



Manik Prabhu Maharaj

Manik Prabhu Maharaj was an Indian [Hindu saint](#), philosopher, poet and guru.^[2] He is also regarded as an incarnation of [Dattatreya](#) by the people of Datta Sampraday. Prabhu's philosophy, the Sakala mata Siddhanta rests on the principles of [Advaita Vedanta](#) as propagated by [Adi Sankara](#). [Shri](#) Prabhu strongly advocated the essential oneness of all religions. Prabhu's Muslim devotees revered him as an incarnation of Mehboob Subhani whereas his [Lingayat](#) devotees saw him as a form of [Basavanna](#). Shri Prabhu composed numerous [bhajans](#) and padas in various languages such as [Marathi](#), [Kannada](#), [Hindi](#), [Urdu](#) and [Sanskrit](#). Shri Prabhu was also associated with the [First War of Indian Independence](#) in 1857.^{[3][4]} Shri [Sai Baba](#) of Shirdi, Shri Swami Samarth of Akkalkot, Shri Bramhachaitanya of Gondavale and many other contemporary saints are believed to have visited [Maniknagar](#) to interact with Prabhu on matters of deep spiritual wisdom.^[5] Biographers refer to Shri Prabhu as a saint of great spirituality and mysticism. Shri Prabhu's teachings emphasize the path of [Bhakti](#). He also moralized on the vedantic truths concerning the spiritual unity of beings. Manik Nagar, [Humnabad](#), [Bidar District](#) is the place where he took sanjeevani [samadhi](#). Shri Prabhu's samadhi at Maniknagar is the nucleus of Manik Nagar and acts as the spiritual center of the activities of Shri Manik Prabhu Samsthan.

Birth and early life

Manik Prabhu's Baala Roopa Murti at his birthplace Ladawanti. The Manika Prabhu Mandir at Ladawanti is located on the exact place where Shri Prabhu was born.

Manika Prabhu was born into [Deshastha Rigvedi Bramhin](#) family of Srivatsa gotra on 22 December 1817 (Margashirsha Pournima - [Datta Jayanti](#), Shaka 1739 Eashwara naama Samvatsara) in his grandmother's native [Ladwanti](#) near [Basavakalyana](#) (now in the Bidar district of [Karnataka](#)). His father name is Manohara Naik and mother name is Baya Devi. It is said that his parents, who celebrated [Rama Navmi](#) every year, had a divine vision of Lord [Dattatreya](#) on the Ram Navami of 1817 before Prabhu's birth. It is believed that Dattatreya assured Manohar and Baya that he himself would take birth as their child on Datta Jayanti. Prabhu had an elder brother called Dadasaheb, a younger brother called Tatya Saheb and a sister called Chimanabai.^[6] Prabhu lost his father at an early age and thus grew up under the guardianship of his maternal uncle Shri Balwantrao Apparao Kulkarni, who was employed with the Nawab of Basavakalyana.

While at Basavakalyana, he started collecting a group of his friends and roaming the hills and dales in the vicinity of the town. Young Manik behaved in such a carefree manner that the members of his family were concerned. He used to roam in the forests for days at a stretch and not return home, which led to the people of Basavakalyana calling him *veda bhau* (mad child). He never went to school and did not receive any formal education despite attempts by his family members. His childhood friends claimed that he performed many miracles in the jungles while they were playing together. On one occasion, his friend Govinda did not turn up for play. When he reached Govinda's house, he saw that Govinda had died due to snake bite and all his family members were mourning. Prabhu is believed to have miraculously brought Govinda back to life by his devotees. On another occasion, he is said to have given Darshan to Kalambhatta in the divine form of Lord [Shiva](#). From early in his childhood, Prabhu's fame as an *Avatari Purusha* quickly spread in the erstwhile Hyderabad state and beyond. His devotees have documented many such stories in which Prabhu solved the problems of his devotees, fulfilled people's wishes and helped common people in distress. He stayed with Bhalachandra Dikshit of Hallikhed (a Vedic Pundit) for a few months to learn some Vedic rites and rituals.

As he grew older, his uncle tried to formally educate him, thinking that education would make him a breadwinner for the family, but in vain. On a hot summer afternoon, when Prabhu was taking a royal siesta on his uncle's bed, he got a strong reprimand from his uncle. This was reason enough for Prabhu

to renounce all worldly ties and leave his hometown for his chosen mission. He composed his first pada or bhajan 'प्रभूविण कोण कुणाचा वाली' after leaving home.

Travel and Pilgrimage

After leaving home, Prabhu stayed and performed penance at Amrutkund - a holy place in the jungles near Manthal for six months. Devotees believe that Bhagawan [Dattatreya](#), disguised as a *Bairagi* once visited Prabhu at Amritkund and gave him *Danda*, *Deeksha* and *Jholi*, mandating his future journey as a wandering yogi and an itinerant messenger of truth. From here, he started travelling and visiting places of religious importance in the region. According to a legend, he once arrived at Chalakapur, a small village near [Bidar](#) during his wanderings. The sun had already set and he had no place to stay at night. On the outskirts of the village, he saw a temple dedicated to [Hanuman](#). The people of this village did not visit this temple after nightfall due to the fear of [dacoits](#), thieves and wild animals. Prabhu arrived at this temple and planned to stay there for the night. He packed his clothes and other belongings in a cloth and safely deposited them on Shri Hanuman's Moorthi before sleeping in a corner of the temple. Next morning, the [poojari](#) (priest) arrived and was enraged to see that a young person had kept his belongings on the holy idol's shoulders. He woke Shri Prabhu up and asked him why he had done so. Prabhu said "He who takes care of the whole world can easily take care of my belongings in this desolate place, therefore I kept it with the lord". The *poojari's* anger knew no bounds and he started beating Shri Prabhu with a stick. It is believed that blood started oozing out of the Hanuman idol when the *poojari* beat Prabhu. Seeing wounds appearing on Hanuman's idol, the *poojari* thought that Prabhu must be none other than Hanuman in human form and begged for his forgiveness. Prabhu forgave him and asked him never to be harsh with devotees. He stayed at Chalakapur for a few months and people started flocking to him for his [darshan](#). He arrived at Mailar near Bidar after leaving Chalakapur. It is here that he met Devi Venkamma or Madhumati Shyamala, his disciple (a [yogini](#) revered as a [devi](#) by Shri Manik Prabhu's devotees), for the first time. Prabhu stayed at Mailar for a few months and like Chalakapur, thousands of people started gathering to catch a glimpse of Shri Prabhu. After leaving Mailar, Prabhu proceeded to [Bhalki](#). Prabhu is said to have performed penance in the jungles near Bhalki. Some accounts suggest that Prabhu taught Devi Venkamma *samadhi* and yoga in the jungles there. He then visited [Chitguppa](#) where he is said to have given *darshan* to his devotees in the divine form of Lord [Basaveshwara](#).

Prabhu sent all his followers and [shishyas](#) to Kalyan and then set out for his spiritual journey across the country. Prabhu travelled on foot as a wandering yogi across the length and breadth of the country covering places of religious importance such as [Varanasi](#), [Haridwar](#), [Mathura](#), Badri, [Puri](#), [Dwarka](#), Girnar, [Tirupati](#) and Rameshwaram. Some of his Muslim devotees believe that he visited the shrine of Mehboob Subhani in [Baghdad](#) (Iraq) during his travels in North India. Prabhu also visited Pandharpur, Tuljapur, Ganagapur, Kolhapur and other major temples of the Deccan region. According to Ganesh Raghunath Kulkarni (Prabhu's official biographer), the river Chandrabhaga was flooded when he visited Pandharpur. Prabhu's devotees believe that Panduranga himself came in the form of a boatman and took Prabhu to the other side of the river and then disappeared. When he visited the Vitthala Temple, he had worn dirty and torn clothes. The pundits thought that he was a beggar and denied him entry to the temple. When he tried to forcefully enter the temple, the pundits beat him. It is believed that a floral garland came from Panduranga's idol and fell on Shri Prabhu. The pundits realised that Prabhu was a divine being and begged him for forgiveness. Prabhu took Lord Vitthala's *darshan* and stayed at Pandharpur for many days. While describing his Pandharpur visit, Prabhu himself says in an [abhang](#) (poem), 'कडकडोनि माणिकदास विठ्ठलासी भेटले'. During his countrywide travel, he composed numerous *bhajans* in praise of various deities in Marathi, Kannada, Hindi, Urdu and Sanskrit. These *bhajans* and *abhangas* are compiled in a book

called *Padyamala*.^[7] Prabhu also visited the Gottamgotti forest, Ketaki Sangam and Nyalkal among other places when he came back to his native land. The devotees of Bidar invited Prabhu to visit Bidar. On the way there, it is said that a yogi came in the form of a snake and led Prabhu to Jharani Narasimha cave. Prabhu's ancestors had performed penance at Jharani Narasimha. People of the Bidar region started to flock to Jharani for Prabhu's *darshan*. Devotees of Bidar invited Prabhu to visit their homes. Prabhu assured everyone that he would visit their house at 12 noon the following day. According to Ganesh Raghunath Kulkarni, Prabhu is believed to have visited every devotee's home at the same time in a miraculous example of [multilocation](#). According to the same account, when Muslim residents of Bidar tried to test him by giving him meat and wine for lunch, Prabhu is believed to have converted them into fruits and milk. Prabhu's devotees ascribe many such miracles to him.

After completing his spiritual journey across the country, Prabhu finally decided to settle on the banks of the rivulets Viraja and Guruganga in the year 1845 which later came to be known as Maniknagar (a place near Humnabad in Bidar District of Karnataka).^[8] He was on his way back to Kalyan when his [palkhi](#) or *palanquin* got stuck in the jungle near Humnabad. Prabhu liked the area and decided to make it his permanent abode and also a center for the propagation of his philosophy of *sakalamata siddhanta*. Prabhu stayed in a simple hut and ate only the *madhukari bhiksha* (alms) which his disciples would bring from the nearby villages. Usually, he dressed in very simple clothes and occasionally he even dressed in royal attire. Manik Prabhu established the *gaadi* (spiritual seat) of Lord [Dattatreya](#) in the very hut where he used to reside. This *gaadi* is a symbol of [Nirguna Bramha](#). He did not place any idol or spiritual icon on the *gaadi* and instead kept it empty. The idea behind it was that his devotees could visualise the [parabrahma](#) (supreme reality) in whatever form they liked and worship him accordingly. Initially When Prabhu made Maniknagar his abode, only his disciples and some [bramhacharis](#) stayed in small huts. Later on, Prabhu allowed people from all walks of life to stay at Maniknagar and the population started increasing steadily. Prabhu's mother Baya Devi and his brothers Tatyasaheb and Dada Saheb also came and settled in Maniknagar with their family.

Prabhu Darbar

The name and fame of Manik Prabhu spread quickly and people of all religions, sects and communities started flocking to Maniknagar. Prabhu used to hold a gathering everyday called *darbar* where thousands of people visited him and sought his blessings.^[9] Prabhu guided his devotees in spiritual matters and helped them overcome their material difficulties. Prabhu gave *khairaat* or alms to the needy and the poor. Hundreds of [Vedic scholars](#), Fakeers, [jangams](#) and other [mendicants](#) came to Maniknagar to receive blessings and *khairaat* from Prabhu. It is said that leading musicians and artists of the time came to Maniknagar to perform *seva*, selfless service, in Prabhu's *darbar*. He was equally revered by all communities; while his Muslim followers thought him to be an incarnation of Mehboob Subhani (the [Sufi](#) saint of Baghdad), his Lingayat devotees would worship him as Lord Basaveshwara and his Sikh followers saw him as in the form of [Guru Nanak](#).^[10] It is said that the fifth [Nizam of Hyderabad](#), Mir Afzaluddaula sent his courtier Yashwantrao Arab to seek Shri Prabhu's blessings. Prabhu declined the [jagir](#) or lands offered by the king and said, "The whole earth belongs to my lord, Datta Prabhu". He sent Prasada to the Nizam Afzaluddaula. Some devotees believe that the Nizam's son Mehboob Ali (the sixth Nizam) was named by Shri Manik Prabhu. Prabhu conducted a *mahayajna* (Vedic sacrifice) called *sarvatomukha* at Maniknagar. Leading scholars of the time are said to have attended this [yajna](#) and sought Shri Prabhu's blessings. Prabhu celebrated Datta Jayanti Utsav every year at Maniknagar in a grand manner.

Stories of his miracles and eyewitness accounts, which bear testimony to the manner in which he brought succor to the distressed and the sorrowing, to the afflicted and the wronged, who, ardently and with deep faith and devotion sought his spiritual intervention are available. He never claimed

credit for any such incident and always said that it is "Datta Prabhu's [leela](#)". He is also believed to have given *darshan* to a devotee in the divine form of Goddess [Tulaja Bhavani](#) and accepted the devotee's offerings. Many such stories are compiled in the official biography of Shri Manik Prabhu by Ganesh Raghunath Kulkarni.^[11]

Visits of spiritual personalities

Shri Swami Samarth is also believed to have visited Prabhu before settling at Akkalkot. According to Shri Manik Prabhu Charitra, Swami Maharaj stayed at Maniknagar for six months. Shri Manik Prabhu and Shri Swami Samarth used to sit under the holy [audumbar tree](#) and interact on matters of deep spiritual wisdom. Eyewitness accounts suggest that Shri Swami Samarth used to regard Shri Manik Prabhu as his brother.

According to Shri Achyut Yashwant Dhond, Shri [Sai Baba of Shirdi](#) visited Prabhu as a young Fakeer. According to the tale, Prabhu was sitting in his *darbar* when *Sai Baba* arrived. Sai asked Prabhu to fill his [lota](#). Prabhu instructed Tatya Saheb, his brother who was sitting beside him, to fill the *lota*. Tatya was busy with some academic discussions on Vedanta and tried to fill the *lota* while speaking to someone else. Even after putting hundreds of coins in it, the *lota* would not fill. Tatya was astonished and gave it to Prabhu. Prabhu put 5 *khariks* (dry dates) and some flowers in it. The *lota* filled immediately. Sai Baba took the dates and flowers and said that this was enough for him. He poured back the coins which were many times more than the original coins put in the *lota* by Tatya Saheb.^[12]

Shri Bramha Chaitanya Maharaj of Gondavale also visited Prabhu at Maniknagar.^[13] The Shankaracharya of Sringeri at the time, Jagadguru Ugra Narasimha Bharati Swamiji paid a visit to Maniknagar during Prabhu's time. Prabhu welcomed the [Shankaracharya](#) with due honours and the Shankaracharya appreciated Prabhu's noble work.

Prabhu and the revolt of 1857

According to Ganesh Raghunath Kulkarni, Nanasaheb Peshwa of Bithur sent a letter to Prabhu seeking his blessings, guidance and support in 1857. A person called Rangrao carried Nanasaheb's letter to Prabhu. Prabhu gave [prasada](#) (dry dates) and some money to Rangrao for the national movement. Prabhu reportedly said to Rangrao, "Tell Nanasaheb that he has my support and blessings. There is a lot of time for the fulfillment of the goal (independence), but don't stop the efforts. Datta Prabhu will definitely bless you all". Prabhu gave yoga *dandas* or divine sticks to his followers and said that "these sticks will protect you from the dangers of the war". After the uprising, Prabhu took all the yoga *dandas* back and they are stored in a room at Maniknagar today. In 1865, Prabhu felt that it was time for him to take [mahasamadhi](#). Both of his brothers, Dadasaheb and Tatyasaheb, and his mother Baya Devi had passed away before Prabhu's *mahasamadhi*. Devi Venkamma too attained *samadhi* a couple of years before Shri Prabhu. Prabhu decided the holy day [Mokshada Ekadashi](#) (*Geeta Jayanti - Margashirsha Shuddha Ekadashi, Shaka 1787*), Tuesday 29 November 1865 would be the ideal date for *mahasamadhi*. He instructed his close aides to construct a walled pit in his hut but under total secrecy. His plan was known only to 4 or 5 of his close disciples. The annual *Datta Jayanti Utsav* had already begun. On the night of [Dashami](#) (28 Nov 1865), Prabhu distributed *khairaat* (alms) to Fakeers and the poor as coincidentally it was the day of Gyarahvi Shareef (anniversary of the death of Mehboob Subhani, famous Sufi saint of Baghdad).

On the early morning of Ekadashi, Prabhu retired to his hut and took [sanyasa](#) *deeksha* according to the scriptures under total secrecy. He called both of his nephews, Manohara and Martanda to the hut and accepted their [pooja](#). Prabhu gave the *mantra deeksha* and *kharik prasada*/'*Karjura* or *Uttatti*' to his elder nephew Manohara Prabhu and appointed him as the successor to his holy peetha. Then he

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sat in the pit of the samadhi and asked his aides to close the pit from all sides. Prabhu attained Sanjivani [samadhi](#), a state of meditative blissful consciousness. Eyewitness accounts suggest that Prabhu left his physical body by the yogic way of Samadhi on the evening of [Ekadashi](#) around 5 PM. Prabhu's devotees believe that he is sitting in the SANJEEVAN SAMAADHI and answering their prayers even to this day. Other examples of saints who took Sanjeevan Samadhi are Santa [Dnyaneshwar](#) of Alandi and Shri [Raghavendra Swami](#) of Mantralaya. The news of Prabhu's Samadhi was broken to the public on the day of [Datta Jayanti](#) (4 days later) after the Mahapooja and Jayanti celebrations.