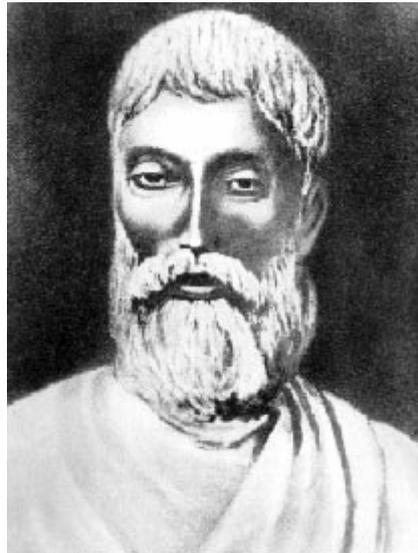


**LIFE OF NAG MAHASAY**  
**A SAINTLY DISCIPLE OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA**

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(Durga Charan Nag)

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**CHAPTER I**

**BOYHOOD**

Let us introduce the life of this great saint, with the ever-memorable words of Swami Vivekananda: "I have traveled far in different parts of the globe, but nowhere could I meet a great soul like Nagmahashaya."

There is a small village, Deobhog by name, at a mile's distance from the port of Narayangunj in Eastern Bengal, (now Bangladesh), where Saint Durgacharan Nag, commonly known as Nagmahashaya, was born on the 6th day of Bhadra, 1253 B.S., corresponding to the 21st August, 1846 A.D. It was the first lunar day of the light fortnight. The moon was in the Leo of the Zodiac. His father's name was Dindayal, and his mother Tripurasundari. Their ancestral home was at Tilerdi. Deobhog had been their subsequent settlement for two or three generation. Dindayal had two sisters. Bhagavati, the elder, became a widow at the age of nine and remained with her brother till her death; but nothing of any importance has been known in respect of the younger sister Bharati. It is said that she seldom visited her brother's home and pre-deceased her elder sister.

Besides Durgacharan, two daughters and a son were born to Dindayal. But of these, Saradamani, (who was born next to Durgacharan) alone survived while the others succumbed to ailments in their childhood. And the mother Tripurasundari passed away soon after she gave birth to her youngest son.

Thus Nagmahashaya and his younger sister Saradamani lost their mother at the early age of eight and four years respectively. Dindayal never thought of taking a second wife and so the task of bringing up the boy and the girl devolved upon their good sister Bhagavati, who eagerly filled the vacant seat of their mother, though of the two children the boy was particularly dear to her. Remembering the tender affection and care of Bhagavati, Nagmahashaya used to say, "This aunt of mine must have been my mother in my prior lives."

Dindayal was a pious, orthodox Hindu. He was employed on a very low salary in the form of Messrs. Rajkumar and Hari Charan Pal Choudhuri of Kumartuli in Calcutta. Dindayal had only a tiled hut at Kumartuli to live in.

The Pals looked upon Dindayal more as one of their family than as an ordinary servant. They had great faith in the pious, truthful and contented nature of Dindayal. He was never asked to submit any account. Once there was a discrepancy of a few thousand rupees in the account. The proprietors had such confidence in Dindayal that they never suspected him in this connection. So they ordered the whole amount to be written off. About a year after this incident, the cause of the discrepancy was found out, and that served only to strengthen their faith in Dindayal all the more. Since then the Pals used to take special care to see that Dindayal earned

more. Another noteworthy incident of these times may be cited here.

The Pals were exporters of salt, and occasionally they had to dispatch the commodity by boats to Narayangunj. The route lay through a dense forest and was haunted by pirates; so a brave and faithful officer was always deputed to accompany every consignment.

Once Dindayal was going on such an errand. On entering the Sunderbuns, it became quite dark before the boat could reach a place of safety. So Dindayal was afraid to proceed further; and seeing a big dilapidated house close by and two cottages of peasants in it's neighborhood, he ordered the boat to be anchored.

All the boatmen, having finished their supper, went to sleep. But Dindayal alone keeping a stout stick by his side, remained awake, and 'smoked' away the whole night. Gradually the night wore away into morning and about five o'clock Dindayal went down from the boat and walked a few paces towards the dilapidated house to ease himself. Being restless by nature, in one place he began to scratch the earth with his fingers; and lo! he felt something like a coin underneath. His curiosity was heightened and he removed a lump of mud from the place and found to his astonishment a pot full of gold coins! He took out a few and found them on examination to be coins of ancient times. He put them back beneath the earth, got up in all haste and ordered the boat to set sail immediately. He did not allow them even breathing space; for he said later on, "Avarice crept on me slowly and I wished to become rich. Suddenly the thought occurred that it might belong to some Brahmin in which case I should have to suffer eternal hell! So, quick as thought I left the place and ran away from the temptation."

Of Nagmahashaya's boyhood, very little is known. Tradition has it that he was sweet-tongued, well-behaved and modest. He was of a strong and health frame and looked exceedingly beautiful with his long hair flowing gracefully from the head. Of jewels and other adornments, he had none at all save two silver bangles. But though unadorned he looked more beautiful than the rest of the boys on account of his natural beauty. Whenever the ladies of the neighborhood saw him they would always take him up on their laps and dandle him. But there was one peculiar trait in him that he would not eat anything that was offered by strangers.

In the evening the serene child would look towards the starry firmament and remain long alone gazing at those twinkling lights overhead, "Dear mamma," the boy would fondly say to his aunt,

"why not let us go to those realms; I don't feel well here." When the moon was up, he clasped his tiny hands and danced in great joy. When the trees rustled to and fro, he thought that they were calling him, and he used to say, "Mamma, let me play with them" and imitate their motions, as if they were his playmates. And all around would be bathed in sweet delight!

His aunt used to tell him various charming stories from the Puranas. She lulled the boy to sleep by narrating the stories of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Not a day would pass without his hearing a tale; even when the aunt felt tired he worried the life out of her till she yielded to his request to narrate a story.

Very often he dreamt of these very stories. Sometimes looking at the figures of gods and goddesses in his dream, he woke up out of fear, but even then, afraid of disturbing his aunt who was taking her rest after strenuous toil, he sat up quietly by her side. In the morning when Nagmahashaya related his dreams to her she would be filled with awe and wonderment.

Like Prahlada of Pauranic fame, Nagmahashaya was not of a playful nature from his childhood. But to satisfy his friends he used to play at games. But never would he tell a lie even in play, or in fun. His love of truth was so great that if any of his friends uttered a lie he would no longer look upon him as a friend. If there arose any dispute among his playmates, he used to take upon himself the task of an umpire and decided the matter judiciously that all were satisfied and looked upon him as their leader. From his very infancy he was able to attract all persons young and old, by his amiable disposition.

After his mother's death Nagmahashaya was for a few years under the loving care of his aunt. As he grew up his thirst for knowledge increased. In those days there were not so many schools as there are at present in Bengal. There was only one vernacular school in Narayangunj. Nagmahashaya began his education there. But he could not advance further than the third standard, that being the highest class in the school. So he became very sad; and when his father came home next during the Durga Puja time, he expressed an earnest desire to continue his studies at Calcutta. But owing to the straitened circumstances of the family, he was not allowed to do so. This had a depressing influence upon him. He banished all hopes of prosecuting his studies at Calcutta, and searched for a school in his own district. Somehow he came to know that there were several schools in Dacca. But Dacca being at a distance of ten miles from Narayangunj, to attend any school there, he would have to walk to and fro twenty miles daily. So the aunt

was against the proposal. His other friends also advised him not to go there. But he was inexorable. Next morning, without informing anybody, he set out for Dacca, having provided for himself with only a handful of puffed-rice for the day's repast. The whole day was spent in searching for schools. He came home in the evening, after finding a Bengali school of his choice. It was quite dark when he reached home. In the meantime the aunt had been searching for him from place to place in the neighboring villages; she was overwhelmed with joy when she saw him return. First, she served him a meal with great affection and care and then asked him the cause of his disappearance during the day. Nagmahashaya disclosed everything to her and said "I have made up my mind to go to Dacca for my study from tomorrow onwards. You will have to cook me meals by eight o'clock in the morning." Seeing his eagerness the aunt said, "God bless you, there shall be no difficulty."

The next morning Nagmahashaya started for Dacca and got himself admitted into the Normal School. Here he studied for fifteen months. During the whole period he was absent only for two days. Rain, sunshine and cold passed over his head equally, from day to day, and nothing could thwart his indomitable perseverance. But owing to the great exertion and continuous strain, his health broke down. Referring to these days, he used to say, "I never felt the least tired when I used to go to Dacca, for I had a short-cut through the forest. On any day if I happened to feel hungry on my way back, I used to buy a pice worth of puffed-rice which was quite enough for munching on the way."

One of the teachers of the school had almost a paternal love for Nagmahashaya. Seeing him come daily on foot from such a distance, he said one day, "Boy, you need not take so much trouble to come here all the way to read. Stay with me and I shall somehow manage to bear your expenses." But the noble boy answered, "No sir, I do not feel any difficulty in coming here." Astonished at this, the teacher remarked, "I know not what this boy will be in the future!" Had the teacher been living to see the after-life of Nagmahashaya, he would have witnessed that his prediction was fulfilled amply.

Nagmahashaya read in the Normal School at Dacca only for a short period. But within that time he perfectly mastered the Bengali language. His handwriting was beautiful and his compositions were simple, thoughtful and attractive, showing an intelligence far above his age.

All his writings during this period were full of religious fervor. Later, when Nagmahashaya came down to Calcutta to study medical

science, these essays were published in a pamphlet form with the heading, "Advice to Boys."

He kept it a secret for a long time. Even his most intimate friend, Suresh Chandra Datta, did not know anything of it before it was actually published. Only when it was printed, a copy was presented to him.

All the books were distributed amongst the boys of his village. Even today, a few copies of it may be found at Deobhog.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **HIS MEDICAL STUDY AND PRACTICE**

Nagmahashaya was now grown up. With a view to strengthen the bond of family life, the aunt of the motherless boy settled his marriage. And he was married to Srimati Prasanna Kumari, an eleven-year-old daughter of Sri Jagannath Das, a well-to-do man of Raisdia in Vikrampur.

Five months after his marriage, he came down to Calcutta and stayed with his father. He began his studies in the Campbell Medical School; but his zeal for learning did not meet with any measure of success. For, even here, he could not prosecute his studies for more than a year and a half, though no one knows exactly why he had to leave the School.

After this Nagmahashaya studied Homoeopathy under Doctor Behari Lal Bhaduri, the renowned physician. Dr. Bhaduri was well pleased with the amiable disposition of the boy and taught him with great care. Daily, morning and evening, he got his lessons from Dr. Bhaduri and would revise them at home.

Nearly two years passed thus. Nagmahashaya had to remain in Calcutta for the most part of the time, acquiring experience in his calling; and so his wife remained in her father's house. Consequently he had hardly any opportunity of cultivating his acquaintance with her, and even when there was an opportunity he felt shy to go near her. If she happened to be in his native village at the time when he went there, he would climb up a tree and remain there throughout the night lest he should be tempted by her presence.

His aunt could not easily understand this kind of behavior; but like all worldly-minded people she was under the impression that time would mend matters. But unfortunately she was doomed to

disappointment. The poor girl died suddenly of dysentery. This touched him deeply but he felt much relieved. He thought that Providence freed him from worldly bondage, and therefore he was happy. His father however felt that he should be married again and left instructions with his son-in-law for the selection of a suitable bride for his son.

Nagmahashaya again took to the study of Homoeopathy. He bought a small box of Homoeopathic medicines and began to treat the poor people of the neighboring localities and distributed medicines among them free of cost. Dr. Bhaduri remarked on more than one occasion that he had very good results in many difficult cases by the use of medicines prescribed by Nagmahashaya. He was a prodigy in prescribing medicines. On a certain occasion his mother-in-law came to Calcutta; she saw the wonderful results of his treatment and said, "My son-in-law is verily Mahadeva (God). Whatever medicine he gives, it is always effective." Gradually the good name of Nagmahashaya came to be known all around. While yet a student, the young physician became the refuge of the poor. Patients began to pour in large numbers into his house. He could now earn money if he so desired, but he did not do so, as his ideal was not to get practice but only to serve the sick and the poor. He would never miss an opportunity to serve others. He never hesitated to do even menial work in the service of others. His father's friends sometimes took advantage of this and made him do their marketing; he carried even their bags of rice and bundles of fuel.

He was ever ready to serve the distressed. There was a rich man at Hatkhola named Premchand Munshi. Although he was rich, he never engaged any servant at home. He had a distant cousin of his for all kinds of household work. Besides this, he was so mean-minded as to depend even for trifles on the generosity of Nagmahashaya. Suddenly his distant cousin died. The people in the neighborhood hated him so much that they would not even help him in cremating the dead body of his cousin. The millionaire of aristocratic birth begged for help from door to door but still none came to his rescue. Driven to despair, Munshi took refuge in the Nag family. The father and the son helped him out of that critical situation.

After a year's apprenticeship under Dr. Bhaduri, Nagmahashaya came to be acquainted with Suresh Babu. Suresh came of the well-known Datta family of Hatkhola. Before coming in contact with Sri Ramakrishna, he had a leaning towards Brahmoism. While Suresh was a worshipper of God without form and had no reverence for gods and goddesses, Nagmahashaya was a thoroughly orthodox

Hindu, and had great reverence for all deities. Now and then there were hot discussions between them. Nagmahashaya used to argue thus: "The gods and goddesses of the Hindus as well as Brahman are all true but to attain Brahman is so difficult that I doubt whether one or two in a million attain it. Hence arises the necessity for a belief in the various gods and goddesses of Hinduism." He would further remark, "Well, sir, do you go so far as to say that the Vedas, the Puranas, the Tantras and the Mantras are all false? The realization of Brahman is the final goal indeed, but unless and until one goes through all these, one cannot attain Him. Unless Mahamaya wills, unless She makes way, none has the power to realize Him." Suresh would vehemently reply, "Keep aside, sir, your Sastras, etc. I have no faith in them", but Nagmahashaya's prostrations before the images of gods and goddesses and his unshakable respect for holy men made him think within himself that a man of such great faith must surely attain Brahman very soon.

Suresh used to go to Nagmahashaya's place in the evening, and there almost everyday they would have heated discussions, but neither was able to win the other over to his religious belief. It is strange how these two persons of opposed natures felt attracted to each other, but ever since their first acquaintance, they became life-long friends, and whenever they met each other, they used to have conversations on religious subjects only.

Suresh would often take Nagmahashaya to the Navavidhan Samaj founded by Keshab Chandra Sen. Though Nagmahashaya highly appreciated the preaching of Keshab, he did not like the manners of the Samaj. Nagmahashaya read with great zeal the Chaitanya Charit, Rupsanatan and the Lives of Mohammedan Saints, all published by the Brahmo Samaj; with great feeling he would sing the song, "Make me mad, in Thy love, O Mother," of the Navavidhan Samaj, although he had not the gift of a musical voice.

From the very beginning of their acquaintance, Suresh found in Nagmahashaya a man of spotless character. From his boyhood he was religious and he observed to the last day of his life all the social customs and usages prevailing among his people. It is said that in his boyhood he was particularly impressed by the translation of the Persian book named *Haten Tai*, yet his faith and devotion to the Lord never waned. Once a few friends of Nagmahashaya, having studied some atheistic literature, began to preach atheism and sometimes argued with Nagmahashaya. Nagmahashaya, even though vanquished in arguments, would firmly assert, "I have not the least shadow of a doubt about the existence of God." Later in his life he often said, "What is the use of reasoning about an entity which you know already to exist? God is self-effulgent like the sun."

From about this time Nagmahashaya began to lose all interest in medical science, and instead commenced a study of religious books; but on account of his father's importunities he could not sever his connection with Dr. Bhaduri all at once. Nagmahashaya did not know Sanskrit; consequently he carefully read the Bengali translations of the Puranas, the Tantras, and the like; if he chanced to meet a Pandit, he would eagerly entreat him to explain the true meaning of the Shastras. He used to take his daily bath in the Ganges and regularly observed the rites of Ekadashi (the eleventh lunar day, a fasting day). Every day at nightfall he used to go to the neighboring cremation ground (Kashi Mitra's Burning Ghat) for a walk; he would sit there alone, wrapt in deep thought till late in the night. At dead of night the dying fires in the pyres with burnt corpses glowed, while the Ganga flowed on nearby mingling her murmuring sound with the rustling music of a solitary peepul tree, humming a melodious but pathetic song of life and death! No language could express it, but it irresistibly touched the human soul. Nagmahashaya would there for hours and think, "Vanity, vanity, all is vanity; God alone is the Truth. Unless He is realized, life is verily a burden. How shall I realize Him? Who would show me the way?"

Sometimes Fakirs, Sannyasins, and Sadhakas came to that burning ghat; with a longing heart Nagmahashaya would ask them those questions but no one could give him any clear answer. He found that most of them were in quest of Siddhi (psychic powers); their aim was not the attainment of pure love for God. Once he met a Tantric Sadhaka, who, when he was questioned about Vamachara Sadhana, began to narrate some horribly uncouth practices. On hearing him Nagmahashaya said, "You will have yet to gather more experience, you have not understood the Tantras in the least." His experience of these types of men instead of creating faith in religion sometimes raised doubts in his mind. Only an old Brahmin, who practiced Sadhana in that cremation ground and was an initiated Tantric Sannyasin evoked his respect; he had no sectarian views; he was liberal and had great insight, although as an initiate he took Karana regularly. He explained to Nagmahashaya the profound significance of Tantric practices and mysteries of Shat-Chakra (six lotuses) very clearly and elaborately. Nagmahashaya expressed his desire to practice Sadhana according to the principles of the Tantras whereupon the Brahmin blessed him and gave him hopes, saying that the Mother would soon fulfill his desire. Nagmahashaya used to say to him, "That Brahmin had advanced much on the way to realization; he was quite conscious to the last moment and breathed his last on the bank of the Ganges."

As directed by this old Brahmin, Nagmahashaya would now and then do Japam and meditate in the stillness of the night in the cremation ground. One day while he was meditating, he saw the vision of a white effulgence; thenceforth he regularly went there and practiced Japam and meditation.

In course of time Dindayal came to know of it and it created some anxiety in his mind. He at once wrote to his son-in-law to select a bride for Nagmahashaya. He thought that his son was quite young, and that it was because there was nothing in life to bind him down to worldly life, that he roamed with mendicants and Sannyasins, and that when he was married all those foolish ideas would disappear. The son-in-law lost no time in selecting a bride, Sreemati Sarat Kumari, the first daughter of Ramdayal Bhunia of Deobhog, and informed Dindayal about it. Dindayal brought this proposal of marriage before his son but Nagmahashaya refused to marry again. Dindayal tried his utmost but could not persuade his son to marry. Since then, there were often exchangers of hot words between the father and the son. The father fasted in anger; the son also went without food. Thus they passed some time miserably. Once Dindayal said, "For you, I have been made a liar at this old age because I have given my word for your marriage to the bride's party." Nagmahashaya replied, "Once you got me married, but that girl died; again you are going to place somebody's daughter in the jaws of death!" Dindayal replied, "Aye, fate is determined by the divine dispenser! If you disobey me, your father, you will not succeed in any sphere of life. I will curse you so that you shall not progress even in your religious life."

He was indeed between two fires. On the one hand there would be the curse of his father, on the other the realization of Truth would be barred to him. He thought within himself, "I know, family life is the root of all misery and bondage, but my father directs me that way. Alas! O God! what am I to do?" Being much mortified, Nagmahashaya once said to his father, "We see that all the sorrows and sufferings of men result from marriage. Therefore please have mercy on me, father, and give up your resolution; I beseech you, kindly do not put me into bondage again. So long as you are alive I shall serve you heart and soul. I shall serve you a hundred times more devotedly than your would-be daughter-in-law. Please save me."

The sorrowful looks of his son and his importunities deeply impressed the old man. He thought that if his son for whose happiness he was proposing the marriage, be not happy by this alliance, it would be futile indeed; and so he consented to drop the proposal. But it at once struck him that if Durgacharan did not

marry, his lineage would be at an end; the Sraddha ceremony of his forefathers would be stopped. At this Dindayal was overwhelmed with grief, but there was no remedy for it. Reasonings, reproaches and rebukes were of no avail. The old man was much afflicted and wept secretly. Nagmahashaya was not at home at the time. On his return, he entered the room and found his father weeping; it touched him to the quick. Nagmahashaya argued within himself, "There is none to call my own in this world except my father, and alas! I have become the cause of so much sorrow to him. Away with religion; from this day forward I shall obey my father at all cost. If my father gets consolation by getting me married, I must do that." Arriving at this conclusion, the son lost no time to report to his father that he would marry. The old man could not catch his words at once and remained dumbfounded. He only stared at his son, with tears still in his eyes. Nagmahashaya repeated, "Please fix the date for the marriage and drop a letter to inform our people in the village."

Coming to himself, Dindayal replied with great joy, "My boy, you have saved my honor and thus my Dharma also. Do what you like after you have married. I shall not say anything. I whole-heartedly bless you, my dear boy. May God fulfill your desire!" Next, Dindayal hastened to Messrs. Pal's place to tell them this good news. They were very glad to hear it and promised to bear a portion of the marriage expenses.

All were merry; but he who was going to be married was in the throes of a great agony. He left the house as soon as he gave his consent for marriage. All day long he roamed about in the streets and passed the whole night sitting on the banks of the Ganges, weeping bitterly; there was none to share his feeling. To whom would he disclose his mental suffering? He went without any food. Dindayal could not know anything of it; for he was busy fixing the marriage date, writing letters to his village and buying the necessaries.

Gradually everything was bought with the exception of the bridegroom's suit. Dindayal asked his son to buy it from the market after his own choice, but he refused to do so; consequently, Dindayal himself had to get it from the market.

The day for them to start for their native village approached. Dindayal was busy packing things. As usual, even on that day, Nagmahashaya went out for a walk on the bank of the Ganges at night-fall. Before returning home he bowed to Mother Ganges and said, "O Mother! I have heard that Thou art the purifier of all sins; therefore, if I be defiled by the dirt and dust of the world in

becoming a householder, wash them off, O Mother; and both in weal and in woe give me refuge at Thy hallowed feet!" Thereafter he returned to his house, and the father and the son set out for their native village.

### CHAPTER III

#### HIS REMARRIAGE AND MEDICAL PRACTICE

About his marriage Nagmahashaya used to say, "Marriage with the pure desire for progeny does not defile a man. But only saints and sages of yore were fit for such marriages. Having observed austere Brahmacharya (celibacy) for a long time, they took wives for the purpose of continuing their progeny; and having begot sons like Vyasa, Sukadeva, Sanaka and Santkumara, they retired to the forest to lead the life of a recluse. But it cannot be so in this iron age. Nowadays there is not that deep meditation and self-restraint (Tapas), and so, the children born of lust become wicked and immoral." About his second marriage, he said, "What could I do? It was my father's command! I had to obey it, although it was venom itself to me."

The father and the son reached their native village five or six days before the marriage. The auspicious day approached, and Dindayal with all the fondness of a father's heart took the bridegroom in procession to the bride's house, and holy ceremonies were gone through with great joy and merriment. But with it withered the long-cherished hope of Nagmahashaya to lead a life absolutely devoted to spiritual practices without the distractions of family life. Moreover, with the thought of the responsibility of married life, it occurred to Nagmahashaya that henceforth he must also earn something for the maintenance of his family. When through the will of Providence he was hurled into this life, he must stand up to it manfully and shirk no duty. But he had an inborn hatred for servitude, and so he chose the independent profession of a doctor.

After the marriage, both the father and the son returned to Calcutta. Nagmahashaya set up his medical practice in right earnest. From this time forward, Nagmahashaya began to accept fees from his patients for their treatment. For seven years the smooth life of Nagmahashaya was gliding on uneventfully in the joy of study and meditation in the company of noble friends and in attending to the numerous patients who flocked to him. All of a sudden a cloud appeared in the clear sky -- a letter came bearing the news of his aunt's illness. She was old and infirm, and was suffering from dysentery. The news caused so much anxiety in his

mind that he started at once for his native village. As soon as his aunt saw him, she exclaimed in delight, "My boy! I deem it my great luck that I shall be able to die in your presence." All his attempts to save her life were of no avail. Before she expired, she asked him whether all the inmates of her house had taken their meals. Even fifteen minutes before her death, the old lady, sitting on the verandah of the house, was repeating the name of God, saying, "My time is up." She beckoned to him to come near her; and placing her hand upon his head, she blessed him saying, "Let your mind always dwell in God" -- these were the last words the affectionate aunt spoke to him. She had been initiated in the Rama-mantram, and her last breath came out with the sound 'Ra'. Nagmahashaya heard it distinctly.

Before this mishap, Nagmahashaya never knew what a bereavement was. He had no attachment to his wife and did not feel the loss of his first wife. His mother died in his infancy, but in her stead he found another mother in his aunt. Her unbounded love and affection for him never made him feel the loss of his mother. Now that very aunt had left him for ever. Oh! unbearable was the woe! Even to remain in that house became impossible for him. He used often to run to the spot where his aunt was cremated and pass the whole night there. Sometimes he would repair to a jungle and spend the silent hours of the night in solitude. Referring to this period, his sister Sarada remarked, "This incident drove my brother almost mad. He had to be urged often and often to take his bath and his meal. Sometimes I used to find him lying quite prostrate on the ground behind our house. So we had to get down our father from Calcutta."

The funeral rites of the aunt being completed, he came back to Calcutta with his father. Time, the great healer, assuaged, no doubt, the intensity of his grief, but in its place another thought appeared on his mental horizon and raised a storm not less convulsive than the former grief. His mind began to be haunted day and night by the thoughts, "Why does man come into this world and why does he die? What becomes of him after death? What has become of my aunt? To what region has she been transferred? The aunt who would give her life to spare me from even a scratch on my body, is no longer paying heed to my heart-rending sorrows and cries. Well! if all relationship ceases with death, then why all this bother with 'I' and 'mine'? Oh! why have we strayed into this world of miseries and bondage -- this vale of tears and woes? Having come here, what is the primary duty of life? How are we to free our agonizing soul from the grip of mortal life?" Such questions began to agitate his mind constantly, and he was yet to find their solution.

Though Nagmahashaya accepted fees from his patients, yet he himself would not demand anything from any one. He gladly accepted whatever was offered to him out of love and gratitude, and so his practice began to increase day by day. He had no outward show in his profession. He would go mostly walking to his patients even at distant places. Once Dindayal got from him a suit of fine cloth thinking that it would count much in increasing his practice. But the son had no idea of the kind and he complained, "What need have I of this dress? You would have done a good thing had you spent the money in the service of the poor." Dindayal replied with a deep sigh, "I had great hopes in you, but alas! now I see it is doomed to frustration. You are about to become a mendicant." But that was not all. All his ways were strange and not befitting a man of the world.

He found to his great amazement that much of his son's time was spent in helping the diseased and the destitute of the neighborhood, and that he would not take even a drop of water without carrying relief to them. Very often he would not only give medicine free to the poor but also help them with money to obtain proper food. If he happened to meet any destitute sufferer deserted in the street, uncared for and unnoticed, he would take him to his place and nurse him with the tenderest care. Sometimes he would offer his own dishes to the hungry beggar, choosing to starve himself. All these acts appeared to Dindayal as quite strange and unpromising for the future of his son.

One day Nagmahashaya went on a visit to a poor man's house and there he found the patient in a most deplorable condition. He at once set himself to nursing and remained by his side, consoling him with soothing words and looking to his other needs. In the night he came to him again. It was winter. The old tiled roof of his house with its thousand holes and cracks was no barrier to the chill of the wintry night, and as if that was not enough, he found further that the patient had little or no clothing at all. Nagmahashaya thought within himself that his case was very serious and that if here were allowed to remain exposed, the case would prove fatal. He had a thick woolen shawl on his person; he quietly spread it over the patient and slipped away. The patient called him repeatedly but he did not return. He only replied from outside the house, "Don't be afraid, tomorrow I shall come to see you again." Next morning when he visited, the patient began to express very feelingly his deep gratitude for him. Nagmahashaya merely remarked that there was nothing extraordinary in the matter, that he had felt his need of warm clothing more imperative than his own, and that he had therefore left the shawl with him.

At home, Dindayal asked him about it, and on knowing the facts, began to scold him severely and make a great row about it. As a result both the father and the son went without food that day. Next morning Dindayal got another woolen wrapper for his son.

Another day when Nagmahashaya went to treat a poor man, he found the patient lying on the bare floor of his room. The sight was unbearable to him. There was an extra bedstead in Nagmahashaya's house. At once he took it to the patient's place and first laid him on it and then commenced his treatment. Such acts were not to Dindayal's liking.

On another occasion a little boy of a certain family was attacked with cholera. Nagmahashaya was called in and he treated the boy with the utmost care for a whole day, but nothing was of any avail; and the poor boy collapsed in the evening. His friend Suresh thought that Nagmahashaya would get a handsome fee that day, but in the evening he was found to return with an empty purse, deeply lamenting, "Alas! it was the only child of the family. All attempts to save it became futile! A gloom and void have now occupied their whole house!" So keenly did he feel for the child that he could not take even a drop of water that night.

Gradually his practice began to increase immensely. Messrs. Pals appointed him as their family physician. For that reason, even today Nagmahashaya is referred to as 'Doctor' by the Pals. "There was not a single premature death in our family as long as Nagmahashaya was our family physician," so testifies Babu Haralal Pal. Once a female relation of the Pal family had an attack of cholera and Nagmahashaya was required to treat her. But the case soon took a very bad turn in spite of his careful treatment. Nagmahashaya got nervous and asked them to send for Dr. Bhaduri. Upon his arrival, Dr. Bhaduri was informed of the medicines administered to the patient; he was perfectly satisfied with the prescription and remarked that he had nothing to add. The Pals urged him notwithstanding to make such changes as he thought fit, but Dr. Bhaduri not only refrained from prescribing any other medicine but also requested them not to place the patient under the treatment of anyone else. Gradually the patient recovered under the treatment of Nagmahashaya. From that day onward Pals' faith in their physician increased and they never called any other doctor to their family. They entrusted even the most difficult cases to his treatment. When the lady had recovered, Messrs. Pals presented him with a silver box full of rupees. Nagmahashaya never used to take any fees directly from their hands, as they were his benefactors. He used to say, "Whatever you have to give me, please give it to my father." So he did not accept the silver box or the money. The Pals thought

he was unwilling to accept it, perhaps because the remuneration was not equal to his expectation; so they brought fifty rupees more and pressed him hard to accept the whole amount. But Nagmahashaya exclaimed with a touch of pathos in his tone, "Sir, the price of the medicine and the whole amount of my fees cannot be more than rupees twenty." Upon further insistence, he accepted that amount and not a pie more. Consequently Messrs. Pals put the remaining money as a donation for the performance of the Durga Puja.

When the matter was reported to Dindayal, he could not contain himself. "He to be drudging on for a petty salary even at that old age and his thoughtless son to refuse to accept his just remuneration! How foolish, how absurd, how suicidal!", he thought. But neither rebuke nor advice was of any avail. The son observed, "It is you, father, who always instruct me to tread the path of righteousness. In all conscience, how could I demand more? I know for certain that the price of the medicines given will, at the most, be rupees six, and my fees for these seven days cannot be more than rupees fourteen. So I have taken rupees twenty in all. To take more than this would be a sin. I beseech you, father, therefore not to take any more money on this account."

Dindayal remarked, "If the balance be given to you by the Pals as a present, with love and satisfaction, would you not accept it? You will never progress, I tell you, in your profession, if you go on in this manner."

Nagmahashaya said, "If it be so, let it be. I cannot help it! What I think is wrong, I shall never do, come what may. God is truth. False conduct brings ruin."

The reply indicated in a clear manner to Dindayal's mind the future of his son. He understood that his son would never prosper in the world. On the other hand, the son reflected within himself, "Good God! such is the world! Truly it is the veritable 'wilderness of a world, where life is in tangled mazes lost'. If you can acquire money no matter by whatever means, fair or foul, then only you will get name, fame and power in this world. Fie! Let me have nothing to do with this sort of world! It is a thousand times better to maintain oneself by begging and leading an honest and pious life, than to enjoy oneself with money earned by unrighteous means."

The practice of Nagmahashaya increased so much that, had he been worldly wise, he would have made a fortune. He did not demand any fees from anyone. He only accepted whatever was offered to him with great cheerfulness. Cunning fellows always tried their best to cheat him. Some would not pay their fees after being

treated by him, while others would take loans from him and never care to repay. Suresh used to say, "When my uncle (Nagmahashaya) would return from his rounds, I often saw some four or five persons waiting for him at his house to take loans from him. He never said 'no', whenever anything was asked of him. That is why all his earnings were mostly spent away in loans and charity, so much so that on some days he used to have nothing left for his own meal. He was obliged to pass such days, taking only a few handfuls of puffed rice for his dinner, although he might have earned on those very days nine or ten rupees."

No one cared to repay the loan taken from him. Moreover some of them would even remark, "You need not be anxious about anything, my friend. God will provide you with all you require." Nagmahashaya never saved even a pie for his own sake. Whatever surplus money he had, he gave to his father Dindayal. If he happened to require anything for his dress etc., which was always very frugal and scanty, he would ask his father for it. While speaking of savings, he used to say, "It is certain that God supplies the real wants of all. There is no good in being anxious about it. Complete self-surrender to God can procure one's well-being here and hereafter. Whatever we endeavor to do, prompted by our own egotism, always defeats its own end -- this is my personal experience."

Nagmahashaya could never brook any unseemly religious conduct and hypocrisy. One day a Vaishnava mendicant, accompanied by a young Vaishnavi, came to his place for alms. Nagmahashaya was then absorbed in meditation. He came out of his house as soon as he heard the cry of 'Radha, Radha' from outside. But when saw the couple in false Vaishnava garb, he cried with all indignation, "You won't get anything, if you say, 'Radha, Radha' like that, in hollow insincere tone. If you can utter it from the bottom of your heart, you shall then get something." The Vaishnava couple went away silently without saying anything further. Nagmahashaya thought, "Alas! here is this Iron-age come to destroy the world! Here have I seen today with my own eyes the veritable Kali."

Nagmahashaya thought, "Man is liable to fall into such a deplorable condition, if he has no good teacher; not only does he ruin himself, but also brings ruin upon others." Referring to these religious charlatans, he often used to remark, "One might be forgiven, if one commits a mistake unwillingly. But there is no salvation even to the end of this cycle, for those hypocrites who practice immorality under the garb of religion."

## CHAPTER IV

### HIS INITIATION AND HIS VISIT TO DAKSHINESWAR

IN the year 1880, the wife of Nagmahashaya came to Calcutta to live with her husband. This was the first time that she had the opportunity to serve her husband according to her desire. Of course, she had met him just after the marriage, but she was then only a girl. Now the young wife devoted all her attention to minister to the comforts of her husband and her old father-in-law. She made Dindayal happy but the mind of her husband could not be attracted. For, Nagmahashaya had no time to attend to her. He had a wide practice and the little time that was left at his disposal, was spent in meditation and study.

The description of Bhavaatavi (the Forest of Worldly Life) and the story of Jada Bharata in the Bhagavata made a great impression on the mind of Nagmahashaya. On reading the story of Jada Bharata, he understood how difficult it is for ordinary men to free themselves from the bonds of attachment, when, such a great man liberated in life, had to be reborn for his slight attachment to a deer. Reflecting on the indescribable and inconceivable power of Maya, found no other way out but to pray to the Mother of the Universe for help. His one thought was how to be relieved from the clutches of Mahamaya, from the fetters of this bondage to the world. He was married; he was earning money. And ties became stronger and stronger everyday. 'How to find the way out?' -- was the thought that troubled him day and night. When he began his career as a physician, he thought that he would relieve the distress of the poor. With untiring patience he had nursed the diseased; without the least hesitation he had given away his earnings in charity; and on many a day he had given his meal to the hungry and himself starved. But alas! could he remove the sufferings and miseries of the world? He reflected this, 'Why did I come in to this world of misery? Ah, again this bondage of marriage! Should I care for money and women? Should I pass away my life with all these? But, what is the way to find Him out? Ah, who will show me the way?'

At this time Suresh, his intimate friend, and a few Brahmo gentlemen would meet together on the bank of the Ganges and pass a few hours in meditation, prayer and songs. Nagmahashaya also joined the party. While uttering the names of the Lord, Nagmahashaya would sometimes dance, at times he would lose himself in ecstasy and fall down while dancing. One day he fell into the Ganges. Suresh with the help of another man, rescued him. Though Nagmahashaya was a little emotional by nature, he was

clever in concealing his sentiments. He used to say, "The more you control your emotions, the stronger they become; and the more these are given vent to, the less they become in intensity. Suresh said that in that state of ecstasy all the signs of strong divine love for God were very conspicuously manifest on his person.

A Sadhu told him, "However strong might be your faith, and however intense be your love for God unless you practice Sadhana and meditate on Him, after being properly initiated by the Guru, you cannot have God-vision." Hearing this, Nagmahashaya became very eager to get initiation. A great spiritual discomfort came over him. Occasionally, many Sadhus and devotees used to come and live on the banks of the Ganges. Expecting that some great man amongst them might take pity on him and initiate him, Nagmahashaya would sit on the bank of the river till late at night. Many a day passed in that way. Once, while he was taking his bath in the Ganges, he saw a boat coming there. When the boat landed, he saw that the passenger in the boat was none other than his own family Guru, Kailash Chandra Bhattacharya. Nagmahashaya finished his bath in haste. After proper greetings, he asked about his unexpected arrival in Calcutta. Kailash Chandra replied that he had come there to initiate him, for he had received such a commandment from the Mother. Was it that his sincere prayers had reached the eyes of the All-Merciful Mother of the universe? He led him to his residence in Calcutta. Dindayal saw the family Guru and was beside himself with joy, for it was his earnest desire that his son should be initiated by the Kulaguru. The next day was an auspicious one. Nagmahashaya and his wife were initiated in Sakti Mantram.

After initiation Nagmahashaya earnestly began to practice Sadhana. Many nights he passed in meditation and Japam. On the new-moon day, he would go without food and pass the night in meditation on the bank of the Ganges. In his meditation he sometimes lost his consciousness. One day he was deeply absorbed in concentration; the flow-tide came high and carried him away. He had to come back to the shore swimming, after had recovered his senses. Thus he passed most of his time in prayer and meditation.

Gradually his medical practice began to fall off, and the income also dwindled. Dindayal apprehended danger. He thought that the idea of renouncing the world, which took possession of Nagmahashaya's mind after the death of his aunt, had been forgotten since his association with Suresh; but once again he was passing most his time in the thought of the Lord, without caring for the comforts of life. So Dindayal's anxiety about the young daughter-in-law increased. It was true that there was no want of food and dress. But mere food and dress could never alleviate the

thirst of the heart. The husband's affection is the only thing that can give peace to a wife. But the wife knew that there was no woman on earth who could bind this man to the world. Nagmahashaya told his wife, "The relationship which exists in the physical plane, never lasts for good. He is blessed indeed who can love God with all his heart. Once we are attached to the body, it is impossible to get over it, even in the course of several births. So, do not have any attachment to this despicable cage of bone and flesh. Take shelter at the feet of the Mother and think of Her and Her alone; thus your life here and hereafter will be ennobled." The wife of the Tapasvi (ascetic) has to become a Tapasvini (a female ascetic).

As days went on, the health of Dindayal broke down. Nagmahashaya wanted that his old father should now resign his service at Messrs. Pals' and devote his whole time to the practice of devotion. After much entreaty, he made Dindayal agree to go and live at their native village. His wife also left Calcutta with the father-in-law to serve him in his old age.

Suresh, as usual, would often come to Nagmahashaya and they passed their time in talking about religious subjects. But mere words could satisfy him no longer, and Nagmahashaya one day said, "Time is wasted in mere talk; unless something is perceived directly, there is no use in living." Just at this time one day, Suresh went to Keshab Babu's Brahmo Samaj and there he learnt that a saint was living at Dakshineswar -- a saint who was a man of great renunciation, who remained always absorbed in God-consciousness and often fell into Bhava Samadhi. Suresh wanted to go over there and pay a visit to the saint with his friend, Nagmahashaya. But for various reasons the topic was not raised before him. Two months passed away after that, when Suresh told Nagmahashaya about the Saint of Dakshineswar. As soon as he heard of him, he wanted to go and see him. Nagmahashaya could not bear to wait any longer. Accordingly, both of them started after their morning meal. Dakshineswar is to the north of Calcutta and so they proceeded in that direction. It was the month of April. The sun was very hot. But neither of them did mind the heat; and both went on as if being dragged on by some unseen force. After proceeding a long distance they made enquiries of a passer-by, who in reply said that they had passed the village of Dakshineswar. He directed them back. They reached the temple garden of Rani Rasmani at about 2 p.m.

The temple is situated in a garden full of shady trees and fragrant flowering plants. At the time of Nagmahashaya's visit, Dakshineswar appeared to all the visitors as the veritable abode of gods. They saw the pond with its cool and refreshing water, the temple with its high pinnacles and the trees with their fresh leaves.

To Nagmahashaya's mind, the rustling of the leaves in the trees seemed to speak in a gentle voice, 'Come, come O ye afflicted travelers of this world of misery! This is the place where you can have your rest.'

They came as far as the door of the room where Sri Ramakrishna used to live. A man with a long beard was sitting by the side of the door. Nagmahashaya asked him, 'Sir, will you please tell me where the saint of Dakshineswar lives?' "Yes," replied the gentleman, "here he lives, but today he is gone to Chandernagore. Please come on some other day."

This information produced a great dejection in the minds of both. But there was no help for it. They were about to take leave of the gentleman, when Nagmahashaya saw somebody from within the room beckoning them to come inside. Was he the saint of Dakshineswar? Surely, he must be the man whom they had come to meet after walking in the sun a long distance! Not paying heed to the words of the bearded gentleman any more, they entered the room.

The bearded gentleman was Pratap Chandra Hazra. Nagmahashaya used to say, "What a wonderful Maya of the Lord it is! Although he had lived in close contact with the Master for twelve long years, Sri Hazra could not know his real nature! Who can know him, if he does not want to be known? Though he may pass a hundred years in prayer and meditation, he cannot know God unless He reveals Himself out of His grace."

It was indeed very curious that Hazra disliked anybody coming to Sri Ramakrishna. But when God's grace descends on anybody, no human power can stand in the way; on the other hand, even if God be standing by one's side, one cannot know Him if He does not like to be known. This reminds us of an incident in Sri Ramakrishna's life illustrating this truth.

One day Sri Ramakrishna went to Kalighat with his nephew, Hriday Mukherjee. On the northern side of the pond near the temple, there was at that time a bush of many Kachoo plants. Sri Ramakrishna saw there the Mother of the universe in the form of a virgin playing with a few maids. She was catching the grasshoppers. She had a red-bordered cloth on Her person. Seeing Her the Master cried out, "Mother, Oh Mother!" and lost all his external consciousness. After that state of higher consciousness had passed Sri Ramakrishna went inside the temple, and found on the image of the Mother in the temple the same cloth which adorned the person of the virgin girl. Hearing of it from Sri Ramakrishna, Hriday said,

"Dear uncle, why did you not tell me then and there. I would have run and caught hold of Her." The Master smilingly replied, "Ah, my boy, that cannot be; unless She wants it, what power have you to catch Her? None can see Her without Her grace, though She is present everywhere and before all."

## **CHAPTER V**

### **MEETING WITH SRI RAMAKRISHNA**

Suresh and Nagmahashaya stepped into the room and saw Sri Ramakrishna seated on a small cot with his legs stretched out at full length. He was smiling and facing northwards. With folded palms Suresh made obeisance to him and sat on a mat spread out on the floor. Nagmahashaya, quite in keeping with the Indian custom, fell prostrate before Sri Ramakrishna and wanted to take the dust from the Master's feet, but Sri Ramakrishna withdrew his legs and thus did not permit him to touch them. This was too much for Nagmahashaya and he felt a pang within. Surely, a devotee cannot suffer such a privilege to be withheld from him! Nagmahashaya laid the blame at his own door and consoled himself, thinking that he was not worthy enough to touch the feet of that holy saint. He got up with an aching heart and sat near the farthest end of the room. Sri Ramakrishna enquired who they were and put some questions regarding them. He talked to them for sometime and in the course of the conversation said, "You remain in this world like the Pankal fish. There is nothing wrong in staying at home. The Pankal fish lives in clay but is not soiled by it; similarly you remain at home but be careful that the dirt of Samsara does not stain your mind." This piece of advice at once went home, as Nagmahashaya was all the while agitated by this very thought. It amazed him and he gazed at the Master, whereupon Sri Ramakrishna asked him, "Why do you look in that fashion?" Nagmahashaya replied, "I had a great desire to see you and am now satisfying myself." After some time Sri Ramakrishna told them to go to Panchavati to meditate a little there. Suresh and Nagmahashaya returned to Sri Ramakrishna after meditating for about half an hour. The Master afterwards took them round the temples. Sri Ramakrishna went ahead, while Suresh and Nagmahashaya followed him.

Close to Sri Ramakrishna's room are the twelve Siva temples; upon entering each of these temples, Sri Ramakrishna went round the Deity and bowed down to Him. Nagmahashaya followed suit. But Suresh, being of Brahmo faith, did not have any regard for the images of God, and he only observed all this silently. Then there was the Vishnu temple. Here also Sri Ramakrishna did as before and then proceeded towards the Mother's temple. As soon as Sri

Ramakrishna entered the Mother's temple, he became quite a changed man. He was filled with emotion and was trembling. It seemed that he forgot himself. He went round and round the Mother several times, just as an unruly child does, holding one end of its mother's cloth. He then bowed down and touched the feet of Siva and Sakti with his head and returned to his room. His living faith and wonderfully childlike dependence as revealed in his acts in the shrine, evoked in Nagmahashaya a feeling of veneration for Sri Ramakrishna, and he was spell-bound to see such great purity, holiness and devotion. At about 5 o'clock in the evening, when Suresh and Nagmahashaya took leave of Sri Ramakrishna, he asked them to come again, remarking that frequent visits would bring them close. Then they departed.

On his way home Nagmahashaya was occupied with the thought of Sri Ramakrishna's personality. Was he a sage or a saint or a higher being? This thought agitated him, and his meeting with Sri Ramakrishna fanned the flames of devotion in his excited mind. The experiences of that memorable day, we are told, left an indelible impression in his mind, and a burning desire for God realization came upon him. He was almost mad with it. He cared neither for sleep nor for food, and he desisted from talking to others. He would talk on Sri Ramakrishna alone with Suresh.

Next week both the friends visited Sri Ramakrishna again. As soon as the Master saw Nagmahashaya in that frantic mood, he attained the state of Bhava and said, "You have done well to come here. I am waiting for you all." Then he made Nagmahashaya sit by him and in words of love and affection spoke to him: "Be of good cheer, my child! Have no fear about your spiritual advancement. You have already attained to a very exalted state." Today also he asked them to meditate on the Panchavati. Sometime after they had gone there, Sri Ramakrishna went to them and asked Nagmahashaya to prepare a chillum of tobacco for him. When Nagmahashaya had gone for it, Sri Ramakrishna told Suresh, "He (Nagmahashaya) is verily a blazing fire!" On Nagmahashaya's return with the chillum, Sri Ramakrishna ordered him, one after another, to get his towel, spice-bag and jug, and fetch water in it and so forth. With a mingled feeling of joy and sorrow Nagmahashaya carried out his orders; for although he was given an opportunity to serve his Master, yet he recalled to his mind the event of the first day of his meeting, which aggrieved him much.

Nagmahashaya again visited Sri Ramakrishna. This time he was alone. The Master, as on previous occasions, attained Bhava. He stood up from his seat and muttered something. Seeing him in that state, Nagmahashaya became terrified. Sri Ramakrishna then told

him, "Well, you are a medical man. Please examine my legs and see what is there." When Nagmahashaya heard him talking in a normal voice, he was greatly relieved. He touched his feet, examined them well and said that he found nothing there. Sri Ramakrishna again asked him to examine them more carefully. Now Nagmahashaya touched the Master's feet with more enthusiasm and felt how the Guru removes the wants and difficulties of the disciple. A small act of charity on the part of the Guru makes a true disciple feel that as an extremely gracious act of love towards him. And what to speak of such a devotee as Nagmahashaya! His grief over the Master not allowing him to touch his feet on his first visit was now assuaged, and he considered himself blessed, now that he was given the privilege of doing so. Tears trickled down his cheeks and he placed those long desired feet on his head and heart. Blessed are the souls that know the relation between the Guru and the disciple, for they shall see God! About this time Nagmahashaya was convinced that Sri Ramakrishna was God-incarnate. Being questioned how he could know this, he said, "After my going to Sri Ramakrishna for a few days, I came to know through His Grace that Sri Ramakrishna was Narayana personified and He was having His Lila in secret at Dakshineswar." He then remarked, "No one can realize Him unless blessed by Him. Even austere penances for a thousand years will be of no avail to realize Him, if He does not show mercy."

Another day Nagmahashaya went to see Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar. When he reached there, he saw the Master taking rest after his meal. It was the month of May and the day was very sultry. Sri Ramakrishna asked him to fan him and then went to sleep. Nagmahashaya fanned him long and his hands became tired but he could not stop without the Master's permission. He consequently continued the task but his hands became very heavy and he could not hold the fan any longer. Just then Sri Ramakrishna caught hold of his hand and took the fan. Referring to this incident, Nagmahashaya said, "His sleep was not like that of ordinary persons. He could always remain awake. Excepting God, this state is not attainable for any aspirant or even a Siddha."

On one occasion, Sri Ramakrishna asked the disciple what he thought of him (Sri Ramakrishna). In reply Nagmahashaya said, "Through Thy grace have I known that Thou art God." On hearing this, Sri Ramakrishna attained Samadhi and placed his right foot on Nagmahashaya's chest. The disciple at once felt a peculiar change within himself; he saw a Divine Light which, penetrating the animate and the inanimate objects, overflowed heaven and earth. Later, while expressing his ideas in regard to Sri Ramakrishna, he would say, "There is no necessity for praying to him for anything. He is Kalpataru. He will fulfill one's desires as he knows one's mind."

Since the advent of Sri Ramakrishna, there has been a deluge which will carry everything away. He is the full manifestation of the Lord and hitherto such a unique reconciliation of religions was not demonstrated by any other Incarnation."

It was at Dakshineswar that Nagmahashaya became acquainted with Swami Vivekananda, then called Naren. He was one day seated in Sri Ramakrishna's room before the Master himself, when Naren entered the room uttering 'Shivoham Shivoham.' Sri Ramakrishna pointed to Nagmahashaya and told Naren, "He (Nagmahashaya) is really selfless. He does not feign it." Narendra replied, "Yes, you may say so, it cannot be otherwise." The two disciples now began to converse.

Nagmahashaya: Everything happens at the will of the Mother. She is the Universal Will itself. She does Her work but men think that they do it.

Naren: I do not accept what you say, this He or She. I am the man, in Me is the universe. In Me it rises, floats and then dissolves.

Nagmahashaya: You have not the power even to change one black hair white! What to say of the universe! Without the will of God, not a blade of grass moves!

Naren: Without My will, the sun and the moon cannot move. At My will the universe goes on like a machine.

Sri Ramakrishna was hearing them. He told Nagmahashaya with a smile, "Well, Naren can say so. He is like a sword unsheathed. It is not presumptuous on his part to say so." Hearing this from Sri Ramakrishna Nagmahashaya bowed down to Naren and remained silent. Since then he believed that Naren was no human being but Siva Himself, incarnated for the Lila of Sri Ramakrishna. Once Nagmahashaya was asked if he had seen any 'free soul.' Nagmahashaya at once replied, "I have seen Sri Ramakrishna, who was the liberator of souls, and I have also seen his foremost disciple Swami Vivekananda who was the Incarnation of Siva." Indeed his was the faith that could move mountains. He would accept whatever Sri Ramakrishna said as the gospel truth. To him even what Sri Ramakrishna said in jest had a profound significance. He would say, "I was a fool. How could I know Him!" It so happened that Nagmahashaya one day heard his Master telling one of his devotees, "Well, it is very difficult for doctors, lawyers and brokers to realize religious truths." The Master specially made mention of doctors and said, "If the mind clings to the tiny drops of medicine, how can one conceive of the great Being?" About this time,

Nagmahashaya used to feel disturbed during meditation as the images of his patients would flash across his mind. He, therefore, thought that the advice was meant for him. He then and there decided that he should not take to any calling which would be an obstacle to the realization of God. He returned home and that very day threw his medicine box and his medical books into the Ganges. After this he took his bath in the river and came back to his house.

Dindayal came to know that Nagmahashaya had given up his medical profession. He was much concerned and at once came down to Calcutta to request Messrs. Pals to employ his son in his place. The son was employed and the father left Calcutta for good. Nagmahashaya had not much work to do. Only now and then he had to go to Baghbazar or Kidderpore canals for his duties. He now found ample time and opportunity to visit Dakshineswar. He also began to prolong his period of meditation. In his house there was a nice clean place near which was kept a jar of Ganges water. He would sit there and meditate for long hours.

When he was going to Baghbazar for his office work, he would find out a solitary place in some garden and would sit there for meditation. One day he had some exalted realization, about which he informed his friend Suresh the next day, remarking that he had never before experience such bliss.

The more he went to the Master, the more he caught the spirit of renunciation. He wished to renounce the world and went to Dakshineswar to get his Master's permission. Upon entering the Master's room he heard the Master saying in a state of Bhava, "What harm is there in remaining as a householder? Only keep the mind fixed upon God. The life of a householder is like fighting from within the fortress." O God! he who roused in him this consuming fire of renunciation, is now directing him to remain a householder like king Janaka! The Master further remarked: "Your life will set up a true ideal for the householders." The disciple had nothing to do but to obey. Later, Nagmahashaya would say, "What came out from the Master's lips could not in any way be violated by anybody. In a few words he would hit off the tendency of a man and put him on the way to the realization of the Ideal."

Nagmahashaya obeyed the command of the Master but his mind was greatly agitated. In his mind he could not come to a settlement. He was in a fix. Day and night he began to pray to God and would utter with a sigh, "O Lord, my God!" Now he would roll in dust, now fall on thorny plants and receive injuries. He had no inclination for food. If Suresh would forcibly feed him, he would eat; otherwise he would not. There was no knowing where he would be;

sometimes he would return home at 2 o'clock in the morning. Even the little work that he had to do could not be now done by him. Ranjit Hazra, with him Nagmahashaya had just then become acquainted, was an honest man though poor; he acted as a representative of Nagmahashaya in case the latter could not go out for his work.

Just then Nagmahashaya had to go to this native village for a short time. His wife was extremely affected to see her husband in that state. She understood that her husband had not the least desire for a householder's life. Nagmahashaya also made it plain to her that having dedicated himself once to Sri Ramakrishna, it was not possible for him to do anything worldly for the family.

Indeed, after his last meeting with Sri Ramakrishna, every vestige of worldly inclinations disappeared from his mind. A minor incident may be mentioned here to show his mental condition at the time. His sister had grown a gourd plant in the garden. It so happened that one day a certain neighbor of his tied a cow near the plant. The rope used was too short to allow the animal to reach the plant in spite of its repeated efforts to get at it. Nagmahashaya noticed her fruitless attempts, and whether his heart was moved to pity for the poor creature, or was filled with devotion for the sacred animal -- it is difficult to say -- he came to the spot and untied the string of the cow, saying, "Mother, eat." The cow fell to eating to her heart's content. Dindayal saw all this from a distance and was quite amazed at the conduct of his son. It was too much for the old man; he remonstrated with him, saying, "You do not yourself earn anything for the family; now, instead of doing any good turn to the family, how dare you cause such a loss to it? You have given up your medical profession. How will you keep the wolf away from the door?"

Nagmahashaya replied, "You need not be anxious on that score. The Lord will see to it whatever happens." Dindayal rejoined, "O, that I know quite well! Naked you will have to roam and feed upon frogs!"

Without saying a word, Nagmahashaya at once put off his loin cloth, and brought a dead frog that was lying in the courtyard. While eating the frog, he told his father, "Now, I have fulfilled both your commands. Pray, never think any more about the maintenance of the family. You take the name of the Lord and tell your beads. I beseech you, I entreat you not to think of anything worldly in your old age." Dindayal thought that his son must have gone mad, and so asked his daughter-in-law not to do anything henceforth against his will.

So long as Nagmahashaya remained in his native place, he would not give any occasion to his father to think of the family or anything worldly. He would always read out to him from different religious books and would rebuke the persons who came to gossip with his father. He used to tell them that they should not raise any worldly topic before him, else they should not go to his house.

When Nagmahashaya returned to Calcutta, Suresh asked him about his father, to which Nagmahashaya replied sorely, "If a man has even once tasted the fruits of this poison tree of the world, he is doomed forever. There is no escape without the grace of Mahamaya!" And then deeply moved with compassion for his father, he began to sob and cry out. "Glory to Sri Ramakrishna! Glory to Sri Ramakrishna! Extend Thy grace, O Lord, to my father!" Afterwards coming to himself, he spoke to Suresh that his father would still think of worldly things, although he was old and infirm and unable even to go out anywhere. He said that his father would not miss an opportunity to talk about worldly things, if any neighbor happened to visit him.

When he next saw Sri Ramakrishna after his return from the native place, he complained to the Master saying, "Sir, how is it that I have not got yet that complete self-surrender to the Lord? Why is it that I am not able to overcome the impulse to rely on self-effort?" Sri Ramakrishna gently replied, pointing to his own self, "If you have devotion for 'this', everything will come to you automatically." Nagmahashaya used to say, "Man has no power whatsoever. Whatever the Lord wills, He gets it done through him. Sri Ramakrishna could mould the minds of men in any shape he liked. Can man do it?"

Noticing Nagmahashaya's strong spirit of renunciation, and his desire to take to monastic life, Sri Ramakrishna told him once again, "Continue to be a householder and remain in your own home. Somehow or other the family will get its bare maintenance, you won't have to worry for it."

Nagmahashaya: How can one remain in the home? How can one remain unmoved even at the sight of others' sufferings and troubles?

Sri Ramakrishna: Well, I tell you, take my word. Nothing can taint you, even if you remain a householder. Men will wonder to see your life.

Nagmahashaya: How should I pass my days as a householder?

Sri Ramakrishna: You have not to do anything; only be always in the company of pious men.

Nagmahashaya: How am I to distinguish a pious man, unintelligent as I am?

Sri Ramakrishna: Oh no, you have not to search for them. You remain in your own house, and the truly pious men will of their own accord come to you.

As days passed, Nagmahashaya began to feel that there was no chance of his attaining to spiritual perfection so long as he considered work for the support of his family as his main concern in life. So he made up his mind to hand over his dispatching work to his friend Ranjit and devote his whole attention to meditation. One day he took the opportunity of broaching the matter to Messrs. Pal Brothers. Pals asked him how he would maintain himself in that case. Nagmahashaya replied gently, "What Ranjit would kindly give me in charity, with that I shall try somehow to make both ends meet."

Messrs. Pals understood that it was impossible for Nagmahashaya any more to do anything for the family. So they thought that they must provide some means for the upkeep of the family that was so long maintained by them. They sent for Ranjit and, having settled with him that half of the profit of his business must be given to Nagmahashaya as his share, gave him the charge of the dispatching work. Ranjit knew Nagmahashaya's temperament. He would never give him all his dues lest he should spend away the whole money. After meeting Nagmahashaya's messing expenses, Ranjit used to send the balance to Dindyal by post. When Sri Ramakrishna came to know of this arrangement, he exclaimed, as if in joy, "That's all right! That's all right!"

Freed from all anxieties, Nagmahashaya now plunged into more austere religious practices, and became a more constant visitor to Sri Ramakrishna. Hitherto he did not go to him on Sundays or holidays, as men of light and learning, whom he thought he was unworthy to talk to, would be visiting the Master on those days. But now that he was a frequent visitor, he became acquainted with some of those people.

One night Girish, accompanied by two of his friends, went to Dakshineswar, and upon entering Sri Ramakrishna's room, saw a man sitting in one corner with folded palms in great humility and devotion. He looked shabby and emaciated, but his eyes were bright

and powerful. Sri Ramakrishna introduced him to Girish and since that auspicious moment, Nagmahashaya and Girish were fast friends.

Nagmahashaya very often went out for a walk on the banks of the Ganges. One day he met a bright looking young man. Nagmahashaya took him at once for a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and, having questioned him on that point, found out that he was not wrong in his guess. He was Swami Turiyananda (then known as Harinath). While speaking of his austere practice of Brahmacharya, Nagmahashaya used to remark, "But for this, how could he become a fit receptacle for the Master's grace?"

From about this time, Nagmahashaya gave up completely the using of shirts or shoes. But he always used to keep his body covered with an ordinary wrapper. He observed no hard and fast rules with regard to his food; for the Master had told him not to follow any such rules saying, "Whatever you get through the grace of the Lord, live on that. For you, there is no need of any injunction. It will not affect you." Ordinarily he used to eat very little and that at the close of the day. He would musingly remark, "As long as there is this body, the tax must be paid." In order to control the desire for tasty things -- the craving for the pleasure of the tongue, as he would say -- he would not flavor his dishes with sugar or salt.

It has been already mentioned that Nagmahashaya had let a portion of his house to one Kirtivash. The latter lived there with his family and used to deal in rice. Sometimes a lot of bran used to accumulate in his house. Nagmahashaya once thought that he should live on that bran. He argued with himself: It is enough if I keep my body and soul together somehow. Where is the need for tasty dishes? He ate the bran, mixing it with water only. He lived on that for two days; but when Kirtivash came to know about it, he sold away the whole lot of bran, and from that day he never allowed any more of it to gather in his house. Nagmahashaya later remarked that he did not feel in any way uncomfortable by eating the bran. On the other hand, he felt more light and brisk. He further remarked, "If I am to think day and night of my food only, when am I to think of God and when am I to do my devotional practices? Constant thinking of the qualities of food produces a kind of mania in man."

Kirtivash highly respected Nagmahashaya for his saintly character, and if any beggar came to Nagmahashaya for a handful of rice and Nagmahashaya could not satisfy him, Kirtivash would at once help him in the matter. We are told that, Nagmahashaya's house being situated on a main road, a multitude of beggars would

visit his house daily, and none returned empty-handed. One day an old Vaishnava came to Nagmahashaya for alms. But Nagmahashaya had nothing at that time for him except a little quantity of rice just sufficient for one meal. Kirtivash also was not at home then. Nagmahashaya came to the beggar and with great humility told him that he had not in his house much to give that day except a little quantity of rice and asked him supplicatingly if he would accept the rice only. The old man was surprised to see his loving regard and went away with the rice in great admiration.

Nagmahashaya never took any sort of refreshment. He would not even touch any sweets not offered to God. He used to say that it would create 'a craving for the pleasure of the tongue.' Although he himself never took any kind of tasty food, he was ever ready to feed others well.

Nagmahashaya would not talk of worldly things, and if any one brought in a topic of the kind in his presence, he would cleverly turn off the conversation, and say, "Glory to Sri Ramakrishna! Why this topic today! Pray, take the name of the Lord, take the name of the Mother!" If for some reason or other Nagmahashaya would have a feeling of hatred or anger towards any one, he would beat his own body mercilessly with anything that he could get hold of. He would not speak ill of others, nor would he speak anything against any one. Once by chance there came out from his lips some bad remark against somebody. Next moment, he picked up a stone that was lying by and began to strike his own head with it. Blood oozed out from the lacerated part and the wound took more than a month to heal up. But he said, "Rightly served, the wicked man should have his punishment!"

In order to subdue the passions, he would abstain from food; sometimes he would remain fasting for five or six days together without taking even water. For example on one occasion, Suresh went to see Nagmahashaya. He was at the time cooking his meals. Perhaps some undesirable feeling had arisen in his heart at the sight of Suresh and at once he broke down the cooking pot. He wept in anguish and bowed down to Suresh and said, "Still I am not free from wickedness!" That day he remained without any cooked rice for his food, and lived on a pice worth of puffed-rice only.

Owing to his chronic headache, Nagmahashaya had to give up bathing, and for the last twenty years of his life he clung to this habit. That gave him a dry, ragged appearance. Moreover there was his severe Tapas. All these combined, made the humility of his soul visibly manifest in every part of his body, and he looked the very emblem of humility. Girish Babu used to say of him, "By constant

beating, Nagmahashaya had the head of his ego completely broken. It was unable to raise its hood any more." While walking on the public roads he would not go ahead of anybody, and even to the common waifs and strays of the road, he would make way and follow them humbly., He would not even tread on the shadow of any person, nor sit on the bed occupied by another. For was he not a devoted servant of the Lord? And the Lord is in all beings. How could a servant accept service from his master? But the devoted servant in him was always ready to serve the Master humbly in whatever form or dress He might choose to appear before him. If anybody would prepare a chillum of tobacco for him, he would not smoke it, but he prepared chillum for all. When any of his friends visited him he used to offer him tobacco, chillum after chillum, and would also smoke himself. Even when the friend would like to depart, he would not let him go, but request him to smoke some more chillum. He used to say, "I am so low, lower than the lowest. I have no capacity for any great work. If by preparing chillums for you all, I can have your grace, I shall feel my life really blessed."

Though a highly advanced aspirant to whom Raga Bhakti had become natural, Nagmahashaya was not averse to the disciplines of Vaidhi Bhakti. As he himself did hard penance, he advised others also to do the same. Once he had a long discussion with Suresh on this point. Suresh was to go to Quetta on some business after he had visited Sri Ramakrishna with Nagmahashaya for eight or nine days. Before he left Calcutta, Nagmahashaya entreated Suresh to take initiation from the Master. But Suresh had no faith in the efficacy of Mantrams at that time, and so argued much with Nagmahashaya. At last it was settled that he would do what the Master would bid him. Next day both of them went to Dakshineswar and as soon as they took their seat, Nagmahashaya raised the topic of Suresh's initiation. Sri Ramakrishna said, "Well, what he says is perfectly right. One should take initiation and then commence his devotional practices. Why don't you agree with him?" Suresh replied, "I have no faith in the Mantram." Turning to Nagmahashaya, Sri Ramakrishna said, "However he does not require it just now. But he will get it sometime afterwards."

When Suresh had gone and been at Quetta for sometime, he felt a great hankering for initiation. He resolved to come to Calcutta and take his initiation from the Master. But when he came there, alas! the Light of Dakshineswar was about to flicker out. Suresh repented bitterly of not having heeded to Nagmahashaya's words in time. When Sri Ramakrishna passed away, he was in great grief and cursed his own fate. Since then every night he used to repair to the bank of the Ganges and sigh out his mental agony to the spirit of the holy river. Once he laid himself down on the bank with an

austere vow. The whole night he was in the same posture. To his great astonishment, early in the morning before daybreak he saw Sri Ramakrishna coming out of the waters of the Ganges and approaching towards him. The Master came near him and uttered the holy Mantram into his ear. Suresh bowed down and wanted to take the dust from His feet, but lo! the holy figure had vanished!

Four years had passed away since Nagmahashaya first met Sri Ramakrishna. The time was fast approaching, when the Master would end his Lila on earth. Those joyous days of Dakshineswar were past. Though the glorious light of the setting sun was still lingering in the sky, the coming night had cast a forward shadow and gloom in the hearts of the devotees. Sri Ramakrishna was lying ill bed-ridden in a garden-house at Cossipore, north of Calcutta. Nagmahashaya knew that the Mother's play through the body of Sri Ramakrishna would soon pass out of sight. At that time Nagmahashaya could not visit the Master often. "What to speak of seeing his sufferings, even the very thought of them was enough to break my heart. Oh, I could not bear the sight of the Master's sufferings! When I found that he, out of his own will, allowed the disease to remain in his body and I could not alleviate his sufferings, I made up my mind not to go near him. Only very rarely I used to go and see him." While Sri Ramakrishna was suffering from a burning sensation all over his body, one day finding Nagmahashaya before him, he exclaimed, "Oh, come here, come, sit by me. I shall feel much relieved by the cool touch of your body." So saying Sri Ramakrishna sat within the embrace of Nagmahashaya for a long time.

When Suresh went to see Sri Ramakrishna after his return from Quetta, the Master said, "Where is that doctor? I hear, he knows medicine; please ask him to come here once." Suresh came and informed Nagmahashaya of it. In obedience to the commandment Nagmahashaya went to Cossipore. Sri Ramakrishna told him, "Oh, you have come, that's all right. The doctors and Kavirajas have given up hope of curing the disease. Do you know any charm to cure diseases? Just see, if you can effect any cure." Bending his head low Nagmahashaya thought for a while and then made a firm resolve to draw by his strong will-power, the fatal disease from the body of Sri Ramakrishna into that of his own. Suddenly a kind of abnormal excitement took possession of him and he cried out, "Yes, yes, I do know. Through Thy grace I know everything. This moment the disease can be cured." So saying, Nagmahashaya hastened towards Sri Ramakrishna. But the Master knew the disciple. He understood his motive, and warding him off from himself, remarked, "Yes, that is possible for you. You can cure the disease."

The Master was a great mystery and equally mysterious was the disciple!

Nagmahashaya went for the last time to see Sri Ramakrishna some five or six days before his passing away. As soon as he entered the room, he heard the Master saying, "Can Amalakee be had now? My taste has become so flat for everything! I think it can be removed if I could chew one Amalakee." Of the devotees present there, somebody said, "Sir, this is not the season for Amalakee. Where can we get it now?" Nagmahashaya thought that when the word Amalakee came out of the holy lips of the Master, it was sure to be had somewhere. For, he knew that whatever the Master wished for was sure to come to him somehow. Once Sri Ramakrishna desired to taste an orange and he was saying about it to Swami Adbhutananda. And strangely enough, Nagmahashaya, though he had no knowledge about the Master's desire, came to Dakshineswar that very day with oranges for the Master, who ate one with great relish. Remembering this incident, Nagmahashaya, without informing anybody, went away in search of Amalakee fruits. Two days passed away but Nagmahashaya did not turn up. These days he was busy searching for the fruit, constantly wandering from garden to garden. On the third day he appeared before Sri Ramakrishna with one Amalakee fruit in hand. The Master's joy knew no bounds. Being overjoyed like a child, he said: "Ah, what a beautiful Amalakee it is! How could you get it at this time of the season?" The Master then asked Swami Ramakrishnananda to prepare a meal for Nagmahashaya. Nagmahashaya then took his seat by the Master and began to fan him. The food was ready; but Nagmahashaya did not get up. Only when Sri Ramakrishna had asked him to go down and take his food, did he get up from the seat and go down. He took his seat but did not touch the meal. All requested him to take his food but Nagmahashaya remained silent. It was Ekadashi -- the day of fasting. But his real intention was that if Sri Ramakrishna kindly gave him Prasadam he would break his vow, though he did not open his mind to anybody. When Nagmahashaya would not touch the food by any means, Ramakrishnananda informed the Master about it. Sri Ramakrishna asked him to bring the food before him. It was done. Swami Ramakrishnananda held the plate of leaf before the Master who took a little from all the dishes, touched them with his tongue, and said, "Now go and give it to him; he will eat." Swami Ramakrishnananda brought down the plate and spread it again before Nagmahashaya. "Prasadam, Prasadam, holy Prasadam!" Nagmahashaya exclaimed and prostrated himself before the plate, and then he ate it. While eating the food, he devoured also the leaf on which the food was served. If anything was given to him as Prasadam, he would leave nothing of it. Swami Ramakrishnananda remarked that a kind of

religious fervor of a high order was visibly manifested in Nagmahashaya on that day. After this incident the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna never used to serve Nagmahashaya any Prasadam on leaves. If by accident he was given Prasadam on leaves, all would wait upon him very cautiously, so that as soon as he had finished the meal, they might snatch away the leaf from him. When they gave him any fruit, they took out the stones lest he should devour them.

In the year 1293 B.S., on the 31st, the last day of the month of Sravana (August 16, 1886), Sri Ramakrishna passed away. Having got the news, Nagmahashaya went to the cremation ground, and coming back from there he remained the whole day without any food or drink. After the passing away of the Master, all devotees gathered round Swami Vivekananda. He became their leader and guide, and he used to look after the welfare of all. The news was brought to him that Nagmahashaya was lying down in his house, taking no food and covering himself with a blanket. Swamiji went to the house of Nagmahashaya with Swamis Akhandananda and Turiyananda. After much entreaty Nagmahashaya got up from his bed. Swamiji said, "Well, we have come here today to beg our meals from you." Nagmahashaya immediately went to the market to buy things for them. Meanwhile the three guests had finished their bath. Then they took their seats on a broken cot and began talking about Sri Ramakrishna with Nagmahashaya. Three seats were made ready and food was served. At the request of Swamiji food was served on an extra plate. Swamiji then entreated Nagmahashaya to sit and take his food with them. But Nagmahashaya did not agree. Swamiji said, "All right. He will take afterwards." After they had finished their food, Swamiji again requested Nagmahashaya to break his fast. But he said, "Alas! even now, the grace of the Lord has not been vouchsafed to me! Should I give food to this body? No, I should not." Swamiji said, "No sir, you must take your food; otherwise, we won't leave you." After much entreaty Nagmahashaya took his food that day.

After the passing away of the Master, the renowned devotee Sriyut Balaram Basu of Baghbazar, Calcutta, pressed Nagmahashaya to live at Puri. He was also requested by Messrs. Pals to dwell at Navadwipa. Both of them agreed to bear all his expenses. But Nagmahashaya said, "The Master asked me to remain at home. I have not the least power to deviate an inch from his order." Disregarding the request of every one and holding the commandment of the Master above all, he went back to his native village and lived there.

Even then, the Kundoos of Bhagyakul requested him to be their family physician on a monthly salary of Rs. 50. But Nagmahashaya declined to accept their kind offer.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **HIS STAY AT HOME**

NAGMAHASHAYA now lived in his own house and began to serve his old father with care and affection. Dindayal was old and decrepit. He had to be nursed and taken care of; and Nagmahashaya used to attend on him with all the loving care of a faithful son. He would spare no pains in attending to all his comforts and wishes.

Once Dindayal expressed his regret saying, "Many people are worshipping the Divine Mother. If circumstances had allowed us, we also would have done so. But we are not so fortunate. Durgacharan has given up earning money." Nagmahashaya came to know of it and since that every time every year he used to arrange for celebrating the festivals of Durga Puja, Kali Puja, Jagaddhatri Puja and all the festivals of the Divine Mother in order to satisfy his father. He would give him no opportunity to divert his mind to worldly thoughts for a moment, for Nagmahashaya would be always reading scriptures, Bhagavata, Puranas, etc. before his father. Owing to the sincere and continued effort of the son, the mind of the father became gradually changed. Once when Nagmahashaya came to Calcutta to buy things for celebrating the Durga Puja, he told Suresh that his father was now quite changed. Thoughts of the world could not overcome him anymore and he was spending the whole time in thinking and talking of the Lord.

Eastern Bengal is a province noted for Tantric practices; miracles and miracle-mongering are more valued there than pure devotion. Swami Vivekananda once remarked, "Vaishnavism and Tantrism have a greater influence in Eastern Bengal, a province known for Vamachara and miracles." Sri Ramakrishna once asked Nagmahashaya, "Is there any famous Sadhu in your province?" Nagmahashaya replied that he never met with any real devotee. He had the impression that true devotees never take their birth in any region except where the holy Ganges flow. Good logicians or learned people there may be, but unless one is born in a place near the banks of the Ganga pure devotion cannot grow in men.

Before Nagmahashaya came to settle in his house, Natobar Goswami and the famous Bijoy Krishna Goswami were preaching the doctrine of pure devotion in Eastern Bengal. Nagmahashaya

knew that Bijoy was a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna. After he came to his native village, Nagmahashaya had to go once to Dacca on a certain business, and he took this opportunity of meeting Bijoy. Bijoy did not know Nagmahashaya, but by the power of his keen insight acquired through devotional practices, he understood that some great personality had come there in the form of that mad man with a ragged look. And in the course of their conversation when it became known that Nagmahashaya was a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, Bijoy Krishna's joy knew no bounds. He embraced him as one of his dearest and nearest relatives and showed his respect and love for him. Nagmahashaya was also much pleased to see Bijoy but he remarked, "It is very strange that Bijoy seeks for other Sadhus even after he has seen the Master. What to speak of others, when a great man like Bijoy could be cheated and misguided!" Having heard that Bijoy would sit before Sri Ramakrishna and meditate closing his eyes, Girish Babu once remarked, "What a peculiar fellow he must be, who would sit with closed eyes before him on whom one ought to look with eyes open and fixed." Mentioning it, Nagmahashaya used to speak highly of Girish Babu's wisdom and learning, and would bow down before him saying, "Glory to Sri Ramakrishna! Glory to our Lord!"

The Brahmacharin of Baradi had a great name and influence in Eastern Bengal. At the request of Bramananda Bharati, a disciple of the Brahmacharin, Nagmahashaya once went to Baradi to see him. Brahmananda was formerly known as Tarakanta Gangopadhyaya. Tarakanta was pleader and had a good income. He took delight in prayers and meditation and in serving the Sadhus. At last he gave up his practice and spent most of his time in devotional practices. Tarakanta used to go to Nagmahashaya often and at times he lived with him for days. He began latterly to visit the Brahmacharin and to give himself out sometimes as a disciple of the Brahmacharin and at other times as his Guru in his previous incarnation. One day Tarakanta came to Nagmahashaya and said that he remembered his previous birth and that he could travel to the higher regions, namely, the Chandraloka, Suryaloka, Brahmaloaka, and so on, and added that righteousness and iniquity are all false and that knowledge alone is true. Finding so much change in Tarakanta, Nagmahashaya remarked, "Even Sadhakas of high rank are misled if they do not get a real Guru or preceptor." Tarakanta would often request Nagmahashaya to go and see the Brahmacharin. Being this repeatedly requested, Nagmahashaya once gave his consent. As he was going to see a Sadhu, he took with him some sweets and fruits. Upon his arrival, he presented them to the Brahmacharin, but he did not touch any of these. There stood a bull by him, and he gave away everything to the bull. Seeing Nagmahashaya's lean figure, disheveled hair, ragged look and pure dress, the Brahmacharin

began to crack jokes at him. But Nagmahashaya was all the time sitting with his head bent down. Finding him indifferent to all jokes, the Brahmacharin got more excited and began to tell all sorts of lies about Sri Ramakrishna. Nagmahashaya could not bear it any longer. He was ablaze with anger. Suddenly he looked up and saw the dreadful figure of a Bhairava of black-brown complexion who appeared before him and begged his permission to throw down the Brahmacharin. At once he checked his passion and began to strike his head against the floor repenting, "Ah! my Lord! why did I disregard your commandment and come to see the Sadhu? Why did such a weakness come over me at all!" Then he began to run from the place, crying, "O Ramakrishna! O my Lord!" When he went out of the sight of the Brahmacharin, he proceeded slowly. On his return home he determined not to go any more to any Sadhu. If anybody would talk of going to meet any Sadhu, he would say, "Oh my mind! Remain within yourself. Don't go to anybody's doors."

Another disciple of the Brahmacharin used to visit Nagmahashaya. After the above incident, one day he came and informed Nagmahashaya that the Brahmacharin had cursed him so that he would die in a year by vomiting blood. Nagmahashaya laughed off the whole matter. One year passed and still there was no effect of the curse. At this the disciple lost faith in his 'Guru and became an ardent devotee of Nagmahashaya. That gentleman made much progress in his life by following the path of Bhakti. Nagmahashaya used to say, "The Brahmacharin of Baradi has spoiled the brains of good many householders by preaching to them his half-digested doctrine of Vedanta."

Nagmahashaya would never be moved by any worldly upset; but he would lose all patience if anybody spoke ill of his Master. A gentleman of Narayangunj once spoke all sorts of lies against Sri Ramakrishna. Nagmahashaya requested him very politely to refrain from doing so, but the more he began to beseech him, the more unrestrained became the other man's abuse of Sri Ramakrishna. Nagmahashaya once more told him, "Please do not tell lies against the Master." But the man persisted. At last Nagmahashaya got excited and said, "Get out of my house, or else you will have to suffer for it." Even this did not bring the man to his senses. He went on with his tirade till it exhausted Nagmahashaya's patience at last. Losing all self-control, Nagmahashaya beat this man in wild fury with a pair of shoes on his back and said, "Get out of this place at once, you rascal. Sitting here you dare speak ill of my Master!" The person concerned was a man of position and influence at Deobhog. While he was going away after being thus beaten, he threatened Nagmahashaya saying, "What a Sadhu you are! you will soon taste the bitter retribution." Nagmahashaya did not pay any heed to his

words but said, "O Lord! Why dost Thou bring such persons who speak ill of Thee? Fie upon this household life!" Nagmahashaya controlled himself in a short time. The gentleman again came to him a few days after and begged pardon of him. Nagmahashaya thought no more of the event but received him very kindly and cheered him up. Girish Babu heard of this incident and when Nagmahashaya came to Calcutta and asked him, "Well, you don't put on shoes; where could you get a shoe to beat the man?" Nagmahashaya replied, "Why, I beat him with his own shoes." Then he bowed down before Girish Chandra Ghosh, saying, "Glory to Sri Ramakrishna! Glory to our Lord!" Girish said, "Nagmahashaya is verily a hooded Naga (snake)!"

One day Nagmahashaya was going to the Belur Math. He had to cross the Ganges on a ferry boat. There were people of various temperaments in the boat. Nagmahashaya took his seat in one corner. When the boat came to a certain distance, the Math building was in sight, and Nagmahashaya with folded palms made obeisance to the Math house. Finding him thus showing reverence, one passenger began to criticize the Math people and its ways and customs. Two or three others joined him with enthusiasm. Nagmahashaya could not tolerate anymore. He got excited and said, "You know only to satisfy your craving for lust and god! What do you know of the Math? Fie upon your tongue that spoke ill of the saints." Those people got terrified and asked the boatman to land the boat very soon; and they fled away lest they should be cursed for their showing disregard to the Sadhus. Hearing the incident, Swami Vivekananda remarked, "Yes, that kind of hissing as Nagmahashaya did, is required at times."

Sri Ramakrishna used to say, "When the flower blooms, bees come of their own accord." When the Divine wisdom truly dawns in the heart of a person it never fails to spread its charm and luster around, and real seekers after truth, of themselves, gather round him. So do we find in the life of Nagmahashaya too. From about this time, earnest devotees and genuine God-seekers began to flock to Nagmahashaya from all part of the country. His name spread far and wide. Nagmahashaya told his wife, "Sri Ramakrishna's last words of benediction have now been fulfilled. Those that would come here must be true seekers of God -- so I was told by the Master. Serve them with all care and devotion. God will bless you."

Whoever went to see him, Nagmahashaya would never permit to leave without having partaken of some light refreshment at his house. And again, he had to arrange for beds and lodging even for those who came from distant places. He set apart a separate room for them so that they might live there as long as they liked.

Everybody in the family felt an uncommon warmth and zeal in receiving guests. Dindayal would say, "If a devotee even snatches his meal by force, or by guile, the host goes to heaven as a result. Indeed, it is my great fortune that so many devotees come to my poor cottage and take their meals here." Nagmahashaya used to say, "This is all the 'play' (Lila) of the Lord. He appeared as a distinct individual while embodied in human form, and now it is He that comes again to bless me in different forms." Truly, he could see the Lord in all beings, and so served his guests as Narayana.

One day Nagmahashaya was suffering from acute colic pain. It was unbearable and it made him lose his consciousness at times. All on a sudden some eight or ten guests came to his house without any previous intimation. There was not a grain of rice in his house. What could be done? He went out to the market even in that state of ill-health. While carrying the bag of rice on his own shoulder from the market -- for he never allowed anybody to carry his things -- the pain increased, and he fell down on the road side. But he cared not for himself and was lamenting, "O Lord, how ill fated I am! Why has this befallen me today! Narayanas have come to my house. Ah! it is getting late to serve them with food! Wretched indeed is this cage of bone and flesh -- this body that stands in my way of serving the Lord today." After a while, when the pain subsided a little, he went to his house with the bag. He bowed down before his guests and begged humbly their pardon for being so late in serving them.

Once, it was the rainy season, and it so happened that two guests came to his house. The weather was very stormy, and it was pouring heavily that night. Nagmahashaya had only four rooms, of which again three were in such dilapidated condition as could afford no shelter from the rains. The thatched roofs were letting in the rain through their thousand holes. The remaining one only was in good condition, and Nagmahashaya used to sleep in it. Now, the guests finished their supper, but where could they pass the night? Nagmahashaya called his wife and said, "Look here, by the Lord's will we are very fortunate indeed! Come, let us patiently bear a little inconvenience tonight for the sake of these Narayanas. Let us pass the night sitting at the porch and uttering the holy name of the Lord." So they vacated the room for the guests and passed the night in the porch in meditation and prayer.

Nagmahashaya had no fixed monthly income, nor had he a fixed expenditure. The profit from the salt contract varied from time to time, while the number of guests went on increasing. Consequently, he was often in want of provisions. But whenever he felt the want, he got the things on credit from some known shopkeepers of Narayangunj, and at the end of the year he would clear his debts, as

far as possible, by the money Ranjit used to send him from Calcutta.

The respect Nagmahashaya used to command among the shopkeepers, did not fall to the lot of many rich men even. Nagmahashaya got more articles than other customers for the same price. But if he knew of it, he refused to accept the favor and urged the shop-keeper to give him only as much as he would give to others for the price. It was a habit with him to buy his stores only from one particular shop and he could never haggle about the price of articles. He accepted things at the price first mentioned, but he was seldom cheated. He used to say, "If one has devotion to Truth, the Truth itself protects him. He basks in the grace of God." Indeed, he was known for his saintliness to all, and no one dared or liked to cheat him. Moreover he had that fascinating amiability of nature which won admiration and devotion from all. It happened many a time that he went to buy things from a new shop, and the shop-keeper, not knowing who he was, demanded at first an exorbitant price. But subsequently, struck by Nagmahashaya's ready acquiescence to pay the demanded price, and his uncommonly amiable manners, he would climb down and whisper a special concession price into Nagmahashaya's ears, or dole out double the quantity required for the price. Besides, he had credit of another kind in the market. It was the general belief with the shop-keepers of the place, that if they could sell their articles to him first at the opening of the day, they would gain more by the day's sale. So when he went to the market, each dealer would urge him to take his articles.

Sometimes, not only had he to feed his guests and look to their comforts even to the minutest details, but also had to defray their traveling expenses. Once a certain person came to visit him and fell ill. Nagmahashaya nursed him with all tender care, and subsequently when he had recovered a little, Nagmahashaya engaged a boat and sent him home, paying all the expenses of the passage. Such things happened not infrequently.

But owing to such unrestrained expenditure, Nagmahashaya had to run into debt. Some of his devotees wanted to pay off his debts, but he sternly refused to accept their proffered help. When Swami Vivekananda, after his return from America, heard of Nagmahashaya's debts and desired to clear them, Nagmahashaya greatly objected to it, saying, "It is enough that the Sannyasins confer their blessings on me. Somehow or other, through weal or woe, my family would be maintained only by the money that is being given by Messrs. Pals." If any of his friends or devotees would express anxiety about his debts, he would at once retort, "Never

mind, I would starve even, if I do not get anything. Still I cannot forsake the Dharma of a householder. Pray don't bother yourself with such trashy nonsense. Let Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna do what He deems best with me!"

Nagmahashaya never used to keep any servant for his house. While he stayed at home, it was not possible even to have the necessary repairing done to his house. He could not bear to see the coolies or masons work for him. So when he was away from his house, his wife used to have the roofs rethatched, and have the other necessary repairs and renovations attended to. Once Nagmahashaya stayed at home continually for a long time, and so for want of timely repairs, all the rooms became almost unfit for use. Nagmahashaya's wife called a contractor to have the roofs rethatched. As soon as the man entered the house, Nagmahashaya cried out in anguish, as if something very heinous was about to be perpetuated there. First, he himself prepared a nice chillum of tobacco and offered it to the mason to smoke; and afterwards when the mason got up on the roof and began to work in the sun, the sight was too much for Nagmahashaya to bear. He asked the mason with earnest solicitude to stop work and get down. But when he saw the mason continue his work without paying heed to his beseeching, he could not contain himself. He wailed, as if in blighting agony, "O Lord, why hast Thou ordered me to remain in the house and lead this wretched householder's life! Ah me, I have to witness this sight -- others laboring for my comforts! Fie on this householder's life!" and so saying he began to beat his forehead and breast. Seeing his agony, the mason had to stop work at last and get down from the roof. Nagmahashaya at once ran to him, offered him another chillum of tobacco and began to serve him with all the devotion of a loving servant. Afterwards he paid the mason his full day's wages and sent him home.

When Nagmahashaya went anywhere by boat, he would never allow the boatman to row; he himself used to ply the oars or punt. Sometimes others passengers of the boat would try to dissuade him. But he seldom paid any heed to the other's exhortation. Therefore seldom would a boatman of his place take him into his boat. The illiterate boatswains used to consider it a sin to allow a saintly person like Nagmahashaya to do the punting or sculling while they were in the boat. During the rainy season, the whole of Deobhog village would remain in a quasi-submerged condition. No one could go from one house to another without the help of a boat. So in that village almost every house owned a boat. But Nagmahashaya had none in the wet seasons; he had to remain almost confined to his house, and at times he must have felt the

want very keenly, inasmuch as he had to provide himself with all the necessary articles of consumption beforehand. His wife used to look after this part of the business with the help of the neighbors.

Every evening Nagmahashaya used to hold the vesper service and Aratrikam before the picture of Sri Ramakrishna. On those days when devotees congregated in his house, there used to be Sankeertanam. Nagmahashaya seldom took part in it. He used to sit in a corner and prepare chillums of tobacco for the congregation. But his presence would infuse an uncommon inspiration into the Keertanam. When the Keertanam was over, he used to chant loudly the name of Sri Ramakrishna and lose his whole mind and soul in the chant.

Not only in Sankeertanam, but also on all other occasions of worship and ceremonies there used to be an exuberant display of Bhakti in the house of Nagmahashaya. Once a devotee named Sarat Chandra Chakravarti went to his place on the Saraswathi Puja day. On being asked to do so, the devotee read out to Nagmahashaya a portion of the Upanishads and gave two or three interpretations of certain passages according to the different commentators. Hearing the whole thing, Nagmahashaya remarked, "All the interpretations are true. Different Acharyas commented differently to suit the needs and capacities of different Adhikaris. So the commentators are not at fault. Further, he cited the parable of the chameleon told by Sri Ramakrishna and said, "God is of infinite forms. One describes Him just as he understands Him. No one can assert exclusively that this alone is His true Being." Next pointing to the image of Saraswathi on the altar he remarked, "That is also true. Oh, how many did attain the final liberation by worshipping these gods and goddesses!" and so saying he bowed before the image several times. The priest was engaged then in worshipping the goddess with all the requirements of a grand ceremonial worship, and the shrine and surroundings wore an appearance of celestial solemnity bathed in divine joy. Nagmahashaya rose up again and exclaimed, "Mother is the embodiment of knowledge itself! Without Her grace none can get across the ocean of nescience (Avidya)! The Mother has made me ignorant and brought me into this insignificant Sudra family! I am not authorized to read the Sastras! So please bless me by reading and explaining the Sastras to me!" Seeing his uncommon devotion to gods and goddesses it crossed the mind of the devotee that perhaps Nagmahashaya had attained some realization only about gods and goddesses; and that perhaps he had not realized Brahman. While such ideas were agitating his mind, Nagmahashaya suddenly disappeared from the place, and could not be found anywhere. After sometime, when the devotee came out of the house in search of Nagmahashaya, he found him almost in

transport, standing alone underneath a mango tree. The devotee went and stood by his side; then Nagmahashaya said in a deep tone as if from the depth of his reverie, "Forsooth, is my Mother confined only within that image of clay and straw? She is the infinite Satchidanandamayi. My Mother is the Supreme Knowledge Itself." So saying, he lost himself again in deep Samadhi and it lasted almost half an hour.

Often he used to fall into Samadhi and remain in that state sometimes for hours. On some days this lasted for such a long time as to make his people feel anxious for his life.

## **CHAPTER VII**

### **HIS LIFE AS A HOUSEHOLDER**

WHENEVER Nagmahashaya went to Calcutta, the first thing he did was to visit the Mother at Kalighat. Next he went with bare feet to Girish Babu. He used to say, "If one keeps association with Girish Babu even for five minutes, one gets freed from worldly delusions. He is such a perfect sage!" Again he said, "Girish Babu has such keen insight that he can see at a glance the innermost recesses of a man's heart; and with such an insight he was the first to recognize the Master as the Incarnation of the Most High." He would profoundly bow down his head at the very mention of Girish Babu's name. To him he gave a very high place amongst the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna.

Once while Nagmahashaya came to Calcutta to make purchases for the Durga Puja, he went to Girish Babu's house. Seeing him coming, Girish Babu came down from upstairs and conducted him very warmly to a room in the first-floor of his house and pointed to him a seat. But Nagmahashaya seated himself on the floor. The gentlemen present there urged him to sit on a cushion. But Girish Babu intervened saying, "Please don't disturb him. Let him sit wherever he pleases." Next Girish Babu requested him to speak something about Sri Ramakrishna. Nagmahashaya said, "Ignorant and worthless as I am, how can I understand Him? Bless me that I may attain devotion to the lotus-feet of the lord." Humility was writ large on his face. All present looked at him with silent amazement. Girish Babu remarked, "That is why I regard our Master as the Incarnation. He whose grace can bring about such a change -- can mould the mind of a man into such a state -- can He be other than God? He must indeed be super-human." After various talks about Sri Ramakrishna, Nagmahashaya took leave for the day.

The Sannyasin disciples of Sri Ramakrishna were at the time living at the Alambazar Math. One Sunday Nagmahashaya went to pay his respects there. Many of the Swamis were present. Nagmahashaya prostrated himself before all. His presence created a regular festivity at the Math. An acclamation of joy was heard. He was received warmly by his brother disciples. Swami Ramakrishnananda was at the time performing evening service (Aratrikam). Nagmahashaya also joined in the service. After a time all sat down to take Prasadam. Nagmahashaya was served in a plate. After finishing with it he went to clean the plate himself in spite of their objections. He then prepared chillums of tobacco for the Swamis. He remained that night in the monastery. It was a very sultry night, and he passed it wholly in Japam and meditation.

Nagmahashaya had not visited Dakshineswar for a long time. One day he set out with Suresh and another devotee Chakravarthy. On their way was the garden-house of Kashipur where the Master had passed the last days of his earthly existence. Suresh was pointing the house to Chakravarthy. The very name of Kashipur used to sting Nagmahashaya with agony and make him shudder. He did not turn to see the house now. Yet his countenance turned pale. When the topic of the Master's passing away of cancer was raised, Nagmahashaya exclaimed, "It was all the play of the Lord. He vicariously took upon himself the disease for the salvation of the Jivas." This was the last time that he passed by that road.

They reached Dakshineswar. At the front of the gate, Nagmahashaya prostrated himself in great reverence. Chakravarty had never seen the place before. Suresh showed him the Bilva tree, the Panchavati and other hallowed places where Sri Ramakrishna had practiced meditation. Nagmahashaya moved with them mechanically. Who could guess where his mind was rambling at that time! Then they turned towards the room where Sri Ramakrishna lived. When they reached there, Nagmahashaya cried out, "Ah Lord! what is it that I have come to see here!" and threw himself down. Chakravarty raised him up, but by no means could he persuade him to enter into the room. He said, "What shall I go to see? It is all over here in this life." Never in his life did he enter the room again. Whenever he visited Dakshineswar, he bowed his head to the room from a distance and went away. Hriday Mukhopadhyaya, who was a nephew of the Master, also happened to come to the garden that day. He had a pack of clothes with him and looked very sad. Hriday was at that time earning his livelihood by hawking clothes. He was known to Nagmahashaya, and both began to talk about Sri Ramakrishna. Hriday sang a few songs about the Divine Mother. Nagmahashaya said that the Master used to sing those songs. After a long conversation Hriday said, "How blessed you all have been

through his grace! But alas! I have still to walk from door to door as a street hawker for my bread. My uncle did not extend his grace to me." With this he burst into tears, sobbing inconsolably like a child. On their way back from Dakshineswar, they paid a visit to the Alambazar monastery where they partook of the afternoon Prasadam. Swami Ramakrishnananda accompanied them a long way while talking all the while about Sri Ramakrishna. Taking leave of him, they went to Girish Babu's house whence Nagmahashaya returned to his own lodging.

At this time the Holy Mother of the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna was living in the garden-house of Nilambar Babu on the bank of the Ganges, at Belur. One Sunday he wanted to see her. He bought some sweetmeats and a piece of red-bordered cloth for the Mother and was ready to start when Chakravarty came to accompany him and found Nagmahashaya ejaculating like a child, 'Mother! Mother!' at intervals. They went to Aheeritola Ghat, got into a ferry boat and reached Belur in a short time. He was so full of emotion that on landing at the Ghat, Nagmahashaya began to quiver as an aspen leaf before a strong wind. Swami Premananda had seen Nagmahashaya from a distance and had already informed the Mother. When they reached the landing Ghat, he caught hold of Nagmahashaya, whose frame was about to give way in ecstasy and emotion, and led him slowly to the Mother's presence. After the lapse of about half an hour they came out. Nagmahashaya, still not fully in the plane of ordinary consciousness, was saying, "Mother is always more merciful than the Father." Swami Premananda said, "Oh! How the Mother bestowed her grace upon Nagmahashaya today! She partook a portion of the sweets brought by Nagmahashaya and then gave him her Prasadam with her own hands." After a short stay they returned to Calcutta.

A week before he left for his native village, Nagmahashaya wanted to go to the Alambazar monastery with Chakravarty. As about eleven in the morning Chakravarty went to him at Kumartooly. He had not taken his meal till then. He did not wait for it but left with Chakravarty. Fruits and sweets were purchased on the way for offering at the monastery, and they reached the place at about half past one in the afternoon. The Swamis had just then finished their meals and were taking their midday rest, the shrine room being closed for the midday. Learning that Nagmahashaya was without food, Swamis Ramakrishnananda and Premananda got up in all haste and prepared loochies for him. But as Nagmahashaya would not take anything but Prasadam, the shrine was opened even at that unusual hour and food was offered again to the Lord, despite all protestations from Nagmahashaya. When it was served to Nagmahashaya, he began to dance with joy exclaiming, 'Glory be to

Sri Ramakrishna!' The inviolable rule of the monastery, which had never been relaxed in favor of even princes and nobles, was for the sake of Nagmahashaya now broken by the same Swami Ramakrishnananda who violently resented the least departure from the regular routine. They left the monastery in the evening.

The Holy Mother had presented Nagmahashaya with a piece of cloth which he used to wear on his head when he went to make his purchases for the Puja. At the request of a devotee, a white Chowry (made of the tail of the Tibetan yak, *Bos Grunniens*, used for fanning the Deity) with silver handle was bought for waving before the Divine Mother. He would make his Puja purchases from the money he used to get every year from Messrs. Pals in the way of commission for the salt contract. After finishing the purchases, Nagmahashaya left for his village. A devotee who went to see him off, left his umbrella in haste in the compartment where he had kept it while helping him to take in the luggage. Finding that the devotee had left his umbrella, Nagmahashaya was going to take charge of it, when another passenger claimed it as his own and misappropriated it despite his protestations. When the train moved on, that man fell fast asleep. When he woke up he found himself over-carried. Being unable to pay the excess fare, he was detained by the station-master. Alluding to this incident, Nagmahashaya used to say, "Evil deeds bear their fruits without delay, yet men are not brought to their senses."

In the same compartment was traveling another man with a courtesan. Nagmahashaya said that as soon as his eyes fell on them, he saw a vision -- a devilish apparition sucking the blood from the neck of the man. After a while all the flesh was exhausted and all that remained of him were the bones. Nagmahashaya was startled and he cried out, "Mother! Mother!" He used to say, "Believe me, I saw all this with my naked eyes."

This time Nagmahashaya went back to Calcutta shortly after the Puja. During his stay in Calcutta he often visited the Alambazar Math, Dakshineswar, and Girish Babu's house with Suresh and Chakravarty. At his lodging at Kumartooly, many people went to see him, and if any of them showed him the least reverence, he would impatiently cry out, "What is there to see in this cage of flesh and bones? Soothe my soul with talks of the Master." Girish Babu used to invite him to dine at his place occasionally, and Nagmahashaya always accepted his invitation with a warm heart. He used to say that his mind and body would be purified if he took food at Girish Babu's. He never hesitated to take food at the house of any of the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. As regards them, he observed no

caste distinction, and would say, "It is like assemblage at the temple of Jagannath."

One day he went to dine with Girish Babu. Khichuri Bhog was offered to the Master. As he went to take Prasadam he found that Kichuri was served to him in one plate and curries in another. At this he requested the other plate of curries to be removed; for he said that it would create a desire for enjoyment; and he took only a little of the curries in the same plate with Khichuri. He even refused to take salt as that might produce a desirable taste in the food which he had denied to himself. Another day he was invited to Girish Babu's. Eggs of Kahi fish were procured that day and Girish Babu wished that Nagmahashaya might take them. But as he was a vegetarian, Girish Babu was thinking how to induce him. Now Nagmahashaya always eagerly sought for Prasadam from the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, though none ventured to give it to him. When this time Nagmahashaya begged Prasadam of Girish Babu, the latter did not lose the opportunity. "Hail Ramakrishna! Take it," saying thus he took the eggs from his own dish and placed them on Nagmahashaya's. Nagmahashaya could not refuse, and while taking them, he said to Girish Babu, "How very clever you are!"

Coming to learn that Nagmahashaya was suffering from chill in the winter for want of warm clothings, Girish Babu sent him a blanket through Devendra Mazumdar, a devotee. When he knew that it was Girish Babu who presented him with the blanket, he repeatedly bowed down and placed it on his head. Girish Babu knew too well that Nagmahashaya never accepted any gift, and when Deven Babu came back to inform him that it was accepted, he felt a great relief. But after a few days it reached his ears that, instead of using the blanket he had presented him, Nagmahashaya always kept it on his head. Troubled with anxiety, he sent Devendra to enquire about it. Deven Babu returned and informed him that Nagmahashaya was found sitting with the blanket on his head.

After a stay of three months in Calcutta, Nagmahashaya returned home. Dindyal's health was breaking down. From this time, Nagmahashaya could not go to Calcutta so frequently.

When Swami Vivekananda returned from America for the first time, Chakravarty went to see him. Hearing that Chakravarty was acquainted with Nagmahashaya and that he regularly visited him, Swamiji remarked, "Vayam tattvamveshat hatah, madhukara tvam khalu kriti. Our life is passed vainly in the search after truth; only he among us is the true blessed son of our Master." Then Swamiji

expressed his desire to see Nagmahashaya in his village and requested Chakravarty to write to him

Receiving the news of Swamiji's arrival from America, Nagmahashaya came to Calcutta to see him. The Math building at Belur was then completed and Swami Vivekananda was living there. Nagmahashaya reached there in the afternoon, and fell prostrate before Swamiji. When he heard that Swamiji was not doing well, he showed his anxiety and said, "Thakur used to say that you are the chest of gold Mohurs. The preservation of your health will save the world from misery. The world hangs on you." After a long conversation Swamiji requested him to live in the monastery for good. Nagmahashaya replied, "What can I do? How can I disregard the Master's wish? Thakur gave me the command to live at home." Swamiji then ordered the scriptural class to be closed in honor of the presence of Nagmahashaya; and all the Brahmacharins and Sannyasins came there and sat before Nagmahashaya and Swamiji. As soon as Swamiji uttered the name of Sri Ramakrishna, Nagmahashaya stood up and shouted, "Glory to Sri Ramakrishna! Glory to Ramakrishna!" He then said, "The other day I went to Dakshineswar and could not find out Master there. Thakur is now living here in the monastery." On Swamiji's asking him whether it was proper to establish Maths and build temples, Nagmahashaya answered, "All these are accomplished at the will of the Lord; and they are for the good of the world and its beings. You must look after your health; the survival of your body will do the world the greatest good." Then Swamiji, addressing the Swamis and Brahmacharins, said, "Only by seeing Nagmahashaya one can understand to what spiritual height a man can attain through the grace of the Lord. In self-control and in renunciation he is by far our superior." After a while Nagmahashaya was taken to the shrine where he prostrated himself before the altar without getting up for a long time.

Every evening Swamiji used to walk in the Math grounds. That day Nagmahashaya also walked behind him. Learning that Nagmahashaya was going to pass the night in the monastery, Swamiji asked a disciple to watch for a ferry boat, as it was already getting dark. Before taking leave, Nagmahashaya prostrated before Swamiji with the words, "Hail Siva Sankara! Hail Siva Sankara!" Swamiji raised him by the hand and said, "Please do come and bless us with your holy presence every now and then." Whenever he was reminded of Swamiji, he used to greet him with the words, "Glory to Lord Shiva!" And when the topic of his preaching religion and conquest of the Western world through spirituality arose, Nagmahashaya would get excited and speak of Swamiji as indeed the greatest of heroes.

The house of the late Balaram Basu of Baghbazar was a favorite resort of Sri Ramakrishna. Nagmahashaya used to call it, "the court-yard of Srivas." (Srivas was a devoted disciple of Lord Gauranga and his courtyard was a favorite resort of his Guru.) The Sannyasin disciples of Sri Ramakrishna used to stay there whenever they went to Calcutta. Nagmahashaya often met them there. One day Chakravarty accompanied him. Swamis Brahmananda and Premananda were present there on that day. They were talking on various subjects. As soon as Nagmahashaya arrived there, they stopped all their talks and began to talk about Sri Ramakrishna. When they were about to return home, Swami Brahmananda said, "The moment Nagmahashaya entered here, we were unconsciously reminded of the Master and all other topics were dropped. It is due to the appearance of such great souls that spirituality is still present in India. Blessed indeed is Nagmahashaya." Nagmahashaya had the highest reverence for his Sannyasin Gurubhais. He used to say of them, "They are not men but gods in human forms who came to play with the Lord. Who can know them? Who can understand them?"

Gradually the last days of Dindayal drew near. During the closing days of his life he occupied himself with worship and meditation. He had no longer any worldly attachment and though far advanced in years, he had no physical ailment. One morning Nagmahashaya was leading him by the hand when all on a sudden he fell down on the ground utterly exhausted. Nagmahashaya bore his father in his arms. On the way the old man fainted. After reaching home he recovered, but Nagmahashaya knew for certain that his father's last hour was come. He sent for a doctor at once and began to repeat in the ear of his father the holy name of the Lord; the tongue of the dying man also joined with his. The doctor came; the disease was apoplexy of a serious type. The doctor felt his pulse. There was no hope. Shortly after, at the ripe age of eighty, Dindayal passed away while the name of the Lord was still on his lips. Nagmahashaya consoled himself with the thought that his father passed away at a very old age with full consciousness and with the name of the Lord on his lips.

Nagmahashaya put on the customary mourning dress. He fasted, took Havishya and offered the ten Pindas according to the Shastric rites. Then came the Shraddha ceremony. This was the last duty he could perform towards his father on this side of the world. He had a mind to do it in a grand style. But where was the money to be had?

Some of his devotees who were officers in the firm of Messrs. Ralli Bros. raised subscriptions among themselves to help him

celebrating the ceremony without informing him anything of it. When Nagmahashaya came to know of it, he humbly begged of them not to do so. Mortgaging his own house, he borrowed Rs. 500 from a merchant of his village. He also borrowed some money from an old lady, his neighbor. This ceremony cost him nearly Rs. 1200.

Then Nagmahashaya went to Gaya and there offered Pindas for three days with shaven head, according to the customary rites, and returned to Calcutta. He told Suresh that in the last days of his life his father had renounced all desires, and refraining from thinking of worldly matters, passed all his time in taking the name of God and finally left his body with the full consciousness of Him.

When Messrs. Pals came to know that Nagmahashaya ran into debt in order to perform the Shraddha ceremony of his father, they proposed to let the house at Kumartooly to a new tenant and increase the rent. Ranjit too agreed to this proposal; but Nagmahashaya would never concede to it. The old tenant Kirtivas was much impressed with this generosity of Nagmahashaya and he of his own accord offered to pay the increased rate, but Nagmahashaya protested and said, "You have to labor hard day and night to earn your livelihood and then with great difficulty to pay the rent. I can by no means exact a higher rent from you." Nagmahashaya loved Kirtivas as his own son and during his stay in Calcutta, Kirtivas also served him with great love and reverence. Kirtivas lived in that house and he preserved with great care the room where Nagmahashaya used to live and his broken bedstead.

When Nagmahashaya returned to Calcutta from Gaya, the Holy Mother was living at Baghbazar. Nagmahashaya was one day going to her with sweets and a piece of cloth, when suddenly he had an attack of colic on the way and could not proceed any further. He had to remain almost senseless for a long time on the verandah of a house in the street. He could easily have returned home in a hackney coach and had enough money to pay for it. But how could he do so without offering the things he had brought for the Mother? He was lamenting that he could not go there, as he was forced to lie down. Nearly after two hours, he felt relieved and returned home after having an interview with the Holy Mother.

In that year Calcutta had the visitation of a plague epidemic for the first time. The rich and the poor were flying away from the metropolis; the great city was almost deserted. Messrs. Pals left their Calcutta house in charge of Nagmahashaya and went away to their village. A Brahmin cook, a Brahmin clerk and a servant lived with him. One day Chakravarty went in search of him to the Pals' house and saw him reading the Gita with spectacles on. Seeing him

there, Nagmahashaya said, "What can I understand of the Gita, fool as I am? You are a Brahmin and learned too. Please read it before me and explain." The Sloka of the Gita beginning with Karmanyakarma yah pasyet etc. was explained to him in different ways as interpreted by the different commentators. Of all the commentaries, he liked that of Sridhara Swami best.

Three days after this, the Brahmin clerk was attacked with plague. A doctor was called in to treat him. But who would nurse him? Nobody dared to approach him. Nagmahashaya alone had to nurse the poor man. The case proved fatal and the dying man pressed Nagmahashaya to take him to the Ganga. As none came to help him, Nagmahashaya alone had to carry the man to the nearest Ghat. In a short time he passed away on the lap of Nagmahashaya uttering, "Ganga! Ganga!" Nagmahashaya had to face great difficulties for his cremation. As he died of plague, no Brahmin came to help him. At last when he offered to pay a large sum, some Brahmins came forward and they cremated him. Some gentlemen happened to come there in search of Nagmahashaya. They expressed wonder at the conduct of Nagmahashaya; and one of them remarked, "He must be start mad!"

One day Nagmahashaya went to the temple of Mother at Kalighat. On his way back he met a devotee in the Maidan. The gentleman took him to the Eden Gardens to show him over the place. Entering the Gardens, Nagmahashaya, simple and mirthful as a child, enquired of him everything that met his eyes. When he was returning he told him, "Man is running madly after enjoyments. When he has assumed this human form, instead of trying to solve the great mysteries of life and death, he has lost himself in a few transitory objects of the world. He forgets that he will have to leave this very soon. This world is full of Rajasika and Tamasika elements and is dominated by pursuit of money and sensuality and people are running mad after them. Oh Lord! what a wondrous play is Thine!"

One day, Nagmahashaya and others were walking about Sri Ramakrishna at Girish Babu's house, when Swami Niranjanananda, who was present there, said, "Well, sir, our Master used to say that one who thinks himself mean and wretched, becomes actually so ultimately. Why then do you always think yourself most low and degraded?" Nagmahashaya replied, "Ah, I see with my own eyes, that I am so low and degraded; how can I think that I am Siva? You can think like that, Girish Babu can say he is Siva; you have got such great devotion for the Lord. Where is such devotion in me? If you all help me, if Thakur grants me grace, my life will be blessed." There was such a ring of sincere humility in those words of Nagmahashaya that Swami Niranjanananda could neither contradict

him nor raise any discussion. Referring to this incident, Girish Babu said, "If a man be sincere and if really all idea of egotism has vanished from him, he attains to the state of Nagmahashaya. The earth becomes consecrated by the very touch of the feet of such great men."

That day, sitting in his house, Nagmahashaya was condemning himself before some gentlemen for his own shortcomings, and was calling himself as 'a heap of sins and the worm of worms.' Suddenly he remembered the words of Swami Niranjanananda and said, "Only this day I heard at Girish Babu's, that one who thinks himself a degraded worm, becomes like that; and if one thinks himself Siva one becomes Siva. Then, what will become of me?" After a pause he again said, "No, there cannot be any harm in speaking the truth that I am really a worm; and it does not matter much to call a worm by its own name. It is not wrong to speak the truth. Through the grace of my Master, and the grace of you all and of Girish Babu, by speaking the truth, I shall never stray away into the path of the untrue." So saying, he bowed down before all. Then he made obeisance to Sri Ramakrishna. He remained silent for sometime, then again spoke, "When I have the attainment to this body, this cage of bone and flesh, how can I boast that I am Siva? Girish Babu is a mighty hero, the Bhairava himself, he can say he is Siva." He then made his obeisance referring to Girish Babu, "I am so low, what can I do for you to smoke" -- so saying he sat down to serve them with chillums of tobacco.

Sri Navagopal Ghosh of the village of Ramakrishnapur, a great devotee of the Master, celebrated with great pomp, the anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna. Babu Upendranath Mukherjee, the proprietor of the Basumati (a Bengali weekly), invited Nagmahashaya for the celebration. On the morning of the anniversary day, Nagmahashaya went to Upen Babu's at Aheeritola. A carriage was hired, but Nagmahashaya expressed his desire to go on foot. Upen Babu knew that Nagmahashaya could not bear the sight of the horses being whipped. Accordingly, he instructed the coachman particularly not to whip the horses, and after much entreaty Nagmahashaya was made to get into the carriage. When they reached the destination, Nagmahashaya got down and prostrated before Navagopal Babu. On entering the house he stood in a corner of the hall and began to fan the guest. The request of Navagopal Babu and all the assembled gentlemen to the contrary, could not stop him. The village of Ramakrishnapur resounded incessantly with the name of Sri Ramakrishna. The devotees were all beside themselves with the joy of festivity and the ecstasy of Sankeertanam, but Nagmahashaya, born as if to serve the devotees of the Lord, had no other business but to serve them. In a corner he stood continually waving the fan.

Then when the devotees went to take Prasadam, he followed them with folded palms, but did not sit in the row. At the request of all, he took only a grain of Prasadam. All gazed at him with astonishment.

While returning to Calcutta, Nagmahashaya could not be persuaded by any means to get into the carriage; consequently, they all set out on foot. On their way, Nagmahashaya remarked that Sri Ramakrishna Deva used to say that Navagopal Babu's wife was born of Vidya Prakriti, and those who considered these devotees as mere human beings were not better than beasts.

A few days later Nagmahashaya went back to his native village; and this was his last visit to Calcutta.

After the final disappearance of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, when Nagmahashaya went to his native village, he first thought of erecting a cottage for himself in a secluded place, and living there all alone. As his wife learnt of his intention, she said, "I have never troubled you for anything, nor shall I do so at any time; then why should you live apart?" Relying on the assurance given by his faithful wife, Nagmahashaya continued to live in the same house with his family. But though he lived in his house, he kept up the spirit of renunciation all through his life. His wife says, "No change or weakness of the flesh could be noticed in his person even for a moment. Taking the name of Sri Ramakrishna, he trampled under foot all animal propensities. He lived in the midst of fire, but his body was not even slightly scorched."

Two people from his preceptor's family once came to his house at Deobhog. One of them was a devotee. His name was Nabin Chandra Bhattacharya. At the earnest request of Dindayal, he pressed Nagmahashaya to live with his wife and beget an issue in fulfillment of the householder's duty to perpetuate his line. When he heard this, he fell down in a swoon and got wounds all over his body. After a time he said to the devotee, "You come from our preceptor's family and are yourself a devotee. Indeed, it is most unbecoming of you to command me to do such an unworthy thing." With this he began to strike his head with a piece of brick lying close by till it cut this forehead and the wound bled profusely. The devotee was sorry and retracted his order. Nagmahashaya felt relieved and took the dust of his feet.

Once Dindayal rebuked Nagmahashaya saying, "How will you provide yourself with food and raiment?" Upon this he replied, "Father, you need not be anxious on that account. The trees are abundant with tender leaves. I have never looked upon any woman

with carnal desires in my life. I am just the same as when I came out of my mother's womb. I need nothing to put on."

Dindayal would often rebuke Nagmahashaya, his only son, for his non-attachment to his worldly duties. One day in the course of conversation there arose an altercation between the father and the son. Nagmahashaya suddenly became excited and said, "I never knew any woman in my life, nor have I any lust. I have nothing to do with this world." Then with the words, "Naham, Naham" (not I, not I), he threw away his cloth and walked out nude from his house. His wife began to weep. Finding her aggrieved, a devotee of Nagmahashaya brought him back to the house.

A middle aged widow living at Deobhog would often come to pay visits to Nagmahashaya and show herself off as a great devotee. But the secret and unchaste motive of the woman did not escape the keen insight of Nagmahashaya. He dismissed her for her wicked intention at such an advanced age. Learning of the motive of the widow, the wife of Nagmahashaya stopped her access to the house. Referring to this, Nagmahashaya said, "Alas! methinks even the vultures and dogs do not like to take the flesh of the despicable body, this cage of bone and flesh. It is a mystery to me, how she became attached to this. Oh, in how many ways my Master tests me. Indeed, it is difficult for human beings to conquer lust and avarice. They can be subdued only through the grace of the Lord." At times the highest truths dropped from his lips in very simple and plain language. He would often say, "Abstinence from lust brings a man near to God."

As towards woman, so was his aversion towards money. Once a relative of the Pals was attacked with small-pox. When all kinds of medical treatment had failed to produce any effect, the Pals who were well aware of the reputation which Nagmahashaya had acquired in the department, asked for his help. Nagmahashaya could not refuse them. He examined the patient and prescribed one homoeopathic medicine which cured the disease. The Pals wanted to reward him with a big sum. But he refused to accept it. When they pressed him much, he began to cry like a child and said, "Alas! O Lord, why did you make me learn the low profession of a physician? It is only on this account that I undergo such sufferings."

At the request of the Pals, he once went to Bhojeswar. When he was going back to Calcutta, they paid him Rs.8 for his steamer fare and a good blanket to protect himself from cold. The steamer station was about six miles from Bhojeswar. When he reached there and was going to buy his ticket, a woman with ragged dress and five or six children hanging on her came to him and, in a most

piteous tone, brought to his notice her sufferings and privations. She asked for help. Hearing her story Nagmahashaya burst into tears and gave away the sum of Rs. 8 and the blanket which he had got from Messrs. Pals with the words, "Mother, take these and save yourself and your children." The beggar woman blessed him and went away. Being fatigued with the long journey, Nagmahashaya took rest for a while at the station. When the steamer had left the station, he resumed his journey towards Calcutta on foot, as he had no money left to pay for the fare. On the way, if he found any temple, he begged Prasadam and at other times lived on parched rice. He crossed the rivers and streamlets on a ferry boat on payment of the fare when they were wide, but when narrow, he crossed them swimming. He had only seven annas and six pies with him. Depending on that small amount he set out for Calcutta and after a continuous walk on foot for twenty-nine days, he reached the place.

Once Nagmahashaya was in great distress for want of money owing to the suspension of the contract business. Occasionally, he had even to go without food. After a long time the Pals dispatched two thousand mounds of salt. Nagmahashaya went to Kidderpore for the dispatch. Though the dispatch of two thousand mounds of salt should have brought him at least seven rupees, he could earn only thirteen annas. He had also to sit in the scorching rays of the sun the whole day. While coming back he met a man who told him of his miseries. Nagmahashaya gave him the thirteen annas, his whole day's earnings and came back home with an empty pocket. That day he had not a grain of rice with which to appease his hunger.

When Nagmahashaya was very young, the barking of a dog or the mewling of a cat would sound in his ears like the cry of the animal for food. Being much afflicted, he would say to his aunt, "Well, mamma, why does it cry? Why not give it some food?" Then he would himself carry food for it and say in very endearing terms, "Well, brother, don't cry any more. Here is food for you."

There was a small pond attached to his house. When he was thirteen or fourteen years old, he used to go to that pond every day to rinse his mouth after dinner, with some rice and dal in his hands. He had some tame fish in the pond; they used to come at his call and take rice and dal from his hand. He would fondle them affectionately. Thus, before he came to Calcutta for his studies, he used to play with them. Nagmahashaya used to say that in birds and beasts also there is to be found some knowledge, and in the course of evolution they too will attain higher births and become free from all bondage.

One summer morning, Nagmahashaya was smoking on the Mandapam of his house when two wild magpies came flying and sat before him. Nagmahashaya did not notice them. To draw his attention the magpies began to peck at his feet. He then caressed them fondly with his hands and said, "Well, mothers, you have come. Wait a bit. I shall give you food presently." Then he fetched some quantity of rice and fed them with his own hands. But their hunger was not yet satisfied and so they began to stroll round Nagmahashaya. Nagmahashaya then brought some more rice and a little water in a cup. Taking their stand on his hand the two birds ate and drank. When they were satisfied, Nagmahashaya caressed them with their hands and then bade them good-bye, asking them to go and play in the forest and come again the following day. The birds flew away. Nagmahashaya said, "Oh, who knows how Ramakrishna plays with his children and in how many ways?"

Nagmahashaya was the living example of the quality of Ahimsa. "Non-injury is the highest virtue" -- this he followed in his life to the very letter. Some European officers of the 'Jute Mills of Naraingunj' once came to Deobhog on a hunting excursion. Hearing the report of guns, Nagmahashaya came running to the European gentlemen and requested them with folded palms to refrain from such inhuman acts. As they could not understand his words, they began to load their guns to shoot at the wild birds. At this Nagmahashaya showed indignation and ejaculated in a furious tone, "Do no more any such cruelty." The Sahibs took him to be mad and aimed their guns at the game without paying any heed to his words. Nagmahashaya suddenly jumped on them and in a moment caught hold of the guns, as if the strength of a hundred lions had possessed the feeble frame of Nagmahashaya. In spite of all his efforts, the Sahibs could not release their guns from his grasp. Nagmahashaya took possession of them and went home. After keeping them in a safe place, he washed his hands for touching those deadly weapons. The Sahibs, after returning to Naraingunj, wanted to lodge a complaint against him. Meanwhile he sent their guns back through a Bengali officer of the Jute Mills, who in the course of conversation spoke of Nagmahashaya's saintly character and his sincerity of purpose. This inspired in them a feeling of great respect and reverence for him and they gave up the idea of going to court. After that incident they never went to Deobhog for hunting.

Nagmahashaya could not bear to see the sufferings of any creature. There was a small tank attached to his house where a large number of fish came and settled during the floods every year. One day a certain fisherman caught some fish from the tank, and according to the custom in vogue, came to Nagmahashaya to give

him his due share. Nagmahashaya was greatly affected to see those fish struggling hard for their lives in the basket. He at once purchased them all at the price demanded by the man and let them loose in the pond.

Another day some other fisherman caught some fish from a pond close to his house and came to sell them to him. This time also he purchased all the fish and let them go into the pond. The fisherman was quite astonished at this strange behavior and no sooner had he got the price of his fish and the basket back than he ran away from this mad man as fast as his legs could carry him and never again in his life crossed the boundary walls of the abode of Nagmahashaya.

He was so very strict in following the Ahimsa Dharma that he would not even allow a poisonous snake to be killed. Once a venomous cobra was seen in the courtyard of his house, which alarmed all persons present there. His wife suggested that it should be killed. Nagmahashaya objected, "It is not a snake of the forest that does any harm but it is the snake that is in the mind that really kills a man." Then he addressed the cobra with folded palms, saying, "Thou art the visible manifestation of the goddess Manasa. Thy abode is in the forest; may it please thee to leave my humble cottage and go to thine own dwelling." And strange, the snake also followed him with its hood bent down as he directed it to the jungle. Nagmahashaya often used to say, "The outside world is the projection of your own mind. As you give out to the world, so you receive back from it. It is just like looking into the mirror. The reflection in the mirror exactly shows what faces you make at it."

One day he was washing his hands and face in a tank when he was bitten by a snake on the toe of his left foot. Nagmahashaya did not move from his position lest he might disturb the snake. After a moment it left him. When his wife came to know of it, she got nervous, but Nagmahashaya said, "Well, nothing very serious happened. Some water-snake mistook my toe for its food, but soon it realized its blunder and left me unhurt."

It was his direct perception that the one God resides in the heart of all creatures. He realized the truth that 'all live, move and have their being in Him.' If he was questioned why he remained with his palms folded, he replied that he perceived his Ishtam everywhere and in every being. It became impossible for him even to tear a leaf from a living plant; for is there not the same God breathing in the plant? We are told of similar experiences of saints who realized oneness with the universe, who felt that the same life principle is vibrating through all, and that even herbs and plants feel pleasure and pain just as we do. None ever saw Nagmahashaya carelessly

treating even the minutest worms, e.g. mosquitoes, ants, etc. If ants chanced to get up on his body, he would carefully remove them to a safer place. His mind was so worked up that he could not walk lest he should tread upon small insects. Sometimes his breath would stop, lest his respiration should kill the minute organisms that live in the air. Once a devotee of Nagmahashaya, while sitting on the verandah of his, found that white ants had eaten up the posts that supported the eastern side of the verandah. He struck at the posts and the poor ants fell down helpless. "Alas! what have you done?" cried Nagmahashaya, moved with pity. "Poor creatures, they found peaceful abode here for a long time. It is very cruel of you to have molested them thus." As he said this, his eyes were filled with tears of kindness. The devotee was stricken with wonder and remorse. Nagmahashaya then approaching the ants, said, "Make yourselves comfortable here again. This time you need fear no harm," and helped them to build ant-hills there. They once more established themselves and in time the posts gave way. But he would never allow anybody to disturb them.

For the cows he had a special reverence from his childhood. In them, as an orthodox Hindu, he found a great manifestation of the Divine Mother. He would often take the dust of their hoofs. One day he got a piece of sugar-cane. A cow tried to eat its leaves, and with the utmost care Nagmahashaya gave them to it. He broke the cane into small pieces and made her eat the same, patting her gently. He then prostrated himself before her and after a time fanned her with great devotion. While fanning, he was possessed by an intense feeling of the presence of the Divine Mother in her and fell down senseless on the ground absorbed in divine consciousness.

Nagmahashaya himself was a worshipper of Sakti (the Energy-aspect of Brahman known as the Divine Mother). Yet he believed like a true disciple of his Master that "different paths lead to the same goal. Creeds or paths do not matter much. If one sincerely and devoutly follows any one of the paths, God's grace descends on him." He harbored no feelings of religious distinction and fanaticism and evinced equal regard for the devotees of all sects, whether they be Saivas or Vaisnavas, Bauls or Kartabhajas (two different sects of the school of Sri Chaitanya). He had the same respect for Hindus, Mussalmans and Christians. He would bow his head and salute reverentially whenever he happened to pass by a mosque or a tomb of a Mohammedan saint. He did the same before churches too with the words, "Glory unto Jesus."

As regards devotional practices he used to say, "The one thing necessary is to keep one's soul wide awake constantly by means of Sadhana like the man who keeps watchful vigil underneath a fruit

tree all the time. The fruition rests with Him. The Jiva can taste the fruit of his Sadhana, only if He allows it through His boundless grace. There are some again to whom is vouchsafed the saving grace of the Lord apparently without any great exertion on their part. It appears as if they have been quite asleep, and the Lord drops on them the choicest fruits of Sadhana from above. When they wake up they see themselves dowered with them to the great astonishment of themselves and the world. These are not to undergo the stress and toil of Sadhana. Such men are known as Kripasiddhas (those that attain to God-realization through the special grace of God. Many such examples of Kripa-siddhas are to be found in the lives of Avatars. To quote but one instance -- through the mere grace of Sri Chaitanya, Jagai and Madhai, the two great robbers, became perfect saints). Until and unless the grace of God descends on man, he cannot know Him. He can be realized only if He so chooses. He is verily the Kalpataru - the wish-fulfilling tree. He gives whatever is asked of Him. But man should not indulge in such desires which will drag him again into the rounds of births and deaths. He must pray to the Lord to grant him unflinching devotion to His hallowed feet and a true knowledge of His self. Then only can he break through the sordid bonds of the world and attain freedom through His grace. Hankering after worldly ends must bring in its attendant evils. That man alone can transcend the scourges and miseries of the world who devotes his time to the contemplation of God and communion with His devotees." About occult powers, he used to say, "When a man becomes pure and truly spiritual, temptations of a subtler kind such as some occult or miraculous power or some sudden attainment of prosperity try to allure him continually. A pure soul has not got to reason out the truth of objects. He intuitively knows everything; for as the pure crystal catches the reflection of all objects about it, the pure mind comprehends the things of the world in their entirety. But should those powers attract his attention, there is every chance of his being led away from the ideal.

If ever a doubt arose in the mind of his devotees in his presence, they had not to ask him anything on those points. Nagmahashaya himself would raise them in the course of conversation and solve them to their utmost satisfaction. He could read the nature and worth of a man on his face. His prophecies regarding many were fulfilled to the letter. He would tell his wife that such an d such a man was coming to Deobhog and so he must go to the market before the man arrived; and as a matter of fact the person named did actually turn up.

Once two friends, Aswini and Chakravarty, started for Deobhog to see Nagmahashaya. Aswini had a colic pain which used to come

on regularly every evening. The whole night he would remain almost senseless from its effect. On this occasion the two friends could not reach the place before evening, and they passed every moment anxiously lest Aswini should get the attack on the way. But though the will of the Lord they came to Deobhog without any difficulty. Chakravarty was indeed much relieved when Aswini informed him that there was no more fear of any attack that night; for the usual time had already passed away. For the previous five months Aswini had not been able to take even a drop of water at night but that night he took rest comfortably after a hearty meal. They lived there for three days without Aswini getting any colic attack in the evening. Referring to this Aswini laments now, "Ah, even that cruel disease of mine which was the effect of some misdeeds of my prior lives wore off under the influence of that holy man. Oh, had I clung to him from that time, my life and character would have been molded to perfection."

Once a Brahmin boy was attacked with smallpox. Hopeless of his life, his widowed mother left him at the door of Nagmahashaya when life was almost extinct. The boy got cured through the grace of God. When Suresh asked Nagmahashaya how the cure was effected, he said it was true that the boy was cured but he could not or would not say 'how'.

Once in summer, a neighboring house, situated to the north of Nagmahashaya's thatched cottage, caught fire, which began to rage fiercely, threatening the neighborhood. The house on fire was only about thirty cubits distant from Nagmahashaya's. Sparks from the flame began to fall on all sides. Great confusion prevailed. Every one was busy in trying to extinguish the fire. But Nagmahashaya stood quietly before the huge flame with folded palms, totally unconscious of danger. His wife got nervous, and afraid of imminent danger to their house, hurriedly began to take out clothes, quilts and other movable things. At this Nagmahashaya cried out, "What a great fool and skeptic you are still! What will you do with these trifles? Brahma has been pleased to come near your very house today; and instead of offering worship to Him, you are troubling yourself with these paltry little things!" Then he clapped his hands and began to dance about in ecstasy of joy, uttering, "Glory to the Lord! Glory to the Lord! If there is God to protect man, what danger is there for him? But if He is displeased, there is no power on earth that can save him." The hunger of the god of fire was appeased, having reduced the house of the neighbor to ashes; but the house of Nagmahashaya remained unscathed.

On the occasion of Ardhodaya yoga (which comes once in fifty years, a very auspicious day observed by all orthodox Hindus),

which came about this time, Nagmahashaya came away from Calcutta some three or four days before the auspicious day. At this, his father, Dindyal, got angry with him and said, "I can't understand what peculiar kind of religion you profess to observe. Is this the proof of your piety that while people at large are rushing for a bath in the holy Ganges, you have come away from Calcutta, from the holy banks of the river to your home! There is still time enough to take me also to Calcutta." Nagmahashaya replied, "If anybody has true and sincere devotion for her, Mother Ganga herself will come to his house; he has not to go anywhere else." The auspicious day came off. Srimati Harakamini, Kailas Bose and some other devotees of Nagmahashaya were present at Deobhog on that occasion. Exactly at the time when the eclipse was to take place, Harakamini was struck with awe and wonder to find that the north-east corner of Nagmahashaya's courtyard had cracked, and through the crevices a stream of water was gushing out, overflowing the yard and filling the place with its murmuring sound. Nagmahashaya was then inside the room. He came out and prostrated himself before the spring, crying, "Mother Ganga! Hail, benign Mother! Thou purifier of all sins!" He took some water and with greatest reverence put it on his head and bowed again. The inmates of the house then took their bath in that water. As the news spread, crowds from the locality gathered there to take their bath. The premises of Nagmahashaya's echoed with the cry of "Hail, mother Ganga!" An hour later the rush of water diminished and the stream gradually subsided. There are persons still living at Deobhog who bear testimony to the above fact. Srimati Harakamini was completely cured of a chronic malady by the touch of that holy water. Never in life did Nagmahashaya even incidentally make mention of this event. If ever questioned about the happening, he would simply say, "Alas! people make much of such trifles." Swami Vivekananda, when told of the incident, remarked, "There is nothing impossible for the will of such great saints. Men may even attain perfect salvation through the effective force of their strong will."

In every occurrence of his life Nagmahashaya saw the benign hand of Sri Ramakrishna. Once while he was asleep a big cat jumped on his face and scratched the left eye. He was painfully injured; but he did not seem to take much care of it and said, "Sri Ramakrishna himself punished me in the form of a cat for the sins of my past births. On, this is also certainly His grace!" But the sore got healed without much medication. To him everything was Sri Ramakrishna; the spirit of Sri Ramakrishna pervaded the whole universe.

While living in Calcutta, he once suffered from some severe pain in both of his hands. He could not even move them, and unless he

placed them in a folded posture motionless, he got excruciating pain. So he said that the Master made him suffer from this kind of pain in order that he might learn to remain always with folded hands.

When he was suffering from severe colic pain he was heard to say, "Hail, Ramakrishna, glory to Thee! As I could not devote whole-heartedly this wretched cage of bones and flesh to Thy holy cause, it is meet that Thou shouldst punish it with such severe pain. Thou art showing Thy mercy by making me suffer from this pain, for it reminds me only of Thee. Blessed indeed is this misery, for it reminds me of Sri Ramakrishna! Oh Lord! Glory unto Thee! Glory unto Thy grace! It is Thy mercy and Thy mercy alone. There is no other means of salvation for a man except Thy boundless grace."

Nagmahashaya never took the attitude of a teacher. If he was asked to teach, he would say, "None can teach others. In due time the spiritual eye of man opens by itself through the grace of Sri Ramakrishna, and then whatever the eye lights upon, manifests Sri Krishna. He finds then everything tinged with a new meaning."

But whenever he found his devotees despondent, he cheered them up, saying, "When you have acquired faith in Ramakrishna, know that this is your last birth. If a man has true and sincere faith in the Lord, he never swerves from the right path. He attains dharma, artha, kama and moksha.

Girish Chandra Ghosh used to remark with his characteristic humor: "Mahamaya fell into a great difficulty in trying to ensnare two persons. Naren (Vivekananda) and Nagmahashaya. As She tried to capture Naren, he became bigger and bigger and at last so big that all Her fetters fell short and She had to give up Her task as hopeless. And when She attempted Her trick on Nagmahashaya, he began to make himself smaller and smaller and at last reduced himself to such a degree of smallness that he easily escaped through the meshes of Her snares."

## **CHAPTER VIII**

### **WITH HIS DEVOTEES**

NAGMAHASHAYA never took the role of a Guru, nor did he ever give initiation to any disciple. He never went against the injunctions of the Sastras and would be very sorry, even at times angry, if others did so. He believed that being a Sudra by birth, he had no right to initiate according to the Sastras, and he acted according to this belief all through life. But through his grace, the fire of truth

and righteousness was kindled in many a desolate heart, and a complete change came upon the life and action of many a licentious youth at his holy touch; yet never did he entertain with any the relation of a master and disciple; nay, even the idea would prick him to the core. He would say, "I am only a low Sudra. What do I know? You all come here to bless me with the dust of your holy feet. Blessed am I that through the grace of my Master I can see you all here."

A certain Brahmin devotee of his once pressed him hard to give him initiation. But he said, "You are a Brahmin and moreover an educated youth: you should not foster such an idea. You must know that we have become so degraded and miserable only through the disobedience of the sacred injunctions of our holy scriptures. Well, I must follow the duties of a true householder strictly, for such was the command of my Master. I have no right nor the power to swerve an inch from that." But finding the devotee very much disappointed, he blessed him, saying: "My boy, don't lose heart. Siva Himself will initiate you." After some time, Nagmahashaya was exceedingly glad at heart to learn that the said youth had got his initiation from Swami Vivekananda. He thereupon remarked, "In this modern age the Sannyasin disciples of the Master only can give initiation to the people of the world. They are the real Gurus of the modern age and those that get themselves initiated by these sages are indeed blessed, for they have certainly received the grace of the Almighty."

Though Nagmahashaya did not have any proper disciple he had numerous devotees; and he always kept a watchful and affectionate eye on them. Whether his devotee be far or near, be he in his presence or far off from him, Nagmahashaya always prayed for his well-being and sent his good wishes for onward progress in the path of God-realization. Once a devotee of his was very anxious to see Nagmahashaya and wanted to go to Deobhog. He was reading in the Dacca college. He reached Naraingunj from Dacca by train when it was evening. It was the wet season and all the roads and fields were flooded with rain water. The road from Naraingunj to Deobhog lies by the temple of Sri Sri Lakshmi-Narayanji. The journey has to be made by boat during the rains. The dark night became darker with the heavy clouds in the sky and it poured incessantly. To add to his troubles there was no boat to be found near by to carry him to his destination. Finding no other means, he determined to swim across the vast sheet of water. Having invoked the blessing of Nagmahashaya, the young man jumped into the rushing tide. It was about 9 o'clock in the night when his benumbed body, thoroughly exhausted through chill and exertion, came floating to the garden side on the north of Nagmahashaya's cottage. The devotee found

Nagmahashaya waiting there for him. On seeing him Nagmahashaya cried out, "Alas! What have you done, what a daring boy you are! The fields are at this time infested with venomous snakes. You should not have taken such a daring, headlong step in this stormy night when it is pouring incessantly and is pitch dark." Without any reply to his affectionate reproaches, the devotee followed him gently. When he reached home, Nagmahashaya's wife gave him a dried cloth to put on. She too did not spare the boy for his rash conduct. At this the devotee burst out into tears and said that it was hard for him to live without seeing Nagmahashaya. However, she then went to cook food for the guest, but found there was no dry fuel to make fire. On learning of it, Nagmahashaya at once began to cut a ridge-pole of his house against all remonstrances of the devotee. He said to his wife, "What? Can't I sacrifice this much, if by so doing I can do a little good to those who come to see me even at the risk of their own dear lives, swimming across rivers infested with poisonous snakes? I would deem it particularly a good fortune if I can render a little service to them even at the sacrifice of my life." The devotee thought, "Indeed, the grace and goodwill of Nagmahashaya saved my life that day."

Another time Nagmahashaya saved the same young man from committing suicide. He was then reading in the B.A. class in the Metropolitan College of Calcutta. Once he was walking alone in a moonlit night on the roof of his house. Though it was peaceful and lighted all around, he felt a thick pall of gloom within. It was stifling him. His heart was not as yet lighted with the fire of knowledge. His life hung heavy on him without the sight of his beloved Master Nagmahashaya. He was not then known to the other disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, and he could not therefore seek solace in their holy company. And though Nagmahashaya went to Calcutta every year to make purchases for the Durgapuja festival, he had not the patience to wait so long. He only thought, "What is the use of my life when I have not been able to realize that bliss, though I could get the grace of such a Mahapurusha." His existence became disgusting to himself and he resolved to bring an end to his life by jumping down from the terrace. But as he was about translate his thought into action, he heard a voice in that silence. "Tomorrow morning you will see Nagmahashaya." He shuddered, for none was there. He went and quietly lay down on his bed.

Next morning when the young man got up from his bed, he heard some one calling him. He opened the door in haste and found Nagmahashaya standing before him with a bag in his hand. As he met him, Nagmahashaya said, "Why do you cherish such terrible ideas? I had to come here for you, as you made me so anxious. What anxiety is there when you have entered the kingdom of Sri

Ramakrishna? Don't be impatient. Suicide is a very heinous offence." The he added, "All this time you had been floating on shallow streams, but now you have entered into the deep ocean." He then took him to the Sannyasin disciples of Sri Ramakrishna at the Belur Math and told them, "This gentleman is very restless. Please shower your blessings on him and see that he can get the grace of Guru Maharaj."

Nagmahashaya once told some devotees who came to see him often, "My boys, you are dearer to me than my own self. If I can help you in any way, even by laying down my very life, I am always ready for that. What more can I do with this cage of flesh and bone?"

Of the devotees of Nagmahashaya, the name of his wife must be mentioned first. Whoever chanced to pass a day in Nagmahashaya's house knew very well what a kind mother she was, how like a veritable goddess she would be attending to all her household duties, and how at the same time she was all attention to her beloved husband and her guests. She would leave her bed before everybody else, and as soon as she finished her morning household duties, she would sit down for worship and meditation. She never took any food before her husband and the guests had finished theirs. She did all the domestic work alone and would not allow anybody, not even her sister Harakamini, to help her in her duties.

She knew no other God than her own husband. Nagmahashaya was the only object of her adoration and on him she poured her heart's devotion and worship. Once on a certain Mahashtami day (the eighth day of the Navaratri in the month of October) she made up her mind to make an offering at the feet of Nagmahashaya, but he did not allow her. He said, "Can anybody accept an offering from her whom one worships?" She also would not leave him and was waiting for the right moment. At last when Nagmahashaya was standing in a corner quite unmindful, she seized the opportunity and offered flowers at his feet. She then kept sealed the offered flowers in a gold locket and hung it on her neck.

She was a constant source of inspiration to the devotees of Nagmahashaya. She was the very picture of grace and piety and an exalted type of womanly virtues. Her tenderness, patience, endurance, self-abnegation in the service of others and above all her absolute purity and Tapasya could not but capture the heart of any one acquainted with her.

Harakamini, the youngest sister-in-law of Nagmahashaya, knew no other God besides him. She poured all her heart's devotion at

the feet of this great saint. Her sincere devotion and simple behavior were singularly prominent in her character. Nagmahashaya also had a paternal affection for her and visited her during the holy festivals she celebrated; for, no ceremony would be complete, she thought, without the presence of Nagmahashaya.

She was quite unconcerned with worldly matters; and none ever saw her moved in any circumstance, favorable or unfavorable. She took care of all the devotees of Nagmahashaya, considering them as belonging to one and the same family.

Nagmahashaya's mother-in-law was a very devoted woman. Once the old lady came to Calcutta and put up at Kumartuly with her daughter and son-in-law. There, every day she took bath in the Ganga. Making an image of Siva with the mud of the river-bed, she worshipped the same. One day as she was worshipping, she found a crack on the head of the image. This made her shudder; for it was a bad omen. The old lady was sorely troubled and wept the livelong day by the side of the holy river. As it was getting dark and as she did not return home, Nagmahashaya anxiously went out in search of her and found her weeping on the banks of the Ganga. She told him what had happened, but he bade her take comfort, for no evil would befall her. The old lady came home and went to bed in a very woeful state of mind without taking anything. At night she dreamt Mahadeva (Lord Siva) standing before her and talking to her, "I am much pleased with you. You need not worship Me any more." She could sleep no more during the rest of the night and in the morning she told her son-in-law all about the dream. From that day all image worship ended for her. If anybody asked her the reason, she said, "I have got Siva as my son-in-law. Why should I worship Him any more?"

The wife of Haraprasanna Mazumdar was well known in the circle of the devotees and the followers of Nagmahashaya. It was with reference to her that Swami Vivekananda once told a disciple, "I came across in your quarters only one lady who is as devoted as she is learned." Nagmahashaya called her 'mother', and was very fond of taking food from her hands.

It was a general belief among his devotees that when any epidemic broke out in any part of the country, the very presence of Nagmahashaya was enough to stop it; and accordingly he would be invited by them to set his foot in their country when any such epidemic prevailed. On a similar errand he had been invited to a place named Bhojeswar. The village where Haraprasanna lived was very near it and so he was invited by him to go and stay there. His wife had never seen Nagmahashaya before. She only knew that her

husband was a devotee of some great saint. She was a very devout lady and this gave her the opportunity to come in contact with a great devotee of the Lord. She took care of the saint with a motherly affection. Afterwards she often went to Deobhog and passed some days with Nagmahashaya in talks of the Divine Mother. Once while they were walking together, they were met by an old Vaishnavi who was a beggar and was known to all the people of that village. She was a little confused to see a lady walking with Nagmahashaya. She asked him, "Who is this lady, Durgacharan?" Nagmahashaya replied, "She is my mother." The Vaishnavi knew she was not his mother. So she again asked, "What kind of mother is she?" He at once replied, "She is my mother, my real mother." The old woman knew Nagmahashaya and the stuff he was made of. She said, "O, I see now, really you are a worthy man and deserve your wide fame. Live long, my child, and be a pride and glory to our country!"

The wife of Haraprasanna Babu had a very good voice. She used to sing with her charming devotional voice, songs in praise of the Divine Mother, and Nagmahashaya would say, "Mother herself sings her own praise!"

Nagmahashaya's mother Tripurasundari had an aunt by name Madhavi Thakurani. She was a great admirer of her grandson. Nagmahashaya used to call her 'granny'. She lived somewhere near Dacca. Even now we hear of her piety, purity and great devotion in those parts. Nagmahashaya went to her often.

Not far from Deobhog in the village of Kashipur, there lived a Mohammedan gentleman who had great respect for Nagmahashaya. He had no fanaticism of any kind and regarded Nagmahashaya as a Mohammedan Pir (a realized soul). He looked upon Nagmahashaya's advice as a commandment from the Most High. This Moslem gentleman had a great desire to do some personal service to Nagmahashaya, but as the latter knew him to be a devotee of a very high order, Nagmahashaya would not allow him to do so. He would often come to Nagmahashaya and pass a few hours in his holy company. He lived till the good old age of seventy. Though he lost his wife in his early youth, he did not marry again but led a very pure, devotional life. Entrusting his household duties to his son, and thus being relieved of the cares and anxieties of the world, he passed his days in the contemplation of God.

Nagmahashaya used to say, "In the kingdom of God there is no distinction of caste or creed. All are equal in His eyes. Those who surrender themselves at the feet of the Lord, by whatever name they may call Him, in whatever form they may meditate on Him -- if

they can do that with a sincere and devoted heart, they will surely get the grace of the Almighty. The numerous paths or creeds are numerous ways to reach the same kingdom of God. They are all effective, provided one follows them with a sincere heart and a resolute mind.

Kalikumar Bhunja of Deobhog was one of those persons whose course of life was completely changed through the grace of Nagmahashaya. In his early life he was very poor; but he was taken in adoption by a well-to-do person of Deobhog. Kalikumar was very loose in character in his youth and squandered away the money and wealth he had inherited from his adopted father. Though he came in contact with Nagmahashaya, he could not at once shake off his youthful failings altogether. Nagmahashaya was, for this, at times very severe and hard with him. He used to remain seated in a pensive mood at Nagmahashaya's house remembering his follies. Once he was seen striking his forehead against a post in the house of Nagmahashaya. He who was so tender-hearted did not even look at him at that time but remarked, "Everyone reaps the fruits of his own actions." Gradually as he came in closer and closer contact with the saint, he was able to shake off all his old habits and lead a very pure and pious life.

Haraprasanna Mazumdar, whose name we have mentioned previously, was one of the devotees of Nagmahashaya. He was first attracted towards Nagmahashaya by seeing how devotional songs brought on him the state of Samadhi in which his face shone with an ethereal and most attractive look. Could it be that he was in divine communion with the Almighty? Was it that he was getting merged in Samadhi, spoken of in the Sastras? His curiosity thus drew him to the saint and made him seek his acquaintance. The more he knew him, the more he admired and loved and felt attraction for his company. Nagmahashaya also loved him very dearly. The ideal life of the saint and his prominent characteristics were well reflected in the life and doings of Haraprasanna. His faith, humility, devotion and above all his service to all men as incarnate Narayanas, reminded one of Nagmahashaya.

Natabar Mukherjee, a young man given to all sorts of youthful indulgences, changed the course of his life, as he came in contact with Nagmahashaya. One peculiar characteristic in him was that he was bold and sincere, and never hesitated to sacrifice aught to carry out what seemed to him right. He had some literary aptitude and once composed a drama, the theme of which was the coming of God on earth in human form for the deliverance of the wicked from their sin. It was staged at Deobhog and Nagmahashaya witnessed it. He had painted the uncommon humility and boundless mercy of

Nagmahashaya in the drama. He was an inhabitant of Deobhog and most of the time he lived there. He had great devotion and reverence for Nagmahashaya's wife, and he loved his devotees dearer than his life.

Another devotee Annada Thakur was well known in the circles of Sri Ramakrishna. He did not know how to read and write but had an intense faith in God. He used to come often to Nagmahashaya, who was very kindly disposed towards this childlike and simple Brahmin. While living at Dacca, he used to frequent the house of a friend of his who was a highly paid Government officer. The gentleman was a little jealous that Swami Vivekananda had made such a great name in America and accordingly was telling all sorts of lies against Swamiji. Annada could bear this no more and in a firm voice he said, "One word more against Swamiji and you're done for." After this incident, he never met that gentleman in his lifetime. His days were very peaceful, and he passed away with the names of Sri Ramakrishna and Nagmahashaya on his lips.

Kailas Chandra Das, the husband of Harakamini of whom we have mentioned previously, like his devoted wife, surrendered himself completely at the feet of Nagmahashaya. Nagmahashaya could never accept any service from others, for he saw Narayana in all. But in the case of Kailas Chandra there was an exception. He regarded the saint as his Guru and therefore believed him to be God incarnate. And the one aim and ideal of his life was to carry out the orders of Nagmahashaya and render him loving service.

Parvati Charan, another devotee of Nagmahashaya, was a great lover of solitude. He never argued about religion. He had a living faith in the saint, and in all matters he depended entirely on him for advice and guidance. When others were busy about arguing out the truth of any philosophical problem, Parvati Charan would be seen quietly sitting and meditating on his Ishtam.

Gopal Chandra Chakravarty, a neighbor of Nagmahashaya, was the first devotee to come in contact with the saint. Many are indebted to him for hearing of Nagmahashaya for the first time. He was initiated in his early life by a woman of great talent into the Madhura Bhava (It is the highest attitude of mind a devotee can attain. The Gopis of Sri Vrindavan had realized that attitude. But in the first stages of progress if a Sadhaka goes to take up that attitude of mind, there is always the danger of fall). As a result thereof great power developed in him, and thereby people were attracted towards him. He was known as Satyagopal in the circle of devotees. He was a charming songster and also had a good hand in playing Mridangam. When Nagmahashaya saw him first, he

remarked, "Satyagopal is a great devotee. He has an intense and living faith; but there is a tendency in him to enjoy sense-pleasures." As he came in contact with Nagmahashaya more and more, he understood the great folly he committed, and ultimately gave up practicing the Madhura Bhava and took to the path of simple devotion. He regarded Nagmahashaya as his real Guru and regarded him as great and glorious as the Vedas and the sky overhead.

There are many more devotees of Nagmahashaya whom we have not mentioned here, and there are again many others of whom we do not know anything, as they themselves like to remain unknown. In fact, whoever had once seen the blessed form of Nagmahashaya could never forget him, and could not but be impressed by his saintly character. He had left such an impression on the life and character of many a youth that the course of their life was completely changed. Through his grace they attained to great purity and blessedness, and many might have realized the summum bonum of life too. Swami Vivekananda used to say that five minutes in the company of such godly men can change a whole life. Religion is actually transmitted to the disciple by a real Guru. We find this verified to the very letter in the life of Nagmahashaya.

## **CHAPTER IX**

### **HIS LAST DAYS**

IN the year 1306 B.S., Nagmahashaya could not come to Calcutta as usual during the Puja time to make purchases. In the latter part of Agrahayana (November) of that year, a devotee who was living in Calcutta received a wire from the wife of Nagmahashaya intimating him about his serious illness. The devotee was to read a paper on the 'Religion of the Vedas' the next day at a meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission. He was placed in rather an embarrassing position. But Swami Adbhutananda told him, "You will have many occasions in your life to deliver lectures on Vedas, and people there will be always to hear you lectured. But if Nagmahashaya passes away, you lose the opportunity in your life to see any more a living Veda." Accordingly he started for Deobhog the very same day.

The next day before it was dark, he reached Deobhog. On entering the house, Mr. Chakravarty (the said devotee) found Nagmahashaya lying on the portico of his room. It was then winter. When the piercing chill blast blew at night from the neighboring meadows, it was very difficult for a health man, not to speak of a patient, to pass the night on the portico walled up by a few screens

with innumerable crevices in them. Finding him in that situation, Chakravarty enquired of the cause. Nagmahashaya's wife replied in a low voice, "My dear boy, since the day he became too weak to get up from his bed, he has been lying here in this condition in spite of our requests to the contrary. The colic pain reduced sometime ago and then he had an attack of dysentery. The disease took a serious turn, and with his consent I sent a wire to you."

Nagmahashaya never mentioned of his sufferings to anybody. He had said to his wife once, "My Prarabdha has almost come to an end. A little more only has to be worked out." Before he was attacked by the illness, he was becoming weaker and weaker every day. He used to take very little food during daytime and at night he fasted. He was reduced almost to a skeleton. If he found his wife sighing with anxiety for him, he would say, "Why do you get anxious for this body, a despicable cage of flesh and bone?" None could persuade him to use any medicine.

Now he had become seriously ill and kept on lying down in the porch; all persuasions to take him inside the room failed. During his illness he could be seen suffering from unbearable pain, but not for a moment was he overcome by agony. All the time he had no other talk on his lips, save that of the kindness of his Master Sri Ramakrishna.

Continually for thirteen days till the death of Nagmahashaya, Mr. Chakravarty lived with him. During these days he read the Gita, the Bhagavatam and the Upanishads before him, and sometimes he sang songs on the Divine Mother. While hearing those songs, often Nagmahashaya lost his sense consciousness and for hours together he was found to be in deep Samadhi. After returning from these states of ecstasy, he used to cry out, "Mother! Mother!" just like a baby awakening from deep slumber. All the Sattvika expressions would become prominently manifest in his body during those periods. Again at times when he came back from the superconscious states, he muttered, "Sachchidananda! Sachchidananda (Existence-Knowledge-Bliss-Absolute)! Akhanda-Chaitanya (Absolute Consciousness)!"

During his illness many of his devotees used to visit him and sometimes they passed the nights with him. And strange, though he was bed-ridden all the time and suffering from severe pain, he never forgot to receive his guests kindly as the veritable Narayanas. He directed his wife to see that they got their meals in time and comfortable beds to sleep on. In fact, he was anxious to see that every arrangement was made for the comfort of his guests during their stay in his house. It became a regular festive time. As

Nagmahashaya would not talk of anything else but of the Lord and his devotees, the latter breathed an atmosphere in his presence which made them forget all their miseries and tribulations of the world and made them think only of God. If Nagmahashaya ever found them anxious on his account, he said, "Alas! why have you taken so much trouble to come to see this despicable cage of flesh and bone? It will not last long. It is ever changing."

Mr. Chakravarty used to spend most of his time in the presence of Nagmahashaya during his illness. He heard him always say, "How gracious and kind is God! It is all the grace of the Lord!" But seeing his sufferings Mr. Chakravarty once thought, "God is not gracious but cruel." Nagmahashaya read the mind of his devotee and said, "Boy, don't even for a moment be doubtful about the boundless mercy of God. What good to the world can be expected of this body? See, it is bed-ridden. I cannot even serve the Narayana in you. And so Sri Ramakrishna out of his boundless mercy is making this despicable body of mine disintegrate into the five elements." Then in a feeble voice he said, "Let the body take care of itself, let miseries and sufferings take care of themselves. Oh my mind! you always remain aloof from them and cling to the blissful nature of the Self." Again he continued, "Be not anxious for this body. Please don't think of this cage of flesh and bones. Take the name of the Divine Mother. Talk of Sri Ramakrishna. These are the only medicines for the disease of the world." Mr. Chakravarty then began to sing a song on the Divine Mother. He sang it with such fervor that at last he forgot himself and his surroundings, when suddenly he was called aloud by the wife of Nagmahashaya. To his great surprise he found at that moment, Nagmahashaya sitting still on his bed, his eyes fixed on the tip of his nose and tears trickling from his eyes down his cheek. While hearing the song, he fell into Samadhi. Mr. Chakravarty did not notice it when he had sat up in that posture. During those days it was even difficult for Nagmahashaya to change sides lying on the bed, without the help of others. So both Mr. Chakravarty and Nagmahashaya's wife got nervous; for it might have given great strain to his nerves. They carefully made him lie down on his bed. Nagmahashaya meanwhile had come back to his sense-consciousness. He was then muttering the name of the Divine Mother.

Once Mr. Chakravarty said to him with great earnest, "Sir, please shower your grace on me. In your absence how shall I remain in this world? On whom shall I depend?" Nagmahashaya replied, "What is there to be afraid of? When you have taken shelter at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna, be assured He will shower His grace on you. One who wants Him must realize Him."

Swami Saradananda was then staying at Dacca on some business connected with the Ramakrishna Mission work. He often used to come and see Nagmahashaya and give sound counsel regarding his treatment and nursing. Swami Saradananda had a very good voice for singing. Nagmahashaya requested the Swami to sing some of the songs Sri Ramakrishna liked dearly. He sang about three songs and while hearing them Nagmahashaya fell into Samadhi. At the advice of the Swami his devotees uttered the name of the Divine Mother in his ears and soon he came down from the super-conscious state.

Before he finally passed away, Nagmahashaya expressed a desire to worship the Mother Kali. The day was fixed. Every arrangement was made. The image of the Goddess was brought. Swami Saradananda said, "It won't be possible for Nagmahashaya in the present condition of his health to get up from his bed and see the image. So bring the image before him, let him have a look at it, and then place it on the Mandapam for worship." Accordingly the image was brought before him. A devotee said, "Sir, yonder is the image of the Mother whom you desired to worship." He had his eyes closed. He opened them, and as soon as he saw the figure of the Mother, he lost all sense-consciousness and was merged in deep Samadhi with the words, "Mother! Mother!" on his lips. Names of Mother were uttered in his ears, but this time he was not coming down to the ordinary state of consciousness. There was no beat of pulse, all palpitation of the heart even had stopped. Was he dead? His wife was bewailing, "Alas! with the pretence of worshipping the Mother he has left us for good." Swami Saradananda consoled all, saying, "Don't you be nervous and raise a hue and cry before him. He will soon come down again to this world of the senses." About two hours passed away in that state. Then suddenly it was found that he had come back to the ordinary plane of consciousness and was crying like a child saying, "Mother blissful!" Then he asked, "Is the worship of the Mother done?" A devotee replied, "We have placed the image here before you. With your permission we want to take it to the Mandapam and there worship Mother." Nagmahashaya agreed and the worship was done according to the Sastric rites.

Early in the morning Mr. Chakravarty said to Nagmahashaya, "It seemed to us from the state you were in that you would not come back to life again." Nagmahashaya replied in a feeble voice, "This body cannot go unless the Prarabdha is consumed fully."

When the Puja was done, all became a little hopeful of his life; for they thought the Mother would surely spare with this time. But they realized the real purpose of his worshipping the Mother when Nagmahashaya said, "The Divine Mother has been pleased to come

here not to save this cage of flesh and bone, but to protect from all dangers and difficulties all those well-wishers of mine who kindly come here. May the Divine Mother shower Her blessing on you all!" While conversing about Sri Ramakrishna the following day, he said, "May you have faith and devotion to the lotus feet of Sri Ramakrishna. I was a fool. He knew me to be a useless good-for-nothing fellow; and yet out of sheer love He showered His grace on me." Then he bowed down saying, "Glory to Sri Ramakrishna! Glory to the Lord!"

Next day the gentleman from whom Nagmahashaya had borrowed money to meet the expenses of the Shraddha ceremony of his father, came to see him. Nagmahashaya saluted him with folded hands and said, "I regret I cannot clear off my debts. I shall soon pass away. It was through your generosity that I could perform my father's Shraddha ceremony. But you need not be anxious. Please take possession of my house after my death. My wife may live with her parents." At this, the gentleman, being aggrieved at heart, said, "Sir, please don't be anxious about the debts. I have not come for money but I have come to see you." "It is all the grace of the Lord!" so saying Nagmahashaya closed his eyes for some time.

About three hours after the gentleman had gone away, there was a sudden marked change of condition in him. He became so very restless on his bed and began to talk deliriously. The outside atmosphere was chill, yet continual fanning could not give him relief from the heat. He wanted to get up from the bed. He was made to sit down but the next moment he was laid on his bed again. For some time he was silent and then again began raving. Suddenly he cried out, "Oh, save me! save me!" His wife said to him bewailing, "Did you not tell that you would not be touched by any delusion at your last moments? Then why are you so restless?" After half an hour or so he felt a little relief and began to feel drowsy.

Referring to the momentary fit of bewilderment, Swami Vivekananda said to Mr. Chakravarty, "You could then only judge the outside man, you did not see what was passing inside him; he was fully conscious within. Having assumed a human form, if there be no human frailties, then he cannot be said to be an embodied being; such weaknesses have been noticed in many other sages. It did not matter anything in the case of Nagmahashaya who was a Jivanmukta. Moreover, we cannot say exactly in what sense he cried out, "Save me! save me!" May be, they were words used from extreme anxiety to get rid of this evanescent body and remain forthwith united with the real Self." Alluding to the same incident, Srijukta Girish Chandra Ghosh once remarked, "None of the

intimate disciples of Sri Ramakrishna aspire after Kaivalya Mukti. Even if they desire it, they cannot attain the Nirvana Mukti. For, the Lord has to incarnate again and again for the upholding of Dharma, and so these Siddha Purushas, His spiritual confreres, too, have to come with Him again and again in human form. Nagmahashaya had not the least attraction for the world. So, if this great soul, who was absolutely free from the least tinge of Maya, would not keep a ray of desire within him for life, how else could he come again in this world when the Lord Himself incarnated again in human form! That is the reason why Nagmahashaya left his body with the slight desire of taking a human form again; the desire of the saint was only for the augmentation of the Lord's Lila, the display of divine glory."

However, he was not affected by any such bewilderment any more till his death.

Three days previous to his final disappearance, Nagmahashaya asked Mr. Chakravarty to consult the almanac and find out an auspicious day for departure. He could not understand that he was asked to find out the day for the final departure, and so he said innocently, "Thirteenth of Poush, after 10 o'clock in the morning is an auspicious moment for starting." Mr. Chakravarty was dumbfounded when Nagmahashaya said, "If you so permit, I shall finally start on that day." He felt extreme mortification and went out and related everything to the wife of Nagmahashaya, where upon she said, "My boy, no use crying any more. He will not live any longer. Let His will be done. Let Sri Ramakrishna's will be done."

Two days prior to his death, his wife, Mr. Chakravarty and another devotee were sitting by his bedside, and he was lying with his eyes closed. Suddenly he opened his eyes and with a busy look said, "Sri Ramakrishna has come here and he intends to show me the places of pilgrimage." Then having turned his eyes towards Mr. Chakravarty, he said, "Well, mention the names of holy places, and I shall see them." Mr. Chakravarty had been to Haridwar lately, and he mentioned the name. At this, Nagmahashaya with great excitement in his voice went on saying, "Haridwar! Haridwar! There comes down Mother Ganga from the Himalayas with a murmuring sound! The banks and the trees on them are dancing, as it were, with her waves. Look, there on the other side stands the Mt. Chandi. Ah, what a beautiful bathing Ghat it is! How many beautiful stairs, one after the other, have gone down to the bed of the river. Wait for a moment please. I have not bathed for these last twenty years. Let me take a plunge in the sacred waters and make my life blessed." Then with the words, "Oh Mother Ganga, the savior of the fallen and the deliverer of the sinners!" Nagmahashaya sank into a

deep Samadhi. After he had come down from that super-conscious state, it seemed as if he really had finished his bath just then.

The name of Prayaga (Allahabad) was next mentioned to him. He bowed down saying, "Hail Yamuna! Hail Ganga!" Then he went on, "Is it not that the hermitage of Bharadvaja was situated somewhere here? But I don't see it! There I see the confluence of the Ganga and Yamuna. There on the other side I can see the range of mountains. Alas! Thakur is not showing me the hermitage of Bharadvaja." Then he fell into a doze. A few minutes passed in that condition and again he said, "Ah, I see it now." After a little pause he continued, "Well, Mother, Thou art the consort of the Great Emperor of Emperors! Thou art the Great Power Herself manifest! How is it that Thou art wandering like this? Hail, Rama! Hail, Rama!" And he fell into Samadhi. When he was again in his ordinary consciousness, the name of Benares was mentioned and Nagmahashaya at once began to murmur, "Hail, Siva! Glory to the Lord of the Universe! Hara, Hara, Vyom, Vyom!" Then he said, "This time I will be dissolved in the Great Lord." Then Puri, Sri Jagannath Kshetra, was mentioned. Nagmahashaya continued saying, "Yonder stands the stately temple of the Lord. There is the Ananda Bazaar where Prasadam can be had." He also mentioned the name of Sri Chaitanya once or twice. Thus the night advanced gradually and it struck four. He felt a little drowsy and soon fell asleep. After 8 o'clock in the morning of the 13th Poush, he was falling into ecstasies continually. Mr. Chakravarty began to utter loudly the name of Ramakrishna. His picture was placed before his eyes and then Mr. Chakravarty said, "This is the picture of your Master, in whose name you have renounced everything." He looked at it and then saluted with folded palms. Then he uttered in his feeble voice, "Grace, grace, grace out of Thine own boundless mercy." These were the last words in his life.

At about 9 o'clock in the morning all signs of the last moment were visible. His eyes became a little red, his lips began to quiver as if he was muttering to himself something. After about half an hour his eyes suddenly became fixed on the tip of his nose, the hair stood on their ends, and tears of Divine Love were to be seen in the corners of his eyes. When it was five minutes past ten, Nagmahashaya lay motionless in Mahasamadhi. It became plain to all. At the instance of his wife, he was laid on a lounge outside, covered with a nice clean bed. Till then the life did not completely ebb away. Five or ten minutes after he was brought outside, all breathing stopped. All was over with him. He had retired from the stage of the world. Even then his face was shining with an effulgence. There were still tears of Divine Love in the corners of his half-closed eyes. Cries of wailing rent the skies. One of his devotees

told the wife, "Mother, be calm please. Don't be unnerved. We are your sons living to look after you." When the first shock of bereavement had abated a little, at the wish of the wife of Nagmahashaya, a devotee went out to the market to bring ghee, sandalwood and all else that was necessary for cremating the body.

The old experienced people of the village examined the body and found that it was still warm. They were conferring whether it was right to cremate the body, when a devotee said, "We must not hurry up for the cremation of the body of a saint like Nagmahashaya. At least, we must wait for twelve hours more to be fully sure of his death." So it was settled that the body should be put on the pyre only after 10 o'clock in the night.

His devotees wanted to take a photo of him. When Nagmahashaya was living he was requested many times to sit for his photograph. But he objected always saying, "Why should you be anxious to take picture of this cage of flesh and bones?" Now that he was silent, they had him photographed after decorating the body with garlands and sandal paste. From this photograph the late printer Priyanath Sinha had an oil painting drawn, which is still preserved in Nagmahashaya's house. And the likeness that we have given in the frontispiece is one after this oil-painting.

Before sunset the widow of Nagmahashaya worshipped the hallowed feet of her lord with flowers, Bilva leaves and other offerings. After circumambulating the dead body seven times, she wiped his feet with her long hairs. His body was decorated with flowers and garlands.

When the news of his death spread over the village, from every quarter men and women of all ages came pouring to see the body of the saint for the last time. Each house in the village was filled with clamorous wailing.

After 10 o'clock at night, the pyre was arranged with sandalwood, and after all the ceremonies were gone through, fire was lighted. Then a Brahmana devotee made the Vyahriti Homa and offered Bilva leaves on the funeral pyre. In the meantime Swami Saradananda came to the spot and fell prostrate by way of homage before the pyre. In three hours the cremation was over. His widowed wife extinguished the fire. All the devotees felt themselves sanctified by the touch of the holy remains of the saint. Thus, at the age of fifty-four, three years after the departure of his father, the mortal frame of Nagmahashaya ceased to exist at his own birthplace, Deobhog. What remained was but the ashes.

At the instance of Swami Saradananda, the remaining ashes were put in a jar and a song to the Divine Mother of Nagmahashaya's own composition was placed inside along with the ashes. The jar was placed underneath the cremation ground. The image of the goddess Kali he had worshipped on his death bed was placed over it and a beautiful canopy was put up over it.

Swami Saradananda, after giving necessary instructions regarding the outstanding debts of Nagmahashaya, left for Dacca.

(Nagmahashaya -- A saintly householder disciple of Sri Ramakrishna - by Sarat Chandra Chakravarti. Translated from the original Bengali, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras - 600 004.)

