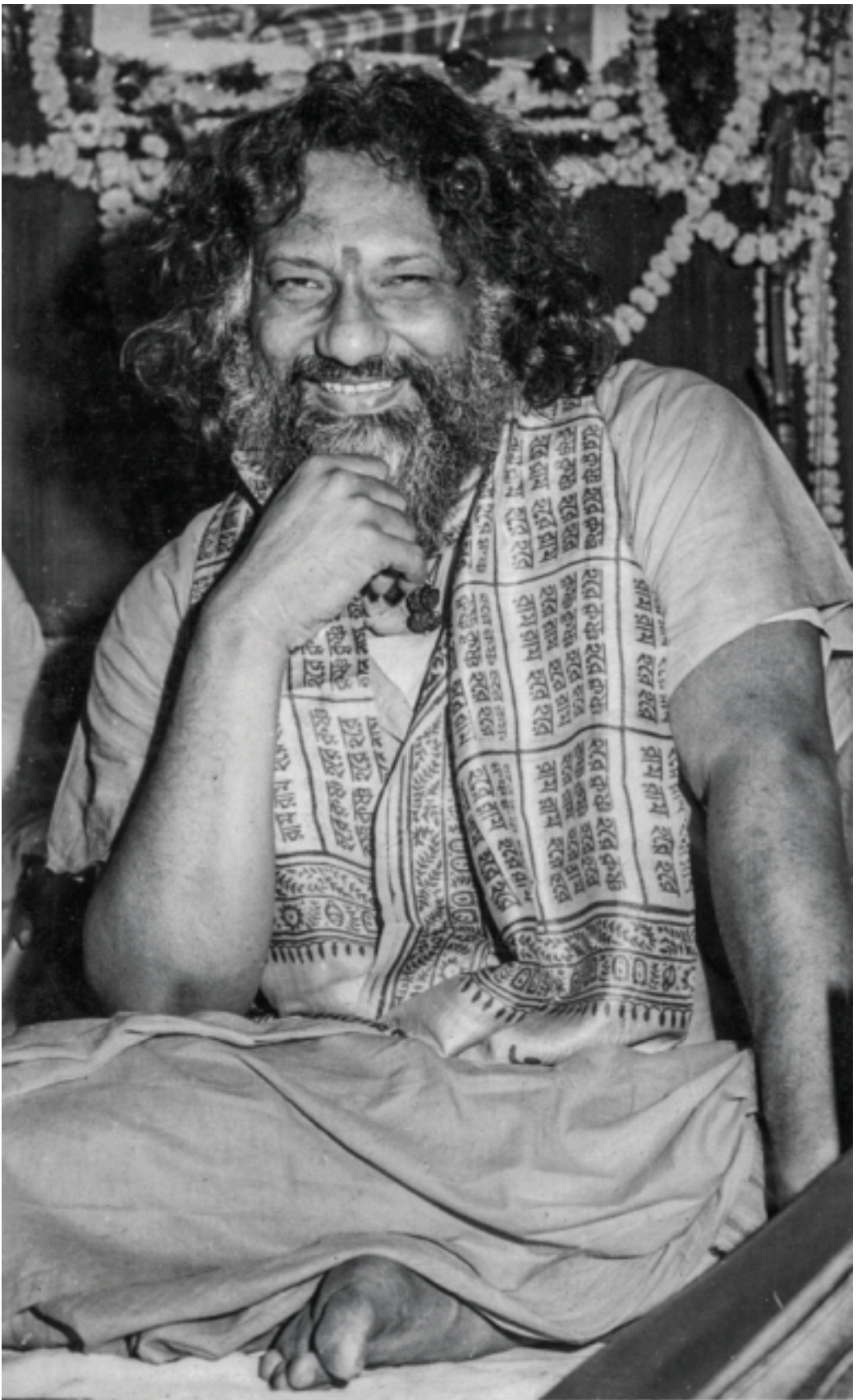




Swami Shivananda Giri Maharaj

(1936 – 1987)

In the year 1936, 23rd April, Swami Shivananda Giri Maharaj was born on the morning of Thursday. This divine manifestation occurred at Ananda Ashram, located at 21/2 Beadon Street. His birth took place on the sacred lunar day of *Akshaya Tritiya*.

Today, Ananda Ashram is much more than just a building. It is a holy site and a leading center for *Naam-Sankirtana*, the devotional chanting of the Divine Name. Believers feel that the spiritual power of all fifty-one *Shakti Peethas* meets here at the feet of *Maa Kali*.

Sisir was the second son of Thakur Sri Sri Biswanath Dev and Mother Shobhana Devi. At the exact moment he was born, the air was filled with the sound of holy chanting.

His arrival was brief and beautiful. Like a drop of dew on a flower offered to the Divine, he stayed for only a short time. He soon left his earthly form to merge back into nature and the spiritual energy of the devotees.

Sisir Bhattacharya was known affectionately as Shanku. He was the grandson of Dr. Sudhanshu Kumar Gupta. The doctor was a deeply spiritual man. It is believed that Adwaitya Prabhu's intense prayers and devotion led to the arrival of Sriman Mahaprabhu. In the same way, the doctor's spiritual power helped bring Sri Sri Thakur Biswanath Dev and Swami Shivananda Giri Maharaj into the lives of many people.

Sisir Bhattacharya attended Rani Bhavani School. Even as a young student, his heart was focused on devotion. He often led his school friends in *Kirtana* (devotional singing), showing his spiritual nature at a very early age.

In 1943, when he was only seven years old, Sisir began his formal musical training. He started learning the *Srikhol* (a sacred drum used in *Kirtana*) under the guidance of Sri Madan Das.

At home, Sisir spent many hours sitting before his mother's sacred altar. He practiced the harmonium with deep focus, treating every note as a quiet offering to the Divine. He did not just practice alone; he also joined the *Kirtana* gatherings. During these sessions, he would accompany his mother, Shobhana Devi, supporting her with his voice and his sense of rhythm. Together, they created a beautiful and loving harmony.

At age fourteen, Sisir experienced a profound loss when one of his school friends passed away. Deeply shaken by this grief, he went to

Thakur's shrine room to seek solace. There, he composed a moving song and set it to his own original melody. With a heart full of longing and spiritual reflection, he sang :

“Ar jabona, ar jabona, phirao tarani...”
(I shall go no more, no more – turn back the boat...)

Under the guidance of his school's Sanskrit teacher, Sudhanshu Babu, he would sit absorbed in the recitation of the *Gita* and the study of the sacred scriptures. During his school years, inspired by his beloved teacher Kanai Basu, he wrote numerous plays, revealing both literary sensitivity and spiritual depth from an early age.

In 1954, Sisir passed his School Final (Matriculation) examination. In 1958, he then pursued a B.Com. degree at Vidyasagar College and completing it. Even in college, Sisir remained deeply devoted to Kirtana. He often sang with his friends, and they would become completely lost in the music.

People were amazed at how easily his classmates were drawn into these prayer gatherings. Sisir had a special quality in his voice and presence. He didn't just sing; he carried everyone around him into a state of high spiritual awareness.

Even as a busy student, Sisir was a natural leader who balanced creativity with deep spirituality. His play, '*Dharmaghata*' (*The Strike*), was a major success and made him very popular across the campus. He was friendly with everyone, regardless of their age or background. Whether they were seniors or juniors, all students felt a close bond with him. In fact, no college event felt truly complete without Sisir's presence.

In recognition of his contributions, he received the college's sole “Student Blazer” award from the cultural wing for both playwriting and devotional singing. During his college years, he first performed *Mathur Kirtana* at the Rammohan Library Hall and later at the Indoor Stadium (Eden Gardens), drawing listeners into profound devotional fervor.

At that time, the Principal of Vidyasagar College was Dr. Achyut Kumar Dutta. He consistently encouraged Sisir and extended wholehearted support whenever needed, recognizing in him a rare spiritual and cultural brilliance.

Sisir always had a naturally detached and whimsical temperament. He never seemed fully tied to the material world. A famous sentiment perfectly described his nature :

“Hetha noy, hetha noy, onyo kono khane”
(Not here, not here-somewhere else)

Most of his time at home would pass in deep nights filled with *Kirtana*, chanting of the Holy Name, composing songs and plays, and setting

melodies to newly written *Kirtanas*. During those moments of musical creation, Sisir was blessed with the companionship of Sri Gopen Mallik and Srimati Anjali Mukherjee, who supported and inspired him in shaping those devotional tunes.

In this period alone, he wrote nearly fifteen plays, many of which were staged and warmly received. While still in school, at the house of a friend named Samar Ghosh, he first composed and performed a *Pala Kirtana*. Among his cherished compositions from that time was the song :

“*Vrindavan Bihari... Kheliche Kanu Piyari...*”

As Sisir grew older, his influence continued to expand. He began organizing *Kirtana* gatherings that attracted many people, especially the youths. They would gather around him, drawn by his sincere devotion and the beauty of his music. Alongside them came numerous devotees and accomplished individuals, all drawn into the current of devotion that flowed through his voice.

The boy who remained immersed in *Kirtana* and the chanting of the divine name had no attachment to worldly possessions. He would often give away his own clothes. Despite having only one coat to protect himself from the bitter cold, he did not hesitate to give it away to a shivering beggar. All who came to know him later in life witnessed this innate spirit of renunciation within him.

His working life began at A.G. Bengal. By then, he had completed his M.A. in Bengali and had wholeheartedly immersed himself in social service,

dedicating his energies not to personal gain but to the welfare of others.

During that period, the very first Inter-Office One-Act Drama Competition was jointly spearheaded by Sisir Bhattacharya and Sri Bijoy Lahiri. It was a remarkable cultural initiative that brought together teams from prominent institutions such as State Bank, Coca-Cola, and Grindlays Bank, among many others.

At the prize distribution ceremony, Sisir Bhattacharya presented his sacred play, “*Ruper Arale*” (*Behind the Veil of Form*). The play was a dramatic retelling of the life and divine activities of Sri Sri Thakur Biswanath Dev. This was not a standard theatrical production. It was a Lila-Nataka, a divine play designed to pull the audience into a deeper spiritual reality.

After this, Sisir, along with a friend, opened a shop in Sealdah called “Sarada Radio.” In later years, Maharaj would often recall a deeply significant memory from those days. He would say :

“*When I used to sit at the radio shop, a devotee of Thakur, known as ‘Auddy-da,’ would frequently pass by that way. Each day, as he went*

past, he would say to me only one thing, ‘Have you come for this ?’ He said nothing more, only this one sentence, every single day.”

At the time, those words may have seemed simple, even casual. But in the light of his later manifestation as Swami Shivananda Giri Maharaj, their prophetic depth became clear. It was as though a subtle call-an awakening reminder-was being placed before him again and again : Was his life meant merely for worldly occupation, or for a higher divine purpose? In time, the truth of that question revealed itself through his spiritual unfoldment.

Around 1969-70, he also worked for a period at Saraswati Press. There, in the room of the founder Sri Shailen Guha Ray, *Kirtana* gatherings would often be held. Even within the rhythm of professional life, the current of devotion continued to flow uninterrupted and transforming workplaces into spaces of spiritual communion.

For Sisir Bhattacharya, there was no division between his professional duties and his spiritual life. He lived with the constant awareness that every action, regardless of its setting, was a form of dharma. He would often emphasize how profoundly the ideals of Swami Vivekananda shaped and guided his life. While speaking of Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother Sarada Devi, he would become deeply absorbed in spiritual emotion.

Again and again, he would say-

“Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita is my dictionary.”

He went from home to home, embracing people with genuine love and drawing them close to him. Through his presence, he awakened in them an awareness of the Divine. His way of spreading love and devotion naturally reminds us of another great soul Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who shared divine love with everyone, without any distinction of caste or status.

Whatever Sisir earned through his professional life rarely reached his own household. Most of his income quietly went toward helping the poor, the suffering, and the distressed. To him, wealth was never a personal possession. He saw it as a sacred trust, meant to relieve suffering and to serve God in humanity.

Around 1968, Sisir entered the sacred bond of marriage. Soon afterwards, he began living in a house on Netaji Subhas Road in Howrah. It was in this very house that he founded the Biswanath Mission School and College. Although the college had to close later due to various circumstances, the school continues to function even today, carrying forward the spirit of service and education that he envisioned.

Even while engaging in diverse responsibilities and social initiatives, Sisir never paused his propagation of *Nama-Sankirtana* and *Lila-Kirtana*

across different places. The current of devotion remained the lifeblood of his existence.

At Ananda Ashram, the Saturday kirtans and the devotional gatherings during different festivals found in him their main source of joy. His presence would transform the atmosphere. What began as a simple gathering would soon turn into a vibrant spiritual celebration, with hearts uplifted and minds absorbed in the remembrance of the Divine.

In 1972, the month of August, came the call, an irresistible pull from the Eternal Blissful One. Answering that divine call, Sisir set out on a new path. He left behind his work, his home, his wife, his daughter, and his relatives and friends. Before him opened another way, an entirely different life.

He travelled through the sacred paths of the Himalayas - Badrinath, Kedarnath, Rishikesh, and Haridwar. There, Sisir was transformed into Swami Shivananda Maharaj.

At the Bholagiri Sannyas Ashram, under the guidance of Swami Asimananda Giri, he accepted the saffron robes of renunciation. But this was not the end of his journey. His search for the Infinite continued. Taking the path as his companion, he set out once again with the Naga sannyasis.

With them he wandered through forests and mountains, visiting many sacred places. Along the way, he gathered deep and varied experiences of a life free from worldly ties. He felt the holiness that exists in many hidden forms throughout the world. Slowly, his heart became full, and the path before him became clear. With a heart overflowing in bliss, he would sing:

“Amar mon bolechhe ei pothe chole gechhe Shyam...”

(My heart tells me - along this very path has Shyam passed...)

In western India, among the holy places in the hills of Girnar, he travelled from one sacred site to another. He felt deep joy as he discovered a new life—a life fully dedicated to the Eternal.

As he walked on, suddenly there arose within him a deep inward pull an awakening in the innermost core of his being. A realization dawned in silence:

“Khojo jare, sei to ghore tomari din guni...”

*(The One you seek - He is within your own home;
It is your own day you have lost...)*

In that moment of inner awakening, he clearly felt that the One whose grace guided his life - the One whose presence flowed through every drop of his blood - Thakur Himself - had always been with him. Through joy and sorrow, through light and shadow, He had been quietly guiding his path.

A deep humility filled his heart. Even after being so close to Him, how little he had truly known of His infinite nature. He began to feel that all the joys of the world were quietly held within that divine abode of bliss. The Supreme Joyful One had hidden every delight there, waiting to be truly recognised.

He felt that it was his own confusion and restless mind that had led him away. He had moved away from the source of the flame, though the flame itself had never left him. Yet the Compassionate One never abandoned him. Through both worldly pleasures and the suffering that follows them, He slowly guided him forward on the path.

And in the stillness of that realization, it was as if a divine voice echoed within– *“Foolish one, where will you go? The entire world revolves around the sun by the sun’s own attraction. However long the night may be, sunrise is certain.”* In that realization he felt both surrender and awakening. The wanderer understood that he had never truly been separated. His long journey had only brought him back to the eternal center, where grace had been quietly waiting for him all along.

In 1972, on the midnight of Kali Puja, he revealed himself once again in the sacred courtyard of Maa Kali at Ananda Ashram. Once more the *Kirtana* arose; once more everyone was swept away in that unbridled, ecstatic bliss. With hearts brimming over, all sang aloud :

*“Bholanath poncho mukhe gaay
sei Horinaam Ganga hoye dike dike dhaay”*

(Bholanath sings with his fivefold face; that holy Name flows forth like the Ganga, rushing in every direction).

Sisir Bhattacharya manifested himself in the form of Swami Shivananda Giri Maharaj. The devotees lovingly addressed him simply as ‘Maharaj’. From home to home, from temples to ashrams, across the country and even beyond, he spread the Holy Name without pause. His message was always the same–the glory of *Nama-Sankirtana* and the greatness of remembering and chanting the name of God.

In the joyful and tireless presence of Maharaj, people began to rediscover their true home–the peace within their own hearts. They felt comfort, inner refuge, and a quiet joy in their souls. It seemed as if, in the heart of Kolkata once again, the sacred *Nadia-lila* of Mahaprabhu had come alive.

With great enthusiasm, deep love, clear understanding, and a generous heart, Maharaj dedicated himself to bringing people of every community and path together. At Dakshineswar, the sacred place associated with the ideal *“Jato Maat Tato Path”* (*as many faiths, so many paths*) he started the *Nikhil Banga Bhaktigeeti Sammelan*. His aim was to restore devotional music to its true honour and place in society.

He wished to take the songs of God beyond the walls of the shrine and into places where they were forgotten. He wanted to inspire the youth of the nation to think about spiritual life. He also tried to bring people of different traditions and beliefs together on one platform of harmony. This noble vision guided Maharaj's life and work.

In this noble effort, the musical community of Bengal came forward with full support. Many well-known teachers, journalists, writers, and respected people from different political fields also joined and encouraged the movement. Swami Shivananda Giri Maharaj created such a sacred space of unity where people of every community could come together and truly feel that it was the home of their hearts-where there was no division.

Maharaj would say, "Instead of raising separate victory cries in the name of your individual Gurus, let us all proclaim together : *Joy Sri Gurur Joy*. Then you will see-just as you are honoring your own Guru, and at the same time you are offering reverence to all Gurus. Here, there is no separation." In this simple yet deep teaching lay his vision of harmony. He wanted people to share devotion beyond all boundaries. When one faith was respected, all were respected. In this way, unity could grow in the name of the Divine.

In 1978, 30th April, after the first *Bhaktigeeti Sammelan* ended, Maharaj took all the artists and devotees to *Dakshineswar*, the holy temple of *Maa Bhavatarini*. The purpose was simple and sacred to share the holy *Prasadam* together. With joy and devotion, everyone received the blessed offering and shared it in a spirit of unity.

But what followed that day became not only a defining moment in Maharaj's life, but in the lives of all who were close to him. Among Maharaj's beloved spiritual children, one stood especially near to his heart, Kailash Ghosh, who through his steadfast devotion, selfless service, and deep faith had earned a cherished place beside him. That very day, after the ceremony, Kailash went to bathe in the sacred Ganga and was lost to her waters.

The loss of dear Kailash struck Maharaj with profound anguish. He was overwhelmed with sorrow, silenced by grief and deep inner reflection. In the life of one who was the embodiment of supreme bliss, a dark shadow of pain descended.

Yet from that deep sorrow came a new spiritual awakening. From that time on, Maharaj began to look for his Kailash in every person. He found him again and again among the poor, the neglected, and the suffering.

To Swamiji's teaching, 'Revere the ignorant as God; revere the poor as God,' Maharaj added his own living truth : 'Revere the neglected as God.' From this realization was born his immortal creation – KAILASH.

Brick by brick, it was built from his dreams, his joy, his sorrow, his love, and his deep compassion. Through Kailash, Maharaj gave a real form to his spiritual vision. Through this sacred work, he stood beside the poor, the helpless, and the forgotten.

On one hand, through *Kirtana*, spiritual awakening, and the fearless distribution of divine consciousness, he stirred waves of devotion across the country and abroad, creating a vast meeting ground beyond all narrowness, where religions, paths, and conceptions of God could stand together in harmony. On the other hand, by serving the orphaned and the neglected, he inspired people toward the true worship of the God, not merely through ritual, but through compassionate action.

Maharaj once believed that *kirtana* and worship should be supported only by personal offerings. He felt they should never go from door to door asking for donations. But the pain of losing his beloved child changed his heart. From that deep sorrow was born KAILASH, a shelter for the poor and the forgotten.

After that, he gradually established many service institutions under the umbrella of Kailash. These included Vivekananda Snehaniir, Saradamani Snehaniir, Nitai Sen Sunday Clinic, Dr. Sudhanshu Kumar Gupta Memorial Clinic, Dr. Anjali Mukhopadhyay Medical Centre, and several others devoted to compassionate service.

Yet even while carrying out all these works of service, Maharaj continued tirelessly to share the message of *Sanatana Dharma*, inspiring people both in India and abroad. With a generous and open heart, he rose above narrow thinking and stood firmly on the ground of true humanity. He spread the message of universal brotherhood and peace to all.

From his powerful voice came these simple yet heartfelt words :

“My ship is little, your sea is wide, Be my Friend, be my Guide. My wings are little, your sky is high, Be my Friend, be my Guide.”

In these simple lines lay the essence of surrender, the finite soul acknowledging its smallness before the Infinite; the fragile vessel seeking direction upon the vast ocean of existence; the tiny wings yearning to rise into the boundless sky of the Divine. It was not merely some words, it was a prayer. Not merely poetry, but an offering of trust.

Through these words, he taught that true strength does not come from pride, but from trusting the *Eternal Friend*. Our human journey may be small, but it becomes fearless when it is guided by the divine hand.

On the sacred day of 26 February 1882, the first meeting took place between *Sri M* (Mastermashai, Sri Mahendranath Gupta) and *Thakur Sri Ramakrishna Dev* at the Dakshineswar Kali Temple.

In 1982, 26th February, exactly one hundred years later, Swami Shivananda Giri Maharaj arranged a special event to remember that sacred moment in spiritual history and to honour the Acharya. For this purpose, a large and beautifully decorated stage was built on the western side of the *Natmandir* of Rani Rashmoni's Dakshineswar Kali Temple. Thus began the Centenary Celebration of *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita*. The living words of Sri Ramakrishna, recorded by Sri Mahendranath Gupta, had changed the lives of countless people. This celebration was both a remembrance and an expression of gratitude, an offering at the feet of the Master.

Many respected monks and distinguished guests were warmly welcomed at the event. Among them were Swami Lokeshwaranandaji and Swami Gahananandaji of the Ramakrishna Mission, along with several other revered spiritual leaders and respected elders.

It is especially worth mentioning that the revered Swami Lokeshwaranandaji spoke with deep appreciation. He said, "*The event that was supposed to be organized by the Ramakrishna Mission was beautifully conducted by Swami Shivanandaji, making us feel truly blessed.*"

In 1982, from 15th to 21st March, the week-long celebration of the centenary of Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita was held at the open-air stage of Rabindra Sarobar in Kolkata. After this special observance, the *Fifth Annual Session of the Nikhil Banga Bhaktigeeti Sammelan* began. In this way, through celebration and devotional songs, Maharaj helped keep the spirit of the *Kathamrita* alive.

In 1983, 1st January, the day of the *Kalpataru Utsav*, ten publishers competed to release various affordable editions of the *Kathamrita*, bypassing copyright restrictions. This, in itself, marked the true success of the centenary celebrations.

In 1985, 25th February, the *Eighth Annual Session of the Nikhil Banga Bhaktigeeti Sammelan* began at the Dakshineswar Temple ground. The event was held to mark the 500th Birth Anniversary of Sri Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. The sacred place, filled with the devotion of many generations, became a gathering ground where history and living faith came together.

On the very first day, greetings were offered to everyone with the prayer, let untouchability end. India's world-renowned cultural ambassador, *Pandit Ravi Shankarji*, paid his tribute through music, offering a *Suranjali* of reverence by composing new raaga 'Goodbye to Untouchability.'

The gathering was open to all. There were no barricades and no

volunteers controlling entry. It was a calm and peaceful assembly. A temple full of devotees. The feeling of unity was not forced; it grew naturally. Panditji himself remarked, “In my life, this is a new experience. Never have I seen such a vast audience.”

The newspaper *Jugantar* wrote, “Since the temple was established in 1851, history has been made in these 136 years.” Another powerful scene was described in the newspaper *Ajkal* : “A leprosy patient, wrapped in a blanket, listening quietly to the music. If the temple of the *Maa Bhabatarini* had not opened its doors freely, who would have allowed them to enter such a distinguished musical gathering of Ravi Shankarji ?”

And in this lay the true meaning of the occasion. The beauty of classical music was not limited to a privileged few; it became an expression of compassion for all. The temple courtyard was no longer just a place for a performance; it became a symbol of equality. There, devotion removed social barriers, and the grace of the *Maa Bhabatarini* embraced everyone alike. In that moment, music was not just art. It became a prayer, a quiet protest, and a message to all that before the Divine, no one is untouchable.

The discovery of ‘*Chaitanya Chokora*’ during this time, became an important historical event. In Bengali, ‘*Chokora*’ means a *Karcha*, or a written record of daily events. This old manuscript was written in the Odia language by the respected poet *Sri Govindadas Babaji*. It contains detailed accounts of many events from the time when Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu lived in Puri. Preserved as a manuscript, it provides rare and valuable insights into that sacred period. With the help of *Padmashri Sadasiva Rathsharma*, a well known researcher of the Sri Jagannath Temple in Puri, Swami Shivananda Giri Maharaj translated this ancient text into Bengali. It was later published by Kailash under the title ‘*Chaitanya Chokora*’.

Before it’s publication, Maharaj spoke to journalists at the Kolkata Press Club. He explained how the manuscript had been discovered and spoke about its great historical and spiritual importance. His talk drew much attention. Soon after, reports appeared in leading newspapers, attracting the interest of scholars and thoughtful readers.

The rediscovery and translation of this work was more than a literary achievement. It was an offering to history, a bridge between Odissa and Bengal, and a new light on Mahaprabhu’s life in Puri. Through this effort, Maharaj showed that devotion and scholarship can go together. When united, they serve both faith and history with equal respect. In the years that followed, Maharaj carried the spirit of the *Bhaktigeeti Sammelan* beyond Bengal. He organized devotional music conferences in Puri and Mumbai, spreading the movement across the country. For his tireless work in promoting devotional music, the *Critics’ Circle of India* honored him with

the prestigious *CCI Award*. The award was presented to Maharaj in Delhi by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India. It recognized not only his cultural contribution, but also the spiritual awakening he inspired through music and service.

Today, Maharaj is no longer with us in his mortal form. Yet his presence is still felt. His inspired children continue to carry forward his legacy with dedication, continuing many of the noble works he began. Through their service, his vision lives on, and through their work, his compassion continues to flow.

In 1986, 19th March, at the sacred *Sri Sri Bholagiri Ashram* in Haridwar, Maharaj was formally given the title of *Mahamandaleshwar*. The auspicious ceremony began at 9 o'clock in the morning. Mahamandaleshwars from different *Akharas* were present, along with monks, ascetics, and devoted householders. The air was filled with the sound of *Vedic Chants*. Sacred worship, Yagna, and other rituals continued throughout the day, making the occasion deeply spiritual and grand.

The day ended with a grand *Sadhu-Bhandara* (a special feast for monks and devotees). Everyone shared the prasadam together in a spirit of brotherhood and devotion. Thus, on the banks of the holy Ganga in Haridwar, among sacred chants and rituals, Maharaj's spiritual journey reached another important milestone, one that reflected both the ancient tradition and his own living spiritual realization.

In 1986, on the sacred occasion of the *500th Birth Anniversary of Sri Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu*, Maharaj organized a historic *Nagar Sankirtana* through the streets of Haridwar. With a large banner of Mahaprabhu, the procession moved through the holy city like a stream of devotion. The air of Haridwar echoed with the chanting of the '*Hare Krishna Mahamantra*'. Many people joined in, and their voices came together in one powerful chorus of remembrance of God. It was not just an event, it felt like a moment of living history.

During the Kumbha Mela at that time, Maharaj also arranged a beautifully illustrated exhibition. Large paintings showing important events from the life of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu were displayed. These remarkable works were created by Maharaj's beloved disciple, Sri Manab Deb, whose paintings brought this sacred history to life.

The exhibition attracted the attention of many pilgrims, saints, and seekers. Through the union of art and devotion, Maharaj once again showed his vision, that spirituality should be seen, heard, sung, and felt, and should be open to everyone.

Thus, in the sacred land of Haridwar, beside the eternal flow of the

Ganga and during the gathering of the Kumbha, Maharaj's efforts turned remembrance into a living experience. The chanting, the paintings, and the shared devotion together created another bright chapter in the spiritual awakening he worked for throughout his life.

If one observes Maharaj's life closely, it becomes evident that the vast scope of his work was far ahead of his time. The breadth of his vision extended beyond conventional boundaries, anticipating needs and possibilities that others had not yet imagined.

His creative and wide-ranging way of thinking gave people a new sense of joy; something spiritual, cultural, and deeply human at the same time. In his holy presence, a rare atmosphere would arise. People would rediscover their own humanity and feel a deep inner peace. Touching that joy, many found the courage and inspiration to begin life again.

Setting aside his own comfort, Maharaj devoted himself completely to the welfare of others. He lived among people, sharing their sorrows, lifting their spirits, and guiding them toward a life of compassion and remembrance of the Divine. In this way, his life was not simply lived, it was lovingly offered in service.

Amid such a vast and continuous flow of work, he hardly found time to care for himself. In the life he lived, there seemed to be no place for the word 'rest' or 'leisure'. Ignoring physical strain, he continued to devote himself to the service of society and humanity – giving, guiding, and uplifting others, until his body could carry on no more.

In 1987, 5th August, at the age of only fifty-one, he entered into eternal rest. On the sacred day of *Jhulana Ekadashi*, he became *Aprakat* withdrawing from mortal sight and entering the eternal *Lila* of Sri Sri Thakur. Yet this was not end. It was a union with the divine play to which his whole life had been devoted.

His mortal presence may no longer be with us, but he lives in our awareness, in our meditation, in our worship, and in every act of service. His presence is felt not in form, but in inspiration; not in words, but in the gentle call of conscience and devotion.

We remember him not only through words, but through action. By continuing his work, by serving others, bringing people together, singing the Holy Name, and standing beside the neglected, we offer our true tribute at his lotus feet. In this way, remembrance becomes a responsibility and through that living remembrance, his light continues to shine.

*Dinabandhu oti sumadhura vachanam,
suraloka vandita kirtana vilasam;
premamurati sada klesa nivaranam,
sphurati Sri Radhamadhava darsana matram.
Shivananda rupam atisaya madhuram,*

janam janam tava sripada smaranam.

*(Oh Friend of the lowly, whose words flowed with exquisite sweetness;
Delight of Kirtana, revered and praised by noble hearts; Embodiment of
divine love, ever the remover of sorrow and affliction; In whose mere
Darshana there shone the radiant vision of Sri Radha-Madhava)*

Arpan Bandyopadhyay