

Pant Maharaj



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Pant Maharaj (3 September 1855 – 16 October 1905), born **Dattatreya Ramchandra Kulkarni**,^[3] was a [Hindu yogi](#) and [guru](#) in the [Belgavi](#) region of [India](#) and is regarded by his devotees as a saint and an incarnation of [Dattatreya](#).

Biography

Pant Maharaj was born in a [Deshastha Brahmin](#) family^[4] to Ramachandra Pant and Sitabai (née Godakka) on the 3 September 1855 in [Daddi](#) on the auspicious day of [Krishna Janmashtami](#).^{[5][6]} He spent much of his infancy and early years in his father's ancestral village of Balekundri and after his [upanayana](#) at the age of eight, moved to his mother's ancestral village of Daddi for primary school, living with his maternal uncle.^[7]

Pant Maharaj's life was marked by poverty and struggles to provide for his family members. He lived through the [Great Famine of 1876–1878](#) and was employed as a teacher for 23 years at the London Mission School in Belgavi.^{[8][9]}

He is considered to be great Hindu saint who founded a philosophy in which the nine gurus of the [Avadhut](#) sampradaya are attributed to [Dattatreya](#).^{[10][11]} He is considered by some devotees to be an incarnation of Dattatreya.^{[12][13][14]}

On 27 October 1892, Pant Maharaj met with his contemporary, [Swami Vivekananda](#), during the latter's 13 day visit to Belgavi, where they conversed for several hours.^{[15][16][17]}

Legacy

The main ashram and temple dedicated to Pant Maharaj is located in the village of [Balekundri](#) on the outskirts of [Belgavi](#). The village was informally renamed as Pant Balekundri in his honor.^{[10][4]}

The temple houses the wooden shoes, or [padukas](#), worn by him. Behind the temple is an [Indian fig tree](#) marking the spot where he was cremated and an eternal flame that has been kept burning from his funeral pyre.^[6]

Annually thousands devotees of Pant Maharaj from [Karnataka](#), [Maharashtra](#) and [Goa](#) participate in a three-day event commemorating his death anniversary in the month of October. On the first day, devotees carry out a procession holding a holy flag, traversing approximately 15 kilometers from the city of Belgavi to the temple in Balekundri. On the second day, a palanquin symbolically carrying Pant Maharaj is paraded in a procession from Pant Maharaj's ancestral home to the temple. On the third day, [prasāda](#) is distributed to all devotees who consume it together irrespective of caste, social standing, or wealth in accordance with Pant Maharaj's teachings.^{[18][19][20][6]}

Literary works

Datta Prem Lahari, meaning waves of love from Pant Maharaj, is considered to be his most seminal work.^[21] The book consists of 2,730 verses in [Marathi](#) and 27 verses in [Kannada](#) that were spontaneously composed by Pant Maharaj. The topics of these poems generally relate to praise of his guru Balmukund, expoundation of his guru's teachings, philosophy of the [Avadhut](#) sampradaya, [self-realization](#), the omnipresence of God, advice on day-to-day living and overcoming challenges, the importance of chanting God's name, devotion to Dattatreya, yogic experiences, and the [maya](#) of the universe.^[22] The book was published posthumously in 1971.^[23]

Written by Pant Maharaj as a guide for two other disciples, the essay *Premtarang*, meaning wave of love, discusses existential questions about our life, God, and [reincarnation](#), while the parallel essay, *Bodhanand Gutika* describes the eight limbs of [yoga](#).^[22]

A few years after Balmukund departed for [Srisailam](#) for his [mahasamadhi](#) in 1877, Pant Maharaj authored a long essay entitled *Bhaktalap*. The essay narrates how he received blessings from Balmukund, how he gained the [satsang](#) of the saint Kallappa, and how he overcame challenges and grew his following of disciples.^[22]

In 1885 and 1886, Pant Maharaj wrote a series of essays narrating his experiences of self-realization. In the essay *Atmajyoti*, Pant Maharaj describes the euphoria experienced when he attained self-realization under the guidance of Balmukund. He compares his experience to that of [Arjuna](#) in the [Mahabharata](#) and [Uddhava](#) in the [Bhagavatam](#) seeing the [Vishvarupa](#) of God. In the second essay *Anubhavvalli*, Pant Maharaj narrates his [anubhavas](#) or experiences in a self-realized state in a question-and-answer form. In the third essay entitled *Bramhopadesh*, Pant Maharaj explains the concepts of [Brahman](#) and [Atman](#) in accordance with the [Vedas](#) and [Upanishads](#).^[22]

In 1901, Pant Maharaj authored a story referred to as *Prembhet* or *Bhaktodgar* where a devotee approaches Balmukund with the desire to attain [moksha](#) through self-realization. Balmukund then proceeds to worship, bless, and enlighten the disciple, ultimately becoming spiritually one with him.^[22]

In *Balbodhamrutsar*, Pant Maharaj authored an entire guidebook based on Balmukund's simple advice that devotees should be of few words and behave as self-realized persons in society