathematics, Geography and History under Nishi Kanta Sen, a teacher of Collegiate School and under Jogneswar Barua, the Headmaster of the same school.

As there was no facility for free mixing with the outside world in her childhood, Nalinibala had to depend on her world of imagination for establishing herself as a poet in later life. — "I regard myself to be a fortunate woman since from my childhood I found a world full of flowers and fruits in which I spent my early days in the midst of natural beauties — extensive and wide — when there was no feeling of want. As I was much away from the touch of the outside, there was not even an iota of polluted spectacle before my eyes."  

Thus Nalinibala grew up to a complete woman of higher taste, education, refinement etc. in her later years within the surrounding of her family and idealism.

With the help of encouragement of private tutor and grand-uncle Kirtinath Bordoloi and father Nabin Chandra, Nalinibala can read lots of poetry books of Bengali literature. Learning was a rare thing for the women in Assam in that age, and in the same manner learning music and dances was considered to be a crime. But Nalinibala was born with a fortune and hence in that age, her father taught her music on a harmonium along with her sister Mrinalini Devi.

"In those days none could think of learning music by girls. But my father himself knew music well and taught us two sisters to sing. We learnt to sing Baragits, ghosa, the Ramayana and Mahabharata, the songs

by Durgevari, the Bengali Brahma sangeets etc.... In such deep-dark age we two sisters became known as the first singers in the Assamese society. We consider it to be our fortune to be known as such".136

Though Nalinibala was born in a progressive family free from social taboos and inhibition; still she had to get into marriage, following the customs of the society, even at the age of twelve years. - "When I attained the age of eleven years, I could not escape the 'Gauridan' (to marry out a girl at a tender age) a social custom of the day.... 'I was the first daughter in the family as such, everybody became eager to perform my marriage. ....... Krishnapran Changkakati was a rich man of Sibsagar. His son Jibeswar was fixed as groom to married with me".137

The teaching and wisdom imparted by Guru Gopal Krishna De made Nalinibala wiser than her age. It is a rare instance that at the age of only 11 years when she got married she realised the chants or mantras.

137. Ibid, P-44.
with fine sentiment. - "Each of the chants (mantras) of the marriage, which were given me by my teacher in the book 'Bibah-Mangal' overwhelmed me in the marriage assembly itself.... When the bride-groom uttered 'May my mind become yours, may my heart exchange itself with yours' - and hymns of the Vedas transformed themselves as the endless respect and love and flowed down to the feet of my husband in a hundred streams."\(^{138}\)

(Mor sikshake diya 'Bibaha Mangal'

mantrabar pahri jowa babe biyathalir pratyakti Vedamantri mor hriday
abhabhuta karitulichil.Sei mhhurtat darae kow 'mor chittai tumar
chittai houk, mor hriday tumar hriday houk' swamir mukhat d\'wanita howa
Vedamantra kumari pranat ashim sraddha aru bhalpowa jen bai parichil
swamir charanat satadhare).

On July 16 of 1909 a new chapter began for Nalinibala Devi. Leaving the familiar surrounding of the parental home and entering the unfamiliar surrounding of the home of her father-in-law, she felt a sort of apprehension, but the affectionate behaviour and sympathetic co-operation of her husband and other relatives admitted her soon as a member of the family.

"I felt as though the house and the family members as strangers. But my husband's familiar face made me forget all sorrows. Within a day strangeness was removed from my mind by the affection of the members of the family."\(^{139}\)

\(^{138}\) Devi, Nalinibala - Eri Aha Dinbor, P-46

\(^{139}\) Ibid, P-46.
Although the happiness in Nalinibala's conjugal life was shortlived, still she was the happiest woman during that period. She recalls in her autobiography all the events and affairs of the days in her father-in-law's house with high regards.

"Fortunately I began to float on the current of care and affection in my father-in-law's house. In the entire family, my father-in-law expressed his greatest affection towards me. I have to shed tear-drops when I remember the affectionate father-in-law. He was a house holder with pure habits, great sincerity and religious fidelity".  

140

(mor bhagyagunat ma sahurar gharar marambhara nadit uti bhahi phuribalai dharilo.gotei gharar bhitarat or sahur deutai mok ati kai snah karichil.deutar senehar katha suwarile mor chakur paniolay.Sahur deuta nisthaban.suddhachari.dharmik grihashtha achil).

In her old age too, Nalinibala repeatedly remembers how the memory of the transitory married-life influenced her mind. - "The unforgettable days of the past in the house of my husband in Sibsagar packed with happy response, still glow in my mind with golden hues of a serene heaven till this days".  

141

(Sibsagarar mor swamir gharar sukh smritire upachi dhaka sei pahariba nawara eri aha dinbor, mor manat ekhani santir amiya sukh swargardare ajio sonswarani hai jiliki ache).

Nalinibala Devi became a mother when she was fourteen years of age."My first son Upendranda was born when I was fourteen years old. Everybody used to call him 'gold'. Along with his birth, the

140. Devi, Nalinibala - Eri Aha Dinbor, P-51.
141. Ibid, P-51.
experience as a mother was attained by me even in my adolescence. My mind became rampant with a surge of inspiration with the sense of duty".142

(chaudhya bashar bayasat pratham lara srimal Upendrar janma hay. Sakalore tak 'son'bul matibalai lay. sonar janmat mor kishori bayasateli matitar abhignata ahil. Manar majalal ahil daitya bodhar prabal prerana).

The main stronghold in Nalinibala's wedded life is her husband's love and affection. As a wife she was possibly the happiest woman. "The golden days of the eight years of my married life were filled with the relentless love-affection of my husband. That constitutes, as though another chapter of my life. The days of my married life were sweetened by the active-engagements".143

(Bibahita jibanar athati bacharar sowaranir sonbulia dinbor achil maramiyal swamir senehare bharpur. Sei jen jibanar an eti adhyay. sansari jibanar karmabayasta dinbor achil karmare madhumay).

But in this world of changes the relentless happiness and the constant enjoyment did not last long. First, the death of her, brother-in-law, then the death of her father-in-law came down around her like an eclipse with no relief.

"With the death of my father-in-law, the family began to open chasms..... After him the entire charge of the family was to be shouldered by my husband".144

(Deuta, swargi howar lage lage gharkhan lahe lahe bhangan dhare.... sansur-deutar pichat mor swamir uparati gotai gharar bhar pare).

142 Devi, Nalinibala - Eri Aha Dinbor, P-50
143. Ibid, P-56.
144. Ibid, P-56.
More calamities occurred in her life even after that. The ominous oracle of her dream appeared in reality. On the 'Mahastami' day (during Durga Puja) the death of her husband created an endless dark-night in her life. The sweetest relation with her husband, though short lived, was as though the relation of eternal time.

"Fortunately I got a very kind-hearted husband. Every woman desires in her life a love and affection from her husband's sacred heart. After the austerities of many a life the woman gets the love from her husband which is singular and sole in thought and deed. I thought it to be the result of my penances in the former lives that I got a husband who was unblemished either in appearance or in virtues."


When she returned to her parental home with five orphaned children after her husband's death, her father helped her to proceed on the path of life with his eternal message.

"Happiness and sorrows are inevitable in a man's life. To tolerate every sorrow and sadness is the acme of a man's moral strength. Arise, be quite and calm".

(manab jibanar sukh dukh anibarjya. Sakalo sahiba parato he manabjibanar sarthakata Utha, sthir howa).

146. Ibid, P-59.
In her forlorn life of a widow her sole companion were the books. - "I put my mind in the study of the books on varied ontological subjects sitting in a trite room. My heart was restless in quest of peace, so I plunged in the search of peace. I did not know how days and nights flitted away."  

(Aeti nirosh kothalit bahi ekanta mone nanan tatta bishayak grantha samuhat mananibesh karilnoo. Antar akankhat akul, santi anwesanat bur marilnoo. Din nisha keni jay kabo nawaro).

Her father lovingly took Nalinibala's white garments befitting a widow as the signal of her inevitable future.

A recent widow Nalinibala moved her father's heart to guide her by the path of spirituality. The holy book Srimad Bhagavata Gita was the unfailing light which Nabin Chandra Bordoloi raised before her Mind's eyes. 'This book will show you the real road' he told her.

Nalinibala passed her widowhood days in rigours of austerity dedicating herself at the feet of the Almighty. She gained peace in the association of a number of saintly persons and in study, a numbers of good books. No worldly desire could attract her. The message of peace was heared from pursuing the 'saffron tract'. During that period of life Nalinibala came under the influence of 'Gitanjali' by Tagore.

"Gradually a deep abhorrence awake in my mind towards the enjoyments of life. A few songs of the 'Gitanjali' by gurudev Tagore became the subject of my meditation.... From time to time I used to write poetry"  

147. Debi, Nalinibala - Eri Aha Dinbor, P-60
In the turmoil of the revolution, her father was imprisoned several times. In the second term of imprisonment a great number of calamities occurred in the life of Nalinibala Devi. The graviest of these occurrences was the death of her life five years child putali in an accident.

"In the life of this hapless widow the cruel fate had his own designs. The only basis of life of the widow - the fatherless youngest child Purali's accidental death was fatal to myself also. Only the solace was to me the valuable words of spiritual stain by the 'Baba' of Panchavati Ashram during those inbearable days of pangs of suffering".149

She was morally or mentally reinforced by the letters of her father written from the prison. Nalinibala managed to publish those letters with due respect in a literary journal entitled 'Chetana'. That her father Nabin Chandra Bordoloi was the guide in her psychological and metaphysical worlds can be discerned by reviewing these letters.

"I bless you so that your heart is soon occupied by tense ascetic ideals. The final penance or austerity in the life of a woman is universal love. May in your boundless devotion for the deity 'Gopal', men and women of the world became your children.

May all the children of the world represent your 'Putali'.

Nalinibala continued her life of duties holding the sorrows on her head like a precious diadem. With her father's help Nalinibala performed the marriage of her first daughter Usha Rani customerilly at the age of 12 years while she resided in Dibrugarh bedecking her with khadi clothes which were brought from Wardha.

The dark clouds of sorrow once again clamped down upon the life of Nalinibala when her formidable father, the ironman Nabin Chandra who sacrificed his life at the altar of his motherland's worship ended his life on February 16, 1936. Nalinibala who spent a long span of her widowhood under the care of her father, now felt utterly helpless at his desire. Upendranath Changkakati, her son, who was a student in Calcutta at that time was compelled to leave his studies and return to Gauhati to take the entire responsibility of founding the Gauhati Bank.

Nalinibala's fate wielded its deadliest weapon since long till the moment when her second son Pabitra (Makhan) died leaving her an ocean of grief.

These succeeding events grieved one another exhausted her mind and body leaving no solace. In her family life she had sons and daughters who were obedient, noble and well-behaved. She remained restless in their demise with an aggrieved heart hankering after peace which she expected to get in pilgrimage.

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150. Devi, Nalinibala - Eri Aha Dinbor, P-93,94.
In Order to forget her personal agonies Nalinibala then engages herself in the pursuit of artistic and literary activities. She made the unerring message of her godlike father the pole-star of her life.

"There is literature in your heart which is no way less than truth itself. Please regard this literature as the worship of God in your life. The constant practice of literature can be reckoned as the main service to the country itself. By loving the country create literature for the welfare of the country... But nowhere remain involved. I bless you, may God guide you always by the path of wellbeing and bliss".151

(Tomar antarat satyaswarup sahitya ache sei sahityike bhagabanar aradhanarupe jibanat saragat kari lawa. Sahitya sadana deshar pradhan seba. Deshak bhalpai desh kalyankar sahitya sristi kariba.... kintu kato lipta hai na pariba... Mai ashirba karicho parameswar tamak saday kalyan pathere lai jaba).

National life:

An extensive part of Nalinibala Devi's life was mingled with politics. Although she was not directly involved in politics, her association with her politician father Nabin Chandra Bordoloi made her consciously interested in politics. His influence touched almost every member of the family. Politics cannot be obliterated from the potrait of the family of Nalinibala.

"In 1919 when Assam was made a separate unit of administration through his untire efforts father returned home and changed the atmosphere of the house to the main centre of political movement".152

Nalinibala Devi was indirectly entangled in this movement for freedom if not in a direct way. In her writings a vivid penpicture of the great awakening for freedom can be viewed.

"When the movement became more forceful the British Government sensed a peril in it. The Government started the search campaign with a greater avidity vigour. My father laid the chagre to conceal the secret papers on me. I hid the papers in a particular place. Fortunately the police could not trace out the papers even searching the entire office of the congress. My father entrusted on me with a number of such responsible duties and praised me for successfully performing the same."

Mahatma Gandhi was regarded as a worshipful person in all ages. In Nalinibala's writings full of respects for Mahatmaji, a picture of the same can be seen.

"In the invitations of my father a host of Indian leaders accompanied by Mahatmaji arrived at this place. That was indeed a memorable day for us. My father's residence (Santi Bhawan) really turned to be an abode of peace like a pilgrimage."

In 1941 as she had to stay in Tezpur in connection with her son Upen's service.

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154. Ibid, P-84.
important of her life begin which is not to be easily forgotten. She came into the association of a number of artists, literary persons and men of culture. The prominent artiste, composer, lyricist play writer Jyoti Prasad Agarwali became intimate with her during that time. Since then she came out of the periphery of her family and expended herself to the social and national life in Assam.

From the middle of her life Nalinibala Devi soared above her personal life of worries and woes and was particularly attracted by the impulse of social and national consciousness.

The absence of female education and the huge obstacles of liberty of women hurt repeatedly the undaunted heart of Nalinibala Devi.

"Till 1919 A.D in the midst great awakened consciousness of India there was no social consciousness for female education in Assam..... In Guwahati (Panbazar bazar area) the high primary Bengali school was the only institution of female education, where a few Assamese girls admitted themselves as students. In the Uzanbazar bazar area of Guwahati no Assamese Girl was familiar with education. A wish to start a girl's school in Uzanbazar agitated my mind" 155

(Bharatar jagrata chetanar majar 1919 sana lai ke Asomat strisikshar prati samaj-sachetanata jagi utta nachil... Guwahatiit Bangali uccha primary school Panbazarat chalichil. Sei schoolat dui-ejani asomiya sowali he parhichil Guwahati Uzanbazarat asomiya sowalihe schoolar mukh dekha nachil... Uzanbazarat ekhan sowali schoolkhulibalai manat habiash jagil).

Her parental uncle Probodh Chandra Bordoloi encouraged and financially helped them to start a school in his own Bunglow which Nalinibala did with

155 Devi, Nalinibala - Eri Aha Dinbor, P-211.
with the aid of my her friend Snehalata Bhattacherjee. But in the absence of the enterprise of the guardians of the female students, the school could not last long.

In the contemporary Assam the reaction to the Sharada Act was vividly apparent (The sharada Act was passed in 1930 in the Indian Central Assembly). Its main point was that if girl was married out before 14 years of her age, the guardian and the priest had to pay rupees one thousand as fine failing which the imprisonment was the penalty. Even before the enforcement of the Act there was the spree of marriage of girl of 3 to 10 years to 10/11 years of age in Assam. It was almost like the 'Kanyamedha yajna' (a ritualistic sacrifice in which girls were killed). At the sight of this miserable plight of the girls Nalinibala pledged that her youngest daughter Aruna would never be married out until she attained sixteen years of age, she maintained her pledge until the last.

"In Assam it was the first instance that Aruna and Bulu (sister of Sri Sarada Kakaty were married when they attained the age of 16 years. After this the marriage of the aged girls became a vogue".  

(Asomat pon pratham 'Aruna' ar 'Bulur' (Srisarada Kakatir bhanick sollo bachar purna howat biwa hay Iyar pcherepara bayastha sowalir biyar prachalon hai pare). In this way, with her dauntless mind, Nalinibala Devi entered the area of various social reforms indirectly. Thereafter she became actively involved in various institutions of the progress of women. Her sympathy to the neglected women possibly inspired her to join hands with the progressive associations.

"The Kasturba samiti was formed under the auspices of the Kamrup women's association

I felt it fortunate to work as the permanent chairperson of the Kasturba Fund for a year".157

(Kamrup mahila samitir jatna kasturba samiti sthapan hay, kasturba fundar sthai sadhanetri rup ebashar kal thakar saubhagyag hate).

Nalinibala Devi adorned the chair of the president in the annual conference of the provincial women's association in 1947 A.D in Nagoan where she delivered a heart-rending lecture on the role of women in the building up of the national character.

"The women today need not live under the mists of superstition and blind faith..... The Assamese women should also join the literary association in order to improve the Assamese literature...corruption, drug etc., have polluted the national character although left untouched the society of women. The women are nonetheless capable of removing those evils from the midst of men".158

(Tirata sa maj aji andhabiswas kusmaskar, adir kuhakat pari thakiba negale..... Asomiya sahitya unnat karane tirata sakaleosahtya sabhat jog di sahityar prati mano jag diya ucht....Durniti, Madakdravya byabahar adi jibare jatia charitra kalusita kariche. Sei bore nari samajak barkai sparsa nakareleo, purus sakalar majarpara seibor guchaba pariba nari sakalei he).

During this period of her life Nalinibala kept herself busy joining the public gatherings actively. In 1949 A.D she presided over the 500th birth anniversary of the saint Sankardeva which was most memorable. Besides from 1941 to 1946 she presided over the birth centenary celebrations of the Rabindranath Tagore at different places with great regard and cheerfulness.

158. Ibid, P-217.
The concluding part of her life was spent in the social welfare services in which she devoted all her energies and leisure. She then absorbed her mind in the formation of the first child-welfare institute in Assam.

"As per the suggestion of Srimati Krishna Hathi Singh an All India children's institute was founded in Guwahati. As the permanent President of the institute the entire responsibility of the same was borne by me and hence an office of the same was founded by me in a room of the house (Santi Bhawan) residence of my father) in 1954 A.D". 159

(Sreemati Krishna Hati Singh
nordeshkrome Gwahati sarbabhbaratiya sisusantha sthapit kara hal. Sthai sabanetri rupe ei sishu santhar bhar mor uparat parat mantakha gharat (Deutar ghar) 'Santi Bhavanat' eti kothali office sthapan kara hal (1954 A.D).

She gave us the birth-story of 'Moina-parijat'. - "Parijat kanaan was the organisation of children which was later amalgamated with another organisation namely 'Moina-mel' and thus the joint organisation was rebuilt as 'Moina Parijat' with great efforts. Unanimously the entire Assam accepted the only children organisation as 'Moina-parijat'". 160

(Parijat-kanan moina melar samjor ghatai bahujatnere 'moin parijat'gothan kara hal sarba samatt kromashomar ekmantra sisu anusthan'Moina-parijatak sadau ashom grahan karile).

This chapter of Nalinibala's life was full of activities. She was elected as a member of the social welfare association for two years in 1955. 159. Devi, Nalinibala - Eri Aha Dinbor, P-225.
In 1952 the Assam Text Book Committee elected her for two years as a member as per the request of the Government. In 1952 she became a member of the Gauhati Municipality as a nominated member of the Government.

In 1953 Nalinibala Devi was nominated as a member of the Advisory Board of the All India Radio in New Delhi.

In 1954 Nalinibala Devi was elected the President of the Asom Sahitya Sabha. At the onset she was supervised and was rather moved at the expected gain of this heavy burden. But later she regained inspiration and courage as she remembered the words of the poet Tagore. "I thought that all things and affairs took place in accordance with the will of the Almighty. I was none in this design of the Almighty and my pride had no place in it. He who had called me for this duty would Himself perform his task. A line of the poet Tagore reverberated in my eyes:

---"Whom you give your banner, O Lord please give him (also) the boldness to bear it. Please give him the devotion (or attachment) To tolerate the great pain in the service of the.'"

(monat bhat hol sakalo kan biswanwartaran icchatei parichalita hay, karma ahamkar karibalai mai kon Jijane ei kartabyar ahabwan diche tewal tewar kam samadha kariba Kaviguru ephaki kavita kanat bajai uthil).

Tomar pataka jare dau Bahibare dau sakati. Tomar sebar mahan dukhoo sahibare dau bhakati.

In 1955 Nalinibala Devi became member of the Sahitya Academy. Nalinibala Devi, though did not actively participate in politics but indirectly she got involved in politics again and again. She was an outspoken orator and a true patriot. As such she could not tolerate any injustice done against her motherland and instead she became vocal in protest. In this period in order to defend the Assamese language and against the bifurcation of the province she entered politics many a time.

By and By Nalinibala abandoned the provincial periphery of Assam and got her place in the national sphere of all India. She gained the national honour and thereby brightened the face of Assam. In 1957 she was invited to the poetic conference of the All India Radio held in New Delhi.

"In 1957 an invitation came from New Delhi to join as a selected representative in the All India poet's meet. I could neither even dream nor imagine that I had to go to Delhi to read out my (self composed) poem. It happened as ordained by the Almighty who might perform every thing accordingly".\(^{162}\)

(Swapanato nabhaba ketiyao kalpana nakara ene abhabaniya ghatana, Delhi lai gai kabita path karibalai jaba nirdesh, tnewaei(bhagaban) sakalo kam nischoyi karai niba).

The second National honour conferred on Nalinibala when she was awarded the title 'Padmashree' in 1958. But in such a huge tidal wave of joy she remained uninfatuated.

"My mind remained inert or indifferent. I could feel neither joy nor frustrations. The most precious honour conferred by the President of independent India has fallen on a daughter of Assam. As this..."  

\(^{162}\) Devi, Nalinibala - Eri Aha Dinbor, P-305.
great honour was bequeathed on the future of a petty worker of patriotic deeds of Assam, the entire Assam became overwhelmed in joy".163

In 1964(25th January) she was elected the President of the All India Poetic Conference in Delhi.

The greatest day of glory and magnificence in the life of Nalinibala Devi was in 1964 when she was awarded the prize by the Sahitya Academy for her poetry book 'Alakananda'. Rising the barrier of personal happiness; sorrows she was then engrossed in the attempt to assimilate herself with great tradition of India. In her speech delivered on the occasion of award distribution ceremony of Sahitya Akademi, she often and on recalled the great Indian tradition and that she was indivisible part of this tradition was also reverentially remembered.

"I am glad to think that I am an heir to this great Indian culture. In my mind this ripple of the great notion of my ancestors has risen making the source of my poetry".164

163. Devi, Nalinibala - Eri Aha Dinbor, P-316.
164. Ibid, P-336.