



Shri Manik Prabhu

His Life
& Mission

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By
Nagesh D. Sonde



Shri Manik Prabhu Samsthan
Maniknagar

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Shri Manik Prabhu Samsthan
Maniknagar

*A Biography of Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj in
English by Shri Nagesh D. Sonde*

श्री गुरु उपासना



During the last 149 years various authors have written the biography of Shri Sadguru Manik Prabhu Maharaj in various languages. Shri Ramchandra Buva Nasikkar was the first to write such a biography in Marathi and it was published in 1893. Later, Shri Ganesh Shivram Tole wrote a biography of Shri Prabhu which was published in 1899. Shri Babasaheb Maharaj (Elder son of Shri Martand Manik Prabhu Maharaj) specially invited Shri Ganesh Raghunath Kulkarni to write an authentic biography of Shri Prabhu. The first authentic biography of Shri Prabhu was thus published by the Samsthan in 1936.

Shri Yadneshwar Dixit and Shri Samb Shastri wrote Shri Prabhu's biographies in Sanskrit in verse form: The former's *Manik Prabhakar* and the latter's *Manikya Vijaya* are still popular amongst Sanskrit readers. Abridged translated versions of Shri Kulkarni's Marathi book were brought out by

the Samsthan in Telugu, Kannada, Hindi, Gujarati and Urdu. Shri Raghavdas Ramname's *Shri Manik Charitamrut* in Marathi *Ovi* (verse) form is a lucid narration of Shri Prabhu's life and is specially useful for the devotees who wish to do *Parayana*. I am happy to learn that Prof. D.P. Nandurbarkar has recently written and published a biography of Shri Prabhu in English based on Shri Kulkarni's Marathi *Charitra*.

However, for all these years I had cherished a dream of bringing out a biography of Shri Prabhu in English, based on the philosophy in which he believed and which he preached and practised. I wanted the book to be written in such a manner that it could make enlightened and interesting reading to even a stranger who had not heard the name of Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj. This had become even more necessary in the light of foreigners visiting Maniknagar for Shri Prabhu Darshan I had discussed this idea with Late Shri B. Y. Nerurkar and he had in fact started the work. Unfortunately he could not fulfill the mission in his life time.

Way back in 1984, when I was on a two months long tour of Bombay, I happened to meet Shri Nagesh D. Sonde who is a keen student of Indian philosophy. When I discussed my idea of bringing out a book on Shri Prabhu in English, he readily accepted the challenge and promised to do his best.

I am extremely happy that Shri Prabhu, the wish fulfilling tree of the devotees has fulfilled my wish of bringing out His biography in English.

Shri Sonde has given due importance to the philosophical aspect of Shri Prabhu's life and that was what I wanted. *Bhakti* and *Jnana* are the two seemingly different ways of attaining the same Goal but there has been a great philosophical dispute amongst the learned over the supremacy of one over the other. Shri Shankaracharya, emphasising the importance of *Jnana* declares that Knowledge is the sole means of attaining *Moksha*. (ज्ञानादेव तु कैवल्यम्) The advocates of *Bhakti* on the other hand, quote Narada who says - "*Bhakti* is 7 greater than *Karma*, *Jnana* and *Yoga*".

(सा तु कर्मज्ञानयोगेभ्योऽप्यधिकतरा) (Narada Bhakti Sutra 25). They also quote Shri Shankaracharya who says - “amongst the means of attaining *Moksha*, *Bhakti* is supreme”. (मोक्षसाधन सामग्र्यां भक्तिरेव गरीयसी) (Viveka Chudamani 1-32). However, for one who has grasped the essence of Indian Philosophy these contradictory statements do not create a confusion as he has rightly understood that *Jnana* and *Bhakti* are not contradictory but are complementary to each other. Shri Martand Manik Prabhu has clearly pronounced this fact in Mahamouna Shataka, wherein he says: “One has to enter the temple of spiritual perfection through the door of *Jnana*, only then can one attain the state of spiritual bliss..... and at the same time it is also true that the blissful company of Shri Prabhu can not be attained without *Bhakti*. (पदा पावण्या ज्ञान हे द्वार मोटे । महाद्वार ओलांडिता वस्तु भेटे । अरे सत्य हे सत्य सत्य त्रिवाचा । विनाभक्ति हा श्री प्रभू लाभ कैचा ।)

Shri Sonde has been able to bring about a perfect synthesis of *Jnana* and *Bhakti* in this book for which he deserves all appreciation and Shri Prabhu’s divine blessings.

I am sure this book will be of immense use to all those who are in search of the SELF and may Shri Prabhu bestow upon them His choicest blessings.

श्रीप्रभु

Mahashivaratri
February 27, 1995

PREFACE

This book, which came to be written with the blessings of Shri Siddharaj Manik Prabhu Maharaj, does not owe its completion to the personal experiences or the capabilities of the writer. The book is entirely due to the Grace extended towards him by the Guru and for that reason the writer had suggested that his name should not be mentioned as the author of the book. It has been his experience, during the course of writing of the book, that entire passages written with much effort came to be completely wiped off from the computer and had to be written again.

Shreeji has mentioned in his *Ashirvachan* that he “had cherished a dream of bringing out a biography of Shri Prabhu in English based on the philosophy in which he believed and which he preached and practised I am extremely happy that Shri Prabhu, the wish fulfilling tree of the devotees, has fulfilled my wish of bringing out His biography in English. Shri Sonde has given more importance to the

philosophical aspect *or* Shri Prabhu's life and THAT WAS WHAT I WANTED."

This could be the reason why many passages used to get wiped off and the writer had to rewrite the entire passages again and again. The passages as they are now found, therefore, have the stamp of his approval and acceptance. It is for that reason that the writer had suggested that his name should not be mentioned as the author of the book. It was his experience while writing the book, that the words were not coming of his own volition but were springing from an inspiration which was more powerful than the writer was capable of mustering.

If despite all these reasons, Shreeji desires that the writer's name should be mentioned as the author of this book, then it certainly is due to his compassionate Grace on the writer, for which he and his family are extremely grateful beyond human words.

In our mundane life, if there is anything that makes living interesting, important and fruitful,

then it is the Grace of the Guru, who is the very embodiment of the Lord in human form.

I am intensely aware of the Grace that has been bestowed upon me and I only hope and pray that this Grace will ever flow towards me, whether I deserve it or not.

February 1, 1995

Nagesh D. Sonde

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01. Introduction

The Truths which are enshrined in the Vedic Hymns are Perennial in substance and Universal in application. They are therefore, referred to as *Sanatana*, *Nitya* and *Apaurusheya*. The Vedas do not propound any particular thought or seek to establish any particular system of philosophy. They do not owe their origin to any one particular person, prophet or preacher. They are the product of supra-sensory perception of the Seers who, it is said, have 'seen' the hymns.

The Vedas are Wisdom, eternal and all-comprehensive. They are available for all,

irrespective of whether one is faithful or an agnostic. The 'Seers' saw the *Satya* (that which ever IS), the *Rta* (the Cosmic Order), the *Dharma* (the Perennial Principles) in their pristine pure vision and what they saw, they experienced and what they experienced they stored in their hearts and expressed through mental concepts. Their expressions are, therefore, eternal and universal because what they expressed was not conditioned by Time, Space or Place. Since their intention was (to) 'Let noble thoughts come to us from every side' (आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः) (Rig Ved.I.89.1), their hearts and minds were ever receptive to the resonance of the Eternal Sound, AUM (ॐ) the Primal Source of all Wisdom. Therefore, the Vedas were called the breath of Brahman, the Wisdom itself, the Brahman.

Seer Atri was one such 'Seers' who had 'seen' and experienced the Brahman, the eternal Wisdom. The Vedas contain many of the hymns seen by him and the members of his family. To him was born a son, the product of the Grace or

the Divine Will, which was the manifestation of all three Primal Energies of *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Maheshvar*. Legend says that since he was ordained with the three energies, he was endowed with the concentrated wisdom of the three God-heads, or symbolically three heads. Hence he came to be called '*Dattatreya*'. In the Vedas, we do not find any hymns which are attributed to him, but then he had not descended on this earth to recount his personal experiences but to establish *Satya-Rta-Dharma*, in all its entirety, which had lost their potency with the flux of time.

In Brahma Purana (213.106-112), it is declared that his descent is for the purpose of establishing the Vedic values, which had lost their purity due to the passage of time.

“The Compassionate Shri Dattatreya, who was the descent of Shri Vishnu, the indweller of all creatures, resurrected the Vedas, the rituals and the sacrifices and provided proper place to the fourfold order, when the

Vedas, the rituals and sacrifices were losing their hold, when righteousness was on the wane and unrighteousness was gaining strength, when Truth was declining and untruth was gaining, when human beings were suffering and *dharmic* values were hampered”.

(भूयो भूतात्मनो विष्णोः प्रादुर्भावो महात्मनः । दत्तात्रेय इति ख्यातः
क्षमया परया युतः ॥ तेन नष्टेषु वेदेषु प्रक्रियासु मखेषु च । चातुर्वर्ण्यं च
संकीर्णं धर्मे शिथिलतां गते ॥ अति वर्धति चाधर्मे सत्ये नष्टेऽनृते स्थिते ।
प्रजायु शीर्यमाणेषु धर्मे चाकुलतां गते ॥ सयज्ञाः सक्रियाः वेदाः प्रत्यानीता
हि तेन वै । चातुर्वर्ण्यमसंकीर्णं कृतं तेन महात्मना ॥)

As time passed, Dattatreya was seen as a great sage, a *Yogi*, a *Jeevanmukta*, a *Paramahansa*. In the triple combination of *Satya-Rta-Dharma*, he saw the inalienable equipoise, *Samatvam* and equanimity, *Samanvaya*. All distinctions and distractions that arose in human enterprise were seen entirely due to *A-Jnana*, the non-awareness of the human being of his true identity with Blissful Brahman.

The concept of *Avatar*, the descent of the Divine, does not accept any contradiction. While it is not denied that the entire creation is due to and at the instance of the Supreme Brahman, emergence of some distinctive energy and specific form, in intensity only proves the need, the occasion and the time. In fact the descent of the Divine in human form is to create conditions for the human to ascend to his Divine essence. Everything that happens is but the expression of the Divine Will and the descent of the Divine Energy and the ascent of the Human aspiration are mutually complementary.

Shri Krishna has made it abundantly clear in Bhagavad Gita (IV.7-8), that “Whenever there is decline in righteousness and rise in unrighteousness, O Bharata, then I send forth Myself. For the protection of the good and the destruction of the evil and the establishment of righteousness, I come into being from age to age”. (यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत । अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥ परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।

धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे ॥). He has also given an indication of the time when he decides to come, the time when *Vishaya-Vasana*, allurements to the objects of the senses overshadows '*Nitya-Anitya Viveka*', discrimination of the eternal and non-eternal. In such event, we should seek to find the redeeming feature in the essence and presence of Divine potency. "Whatsoever being there is endowed with glory and grace and vigour, know that to have sprung from a fragment of My splendour" (यद्यद्विभूतिमत्सत्त्वं श्रीमदूर्जितमेव वा । तत्तदेवावगच्छत्त्वं मम तेजोऽशसम्भवम् ॥) (Bhagavad Gita X.41).

When we see in this context, the life and the message of Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj, we see many similarities between his life and the life of Shri Dattatreya. In fact it would not be incorrect to say that Lord Dattatreya himself, out of compassion took descent in the form of Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj. If we consider the time of Shri Prabhu's birth we realise that religious hatred, social inequality

and a total cultural chaos was the order of the day. The seekers of true knowledge were in a confused state of mind and ran from pillar to post in search of spiritual solace.

The purpose of having a *Guru* or surrendering to him, is not to be possessed with a crutch on which we can lean, but to have guidance and grace for traversing the Path of Truth, which embraces Universal Essence, **SAKALAMATA**. Only when we have the *Shraddha*, the receptivity, towards our Guru and His Message, we can hope to live the life of *Samatvam* or *Samanvaya*, which is the purpose for which Shri Dattatreya took descent in the form Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj.

Therefore, as Shri Krishna recommended, we should approach the wise Teacher. “Learn THAT (Eternal Truth, the Brahman) by humble reverence, by inquiry and by service. The men of wisdom who have seen the Truth will instruct you in that wisdom” (तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया । उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥)

(Bhagavad Gita IV.34). We shall thus approach Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj, the descent of Shri Dattatreya, to understand and to be initiated in the *Sakalmata Sampradaya*, which indeed is the need of this age.



02. Birth and early life

In a village called Ladwanti, near the town of Kalyan, in the erstwhile state of Hyderabad, a child was born to a pious couple, Shri Manohar Naik and Smt. Bayadevi. They had in all three sons and one daughter. Amongst the sons, the middle one was the one who was to make history in time to come. He was named **Manik**.

The child was born on 22nd December, 1817, when the whole town was busy celebrating the birthday of Shri Dattatreya. There was nothing notable in this event and the child grew like any other child in that

area. As he grew, one and all were attracted to the child, who was fondled not only by his parents but also by his neighbours. His pranks were endearing to everyone. He started collecting a group of his friends and roaming the hills and dales in the vicinity of the town. He was, as it were, a child of nature, more close to the trees, the breeze, the birds and the flowers.

In the course of play he would occasionally, casually disclose his divinity. Once, when one of his playmates, Govinda, failed to turn up for play for a couple of days, Manik went to his house to enquire after him. Arriving there he heard the sound of wailing from within the house. He was informed that Govinda had passed away after suffering from fever for a few days. Manik told Govinda's mother to stop grieving as her son was alive. Sure enough, when Govinda's mother called out to him to go out and play with Manik, he arose as if out of a deep slumber. All present were overjoyed and amazed at this occurrence.

This and such other occurrences caused his fame to spread far and wide.

On another occasion, one Bheemabai, a childless woman, the wife of Apparao Arab, a General in the army of the Nizam of Hyderabad, was travelling to visit him to seek his blessings for progeny. On her way she noticed some boys beating up one boy and asked her escort to rescue him. The boy who was being beaten up asked for only eight *cowries* (shells) that he owed the other boys whereby he could get himself released from the other boys. Knowing through divine insight that Bheemabai sought children he promised eight sons for eight *cowries*. Hearing this, Bheemabai gave him the eight *cowries*. Thus released, the boy said, "You are given eight sons. You may go!"

When Bheemabai and her entourage reached Manik's home they discovered that Manik was missing from home for some days. She decided not to have any food

until she saw him and waited for his arrival for three days without food and water. Finally, pitying her, Manik returned home. When Bheemabai saw him, who should he be but the boy whom she had rescued on her way here. Manik said, "I have already given you what you seek. Go in peace!" Satisfied Bheemabai left for Hyderabad and in the years to come, she was blessed with eight sons and remained eternally grateful to Manik to the end of her life.

On the whole however, Manik behaved in such a carefree manner that the members of his family were concerned. It was, therefore, decided that at the age of seven his thread ceremony should be performed, so that a sense of responsibility may dawn on this wayward child, who, it appeared, preferred to roam rather than sit and read. When the sacred thread was being bestowed on him and the sacred *Gayatri* hymn was being recited in his ears, as was the custom, a strange thing took place. Manik behaved as though all this

was superfluous for him and he knew all about *Gayatri* and the significance of the eternal sound, AUM. He recited the hymn unaided, to the great surprise of the assembled people. As none could explain the inexplicable event, it was said to be a remarkable event and was left as such. None attached further notice to this event.

Manik was again free to roam in the woods. When he was sent to the school, his attention was to the open sky, the cool breeze, the rustling leaves and the chirping of the birds. The books were stale for him and the lessons boring. The enclosed class room was suffocating and the teachers were uninspiring. He had, in fact, an extraordinary capacity to absorb what was conveyed to him but what was being conveyed to him appeared too little and too stale to capture his imagination. He liked to seek teachers in the lap of nature, listen to Nature's natural education rather than the artificial or contrived lessons in the class room. It was not surprising

therefore, that he was given to sneaking out of the class rooms and wandering in the woods.

It is said, when Satyakama approached his teacher's residence, his face was shining brilliant. Upon which the teacher asked: "Verily, my dear, you shine like one knowing Brahman. Who has taught you ?" To this Satyakama replied, "Others than men" (ब्रह्मविदिव वै सोम्य भासि को नु त्वाऽनुशशासेत्यन्ये मनुष्येभ्य इति ह प्रतिजज्ञे भगवांस्त्वेव मे कामे ब्रूयात् ॥) (Chhandogya Upanishad IV.9.2). In like manner, Shri Dattatreya is said to have twenty four teachers from nature. "Many are my preceptors," he told King Yadu, "selected by my keen sense, from whom acquiring wisdom freely, I wander in the world... The earth, breeze, sky, water, fire, the moon and the Sun; the dove, python, sea, moth, honeybee, elephant, honey gatherer, deer, fish, Pingala the courtesan, sea-eagle, infant, maiden, forger of arrows, serpent, spider and bumble bee are the twenty four preceptors accepted by me. From their behaviour, I have learned all that is to be learned in this life for my good" (सन्ति मे गुरवो राजन् बहवो

बुद्ध्युपाश्रिताः। यतो बुद्धिमुपादाय मुक्तोऽटामीह तत्कृणु। पृथिवी
वायुराकाशमापोऽग्निश्चन्द्रमा रविः। कपोतोऽजगरः सिन्धुः पतंगो मधुकृद्
गजः। मधुहा हरिणो मीनः पिंगला कररोऽर्भकः। कुमारी शरकृत् सर्प
ऊर्णनाभिः सुपेशकृत्॥ एते मे गुरवो राजंश्चतुर्विंशतिराश्रिताः। शिक्षा
वृत्तिभिरेतेषामन्वशिक्षमिहात्मनः॥) (Bhagavat Purana -
XI.7.32-35).

In like manner, the formal education needed for making one fit for normal worldly life, was obviously not required for Manik. For, it appeared that he would rather wander through the woods gathering wisdom right from Nature than information from the class room, which would neither enlighten him nor elevate his Self towards That for which he had taken this descent. Nature became his class room and his very Self became his teacher. His receptivity became keen, intelligence sharp and thoughts synchronised. He came to be aware of things for which even normal perception was denied. And sure enough, he started speaking like one who was authorised to speak.

Strange are the ways by which the true

seekers and aspirants are communicated the nuances of Truth. While the normal person is busy in collecting information (which he erroneously considers to be knowledge) and material possessions, the person graced by the Lord is seeped with wisdom and extraordinary powers which are beyond the imagination of even the most learned human beings. For the man of wisdom, the realisation does not come bit by bit but all of a sudden like a flash of lightning, brilliant and all-illuminating. As said in Kena Upanishad, "Of this Brahman, there is this teaching: this is, as it were, like lightning which flashes forth or is like the winking of the eye" (तस्यैष आदेशो यदेतद्विद्युतो व्यद्युतदा ३ इतीन्न्यमीमिषदा ३ इत्याधिदैवतम् ॥) (IV.4). The men of wisdom tell us that when there is such realisation, there is, as it were, a sudden expansion of the mind, a flash of light illumining the innermost recesses of the intellect, an inflow of the Divine Will into the Individual Will causing vibrancy and joy ineffable. But few had the eyes to see or the vision to appreciate the change that was taking place in the life of Manik. They took his

wandering in the woods to be lethargy and non-interest in formal education or to his being naive. It was, therefore, natural for them to consider a change in his environment by way of sending him to his uncle, who, it was considered, would put some sense in his mind and make him a fit person to take the burden of life.

Even here, Manik was neither receptive to education nor to the admonitions of elders. While children of his age were busy in play or in studies, he often would be found lying in his bed and absorbed in his own thoughts. But as far as Manik was concerned, he seemed to be going through an intense spiritual transformation and a great aversion to life around him. As time would show he was almost ripe for the first step to be taken. The very first verse of Avadhoota Gita declares that “It is only with the Grace of God that in men of wisdom is born the inclination for non-dual experience which protects them from great danger” (Avadhoot Gita I.1) (ईश्वरानुग्रहादेवपुंसामद्वैतवासना । महद्भयपरित्राणाद्विप्राणामुपजायते ॥).

Manik seemed to be waiting, for the moment when the last leaf attached to the tree of worldly life would fall. And that moment was not far.

Manik's uncle sincerely felt that this boy should grow up like a normal child and should be trained and educated to take up the responsibilities of life. He was deeply frustrated by the failure of his measures in sending this boy to school. He then thought that employment may inculcate a sense of responsibility in him and thus got him appointed as a clerk in the octroi check post on the outskirts of Kalyan town. Manik was made to sit there and to collect duty on goods entering the town. However, Manik was least interested in his job. He would sit there engrossed in deep thought. He would distribute all the cash collected over there amongst his friends who were needy and poor and was thus dismissed the very next day.

Already frustrated and furious over this episode, one afternoon Manik's uncle

happened to see him resting on the bed, as if unconcerned with the world around him. Seeing him lazing thus, his uncle scolded him and asked him whether he thought himself to be a king to receive food and clothing without working for the same. That was enough. The words were so sharp for Manik's keen intellect, that at that very moment aversion towards life came over him and the vision of his life's mission flashed before him. He got up without uttering a word; discarding his clothes he left home wearing but a loincloth. As he left he made this prophetic statement:

*“Who else be my saviour,
save the compassionate Lord ?
Creator and the Destroyer
as well, my lone Controller.
Through delusion, ‘I AM’,
thus does a person consider.
Who, verily, is the servant
and who, indeed, is the Lord ?
Worthless, verily,
is this distress for one to worry,*

*Even in one's mother's womb,
He alone was the Witness.
Thus, verily, does Manik speak."*

(प्रभुविणे कोण कुणाचा वाली ॥ध्रु. ॥
कर्ता हर्ता तो करवीता । मी मिथ्या जन बोली ॥
कोण कुणाचा चाकर मालक । व्यर्थचि भाषण खाली ॥
माणिक म्हेणे मातेच्या उदरी । नवमास रक्षण केली ॥)

From then onwards, his journey on the Pathless Path was within the folds of Mother Nature. As he breathed in the fresh, unconditioned atmosphere, a new wave of awareness came over him, spreading before him the universality of the Divine presence in every thing he saw, touched or heard. One by one the mysteries, long concealed, came to be revealed to him. "*Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma*" (सर्वखल्विदं ब्रह्म) "*neha nanastikinchna*" (नेहनानास्तिकिञ्चन ।) "Verily, that Imperishable, O Gargi, is unseen but is the seer, is unheard but is the hearer, unthought but is the thinker, unknown but is the knower. There is no other seer but this, there is no other knower but this. By this

Imperishable, O Gargi, is space woven like warp and woof” (तद्वा एतदक्षरं गार्ग्यदृष्टं द्रष्टृश्रुतं श्रोत्रमतं मन्त्रविज्ञातं विज्ञातृ नान्यदतोऽस्ति द्रष्टृ नान्यदतोऽस्ति श्रोतृ नान्यदतोऽस्ति मन्त्र नान्यदतोऽस्ति विज्ञात्रेतस्मिन्नु खल्वक्षरे गार्ग्याकाश ओतश्चप्रोतश्चेति ॥) (Brihad Aranyak Upanishad. III.8.11).

What does all this mean ? When one speaks of the tree, one also assumes it to be each leaf, each flower, each fruit as well as the trunk, the branches and the unseen roots. However, when one speaks of the Lord, one rarely assumes the Earth (with its minutest molecules), the water, the air, the fire, the space to be nothing but the Lord. This apparent division between the Lord and his creation is no division at all. This division is only unreal, for there can be no demarcation. Nor is any separation possible. As Shri Krishna puts it, “He (the Lord) stands undivided in beings and yet as if divided. He is to be known as the Creator, the Supporter and Devourer as well” (अविभक्तं च भूतेषु विभक्तमिव च स्थितम् । भूतभर्तृ च तज्ज्ञेयं ग्रसिष्णु प्रभविष्णु च ॥) (Bhagavad Gita XIII.17).

This made Manik a completely changed person. Shri Krishna's assurance seemed to echo in every action of his. "He who sees Me everywhere and sees all in Me, I am not lost to him nor is he lost to Me" (यो मां पश्यति सर्वत्र सर्वं च मयि पश्यति । तस्याहं न प्रणश्यामि स च मे न प्रणश्यति ॥) (Bhagavad Gita VI.30). Consequently within himself and without himself, in nature, in creatures, in trees and streams, hills and dales, in the wise as well as in the foolish, in the saint as well as in the sinner, in those who love and in those who hate, he saw only the same Divine essence, the Brahman. The entire world experience was spiritualised and became self-experience. His love and compassion for all beings from the creatures to the creepers became all-embracing, for he had seen the face of the Lord unveiled to him with all its mysterious secrets.

He could not bear to see any of the Lord's creatures being ill-treated. Once, he saw a boy riding a pregnant buffalo and goading her to run faster and faster. He reprimanded the boy and bade him to dismount. Ignoring Manik's

remonstration the boy continued his torture of the buffalo. Manik once more cautioned him and warned him that if he failed to dismount immediately, he may find himself stuck to the buffalo. When the boy failed to dismount, suddenly the buffalo commenced galloping and then he could not dismount as he found his hands stuck to the back of the buffalo. Fearing for his life, he pleaded to Manik to release him and promised not to misbehave with any animal ever again. Then, Manik approached the buffalo and requested her to release the boy and immediately the boy was able to dismount.

Seeing the Supreme Self mirrored in all beings as well as his individual Self , the *advaita-bhavana*, the non-dual inalienable experience gave way to exhilaration. He and his Preceptor, as also he and his Maker all appeared but as one, indistinct from one another, as *Bimba* and *Pratibimba*. Like the Cuckoo who experiences the first showers of rain, he sang with gay abandon:

*“Compassionate is Datta,
my own Divine Preceptor,
Controller of inner core,
maintainer of triple shore
Converting my mundane life
to be entirely pure.
Indivisible, Inviolable,
In-dweller of the Universe,
Verily, as Consciousness,
He abides in the Universe.
Bestowing unsurpassed,
illumined splendour,
Has taken humble Manik
to meet his mentor.”*

(श्री गुर माझा दत्त दयाघन रे ॥ध्रु॥)

अन्तर चालक त्रिभुवन पालक । सकलासि जीवन रे ॥

अखण्ड अगोचर व्याप्त चराचर । शाश्वत चिद्धन रे ॥

माणिक दासासि मिळविले स्वरूपासि । देउनि उन्मन रे ॥)



03. In jungles, hills and woods

Yajnavalkya explains in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad (III.5.1) that it is the Self that transcends hunger and thirst, sorrow and delusion, old age and death. The knowers of Brahman having known this Self, having overcome the desire for sons, the desire for wealth, the desire for worlds, live the life of mendicants. (Because) that which is the desire for sons is the desire for wealth, the desire for wealth is the desire for the worlds. Therefore, let the knower of Brahman, after he has done with

learning, desire to live like a child. When he has done with the state of childhood and with learning, then he becomes a silent mediator. Having done with both the non-meditative and meditative states, then he becomes the knower of Brahman.

(कतमो याज्ञवल्क्य सर्वान्तरो योऽशनायापिपासे शोकं मोहं जरां मृत्युमत्येति ॥ एतं वै तमात्मानं विदित्वा ब्राह्मणाः पुत्रैषणायाश्च वित्तैषणायाश्च लोकैषणायाश्च व्युत्थायाथ भिक्षाचर्यं चरन्ति ॥ या ह्येव पुत्रैषणा सा वित्तैषणा या वित्तैषणा सा लोकैषणोभे होते एषणे एव भवतः ॥ तस्माद्ब्राह्मणः पाण्डित्यं निर्विद्य बाल्येन तिष्ठासेत् । बाल्यं च पाण्डित्यं च निर्विद्याथ मुनिरमौनं च मौनं निर्विद्याथ ब्राह्मणः स ब्राह्मणः के न स्याद्येन स्यात्तेनेदृश एवातोऽन्यदार्तं ततो ह कहीलः कौषीतकेय उपरराम ॥)

These appear to be the graphic stages through which Shri Manik was passing. Perceiving the manifestation of the Brahman in the expansive Nature, living in the lap of Nature, being instructed by the forces of Nature, he became one with Nature, one with manifestation, one with the Lord, of whom he himself was a part and parcel.

In his discourse with Prahlad, Shri Dattatreya has described the life of one who has realised the Brahman. "The very best among our Teachers in this world are the bees and pythons. Following their example we have acquired non-attachment and contentment. Strangers may rob the honey which was collected with great effort and pain by the bees yet the bees do not despair. Seeing that, I cultivated from the bees aversion towards all objects. Like the python I remain effortless and contented in mind with whatever I get. If I do not get anything, I lie for many days depending upon my own strength. Some times I eat plenty and sometimes but little, no matter whether it is delicious or tasteless. Some times I partake rich food, some other time I gulp even worthless things. Sometimes I eat food given with respect and sometimes given without any honour. Enjoying what is ordained by destiny and contented in mind, I put on silk or linen, deer skin or rags, bark of the trees or whatever is available at that time. Some times I lie on the ground, sometimes on straw, on

leaves, on stones or in ashes. Some times I sleep on soft quilt at the desire of others or on a bed inside a palace. I bathe besmeared with sandal paste, finely dressed, wearing garlands and bedecked in jewels. I drive in chariots, or ride on a horse or on an elephant, while on other occasions I wander stark naked like an evil spirit. I neither revile nor eulogies men of varied natures or having predominance of one or the other of the *Gunas*. I have told you about my conduct, even though it may appear to you as being against the canons of the Vedas..." (Bhagavat Purana VII.13)

(मधुकारमहासर्पी लोकेऽस्मिन्नो गुरुत्तमौ। वैराग्यं परितोषं
च प्राप्ता यच्छिक्षया वयम् ॥ विरागः सर्वकामेभ्यः शिक्षितो मे
मधुव्रतात्। कृच्छ्राप्तं मधुवद् वित्तं हत्वाप्यन्यो हरेत्पतिम् ॥
अनीहः परितुष्टात्मा यदृच्छोपनतादहम्। नो चेच्छये बह्वहानि
महाहिरिव सत्त्ववान् ॥ क्वचिदल्पं क्वचिद्भूरि भुञ्जेऽन्नं स्वाद्वस्वादु
वा। क्वचिद्भूरि गुणोपेतं गुणहीनमुत क्वचित् ॥ श्रद्धयोपाहृतं
क्वापि कदाचिन्मानवर्जितम्। भुञ्जे भुक्त्वाथ कस्मिंश्चिद् दिवा
नक्तं यदृच्छया ॥ क्षौमं दुकूलमजिनं चीरं वल्कलमेव वा।
वसेऽन्यदपि सम्प्राप्तं दिष्टभुक् तुष्टधीरहम् ॥ क्वचिच्छये धरोपस्थे
तृणपर्णाश्मभस्मसु। क्वचित् प्रासादपर्यंके कशिपौ वा परेच्छाया ॥

क्वचित्स्नातोऽनुलिमांगः सुवासाः स्रग्व्यलंकृतः । रथेभाश्वैश्चरे
 कापि दिग्वासा ग्रहवद् विभो ॥ नाहं निन्दे न च स्तौमि
 स्वभावविषमं जनम् । एतेषां श्रेय आशासे उतैकात्म्यं महात्मनि ॥
 विकल्पं जुहुयाच्चित्तौ तां मनस्यर्थविभ्रमे । मनो वैकारिके हुत्वा
 तन्मायायां जुहोत्यनु ॥ आत्मानुभूतौ तां मायां जुहुयात् सत्यदृयुनिः ।
 ततो निरीहो विरमेत् स्वानुभूत्याऽऽत्मनि स्थितः ॥ स्वात्मवृत्तं
 मयेत्थं ते सुगुप्तमपि वर्णितम् । व्यपेतं लोकशास्त्राभ्यां भवान् हि
 भगवत्परः ॥)

This extensive quotation reminds one of the strange behaviour patterns Shri Manik exhibited throughout these years of his adolescence. If, therefore, people considered him to be an *Avatar* (incarnation) of Shri Dattatreya, then the future events, as they unfolded, seemed to justify such conclusion.

Even though the family members accepted the strange behaviour of Shri Manik, it nonetheless created anxiety in their minds, especially when he would wander from place to place without notice. He would come and go like the breeze. He was like '*Aniketa*', one without any settled place of residence.

Becoming unattached with everything that was not of Brahman, he lived in the ever-blissful state, delivered, as it were, from the bondage of life. He had become a *Jeevanmukta*. From that time onward, Shri Manik who was considered a prankster, an irresponsible adolescent boy, was looked at with due respect. An aura enveloped his personality. He seemed to be more and more like the one in whom awareness had illumined the Brahman like the Sun in the firmament.

He preferred to stay in solitude and alone concentrating on the Supreme Self. He went to nearby places such as Manthal and especially to Ambilkunda or Amritkunda. Here nature was luxuriously abundant and along with peace the Grace of the Lord also descended on him. He stayed there in rapture for days on end.

Once a devotee who had come to the Shiva Temple at Ambilkunda, saw this young *Sanyasi* with his face shining brilliant as the noon Sun. He was curious to know the

particulars of this *Sanyasi*. Since he did not get any response from Shri Manik Prabhu himself, he tried to follow him to see where he lived. With the intention of dissuading him from unnecessary curiosity, Shri Prabhu hid himself in a nearby bush. Even then the curiosity of the person was not satisfied. He started peering through the bush and what he saw in the bush was the face of a growling and ferocious tiger. Frightened to the extreme and to save his life, the person ran towards the village and narrated the strange event. It then became clear to the people that the *Sanyasi* was none other than Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj of Kalyan town.

The news spread far and wide. It even reached the parents of Shri Prabhu who were distraught till then. They were overjoyed to know the whereabouts of Shri Prabhu. They came over to Manthal looking for him. But the Divine Will had other plans for this traveller on the path of Truth. Shri Prabhu spoke to them in most compassionate words and spoke those prophetic words which spelt out his mission in

life. "With the Grace of Shri Dattatreya I took birth in your family. Your desire for a child was duly fulfilled. I stayed with you as long as it was necessary. Now that I have been initiated in *Brahmavidya*, wisdom of Brahman, my life is devoted to humanity. I will now have to wander from place to place to spread the message of the Compassionate Datta, *Datta-dayaghana*, so that the misery of human beings can be alleviated. Therefore, it is futile to grieve for my loss. I will ever be with you. Go back to your home and leave me to fulfil my mission. Whenever and wherever one needs me, I will come. This is certain; this is my promise."

The parents were at a loss to understand the great significance of his mission or of his promise. Pacifying their confused minds and leaving everything to God's mercy, they returned to their native place.



04. In search of the Self

Shri Prabhu was greatly attracted to the hills around Manthal. The caves in the hills were cool and far from the maddening crowd. The locale was quiet and peaceful and conducive for communion with the Supreme Self. He lived for many days immersed in the blissful state of realisation. Some time he would come down from the hills and roam around the town.

His behaviour was some times so different from normal ways of life, that people would shun him as though he was demented. His favorite pastime seemed to be to sit on a

stick and play like a child, treating the stick for a horse. While children and less intelligent people would treat this event with amusement and ridicule, the wise ones would see this unusual spectacle and wonder who this person may be! A saint, a Yogi or a simpleton to be neglected.

They had heard that many ancient yogis used to behave in a manner which would appear unnatural to the common man. However ordinary people did not have the required spiritual comprehension to see the great man through his *Leela* (sport).

For one who is wise, doubts need not arise. There have been instances where *Jeevanmuktas*, those who were liberated even when alive, were not bound by the norms of the social life. Jabala Upanishad (6) tells us about Samvartaka, Aruni, Svetaketu, Durvasa, Rbhu, Nigadha, Jada-bharata, Dattatreya, Raivataka and others were *Paramhamsas*. They were of un-manifested

nature, of un-manifested ways of life, seen (by others) to behave like mad men though they were in no way mad.

The wise ones, therefore, recognizing Shri Prabhu as a great *Yogi* honoured and worshipped him, which Shri Prabhu accepted as though all this was natural for him. But at the same time like a simple, unassuming child of nature, he would distribute the things received by him among the assembled persons. Indeed, strange are the ways of those who are absorbed in the bliss of Brahman. As Shri Krishna says, “Sages see with equal eye, a learned and humble *Brahman*, a cow, an elephant, and even a dog or an outcast” (विद्याविनयसम्पन्ने ब्राह्मणे गवि हस्तिनि । शुनि चैव श्वपाके च पण्डिताः समदर्शिनः ॥) (Bhagavad Gita.V.18). The empirical diversity prevalent in the manifested world does not hide the metaphysical Reality abiding within.

Often when in spiritual rapture, he would sing and dance and many of his *bhajans* were the product of such ecstatic moods. When he

sang these bhajans, which in Marathi are known as “*Abhanga*”, he seemed to be inseparable from “*Datta-Dayaghana*” his chosen deity. The state of *a-bhanga* is surely that state when one is not separate from the Lord. One is reminded of the words of Shri Krishna (Bhagavad Gita. XVIII.20) when he says that the *Satvic* attribute is that wisdom by which the one Imperishable Being is seen in all existence, undivided in the divided. (सर्वभूतेषु येनैकं भावमव्ययमीक्षते । अविभक्तं विभक्तेषु तज्ज्ञानं विद्धि सात्त्विकम् ॥)

In fact *bhajans* were to play an important role in the *Sampradaya* of Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj, in the generations to come. It is only through such unalloyed communion with the Lord that His creatures come back to Him. *Bhajana*, therefore basically represents the unity of *Bhagavan* (the lord) and *Jana* (the devotees). Shri Prabhu also encouraged this medium of ‘*naad-upasana*’.

In an unbroken tradition, from Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj to Shri Siddharaj Manik

Prabhu, every *Peethadhipati* of the *Sampradaya* of Shri Prabhu has contributed to the wealth of *Bhajans*, poetical outpourings which tie emotional bonds between the '*Upasya*' and the '*Upasaka*'. Whatever mood they may exhibit in their outward way of life, their inner spiritual strength made them pour out intensely the spiritual earnestness towards the Lord, which contained not only *Jnana*, *Bhakti*, *Vairagya* but also the *Karma* to be performed by the people at large.

In Shri Manik Prabhu *Sampradaya* nothing is more important than singing the glory of the Lord. It is realised that while intellectual and philosophical disputations may attract and captivate the mind, it is the sound, the *naad*, that moves the heart. It is the Eternal Sound AUM, which transformed all this that, verily, is. The very first hymn of Mandukya Upanishad declares, "AUM, is verily, all THIS, the Imperishable." (ॐ ओमित्येतदक्षरमिदं सर्वं तस्योपव्याख्यानं भूतं भवद्भविष्यदिति सर्वमोकार एव । यच्चान्यत् त्रिकालातीतं तदप्योकार एव ॥) *Samaveda* is the

epitome of *Naad*, therefore it is called *Naad-Brahma*. Shri Krishna declaring his *Vibhuti*, divine manifestation, says: “Of the offerings, I am the offering of silent adoration” (महर्षीणां भृगुरहं गिरामस्मेकमक्षरम् । यज्ञानां जपयज्ञोऽस्मि स्थावराणां हिमालयः ॥) (Bhagavad Gita. X.25).

Further the Lord has assured of His presence among his devotees singing his glories, “I do not dwell in Vaikuntha, nor in the hearts of the Yogis; I dwell there, Narada, where my devotees sing my eulogies”. (नाहं वसामि वैकुण्ठे योगिनां हृदये न वा । मद्भाक्ता यत्र गायन्ति तत्र तिष्ठामि नारद ॥) (Bhagavat Purana). Shri Narasimha Sarasvati Maharaj tells us in *Guru Charitra* (51.40-42)

***“I shall tell another mark;
through music should one hear,
For there do I ever dwell, my Will
in Music is ever dear.
Those who daily do sing, on them
my eternal love remains.
In their residence ever, you may
consider my appearance.***

(माणिक सांगेन एक धूण । गायनी करावे माझे स्मरण ।
त्यांचे घरीं मी असे जाण । गायनीं प्रीति बहु मज ॥
नित्य जे जन गायन करिती । त्यांबती माझी अतिप्रीति ।
त्यांच्या घरीं अखण्डिती । आपण असे अवधारा ॥
व्याधि नसती त्यांचे घरीं । दरिद्र जाय त्वरित दूरी ।
पुत्र पौत्र श्रिया करी । शतायुषी नादंतील ॥)

This thread was picked up by Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj as the most powerful means for deliverance of the human soul. In the tradition of saints, Shri Manik Prabhu started spreading highly philosophical wisdom through *Bhajans*, couched in simple and commonly understood words. It is truly said that “*nadopasanaya deva Brahma Vishnu, Maheshvarah / bhavanty upasita nunam yasmadete tadatmakah /*”. (नादोपासनयादेव ब्रह्माविष्णुमहेश्वराः । भवन्त्युपासिता नूनं तस्मादेते तदात्मकः ॥) If propitiation is done through music, devotion to *Brahma, Vishnu* and *Maheshvar* is truly established.

“All this world is the syllable AUM. Its further explanation is this: the past, the

present, the future -- everything is just AUM. And whatever transcends the three divisions of time -- that too is AUM" (ॐ ओमित्येतदक्षरमिदंसर्वं तस्योपव्याख्यानं भूतं भवद्भविष्यदिति सर्वमोकार एव । यच्चान्यत् त्रिकालातीतं तदप्योकार एव ॥) declares Mandukya Upanishad at the very outset. In the word '*nada*', the letter '*na*' denotes the Primal Breath, Prana and '*da*' denotes the Primal Energy, *Agni*. The combination of these two primary energies contribute to the upsurge of spirituality in a person.

Shri Prabhu moved from place to place like a free bird or breeze which knew no bounds. In the bosom of Mother Nature, he had all the satisfaction and contentment which the world of the attachment and possessions would not give. In Avadhoot Gita, it is said : "To me there exists no mental act that is auspicious or inauspicious. There is no bodily activity which is fair or foul nor any speech which is pleasant or unpleasant". (न मानसं कर्म शुभाशुभं मे न कायिकं कर्म शुभाशुभं मे । न वाचिकं कर्म शुभाशुभं मे ज्ञानामृतं शुद्धमतीन्द्रियोऽहम् ॥) (Avadhoot Gita I.8)

Subala Upanishad describes an *Avadhoot* thus “One should be like a child. The characteristics of the child are non-attachment and innocence. By abstaining from (unnecessary) speech, (unnecessary) learning, by nonobservance of (unnecessary) rituals relating to class or stages of life, one acquires the state of solitude that is spoken in the Vedas”. (बाल्येन तिष्ठासेद् बालस्वभावोऽसंगो निरवद्यो मौनेन पाण्डित्येन निरवधिकारतयोपलभ्येत कैवल्यमुक्तं निगमनं...) (Subal Upanishad 13) Shri Prabhu was passing through this pure and fearless state of a child.

During one of his wanderings, he arrived at Chalakapur, a small town near Kalyan. The Sun had already set and he had no place to stay at night. On the outskirts of the town, he saw a temple dedicated to *Hanuman*. The people of this area did not visit this temple after nightfall. It was believed that during night, *Hanuman* bore his ferocious countenance which no human being could see and remain alive. Shri Prabhu was not aware of this legend. When he approached

the temple he saw the doors open and the place deserted. He entered the temple and slept at the feet of the Lord, after safely depositing his clothes and sandals on the shoulder of Shri *Hanuman*.

The next morning as the Sun rose, the temple priest came to perform the daily worship. Seeing someone's footwear deposited on the idol, a sacrilegious act, his anger knew no bounds. Taking the person sleeping in the temple responsible for this dastardly act, he started beating him black and blue. However, the Lord recognises his devotees and the faith they have in him. Consequently, even as the priest was beating Shri Prabhu, blood started oozing from the idol. Seeing this strange occurrence, the priest was shaken up and it dawned on him that the person he was beating was not an ordinary person. When Shri Prabhu revealed his identity he fell at his feet and implored his mercy.

The news spread like wild fire. People who were afraid to enter the temple thronged in thousands. The entire atmosphere was surcharged with religious fervour. Bayadevi, Shri Prabhu's mother and Nrisimha, his brother came over to Chalakapur. From Hyderabad came Raja-Rai-Rayan, a nobleman of the Nizam's court. All experienced the overflowing Grace of Shri Prabhu and no one went back empty handed. Such was the compassion of Shri Manik Prabhu.

He stayed at Chalakapur with his mother and brother for some months at the insistence of the people and later left for Mailar as desired by mother Bayadevi.



05. Venkamma

Mailar is one of the ancient holy places, popularly known as '*Dakshina Kashi*'. Shiva is worshipped here as *Martanda Bhairava* and is also venerated locally as *Khandoba*. The temple received many donations from far and wide, including from the Peshwas. During the period when Shri Prabhu arrived here the town was a prosperous trading centre. During the annual festival of the temple innumerable devotees thronged this town. As long as Shri Prabhu stayed there, it became normal for the devotees to take his blessings after taking the *Darshan of Martanda Bhairava*. For many, Shri

Prabhu appeared as Shiva himself in the garb of a wandering recluse. During this period, his fame as an *Avatar* of Shri Dattatreya spread further in the surrounding areas.

Among the many frequent visitors, there was one lady of exceptional spiritual competence. She had all the potential for being spiritually awakened but seemed to be waiting for the grace of a *Guru*. She belonged to the *Komti* caste, a trading community (vaishya) and appeared to be endowed with wealth and prosperity.

None noticed her, for she had been keeping to herself at the far end. Each day she would come and take Shri Prabhu's blessings and sit in the corner till the close of the day when all the crowd would disperse. Thus, on each day she was experiencing the Grace of Shri Prabhu, for it appeared that she had finally met her ordained *Guru*. The Grace was silently flowing through her and preparing her for the path chosen for her in the *Sampradaya*.

This remarkable lady was none other than *Venkamma*, who became a powerful force, *Shakti Svarupini*, in *Shri Manik Prabhu Sampradaya*.

Great saints have an insight which is unlike that of normal persons. Among the large crowd which was coming over for his *Darshan*, he had seen her spiritual preparedness with his mystic eye. No one has admittance in spiritual matters unless they are so authorised. The person has to be an *Adhikari*, qualified to receive initiation and retain the extraordinary power bestowed on him. An unqualified person will not be able to receive, let alone sustain the power of penance. Shri Prabhu realised that here was one such personality who was well equipped for being initiated. Therefore, when all the persons left his presence, he called her. "You have taken *Prasad* more than once", he told her, "Why do you then come again and again. Why don't you go back to your family?"

When the reference to her home and family was made, she seemed to come out of a trance. Where was her home? Who were her father, mother, brothers and sisters? She replied, “I do not know where my home is or my family. I have therefore come to you to seek guidance to the place of my abidance. Your lotus feet appear to me to be the place where I can take shelter”.

These words had more significance than was prima facie apparent. She was receptive to the resonance which was passing from Shri Prabhu and she was so much immersed in that Grace that the entire surrounding seemed to have become full of Shri Manik Prabhu. Her heart was pure enough to become the resting place of Shri Prabhu’s Grace.

It is rare for one to be spiritually inclined. People gather around *Gurus* looking for material gains and economic prosperity. Few and rare are those who come with two bare hands but go back with abounding grace

showered by innumerable hands of the Lord. Few therefore, know the importance of asking and what it is to receive without asking. Therefore Shri Krishna rightly pointed out to Arjuna, “Among thousands of men scarcely one strives for perfection, and of those who strive and succeed scarcely one knows Me in truth” (मनुष्याणां सहस्रेषु कश्चिद्यतति सिद्धये । यततामपि सिद्धानां कश्चिन्मां वेत्ति तत्त्वतः ॥) (Bhagavad Gita VII.3.). In Avadhoot Gita also it is said at the outset that “It is only with the Grace of the Lord that the knowledge of *Advaita* is born, which alone protects one from great danger” (ईश्वरानुग्रहादेव पुंसामद्वैतवासना । महद्भयपरित्राणाद्विप्राणामुपजायते ॥) (Avadhoot Gita I.1).

Devi Venkamma seemed to be one such rare person in whom the knowledge of *Advait* had ripened. For her, Shri Prabhu became the creator, the sustainer and the deliverer. In fact, in time to come she was to realise the unity of herself and her *Guru*. People often think that this is possible only for the chosen few on whom the *Guru* sheds his grace. They

forget that the fault lies not in the unwillingness or in the inability of the *Guru* to shed such grace but because of one's own infirmity, incapacity to receive such Grace. Consequently, their own weakness is transferred to the *Guru* and they wander searching for *Guru* after *Guru* of their liking.

However it is not so. The *Guru's* Grace does not depend upon how much you please him with your outward service, wealth and prosperity, when your own heart itself is poor and incapable to receive the ever flowing grace. If the people keep their minds and hearts pure and auspicious then the Lord is sure to dwell therein. A popular verse says: "What were the good practices of Vyadha? What was the age of Dhruva? What was the learning of Gajendra? What was the prowess of Ugrasena? What was the beauty of Kubja? What was the wealth of Sudama? The Lord, who is the lover of devotion, is pleased with devotion itself and does not bother about other qualities" (व्याधस्याचरणं ध्रुवस्य च वयो विद्या गजेन्द्रस्य

का । का जातिर्विदुरस्य यादवपतेरुग्रस्य किं पौरुषम् । कुब्जायाः कमनीय
रूपमधिकं किं तत् सुदाम्नोर्धनम् । भक्त्या तुष्यति
केवलैर्नतुगुणैर्भक्तिप्रियोमाधवः ॥).

It is only on the basis of such absolute *Shraddha* that the Lord takes the devotee under his shelter and gives this assurance as said in Bhagavad Gita. “Those who worship Me, meditating on Me alone, to them who ever persevere, I bring attainment of what they crave and security in what they have” (अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते । तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥) (IX.22). “Swiftly does he become a soul of righteousness and obtain lasting peace, O Arjuna, you know this for certain that My Devotee perishes never” (क्षिप्रं भवति धर्मात्मा शश्वच्छान्तिं निगच्छति । कौन्तेय प्रतिजानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति ॥) (IX.31). Therefore, He strongly recommends to each of us, “On Me fix your mind; to Me be devoted; worship Me; revere Me; thus having disciplined yourself, with Me as your goal, to Me shall you come” (मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु । मामेवैष्यसि युक्त्वैवमात्मानं मत्परायणः ॥) (IX.34).

However, how many of us are prompted by such an urge or inclination? We seek *Gurus* to fulfil our wishes and our desires, which are mundane, temporal and entirely transitory. Our eyes are so full of desires that we are incapable of seeing the grandeur of the Lord. Venkamma, However was not such a devotee. Her non-attachment and sense of renunciation was complete and final. Even then, Shri Prabhu desired to test her. “You are young and in society many types of people are to be found. It would, therefore, not be proper for you to take such a sudden decision. For your own good, I plead that you return to your family”.

Venkamma was not to be shaken from her resolve as she had already renounced everything and everyone for the *Guru* whom she had now found. Even a child sometimes becomes firm with its mother. She said, “Master, I have left everything, father, mother, family and friends, with full knowledge and consideration. I have no goal except your feet. I can never go anywhere else, even if I so

desire". Seeing her firm determination and hearing the intense, austere tone of her voice he finally said, "If you want to stay here you will have to come without your wealth and possessions". Venkamma discarded, without any hesitation, all her jewels and ornaments then and there and became ready to follow her master. People were wonderstruck at such intense *Vairagya* and fell at her feet. Shri Prabhu recognised her as the manifestation of his *Shakti* and declared that none could have access to him save through the grace of *Shakti Svarupini*, Devi Venkamma. She was sent to Shri Prabhu's mother till she became fully energised to play the role which was ordained for her.

It is one of the fundamental tenets of the Hinduism that one cannot attain his spiritual goal unless one is energised by *Shakti*, the energy of the Supreme Lord. What we call Nature or *Prakriti* is but the outward manifestation of the Lord, which becomes reality only when it is energised by the power of the Lord.

In Devi Bhagavat, she is identified as *Durga, Rama, Radhika, Dhareshwari, Jambuvadini, Arunika, Minakshi and Madhumati*. She is also known as *Matanga Kanya*. In Shri Manik Prabhu Sampradaya, Shri Prabhu's *Shakti, Venkamma*, is referred to as *Madhumati Shyamala*.

Later she attained *Samadhi* at Maniknagar in the year 1865. Ramchandra Buva Nasikkar, who was present on the occasion has vividly described the incident. She sang and danced the whole night and in the early hours of the day she left her mortal coil and merged her Self in the Universal Self. When people of her community gathered there and started preparing for the funeral they were amazed to hear the sound of *AUM* emanating from her corpse. On being informed of this Shri Prabhu rushed to the spot where the corpse was lying and ordered that a *Samadhi* be built for her. Shri Prabhu personally supervised the ritual of *Samadhi* for Venkamma.

Later Shri Martand Manik Prabhu built a temple over her *Samadhi* and prescribed the rituals for worship. He composed a number of *Bhajans* in her glory and started celebrating the *Devi Navaratra Utsava* in her honour. Even today Venkamma's temple is considered to be a very important shrine for the devotees of Shri Manik Prabhu Sampradaya.



06. Pilgrimage continues

As the fame of Shri Manik Prabhu spread far and wide, people flocked to have his *Darshan* and seek succour from worldly troubles. Invariably, people need quick results. They have neither the patience to pray nor the willingness to wait for the result. For some, the very sight of a holy person brings solace; but there are others who desire to have assured remedies. Saints do not come to give solutions in capsules. They come to alleviate the miserable state in which the people at large find themselves but this can be done only with the cooperation of the aspirant. While

the saint can only show the path to be tread, the path has to be traversed by the aspirant himself.

When the seekers become unreasonable and extremely demanding on the patience and peace of the saints, they seek to avoid the world of self-conceit and reside in solitude, where they can reflect and meditate on the Self which is free from all the selfish blemishes of the world. With that view in mind, Shri Prabhu left Mailar with some of his close associates to visit holy places like Parali-Vaijanatha, Tuljapur, Pandharpur etc.

At Pandharpur when he went to take the *Darshan* of Shri Vitthala he was wearing clothes which were soiled with the dust of the road. Vitthala receives everyone with equal love, irrespective of whether he is good or bad, rich or poor, saint or sinner. Pandharpur is one of those places where class, caste, status all melt away. Everyone is eager to have the *Darshan* of the Lord and consequently they

take no notice of the other devotees. The priests did not recognise Shri Prabhu but the Lord recognised his devotee. When Shri Prabhu desired to place his head on the feet of the Lord and to touch him lovingly, the priests did not permit him to do so. Then the Lord himself covered Shri Manik Prabhu with the garlands which were placed around His neck. Seeing this unexpected miraculous event, the priests felt ashamed of themselves for not recognizing the greatness of Shri Prabhu. The assembled devotees were thrilled with this miracle. They fell at the feet of Shri Prabhu and sought his blessings but all this adulation did not affect Shri Prabhu for he was completely oblivious of all that was happening around him and was already in communion with the Lord Panduranga. He was so overcome with emotion that what flowed from his lips then was one of the most beautiful expressions of a realised soul.

*“I saw this day, my Panduranga,
standing on the brick,*

*His forehead adorned with
sandal paste and saffron,
Shiva, verily, had adorned himself
bright as his crown,
Seeing splendour of ear-rings,
even Sun hid himself back.
Alluring were the ears,
eyes, nose and the smile,
The broad chest covered
with the Tulsi all awhile,
The arms on the hips
adorned with the golden vest,
Vaijayanti gracing his neck;
Bhrigu's mark on chest.
Eagerly did Manik have
with Vithala his tryst,
His throbbing heart
and the eyes flowing moist,
His chosen goal in life,
all desires fulfilled,
Pure love spreading
all around fully distilled.*

(आज विदेवरी नीट विट्ठल सखा देखियला मे । बाळिं गंध केशरि

तिलक कस्तुरि रेखियला गे ॥ध्रु. ॥ शिवाकार मुकुट मस्तकासि फार शोभतो । कुण्डलांचे तेज पाहुनि रवि लाज वाटतो । शोभे नासिक कर्ण नेत्र आकर्ण वदन हासतो । तुळसि हार भार फार अंग झाकियला गे ॥ कासे कसे पिताम्बर ठेवि कर कटे वरी । शंख चक्र दोन्हि करी हरी प्रीतिने धरी । गळ्यामाजि वैजयन्ती माळ शोभती बरी । उरी धरी लाथ जेंवि भृगुनें झोंकियला गे ॥ कडकडोनि माणिकदास विट्टलासि भेटले । सद्गदित कण्ठ होउनि नेत्रि अश्रु दाटले । अन्तरीचे हेत हेंचि आज सर्व फीटले । प्रेम भाव हेंचि अबिर वरी फेंकिला गे ॥)

From Pandharpur he went to visit Shri Junglee Maharaj at Poona and from there onward to Girnar to have communion with Guru Shri Datta, the compassionate one. Sourcing his power from the Primal source, he travelled further to Gangotri, Haradwar, Badri, Kedar, Prayag, Varanasi, Gaya, Puri, Mahur, Tirupati, Ganagapur and to many holy river banks and hills on the way. This travel established in him the unique feeling of all-pervading nature of his Self and the manifestation of the Supreme Brahman in everything which he saw, touched, heard and breathed.

Finally he came to Kalyan, his home town. His innumerable devotees were waiting to receive the child of their soil. Shri Prabhu was pleased to come back and was also pleased with the changes that had taken place in the intervening period. He decided to live there for some time to consider the steps to give shape to his mission, for the time had come when the first step was to be taken.

However, Kalyan did not seem to be his final destination, but only a resting place. He decided to leave the town to visit the *Samadhi* of Shri Bakkaprabhu and also Ketaki Sangam. After visiting the *Samadhi* of Shri Bakkaprabhu at Karakanalli, he went to the Shiva temple at Ketaki Sangam. This ancient temple had a tradition that no worship of Shiva would be complete if *Kevada* leaves were not used in the *Pooja*. When Shri Prabhu went there, it was not the season when *Kevda* leaves would be available and no one could procure them for him. Suddenly a farmer came over to him with a basketful of *Kevada* leaves. When people

were wondering how the farmer could procure them, he slipped away from the crowd not to be seen again. This gave rise to the belief that Shiva had himself come with the leaves, so that His devotee's pooja may not remain incomplete.

Myths are made of such events. We are so immersed in our normal uneventful lives that any variation from the same becomes a strange event. A great *Yogi* who has power over his mind is capable of creating conditions according to his desire. Shri Prabhu already had so much occult power that it should not have been difficult for him to materialise the *Kevada* leaves with his own powers but the one who is a true *Yogi* never uses the powers for his own sake or for proving his divine powers. When such is the case and his will surrenders to the Lord, his *Shraddha* (devotion) itself creates conditions when ordinary human beings become the vehicles for fulfilling his needs.

After completing the *Pooja*, Shri Prabhu sat under a banyan tree and asked one of his devotees to dig the ground nearby. Wonder of wonders! There arose from the ground an exquisitely carved *Shiva Linga*. The *Linga* was consecrated then and there, with all ceremonies. Such are the ways by which the Lord demonstrates His grace to his devotees.

After installation of the *Shivalinga*, Shri Prabhu was to leave for Bidar. Shri Annarao Deshmukh, a prominent citizen of Nyalkal had come to Ketaki Sangam to pay his respects to Shri Prabhu. He very much desired to take Shri Prabhu to Nyalkal, en-route to Bidar, and for that purpose he had brought all regalia like elephants, horses and *Palkhi* for the convenience of Shri Prabhu. However Shri Prabhu would have none of these. He remarked in his kindest words, lest he cause pain to the pure devotion of Annarao Deshmukh, “Annarao, why does one need all these arrangements. We are simple *fakirs* and all this grandeur will not befit us”.

Annarao Deshmukh did not agree. He was insistent and said that it is one form of *seva* which a devotee desires to perform and Shri Prabhu should not stifle his aspirations. For fulfilling the desires of the devotees, Shri Prabhu was ever ready. He gave his consent. Shri Prabhu's journey to Nyalkal in procession and the ceremonies performed there were remembered and talked about for years to come.

When the news of Shri Prabhu's arrival at Nyalkal reached Bidar, people, rich and poor, Hindus and Muslims, rushed to Shri Prabhu and implored him to visit Bidar. Nothing pleased Shri Prabhu better. When the procession left Nyalkal for Bidar it looked as if a great King was passing through the town with his retinue. But then, was Shri Prabhu not a Prince among *Yogis*?

On the way to Bidar the procession had to stop frequently for people to offer *Pooja* to Shri Prabhu and seek his blessings.

Bidar was only two miles away. “*Shri Datta Dayaghana*”, however, had different plans in his mind. The bearers of the *Palkhi*, as if drawn by an unknown force, took a different route and came to Jharni Nrisimha. Even when they realised their mistake, they could not retrace their steps. It appeared as if they had no control over their legs and some other force was deciding where their next steps should fall.

Suddenly as if from nowhere, a snake appeared with its hood lifted. The *Palkhi* bearers stopped in their tracks uncertain of what to do. The snake would not give way. It stood in the middle of the road, swaying its hood and finally lay across the road as if to prevent further journey. Shri Prabhu was strangely quiet. He pacified the worried devotees. He said, “Do not worry. Obviously he seems to be some *Siddha Purusha*, who desires to convey to us some information. Let us see where he desires to lead us”. So saying he got down from the *Palkhi* and as if it understood, the snake led the way with all the retinue following. When they

reached Jharni Nrisimha, it disappeared. Shri Prabhu took this incident as the desire of the snake that he should stay in Jharni Nrisimha for some days. His stay in Jharni brought great joy to the people.

Jharni is an ancient holy place where a temple dedicated to Shri Narasimha, an *Avatar* of Shri Vishnu, is consecrated. There is a statue of a *Nandi* facing the main idol, which is unusual. *Nandi* is the vehicle of Shiva and is normally found only in Shiva temples.

Shri Prabhu's being drawn to such a unique site seemed to be an omen of the path that he was soon to lay, *Sakalmata* ('*Samatvam*' among different faiths), for mankind to follow in the ages to come.



07. Pilgrimage comes to an end

Even though the people wanted Shri Prabhu to stay in Jharni for a longer period, it was not to be so. People from different adjacent villages and towns would prevail upon him that he should grace their homes also with his presence. Sometimes the places he was invited to were at two extreme ends. It was impossible for Shri Prabhu to accept all these requests; at the same time it was not within him to reject the earnest desires of his devotees. To one and all he would promise his presence

and give the date when he would visit their homes.

His attendants would be worried about the inconvenience and the effect these journeys would have upon his health but, as usual, Shri Prabhu would tell them not to worry about his health but have faith.

Once, Shri Prabhu was taking an afternoon nap at the very time that he had assured some of his devotees that he would visit their homes in Bidar. The time when he should normally have started on the journey had already come but no one had the courage to wake Shri Prabhu and remind him of the promise he had made to visit his devotees' homes in Bidar. The time passed and very much later Shri Prabhu woke up from his sleep as if nothing had happened.

At the same time as he was asleep in Jharni, the people in Bidar were happy to have Shri Prabhu in their midst and they celebrated

Shri Prabhu's presence with great devotion and satisfaction. Even in Bidar, he was received in their homes by different devotees at chronologically the same time. When the news of his visit to Bidar came to Jharni, every one was surprised because they had seen with their own eyes that Shri Prabhu was in deep sleep in Jharni itself. How could he have gone to Bidar when he was in Jharni all the time?

People of little knowledge view every event from their own stand point. For them, Shri Prabhu was a physical, gross body. They were not aware that *Yogis* are known to have left their gross bodies and travelled in their astral, *Sukshma* bodies long distances in a short time. However, even though such miracles by the *Guru* enhance the power and influence even of the devotees, they seldom realise how difficult and strenuous it is for the *Guru* himself to undertake such unusual tasks.

In Jharni itself, when Shri Prabhu woke up from his afternoon nap, Venkamma saw

him tired and perspiring profusely, as if he had travelled a long distance. When asked about the matter, he just smiled and kept quiet. True *Yogis* do not desire to exhibit their supernatural powers. If they sometimes use these powers, it is entirely out of love and compassion for their devotees.

It is a travesty of fate, however, that even the kindest of saints have an abundance of enemies. There are people who do not desire that the Sun should shine, so that they can continue with their nefarious activities. These forces of Darkness, Ignorance and Inertia, therefore, would do any thing to place impediments in the path of saints. Saints willingly go through these ordeals of fire only to come out shining like gold which has passed through fire. Sant Tukaram says that only because there are fallen people in the world does the Lord come as the redeemer of the fallen. If there were no '*Patita*' (Downfallen) then the Lord would not have been called '*Patita-Pavana*' (Redeemer of the Downfallen).

Some misguided *Mullas*, who could neither understand nor digest the popularity of Shri Prabhu in their blind orthodoxy, decided to counter the effect of Shri Prabhu's message on the people, amongst whom many were also Muslims. When one loses discrimination, he tends to behave not only in an irrational manner but also foolishly. With a view to embarrass Shri Prabhu, they brought some plates covered with shawls, ostentatiously full of gifts. They wanted to embarrass him and make him look insignificant in the eyes of his devotees. They, therefore, surreptitiously brought beef in the plates instead of fruits etc. and offered the plates to Shri Prabhu with a false pretence of devotion. However, from a *Yogi* nothing is hidden and nothing can be hidden. He saw through their game and yet, graciously accepted their offerings by touching the plates. He then asked the contents to be distributed among the assembled people as *Prasad*. When the shawl was removed what every one found was fruits and sweetmeats.

The *Prasad* was distributed to all the assembled people. The miscreants were humbled and felt ashamed. They fell at the feet of Shri Prabhu and asked for his pardon. All that Shri Prabhu did was to bless them to have good thoughts and follow the noble path which the Koran has prescribed for them.

The area where Shri Prabhu spent much of his human life was ruled by a Muslim King and the population was also predominantly Muslim. Therefore, the above incident created a lasting impression on them and they considered Shri Prabhu to be an *Avatar* of Mahaboob Subhani, a Muslim Saint, which belief they even now hold. The Manik Prabhu Sampradaya also reciprocates this faith. In the festivities at Maniknagar both Hindus and Muslims take part with equal enthusiasm. This is indeed the unique example of Sakalamat Sampradaya, equality and universality of religions and faiths. A *Yogi* sees no difference between the various manifestations of the Lord and for him

everything that is in the world is but the manifestation of the Lord.

Large followings need a focal point to gather together. Shri Prabhu felt the need to have such a spiritual centre. Till now he was wandering from place to place in his own state of constant awareness of the Supreme Bliss. The descent of the Lord is not only for the sake of destruction of evil but also for the establishment of righteousness. "For the protection of the good and destruction of the evil, for establishment of righteousness, I come into being from age to age" (परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम्। धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे ॥) (Bhagavad Gita IV.8).

The decision for the selection of the place was left to the Will of the Lord. Shri Prabhu left Bidar for Kalyan. In those days, riding on horseback or in a *Palkhi* was the mode of travel. As the travellers approached the point where two rivers meet near Humnabad, they turned towards Gadvanti. The road was narrow and the people had to pass through trees and shrubs

on both sides of the road. The *Palkhi* in which Shri Prabhu was sitting got stuck in the branches of some trees, making him alight from his seat.

Nearby they saw a temple of Shiva. Shri Prabhu sat there under two *Bilva* trees. While he was resting thereunder, the trees caught fire unexpectedly and were reduced to ashes in no time. The people around him were struck with wonder and were also worried about Shri Prabhu's safety but Shri Prabhu was quiet. He told them not to worry. "Don't panic. A good thing has happened today. The *Brahmarakshasas* who were imprisoned in these trees, are liberated". Thereafter they came near the confluence of the two rivers. There as Shri Prabhu sat under the *Audumbara* tree in ecstatic meditation, the decision to establish the spiritual centre at that very place was taken.

The *Audumbara* tree is special to Sri Datta Sampradaya. It is the favourite tree of Sri Dattatreya and it is believed that he always dwells thereunder. It is the symbol of

deliverance. Legend says that when Lord Narasimha killed the daemon, Hiranyakashipu, his fingers were burning with the venom of the *Rakshasa*. He had to dip his fingers in the fruits of *Audumbara* which Shri Lakshmi brought and the burning sensation was removed by the juice of *Audumbara* fruit. In Guru Charitra also it has been said,

*In the daemon's bosom,
there was the dark poison spot,
Like the raging forest fire,
fearsome was the clot.
While tearing apart
the daemon's dreadful heart,
Lord's fingers,
dipped in poisoned blood, became hot.*

(सिद्ध म्हणे नामांकिता । सांगेन याचिता वृत्तान्ता । जर्धी नरसिंह
अवतार होता । हिरण्यकश्यप विदारिला ॥ नखें करोनि दैत्यासि । विदारिलें
कोपेसिं । आंगडीं काढोनिया हर्षीं । घातली माळ गळां नरहरीनें ॥ त्या दैत्याचे
पोटीं । विष होते काळकूटी । जैसी वडवाग्नि मोठी । तैसें विष परियेसा ॥
विदारण करिता दैत्यासी । वेधलें विष त्या नखांसि । तापली नखें बहुवसी ।
ऐक शिष्या एक चित्तें ॥ तये समर्थी महालक्ष्मी । घेऊनि आली अतिप्रेमी ।

औदुम्बर फल नामी । शान्ती कारणे नखांसी ॥ तये वेळीं शीतलार्थ । नखे
रोविलीं औदुम्बरांत । विषाग्नि झाला शान्त । उग्र नरसिंह शान्त झाला ॥)

Since then, with the grace of Sri Narasimha, the *Audumbara* tree became the *Kalpvrisksha*, shedding illumination and wisdom. Therefore, it came to pass that one who does penance sitting thereunder is freed from the agony of the *Samsara*.

Shri Prabhu being an incarnation of Lord Dattatreya had a special affinity for the *Audumbara* tree. The incident of the *Bilva* trees and the ecstatic meditation that he experienced under the *Audumbara* tree both must have had a special symbolism for him that led him to choose that site as his permanent abode for the remaining years of his temporal life. Thus was established what is today known as the village of MANIKNAGAR.



08. Maniknagar

The time and place selected by Shri Prabhu for establishing the spiritual center near Humnabad seemed significant as well as ideal. Those were troubled times, both politically as well as religiously. Politically, the area was coming under Muslim domination, under which, excepting for a few rulers, the rest were, to a large extent, fanatical in their approach and forceful in converting the people. Hindus were consequently at the receiving end, with large scale death of Hindus and destruction of temples. Many Hindus came to be converted, who were neither assimilated with

the new religion nor completely denied to the old. There was a religious vacuum in the hearts of the people. Obviously belief in one or the other religion cannot be forced upon one against one's will and for a person like Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj any use of force in religion was contrary to the very tenets of religion. For a person who believed in universality of religion, such irrational behaviour was anathema.

Great events often have trivial beginnings. When the *Bilva* tree caught fire, many considered it to be a bad omen. But Shri Prabhu himself saw it in quite a different perspective. For him the fire was the fire of *Samsara* and the deliverance of the *Brahmarakshasa* was the deliverance of the people from ignorance and superstition. He therefore, selected the confluence of the two rivers for establishing his spiritual center, as if to emphasize that he wanted to bring the two communities (Hindus and Muslims) together. In his visionary mind he saw these two streams

of great faith come together and live a life of peace and understanding. How prophetic his vision was can be seen by the fact that even today both the Hindus and the Muslims flock to Maniknagar each year, to honour the great founder of the Universal Truth, the SAKALAMATA.

The moment people came to know of Shri Prabhu's intention to establish the spiritual center near Humnabad, people flocked to his presence and thus came to be established the present day MANIKNAGAR. Originally, a small hut was constructed for Shri Prabhu to stay. Later, another hut was constructed to establish the *GADI*, or the Spiritual Seat, which in time to come was to be associated with the living spirit of Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj. Sitting on the *Gadi*, he would give audience and his very *Darshan* would give peace and contentment to all who visited Maniknagar.

The entire atmosphere was surcharged with religious fervour with the name of the

Lord and of His representative manifestation always on the lips of the devotees. The *Bhajans* brought both the '*Bhagavan*' and the '*Jana*' together in one great communion, irrespective of caste, creed, faith or religion. The atmosphere reverberated with the sound of *Bhajans*, cymbals and drums.

With the passage of time, the number of devotees increased, and with the increase, of devotees and lay visitors the need for dwelling places also increased. Shri Prabhu's mother, who had till then endured separation from her son, came to Maniknagar with the rest of the family. Now that all the family members were at one place, it was decided that proper residential quarters should be constructed. Sacrifices with all the rites and rituals were decided to be performed to sanctify the area. Only in a pure and auspicious place could a center be installed with all spiritual energy concentrated in that place. Shri Prabhu gave his consent and well qualified priests were called for the purpose.

Strange as it may appear, when the priests were bringing the various materials needed for the sacrifice, they were waylaid and all their material was looted. When Shri Prabhu came to know of this incident, he instructed the priests to come without any worry or hesitation and all the requirements would be made available at the proper time.

As it transpired, when the robbers were running away with the stolen materials, they got confused and were not able to find their way out of the forest, where they were hiding. They realised that they had committed a great blunder. They prayed to the Lord for mercy. Shri Prabhu's compassion made them come to their senses and guided them to Maniknagar where they handed over all the material to Shri Prabhu.

As the need arose, more temples and buildings came up in Maniknagar. Many of the devotees also decided to stay there and constructed their own houses. Shri Prabhu's

brother, Nrisimha, who was working at the *darbar* of the Nawab of Kalyan, resigned from his post and came to Maniknagar to assist in the management of the spiritual center's activities. His experience in court administration was of great assistance and he could put the ideas of Shri Prabhu in actual practice. He saw to it that the place was protected from wayward robbers, who were abundant in those days. Similarly Shri Prabhu's elder brother Hanumant Dada took upon himself the responsibility of providing food and shelter to the devotees.

In the beginning it was decided that only *Brahmacharis* and *Sanyasis* should be permitted to stay in Maniknagar but this rule had to be relaxed when Mother Bayadevi and brother Nrisimha came to stay in Maniknagar. Many householders were also eager to make Maniknagar their place of residence, so that they could always be in the service of Shri Prabhu.

Along with the construction of dwelling places, an extended hall was constructed for the conduct of Shri Prabhu's *Darbar* to accommodate more and more devotees visiting Maniknagar. Slowly, regular discipline and some form and decorum came to be established. It came to pass that as soon as Shri Prabhu entered the *Darbar* Hall, the *Birudavali* or the Invocation of Shri Prabhu, composed by his brother Nrisimha, was recited in a loud voice by all the persons present in the *Darbar*. All the people would remain standing till Shri Prabhu himself took his seat on the *Gadi*. The front row was reserved for the musicians, who would first offer their performances. If no musicians were present then the devotees could occupy the front seats. On the right side was the place reserved for *Pundits*, *Puraniks* and *Kirtankars*. On the left would sit the *Sadhus*, *Sanyasis* and *Fakirs*.

In the *Darbar*, Shri Prabhu being a *Rajayogi* would wear rich clothes and magnificent jewellery. However, sometimes he would be

seen wearing ordinary clothes. For him everything had equal value. Even when he wore very ordinary clothes his countenance with its wheatish complexion would nevertheless glow like the Sun. The people gathered would bask in the aura and the benevolent grace of Shri Prabhu. The entire atmosphere would be surcharged with spiritual splendour. Shri Prabhu would cast his compassionate glance on all, making everybody participate in the bliss which he was experiencing.

Often, philosophical discussions and spiritual discourses were conducted in Shri Prabhu's *Darbar*. People from far and near would come with their doubts and Shri Prabhu, even though he had not received formal education in the scriptures, seemed to be better versed in the scriptures than the philosophers in his *Darbar* and was able to clear all doubts with great ease. The wisdom of innumerable past lives was his inheritance and he would solve the problems with the

ease of the Knower of Brahman. Sometimes he would reply even before the questions were asked. Such was his authority, wisdom and spiritual insight.

Many of the people who flocked to him were those who were sunken in the despair of worldly life. For them a word from Shri Prabhu was like balm on their wounds. Such was the graceful presence of Shri Prabhu that his very *Darshan* would assuage all the misery of a person. They would be absorbed in the *Bhajans* and all thoughts of the world would be forgotten. Such was the effect of Shri Manik Prabhu on every one who came under his influence. Even when people did not think of him consciously, he activated their lives without their knowledge and his compassion became apparent in the most unexpected way.

Bhagvata Purana (III.25.21) describes the saints as “forbearing, compassionate and composed; they are friendly to all living beings, inimical to no one and their good

disposition itself serves as an ornament to them". (तितिक्षवः कारुणिकाः सुहृदः सर्वदेहिनाम्। अजातशत्रवः शान्ताः साधवः साधुभूषणाः॥) Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj epitomised the description of the saint. He was like the sun in the sky spreading his rays on the noble as well as on the evil, good as well as on the bad. It is for the people to benefit by the invigorating warmth and energy of the Sun. The one who hides himself in the shadow or in the dark corners of superstition and bigotry will never have the light of the Sun. He will never be able to come through the travails of *Samsara*.

Once, a devotee who wanted to test the spiritual powers of Shri Prabhu, had vowed to offer to Shri Prabhu, one sugar candy, which would have cost one paisa at the most, if his wishes were fulfilled. After his wishes were fulfilled he came to Maniknagar, with a bagful of sugar. Shri Prabhu could see that the devotee wanted to show his great generosity in offering a bagful of sugar while he had to offer only one sugar candy, worth one paisa.

Seeing the trace of arrogance in this act and with the intention of teaching him, Shri Prabhu picked with great humility, only one paisa worth of sugar.

Human beings in times of despair either offer too little to God, as they are not confident of their desires being fulfilled, or else offer their entire wealth in utter dejection. Then, if their desires get fulfilled, if they had offered too little at the outset they can afford to become generous and offer more at least to show their self-conceit. However, if they had offered their entire wealth they find themselves in a quandary when their wishes are fulfilled. The Lord, however, is neither unkind nor is he in need of the things offered. He can see the faith of each person and the intention and the pain which he had in his heart when he made the vow. Therefore, irrespective of what the devotee agrees to offer when he is in despair, the Lord knows how much to receive and how much to leave for the devotee. His hunger is for the devotee's devotion and not for his

wealth. The relationship with the *Guru* is not of the nature of trade or barter.

It is the *Guru* or the Lord who ordains and the devotee has only to be thankful for the Grace and place at the feet of the *Guru* any thing as a token. It so often happened that many devotees of Shri Prabhu, who esteemed themselves as great persons or devotees, expected Shri Prabhu to recognize them as special and distinct. There were others who thought that by engaging themselves in continued conversation with Shri Prabhu they were close to him but for Shri Prabhu no one was dear or hateful. Shri Krishna is very outspoken on this matter in Bhagavad Gita (IX.26) “Whosoever offers to Me, with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water, that offering of love, of the pure heart, I accept” (पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति । तदहं भक्त्युपहृतमश्नामि प्रयतात्मनः ॥)

Outward demonstration of devotion but with a heart full of desires for the fruits,

attachment to senses and sense bound enjoyments, is not *Bhakti*. The *Guru* in his purity of Mind can see the intention of each of the devotees and therefore the devotee need not satisfy himself with outward demonstration of devotion and service.

Devotion to the *Guru* should be like that of the child towards its mother. Whether the mother is nearby or not, the child is ever confident that the mother will listen when it is in distress. If such confidence and faith is there, then Shri Prabhu's Grace will ever be with us to guide us and tide us over the difficult times. Many devotees have experienced this expansive Grace of Shri Prabhu even when they have been in places far from Maniknagar. For surely Shri Prabhu does not reside only in Maniknagar but in the heart of all the devotees as well.

One of the most inexplicable things of Shri Prabhu's *Darbar* was the flow of wealth in it. In Maniknagar since the days of Shri Prabhu

nothing is asked for, yet everything is available at the proper time in the right proportion. As a matter of fact, Shri Prabhu would keep only as much as was necessary, having renounced all attachments to material things. Whatever was collected was solely utilised for establishing and strengthening the Mission. Yet, in his *Darbar*, everyone, whether rich or poor, wise or ignorant, got what they needed most, blessings, a fruit or cash. There are instances when Shri Prabhu would put his hand under his *Gadi* and pull out cash for distribution but if anyone searched under the *Gadi*, nothing would be found there. This inexplicable mystery caused one of Shri Prabhu's biographers to exclaim:

*From whence does this wealth endlessly flow,
No one really could ever seem to know
Inserting his hands underneath the pillow,
Enough wealth was sure to flow
for the seeker's hand.
They turned the Gadi round and round,
Nothing was there ever found.*

*But sitting on the Gadi he seemed to abound,
Sufficient for each of the persons around.*

The grandeur of Shri Prabhu's *Darbar* proved one thing. When the Lord oversees us, he knows our needs and so ordains accordingly. Whether we ask for little or more, Shri Prabhu knows fully well what is good for us. If there is *Shraddha* in us, nothing else is needed. If there is no *Shraddha* then all efforts and endeavours to please Shri Prabhu are to no avail. He distributed wealth as well as health as needed by the sincere *Sadhakas*. He was a great *Yogi*, a great recluse. For him wealth was as good as dust. He saw the Lord in both. Therefore whether he sat on a throne or on an earthen mound, for him it made no difference.

No one was a stranger to Shri Prabhu. He knew each one by name as well as his problems. One of his contemporary biographers, Shri Ramachandra Buva Solapurkar writes:

“Shri Prabhu Maharaj used to know each of his associates very closely. He had the extraordinary capacity of assessing the capability of each of them. He would never encourage rumours nor give credence to loose talk. He would immediately tell the person on his face whether he was telling the truth or not. Yet he was considerate of the foibles and idiosyncracies of the people and would treat them in a kind and compassionate manner, guiding them against the folly of getting such pleasures. People who had ill-will for others never succeeded in obtaining his blessings. People who would come to scoff at him, would remain to pray and seek his blessings. Consequently none went from the *Darbar* without being satisfied in one way or the other.”

“All had access to him, be he a thief, a sinner, a *Sadhu*, a *Sanyasi*, an ignorant fool, a learned *Pundit*, a householder, a fallen woman, a poet, a dancer or a musician, all flocked to the *Darbar* to perform *Seva* at his feet.

Everyone, irrespective of caste, creed or religion, rich or poor would stay for the *Prasad*, which would be served alike to all without discrimination. No one had any occasion to hear words like 'no' or 'go' from anyone in Maniknagar."

It was the *Darbar* of Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj and each one returned from there with a satisfied and contented mind, for Shri Prabhu was, indeed, the Wish Fulfilling Tree.



09. Mahamantra

Shri Prabhu was one day resting absorbed in his own self, while his brother Nrisimha, always devoted to him, was pressing his legs. At that moment a strange thing happened. Like a roll of thunder from the sky, words suddenly rolled from Nrisimha's lips, which were subsequently accepted as the *Birudavali* (Invocation) of Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj.

**SHRI
BHAKTA KARYA KALPADRUMA
GURUSARVABHAUMA
SHRIMADRAJADHIRAJA
YOGI MAHARAJA**

**TRIBHUVANANANDA ADVAITA
ABHEDA NIRANJANA NIRGUNA
NIRALAMBA PARIPOORNA
SADODITA SAKALAMATASTHAPITA
SHRI SADGURU MANIK PRABHU
MAHARAJ KI JAI**

(श्री भक्तकार्यकल्पद्रुम गुरुसार्वभौम श्रीमद्राजाधिराज योगीमहाराज त्रिभुवनानन्द अद्वैत अभेद निरंजन निर्गुण निरालम्ब परिपूर्ण सदोदित सकलमतस्थापित श्री सद्गुरु माणिक प्रभु महाराज की जय ।)

This glorious invocation describes Shri Prabhu in his pristine form. Each of its words describes an essential attribute of Shri Prabhu and in doing so the form of Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj stands before us. Even though the physical form of Shri Manik Prabhu may not be visible, his *Akshara-rupa*, immutable form can be experienced by us.

All great events appear to happen suddenly and unexpectedly. The invocation or the *Birudavali* became the *Maha-Mantra*, recitation of which was to bring immense

relief and peace to innumerable devotees in the years to come.

The spontaneous outpouring had a dramatic effect on the life of Shri Prabhu. If we believe that Shri Prabhu was the manifestation of Shri Dattatreya, then we should understand why we believe so. If peace and contentment descends on our mind, even by mere repeating of the *Maha-Mantra*, how much grace would fall on us if we understand and assimilate the meaning and significance of words contained therein? It is said that in *Kali Yuga* the *Nama-Smarana*, remembrance of the name of the Lord alone is enough to cross the ocean of *Samsara*. The Word, the Sound has greater power concealed therein than one realises.

Nama (name) and *Rupa* (form) have great significance in the spiritual advancement of a human being. In fact the *Nama* has more powerful impact than the *Rupa*. It is therefore rightly said that *Rama-nama* was more powerful than Shri Ram himself and this fact

the Lord himself was to experience in the devotion of Hanuman. When the *Maha-Mantra* is recited with all devotion, in the resonance of that *Mantra* the form of Shri Manik Prabhu comes to be expressed before the devotees. The *Maha-Mantra* is believed to have the power of the *Gayatri* to illumine and spiritualise the human personality. It is also considered to be the verbal manifestation of Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj.

This is the assurance of the *Guru* himself, not just a statement. Therefore, in understanding the literal meaning of each of the words, one should endeavour to seek to experience the psychic and the mystical Sound of the words. Because words are no words, if they do not stir feelings in the heart of human beings. When even the plants and the animals are said to experience and move with the vibrancy of sound there is no reason, given the inclination and determination, why the human being should not experience the spirituality of the *Maha-Mantra*.

There is no doubt that the illumination is the gift of God but the desire to have such illumination comes about through Divine Grace. The very first verse of Avadhoota Gita, therefore, declares, "It is only with Grace of God that in men with wisdom is born the inclination for non-dual experience which alone protects one from great fear".

(ईश्वरानुग्रहादेव पुंसामद्वैतवासना । महद्भयपरित्राणाद्विप्राणामुपजायते ।)

BHAKTAKARYAKALPADRUMA

Kalpadruma is a mythological wish fulfilling tree. As Shri Prabhu was known to respond to the sincere prayers of his devotees, and to grant their wishes, in the Invocation he is likened to that tree.

Is he just fulfiller of the desires of the devotees? Surely not so. His dispensation is neither whimsical nor erratic. The desire should be for non-dual experience. Getting rid of the miseries of human life means being

ready for the divine life. Getting rid of human miseries does not mean filling one's life with more physical wants which are nothing but shackles. The *Guru* fulfills the *Bhakta Karya* and *Bhakta Karya* is what benefits the devotee most in spiritual aspirations and not what pleases his senses.

Therefore, one should have discrimination before one desire - '*Nitya-Anitya Viveka*', as Shri Shankaracharya puts it. One should be able to discriminate between the Truth and the un-Truth, the Eternal and the non-eternal, the good and the bad, between what is Proper and what is Pleasant. In Katha Upanishad (I.2) , Nachiketa is told by Yama that before each person two choices are laid - '*Preya*', one which pleases the senses and therefore binds him to the miseries of *Samsara* and '*Shreya*', the one which is Proper and therefore delivers him from the misery and the bondage of the *Samsara*. The Wise one, *Dheera*, chooses that which Proper and thereby gets liberated and the one of little

understanding, attracted by the objects of the senses, chooses that which is pleasant, thereby coming back to the miseries of *Samsara* repeatedly. (श्रेयश्च प्रेयश्च मनुष्यमेतस्तौ सम्परीत्य विविनक्तिधीरः । श्रेयो हि धीरोऽभिप्रेयसो वृणीते प्रेयो मन्दो योगक्षेमाद्गृणीते ॥) Therefore, Shri Krishna assures Arjuna, “...those who worship Me, meditating on Me alone, to them who ever persevere, I bring attainment of what they have not had and security in what they have” (अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते । तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥) (Bhagavad Gita IX.22)

In like manner, those who devote themselves to Shri Prabhu with all their heart and soul, discarding personal needs born out of selfish desires and induced by sense organs, their actions being *Satvic*, Shri Prabhu comes to help in the fulfillment of their actions. Because it truly is *Bhakta-Karya*, the action which will bring the devotee in communion with the *Guru*. *Bhakta* is one who is not *Vi-Bhakta*. *Bhakta* is one who is in communion with the Lord, one who has '*Advaita-Vasana*' -

the desire for non-dual experience, which according to Avadhoota Gita comes through the Grace of God, which alone delivers one from fear.

Therefore, whenever one desires to propitiate Shri Prabhu through the *Maha-Mantra*, it should be in the sense of complete surrender of one's self-centered ego, selfish nature and by filling the heart and the mind with noble thoughts and noble intent. Let, therefore, our prayers be born out of humility.

Let us remember the instructions, the commands (*Adesha*), the teaching (*Upadesha*) contained in Taittiriya Upanishad (I.2.1) "Speak the Truth. Practice virtue. Let there be no neglect of your reading (the scriptures). Having brought to the Teacher the wealth that pleases him, do not cut the thread of the offspring. Let there be no neglect of Truth. Let there be no neglect of virtue. Let there be no neglect of welfare. Let there be no neglect of prosperity. Let there be no neglect of study

and teaching. Let there be no neglect of the duties to the gods and the fathers.” (सत्यं वद । धर्मं चर । स्वाध्यायान्मा प्रमदः । आचार्याय प्रियं धनमाहृत्य प्रजातन्तुं मा व्यवच्छेत्सीः । सत्यान्न प्रमदितव्यम् । धर्मान्न प्रमदितव्यम् । कुशलान्न प्रमदितव्यम् । स्वाध्याप्रवचनाभ्यां न प्रमदितव्यम् । देवपितृकार्याभ्यां न प्रमदितव्यम् ।...)

Let us not pray to the Lord in this manner. “*nirvighnam kuru me deva SARVA karyeshu sarvada*” (वक्रतुण्ड महाकाय सूर्यकोटिसमप्रभ । निर्विघ्नं कुरु मे देव सर्वं कार्येषु सर्वदा ॥) Instead of “*Sarva Karyeshu*” (good or bad, noble or ignoble), let our prayer be ‘*SHUBHA Karyeshu Sarvada*’. Let success come to us in the performance of good, noble deeds, not otherwise. In our ignorance, if we perform unknowingly ‘*A-shubha*’ *Karya* (an ignoble act), let the Lord bring impediments and prevent us from undertaking and fulfilling those actions.

Bhakta Karya, therefore, becomes the performance of those actions which are beneficial to the Devotees. Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj is the dispenser of such *Bhakta Karya*.

GURU SARVABHAUMA

He is Supreme among all the Teachers. Shri Dattatreya, whose essence Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj evidently is, was himself the manifestation of the combined energy of *Brahma-Vishnu-Mahesh*. That is the reason why we pray: “*Guru is Brahma, Guru is Vishnu, Guru is verily, Mahaeshwar. Guru is the ultimate Supreme Brahman. To such a Guru let my adoration be.*” (गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णुः गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः । गुरुस्साक्षात् परब्रह्म तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः ॥)

SHRIMAD RAJADHIRAJA

Among the King of Kings, he is the most auspicious one. In him is concentrated the essence of Shri Dattatreya, the manifestation of the triple-energy, the threefold *Shaktis*.

YOGI MAHARAJA

Among the *Yogis*, he is the great emperor. In Jabaladarshan Upanishad at the very outset,

he is described as ‘Dattatreyo mahayogi bhagavan bhutabhavanah/ chaturbhuj mahavishnur yoga samrajya deekshitah” (दत्तत्रेयो महायोगी भगवान्भूतभावनः चतुर्भुजो महाविष्णुर्योगसाम्राज्यदीक्षितः॥) He was also the wandering ascetic like *Maheshvara*, with matted locks and body smeared with ashes. He was both *Vishnu* as well as *Maheshwara*. In Shri Prabhu’s life this aspect of *Bhogi* and *Yogi* was perceived.

TRIBHUVANANANDA

Shri Prabhu was beyond the constraints of *Tri-Guna* (three attributes), *Tri-Kala* (past, present and future), bliss of all the three worlds, of the human world, of the space and of the heavens.

There, indeed, is a state which is beyond, when the attributes, the *Gunas*, inseparable powers of equilibrium, movement and inertia, become purified as *Jyoti*, *Tapas* and *Shama*. That is the state of absolute Bliss, which is incomparable even in the three worlds.

ADVAITA

Non-dual. He was one with the Supreme Brahman. He was the real *Bhakta* of the Lord, having been in committed communion with Him. He was aware of his real state of Being, which is non-dual and blissful. It is like the space being one with the Space, there remaining no separate existence between the Individual Self and the Universal Self. "Verily, when there is another, there one might see the other, one might smell the other, one might taste the other, one might speak to the other, one might hear the other, one might think of the other, one might touch the other, one might know the other. He becomes like water, the Seer without duality. This is the highest goal; this is the highest treasure; this is the highest world; this is his greatest bliss. One particle of this very bliss other creatures live."

(यत्र वा अन्यदिव स्यात्तत्रान्योऽन्यत्पश्येदन्यः
अन्यजिघ्रेदन्योऽन्यद्रसयेदन्योऽन्द्वेदेदन्योऽन्यच्छृणुयादन्योऽन्मन्वीतान्यः
अन्यत्स्पृशेदन्योऽन्यद्विजानीयात् । सलिल एको द्रष्टाद्वैतो भवत्येष ब्रह्मलोकः
सम्राडिति हैममनुशशास याज्ञवल्क्य एषाऽस्य परमा गतिरिषास्य

परमासम्पदेशोऽस्य परमो लोक एषोऽस्य परम आनन्द
एतस्यैवाऽऽनन्दस्यान्यानि भूतानि मात्रामुपजीवन्ति ॥ (Brihad
Aranyak Upanishad. IV.3.31-32)

ABHEDA

Having transcended all the five sheaths of consciousness, Shri Prabhu is beyond dichotomy. There is no separateness between his individual Self and the Universal Self. Both being in reality but one, there is no distinction.

NIRANJANA

He is without defects, '*aham eko niranjanah*' (पंचभूतात्मकं विश्वं मरीचिजलसन्निभम्। कस्याप्यहो नमस्कुर्यामिहमेको निरंजनः ॥) declares Shri Dattatreya in Avadhoota Gita. The Brahman is Pure, without defects.

NIRGUNA

Without any attributes like *Satva*, *Rajas* or *Tamas*. He is Brahman. Creation is said to

come about when there is turmoil in the balance of these three attributes. Since Shri Prabhu has passed beyond these three attributes, he is *Nirguna*, beyond the effects of the modifications of the *Gunas*, the attributes. He is ever free of the attributes and therefore beyond being created.

NIRALAMBA

He is not dependent on anyone else. This is difficult to explain. At the supra-conscious level Brahman is independent of all others while all others are dependent upon Him. As Shri Krishna clarifies, “Whatever state of beings there may be, be they *Satvic*, *Rajasic* or *Tamasic* - know that they all flow from Me alone. I am not in them, they are in Me” (ये चैव सात्त्विका भावा राजसास्तामसाश्च ये । मत्त एवेति तान्विद्धि न त्वहं तेषु ते मयि ॥) (Bhagavad Gita VII.12). When one considers the meaning of the word *NIRALAMBA* on an empirical level, where the Lord descends to establish righteousness amongst the erring humanity, we will have to

take the assistance of Bhagavat Purana (II.2.2-6) where the attributes of the person who is wise, are narrated.

“Such are the words of the Vedas, that the mind seeks gratification through names without experiencing their real meaning. Expecting happiness in the world of Illusion, the soul wanders as though in sleep, without realising true happiness. Therefore, the man, who is wise, should associate with the objects of the senses only for the maintenance of the body and convinced at the same time of their futility, should never get attached to them. If such happiness be possible due to one’s own fate, then one should not strive for them because that would only be avoidable labour. When the earth is there, what need is there for a bed? When nature has provided us with arms, what need is there for pillows? When one can hold food in the folds of the palms, what need is there for a dish? When there is the space and the barks of the trees, what need is there for silken robes? Are there no rags on the

road or are there no trees on the roads that are ever eager to give fruits and leaves unasked? Have the rivers dried up or are the mouths of caves blocked? Or has the Supreme Lord, Shri Hari, denied protection to those who approach him? Why then should the men who are wise knock the doors of those who are blind with the arrogance of wealth? Having thus decided, the wise man should adore the Infinite and Eternal Lord dwelling in his heart as the beloved and the Ultimate Truth.”

(शाब्दस्य हि ब्रह्मण एष पन्था यत्रामभिर्ध्यायति धीरपार्थः । परिभ्रमंस्तत्र न विन्दतेऽर्थान् मायामये वासनया शयानः ॥ अतः कविर्नामसु यावदर्थः स्यादप्रमत्तो व्यवसायबुद्धिः । सिद्धेऽन्यथार्थेन यतेत तत्र परिश्रमं तत्र समीक्षमाणः ॥ सत्यां क्षितौ किं कशिपोः प्रयासैर्बाहौ स्वसिद्धे ह्युपबार्हणैः किम् । सत्यञ्जलीं किं पुरुधान्नपात्र्या दिग्बल्कलादौ सति किं दुकूलैः ॥ चीराणि किं पथि न सन्ति दिशन्ति भिक्षां नैवाङ्घ्रिपाः परभृतः सरितोऽप्यशुष्यन् । रुद्धा गुहाः किमजितोऽवति नोपसन्नान् कस्मात् भजन्ति कवयो धनदुर्मदान्धान् ॥ एवं स्वचित्ते स्वत एव सिद्ध आत्माप्रियोऽर्थो भगवाननन्तः । तं निर्वृतो नियतार्थो भजेत संसारहेतूपरमश्च यत्र ॥)

This is the highest state of being non-dependent upon any one other than one's

own Self. As Shri Krishna commends, “Let a man exalt his Self by his own Self; let him not degrade his Self. For Self alone is the friend of the Self and Self alone is the enemy of the Self’ (उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत्। आत्मैव ह्यात्मनो बन्धुरात्मैव रिपुरात्मनः ॥)(Bhagavad Gita VI.5) This is what is meant by the word *NIRALAMBA*.

PARIPOORNA

He is complete in himself. One who is aware of the majesty of one’s Self is the Self himself. “When it (the Self) is known through every state of cognition, it is rightly known, for (by such knowledge) one attains life eternal. Through one’s own Self one gains power and through wisdom one gains immortality.” (प्रतिबोधविदितं मतममृतत्वं हि विन्दते। आत्मना विन्दते वीर्यं विद्यया विन्दतेऽमृतम्॥) (Kena Upanishad. II.4) One who knows the Self thus is a Complete Person. “He who is here in the person and he who is yonder in the Sun - he is one. He who knows this, on departing from this world, reaches to the Self which consists

of Food, reaches the Self which consists of life, reaches the Self which consists of Mind, reaches the Self which consists of Understanding, reaches the Self which consists of Bliss” (स यश्चायं पुरुषे । यश्चासावादित्ये । स एकः । स य एवं वित् । अस्माल्लोकात्प्रेत्य । एतमन्नमयमात्मानमुपसंक्रामति । एतं प्राणमयमात्मानमुपसंक्रामति । एतं मनोमयमात्मानमुपसंक्रामति । एतं विज्ञानमयमात्मानमुपसंक्रामति । एतमानन्दमयमात्मानमुपसंक्रामति । तदप्येषः श्लोको भवति ॥) (Taittiriya Upanishad. II.8.1)

Shri Manik Prabhu being *Jeevanmukta* had experienced the fullness of the majesty of the Self even when he was alive in this body.

SADODITA

Like the Paramahansa, the Divine Swan, he was capable of distinguishing here in this life itself ‘*Shreya*’ and the ‘*Preya*’, the Truth and un-Truth. “When, to one who knows, all beings have, verily, become one with his own Self, then what delusion and what sorrow can there be for him, who has seen the oneness?” (यस्मिन्त्सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मैवाभूद्विजानतः । तत्र को मोहः कश्शोक

एकत्वमनुपश्यतः ॥) (Ishavosya Upanishad.7). He revels ever in the knowledge of Experience. The bliss or delight which wisdom of Brahman brings about is beyond any description. It is something completely incomprehensible. As the Seer puts it, "When the words return along with the mind, not attaining It, he who experiences that bliss of Brahman fears not from any thing at all. For such one, verily, the thought does not torment, Why have I not done the right? Why have I done the sinful? He who knows this, saves himself from these (thoughts). For, truly from both these he saves himself - he who knows this, Such is the Secret Doctrine" (यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते । अप्राप्य मनसा सह । आनन्दं ब्रह्मणो विद्वान् । न बिभेति कुतश्चनेति ॥ एतं ह वा व न तपति । किमहं साधु नाकरवम् । किमहं पापमकरवमिति ॥) (Taittiriya Upanishad. II.9.1-2). Therefore, Shri Prabhu is *SADODITA*, ever living in the blissful state of realised self.

SAKALMATASHTHAPITA

He is '*samam hi sarveshu*' (समं हि सर्वेषु) - equal towards all. He is the same to every one who

approaches him. None is dear or hateful to him. He is aware that whatever has been said in every faith, creed or religion is but the Eternal Truth, though the method of expression has varied according to the time and place and capacity of the person. Just because the expression differs, the Truth does not differ. As Shri Krishna declares in Bhagavad Gita (IX.23), “Even those who are the devotees of other gods and worship them with faith, they also sacrifice to Me, O Arjuna, though not in the right manner”. (येऽप्यन्यदेवता भक्ता यजन्ते श्रद्धयान्विताः । तेऽपि मामेव कौन्तेय यजन्त्याविधिपूर्वकम् ॥)

The time when Shri Prabhu took Avatar was the time when unrighteousness, bigotry, hatred etc. were at their highest peak. In the world had spread the virus of distrust between classes, castes, communities and religions. The knowledge about the true nature of religious beliefs and the ultimate reality was lacking in people and they were becoming more and more ignorant and superstitious. It was at such a time that He took descent to put

an end to these disparate, divisive forces prevailing in society.

Shri Prabhu not only preached SAKALMATA he also practised it in letter and spirit. Once Gulam Mustafa Khan the Tahasildar of Chitguppabeing impressed with Shri Prabhu's profound knowledge of the holy Koran, approached him with a strange proposal. He requested Shri Prabhu to embrace Islam so that he could accept him as his *Murshad* (teacher). He even went to the extent of alluring Shri Prabhu with royal gifts from the Nizam of Hyderabad. However, for Shri Prabhu change of religion was a futile exercise as he knew that all religions led to the same goal. He immediately asked for a copy of the holy Koran and read out the very first verse from it which says, "*Alhamdulillah Rab-ul-Alamin*" which means - Allah alone is praiseworthy as He is the creator, sustainer and the deliverer of the whole Universe. Shri Prabhu jocularly asked Gulam Mustafa Khan to cite a single verse from the Koran wherein

Allah is said to be the saviour of only Musalmans, to which Gulam Mustafa had no answer.

Only a great Teacher like Shri Prabhu can realise the similarity, the common bond between different faiths and religions and bring about the state of '*Samatvam*', the equanimity. He was therefore the *Sakalmata-sthapita* as well as the *Sakalmata Acharya*.

One should understand the Maha Mantra with this background in view and the purpose and the objective which Shri Prabhu had placed before himself and his *Sampradaya*. It is for this purpose that both *Nama* and *Rupa* should equally be understood. It is not sufficient if we say that we venerate the Teacher and not follow his message. The *Rupa* and *Nama* are not different. Once the *Rupa* is removed from our sight it is the *Nama* which guides us in our life. But *Nama* is not only the name, written in alphabets. It is idea behind the name. While *Rupa* is the visible symbol of

the *Nama*, *Nama* is the vocal symbol of the *Rupa*. These are the principles which are required to be apprehended by the intellect as well as by the consciousness. While the *Rupa* is the outer form the *Nama* is the inner soul.

Nama and *Rupa* together make the person. The *Nama* is not purely the name but the idea, the archetype, the essential character, consciousness and the *Rupa* is the existential context, the visible embodiment of the idea. In every object these two elements do exist. But while the form may change the idea still remains the same. The different *Nama-Rupas* are the differentiated conditions of the one *Nama*, the Universal Consciousness. This the significance and the fundamental basis of all religions. This what *Sakalmata* stands for.

Therefore we should pray with the Vedic Seers.

***Assemble; speak with one another.
Let your minds be of one accord.***

*As ancient gods unanimous
enjoyed their portions,
May your aim be common,
your assembly be common.
Common be the mind,
and the thoughts be united.
A common purpose do I lay before you,
To worship with your common ablation.
Common be your aim
and your hearts united.
Your mind be one,
So that all may happily live together.*

(संगच्छध्वं संवदध्वं सं वो मनसि जानताम् । देवा भागं यथा पूर्वं संजानाना
उपासते ॥ समानो मंत्रः समितिः समानी समानं मनः सह चित्तमेषाम् ।
समानं मन्त्रमभिमंत्रये वः समानेन वो हविषा जुहोमि ॥ समानी व आकूतिः
समाना हृदयानि वः । समानमस्तु वो मनो यथा वः सुसहासति ॥)



10. Saints and Kings flock to him

Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj accepted his role as 'Sakalamata Samsthapak', the consolidator of the diverse paths towards Godhead and seeing the intensity of his austerity and the refulgence of his Yogic powers, no one had any doubts that he was really the embodiment of Shri Dattatreya, a descent to save humanity with his 'Svatma Samavitti Upadesha' or through Sakalmata Sampradaya and as the Guru-Sarvabhousma (The Preceptor of Preceptors)

Shri Prabhu was dear to Shaivas as well as Vaishnavas. Naths, Mahanubhavaas, Gosavis, Avadhoots, Varkaris, Ramadasis, Shaktas and even to Sufis. Consequently his followers were Brahmins as well as non-Brahmins. Hindus as well as Muslims Shri Shripad Vallabh. Shri Narsimha Saraswati and Shri Manik Prabhu who are considered as Shri Dattatreya's manifestations in Kaliyuga had the same traits of universal vision and message.

Many incidents during Shri Prabhu's life time are demonstrative of his capabilities as the Preceptor of Preceptors. Not only the lay folk but also men of great spiritual wisdom are known to have flocked to him for the light he could shed on their spiritual path. While all incidents may be difficult to be narrated in detail, some main events need to be recorded to show the great respect and veneration with which he was held by many of the well known and revered saints, who unhesitatingly looked up to him as the manifestation of Shri Dattatreya.

Apart from *Sanyasis* and learned *Brahmins* flocking to him for advice, well known heads of established Maths and even some realised souls came to his Darbar for solace and solutions accepting him as the manifestation of Shri Dattatreya.

One such incident is the difference between the two Maths of Shri Shankaracharya, the one at Shringeri and the one at Hampi, which vied with one another for leadership in propagating Shri Shankaracharya's teachings in the areas controlled by the Nizam. The head of the Hampi Maths was propagating in the Nizam's territory considering his Maths independent of Shringeri while the Head of the Shringeri Math, Shri Narsimha Bharati VIII, considered the Hampi Maths as subservient to the Shringeri Math and that therefore it should propagate under the supervision of the Shringeri Math. This difference of opinion could not be resolved for long till they accepted the arbitration of Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj.

Many followers of both the Maths were constant visitors to Maniknagar and knew the intensity of the spiritual powers of Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj. It was therefore agreed that the Acharayas of both Shringeri and Hampi should come over to Maniknagar to find an amicable solution to the dispute. Accordingly, His Holiness Shri Narshimha Bharati VIII visited Maniknagar where he was received with the great pomp and respect. After discussing the matter with Acharya, Shri Prabhu finally offered the solution which became acceptable to both Acharyas. Both Shringeri and Hampi Maths have given letters of authority and distinction to Shri Manik Prabhu Samsthan which are relevant even today.

It is a well known fact that Shri Akkalkot Swami Maharaj came over to Akkalkot as if from nowhere and his origin is not known at all. When he was asked, he said that he was originally from Himalayan region from where he wandered over many places till he came over finally to Akkalkot.

However, before he came over to Akkalkot, he lived secluded for three days in the company of Shri Manik Prabhu. It is not known what transpired between them. Apparently, Shri Akkalkot Swami Maharaj was desirous of staying on in Maniknagar, to which Shri Prabhu said to have remarked that a tree would not grow under the shade of another huge tree and that therefore, Swamiji should go and settle at Akkalkot. Swamiji left for Akkalkot and stayed there during all his temporal life. Akkalkot Swami Maharaj came to be accepted as a Vibhooti of Shri Dattatreya. He is reported to have directed people to Shri Prabhu saying “Go to Maniknagar, where sits my elder brother”

Similarly, Shri Sai Baba of Shirdi is said to have visited Shri Prabhu prior to settling down in Shirdi. Historians tell us that when he visited Maniknagar Shri Manik Prabhu was sitting in Darbar. Shri Sai Baba dressed as a Fakeer came before Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj and extending his Lota (cup) before

him said. “Prabhuji, fill this cup.”

At that time Shri Prabhu’s brother Shri Tatya Saheb was sitting nearby having a discussion with some Pandits. He was directed by Shri Prabhu to fill the Fakeer’s ‘Lota’ (bowl), but the Lota would not fill up no matter how much money Tatya Saheb would put in to it. Shri Tatya Saheb looked to Shri Prabhu in bewilderment. Shri Prabhu, with his divine vision was able to recognise the *Fakeer* as a realised soul and put two dry dates and some flowers in the Lota and said smilingly “Sai, take it”. Miraculously, the Lota filled up but the Fakeer took only the dry dates and flowers saying “This much is enough for me” and turned the Lota upside down to pour out more money than it could have been filled with. Giving due respects to Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj. The Fakeer left the place.

Shri Brahma Chaitanya Maharaj of Gondavale was wandering in quest of a Guru.

In this quest he visited Maniknagar and met Shri Prabhu. Shri Prabhu received him with great affection and suggested that he be patient and that at the appropriate time he would meet his Guru. Satisfied Shri Brahma Chaitanya Maharaj went on his way.

Both Hindus as well as Muslims used to flock to Maniknagar. Muharram and Gyarahvi (the death anniversary of Mahaboob Subhani) were celebrated with as much enthusiasm as the Hindu festivals. Consequently many Peers, (Muslim saints) came to visit Maniknagar to have Shri Prabhu's Darshan and seek his blessings.

The fifth Nizam of Hyderabad Meer Afzaluddula was childless. He was aware of Shri Prabhu's divine powers. He was advised by his noblemen that he should seek Shri Prabhu's blessings for progeny. The Nizam sent one of his noblemen Apparao Arab to Maniknagar with a gift of a Jageer for Shri Prabhu worth Sixty thousand

rupees in lieu of Prasad (blessing) for a child. When Apparao Arab reached Maniknagar and presented the papers of the Jageer to Shri Prabhu and requested him to give Prasad to the Nizam, Shri Prabhu smiled and said “ I am a Fakeer, what will I do with this Jageer? My Lord “Datta Dayaghana” has given me the empire of the three worlds, why should I crave for such small gifts form mortal men. Tell your master that I am not interested in a accepting this Jageer. However I shall give Prasad to the Nizam for progeny. He will be blessed with a son. Tell him to name the boy ‘Mahaboob.’ Apparao Arab returned to Hyderabad wonderstruck with Shri Prabhu’s ‘Vairagya’ (non attachment) In due course the Nizam was blessed with a son who later ruled Hyderabad as Meer Mahaboob Ali Pasha.

Similarly Nama Saheb II, Peshwa of Pune had sent his emissary Rangarao to Maniknagar to seek Shri Prabhu’s blessings for the great

military upsurge he was then planing against
the British (mutiny of 1857)

The great and the ordinary, the rich and
the poor, the saints and the sinners all flocked
to Shri Prabhu to seek his divine blessings.



11. Mahasamadhi

Mother Bayadevi, brothers Shri Hanumant and Shri Nrisimha and Devi Venkamma acted as the four corner pillars, with Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj at the center, for the spiritual center in Maniknagar but strange events were to follow. Once Maniknagar started taking a definite shape, one by one the central characters started departing from the scene. First Shri Hanumant followed by Mother Bayadevi then Shri Nrisimha and Devi Venkamma, all gave up their mortal coils within a short span of only six months, leaving Shri Prabhu alone on the scene. There seemed

to be some purpose in all these successive events. Shri Prabhu wanted to see that these spiritual pillars were liberated from their mortal coils prior to his departure from the scene.

Shri Prabhu himself was not constrained by the gross body. He had realised his Self. Therefore, there was no need for him to be liberated from the shackles of the body. He was a *Jeevanmukta*, liberated even when alive. He had won over both birth and death. He was beyond the dualities of Life, having been aware of his essential nature. Nothing that was not his Self was of any concern to him. He lived like the lotus leaf, unconcerned by the effect of the senses on his body or on the mind.

Yet he was controlled by the same Lord who had created him. His knowing the Lord was his knowing the forces which controlled him. So, when he realised that the time had come for him to shed his mortal coil and merge in the Infinite, he considered seriously

the future course to be laid down for the mission to continue, which was as important as the manner in which he would discard the gross body. Since people were already shell-shocked with the passing away of Mother Bayadevi, Brothers Hanumant and Nrisimha and Devi Venkamma, Shri Prabhu was reluctant to confide in his devotees, the time of his own departure. He took only three or four persons into his confidence, they who were closely associated with the *Sampradaya* and who understood the significance of his *Avatar*. Even though they were shocked with what Shri Prabhu had to confide in them, being spiritually advanced, they accepted the fact as ordained by the Lord himself.

The news was kept in utmost confidence and all the required work was carried out with a smile on the face but with remorse in the heart. Shri Prabhu realised the difficulties through which he was making them pass. What was to happen to him would also happen to them when the time came. In that way he

was preparing them to live with death as their nearest companion. He would advise them, “You think that once I take *Samadhi* everything will end and I will no more be available to you. What you will miss is the sight of my Gross body, but my Self, the spirit within, will ever remain with you to guide you without your realising that fact. There will not be any breach in your spiritual path. Remember that decay and destruction of the gross body is certain. When every breath has already been numbered and assigned what is the purpose of grieving?”

Shri Prabhu’s words were soothing, yet each one dreaded the moment to come. They wished that the Sun would not rise and another day would not be born but the Sun does rise every day and the day is born thereby. Like the Sun, Shri Prabhu was going through his ordained tasks unconcerned.

One day, a small boil was noticed on Shri Prabhu’s back. He would jocularly remind

his associates that Yama's message has been received. For the others, it was a grim reminder of the fateful day. Shri Prabhu consoled them, "It is good that my work here is now coming to an end. You will all be able to carry the mission further by the Energy which I will be leaving behind. What's the use of remaining alive in this worthless body when the work is complete?". He supervised the place where he was to take *Samadhi*. The pit was dug in all secrecy and no one in Maniknagar could get even a breath of it.

Soon the auspicious month of *Margashirsha* arrived. Did Shri Krishna not declare in Bhagavad Gita (X.35) that "of the months, I am Margashirsha"? (बृहत्साम तथा साम्नां गायत्री छन्दसामहम्। मासानां मार्गशीर्षोऽहमृतूनां कुसुमाकरः॥) Blissfully unaware of the impending calamity that was to fall on Maniknagar, the people were getting ready to celebrate the annual Shri Datta Jayanti festivities. People from great distances were pouring in every day. Somehow that year was considered auspicious

for Muslims also. Consequently, Shri Prabhu's Muslim devotees also came in thousands.

As time passed, Shri Prabhu's health was deteriorating steadily. The small boil was getting bigger and more painful. Yet, Shri Prabhu's face bore no trace of the pain and it was blissful and tranquil as ever. On the tenth day of *Margashirsha*, Shri Prabhu decided to summon the *Darbar*, so that people could have his final *Darshan*. All arrangements were made for Shri Prabhu to sit in as comfortable a position as was possible. The occasion was to become so spiritually surcharged that Shri Prabhu as well as the close associates forgot for the time being the impending disaster.

The next day was *Ekadashi*, the eleventh day of the month. For Hindus it is one of the most auspicious days. It is the day when Sage Durvasa, elder brother of Shri Dattatreya won over his anger and received the Grace of Shri Vishnu. Incidentally this is also the day on which, thousands of years ago Shri Krishna

delivered the message of Bhagavad Gita to Arjun. This day is observed as Gita Jayanti. This 29th day of the month of November 1865 was the day on which Shri Prabhu had decided to take *Samadhi* and merge his Self with the Supreme Self.

There were, however, some final deeds to be done by Shri Prabhu. He had not taken *Sanyas* as prescribed in the *Shastras*. In fact he had already reached the stage which was beyond the four stages, *Ashramas*. He was a *Jeevanmukta*, *Avadhoota*, *Paramhansa*. All the same, the right thing should be done before one takes the final step. So he got himself initiated in *Sanyas Ashrama*. He then called the two sons of his brother Nrisimha and blessed them. He garlanded the elder son Manohar and covered him with the shawl which was used by him. Thus the line of succession to the *Gadi* was laid down for all to know. Covering Manohar with the shawl was not just a symbol of affection but also of authoritative transfer of the Eternal Energy of Shri Manik Prabhu

Maharaj to this young child who was wise and pure like Shri Dakshinamurti. Thus the Guru-Parampara of Shri Manik Prabhu Sampradaya was established for all time to come.

Having done this Shri Prabhu started walking towards the hut where the pit was dug. With his face glowing with extraordinary spiritual splendour, Shri Prabhu took each step. It was like the space merging within the space leaving no trace whatsoever. For Shri Prabhu the occasion was joyous for it was like going back to the origin from where he had started. He sat in the pit in *Padmasana*, forcing his *Kundalini* to rise and reach the *Brahmarandhra*. The pit was closed slowly by the close associates, in a mood that was surcharged with spiritual fervour. What does one feel when one passes through such a course?

Taittiriya Upanishad (III.10.5) gives us a glimpse of the experience of the traveller.

“Let one contemplate That as adoration; then his desires pay adoration to Him. Let one contemplate That as Supreme, he becomes possessed of That Supreme. He who is here in the person and he who is yonder in the Sun, he is one. He who knows this, on departing from this world, reaching on to that Self which consists of food, reaching on to that Self which consists of life, reaching on to that Self which consists of mind, reaching on to that Self which consists of understanding, reaching on to that Self which consists of bliss, goes up and down these worlds eating food he desires, assuming the form he desires. He sits singing the chant : Oh Wonderful, Oh Wonderful, Oh Wonderful”.

(स य एवं वित् । अस्माल्लोकात्प्रेत्य । एतमन्नमयमात्मानमुपसंक्रम्य । एतं प्राणमयमात्मानमुपसंक्रम्य । एतं मनोमयमात्मानमुपसंक्रम्य । एतं विज्ञानमयमात्मानमुपसंक्रम्य । एतमानन्दमयमात्मानमुपसंक्रम्य । इमाँल्लोकान्कामाग्नी कामरूप्यनुसंचरन् । एतत्साम गायन्नास्ते । हा३वुहा३वु हा३वु ॥

In this Upanishadic hymn some of the

important words merit reappraisal. The first one is 'pretya', "*asmalokat pretya*", crossing over from this world. The word 'pretya' is translated, 'after the death of the body'; it is made up of 'pra' + 'itya' = 'pretya'. 'Pra' is giving up, crossing over and 'itya' is going away. Thus the Self which decides to merge in *Samadhi* in the equanimous mind gives up its attachment with its body or crosses over from the sheaths of the body, of the breath etc. When the Self is dwelling in the body, it can with determined will, raise the *Kundalini* Power from *Mooladhar* to *Brahmarandhra*.

The news of Shri Prabhu having taken *Samadhi* was kept secret till *Pournima*, lest the grieving crowds might vitiate the solemn and serene occasion, in their ignorance of the significance of the event. When they came to the *Gadi* for Shri Prabhu's *Darshan* as usual, before they departed from Maniknagar, they were shocked to hear the news. They rushed to the hut in uncontrollable grief. Close devotees and associates had to pacify the crowd.

When Shri Sadguru Manik Prabhu Maharaj attained *Samadhi*, devotees were in despair. It is a great paradox of life that even though people say that they have faith in the words of the *Guru*, when he is seen with these gross eyes, the same devotees tend to be sceptical when the *Guru* is no more visible to them nor are his words audible to the human ears. Shri Prabhu had assured time and again, his continued presence in Maniknagar. However, the faith of devotees often appears brittle, when the object of veneration is removed from sight. People are so accustomed to lean on the wooden staff that even when they are told that they can dispense with it they are reluctant to have confidence in those assurances as well as in their own self. This does not mean that one should not draw strength and sustenance from some powerful energy but to assume that the Energy will itself take us to salvation is fooling ourselves. While it gives momentum in the first instance, further steps on the travel have to be taken by the aspirant himself.

Knowing human folly, the compassionate *Guru* does take steps to provide for his devotees an object of veneration and a medium for communication who takes his place after him. Shri Manohar Manik Prabhu was the designated medium of Shri Manik Prabhu.



12. Shri Manohar Manik Prabhu

(1858-1877)

When some of the close associates of Shri Prabhu saw that Shri Prabhu's health was slowly deteriorating, they were concerned about the future of the *Sampradaya* and what arrangements would be made to continue the glorious *Sampradaya*. Many who considered the matter as a temporal and administrative arrangement were guided by their own likings and preferences regarding

who should ascend the *Gadi*. In spiritual matters such decisions are not taken on a temporal consideration but on a spiritual consideration. It is the Divine Will and not the human preference that prevails in such matters. Therefore, Shri Prabhu had also not opened his mind on this matter even to his closest associates. Even though their concern was genuine, they should have felt assured that Shri Prabhu, having established the *Sampradaya*, would also provide the agency for continuing it.

People, however, had no patience or possibly they had their own self-interest. Therefore, even before Shri Prabhu could spell out his views, many enthusiastic persons, who had taken over on themselves the responsibility of managing the Samsthan, had already commenced the search for a successor. They even found one intelligent young person in *Bhalki* town who appeared suitable to them. They suggested this person to Shri Prabhu and “advised” him to take this young man as

his *Shishya*. Shri Prabhu kept quiet and did not express any opinion about the young person, who was also known to him and in fact was quite close to him.

A good person or a good manager need not necessarily be a good leader of the masses, especially in matters which are Spiritual in nature. It is the Divine will and not human consideration or convenience which decides these matters. Shri Prabhu, having in his mind already chosen his successor, did not announce this till just prior to taking *Samadhi*.

It appeared that Shri Prabhu had, through his divine vision, already selected an able and meritorious successor in Shri Manohar, his nephew. Shri Prabhu had seen in him the intense austerity of all his past lives and the required preparedness for taking the responsibility. How proper was the choice only time was to tell. Shri Manohar was not only intelligent as a child but had shown great spiritual capacity in his very childhood. He

seemed not only to have had the desire for non-dual relationship with the Brahman but already seemed to have established himself in that state of Bliss.

When Shri Manohar Manik Prabhu took over the charge of Shri Manik Prabhu Samsthan, he seemed to have been fully energised to cope with the responsibility assigned to him. With the devoted followers of the *Sampradaya* he delved deep in both spiritual and temporal matters pertaining to the Samsthan. He organized the financial matters of the Samsthan in such a way that the spiritual activities of the Samsthan as well as its administrative matters could smoothly be continued. He was very particular and concerned that the rituals and festivities which were being conducted during Shri Prabhu's time should be continued uninterruptedly.

Since he left the responsibility of managing the temporal matters of the Samsthan to his brother Shri Khanderao, he

was free to look after the spiritual matters concerning the *Sampradaya*. When he ascended the *Gadi* he was hardly seven years of age but it seemed that he had already traversed miles on the spiritual path. Great mystics are fully aware of their past lives and therefore, they restart from where they had left in their previous life. He mastered Sanskrit in addition to Marathi, Kannada and Hindi in no time. His deep understanding of the Vedas and Upanishads was marvelled at by all those who came in contact with him. He was not only a seer but also an exceptional poet. During the entire period of twelve years when he was on the *Gadi* as Shri Manohar Manik Prabhu, he created a mass of literature codifying the *Pooja*, *Abhishek*, *Upasana* and other rituals which are still prevalent in Maniknagar. He composed innumerable *Stotras*, *Shlokas*, *Ashtakas* and *Bhajans* in Sanskrit as well as in regional languages, establishing, if at all it was necessary, that Shri Prabhu had chosen his successor well.

He was indeed an *Avatar*, for rarely do we come across in the Indian spiritual horizon a child prodigy like him, comparable to Shri Sanatkumar brothers, Shri Shuka, Shri Shankaracharya or Shri Dnyaneshwar. He was a great *Yogi* and lived the life of a pure realised soul. His constant communion with the Supreme Self was making him yearn to merge his individual Self with the Universal Self. Even as he was designing the temple over the *Samadhi* of Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj, he was also contemplating within himself for creating a niche where he would rest in due time to come. He would exclaim often, “How beautiful and quiet a place is this? A fit place for a *Yogi* to sit and meditate for all the eons to come”. However, none could read his mind at that time and that was as it should be.

While remaining himself a celibate, he saw that the family of Shri Prabhu would not end. So he got his brother Shri Khanderao married to the daughter of Shri Bapacharya,

who was one of the close associates of Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj. Shri Khanderao was twelve years of age at that time. His entire time was devoted to the supervision of the affairs of the Samsthan, without any leisure for him to be educated or engage himself in spiritual *sadhana*. This came to the attention of Shri Manohar Manik Prabhu. He gave him initiation in spiritual matters and made him conversant with the Vedas, the Upanishads and other scriptures. In time to come Shri Khanderao became so engrossed in these subjects that his knowledge of *Mantra Shastra* was considered very commendable.

When Shri Manohar Manik Prabhu realised that Shri Khanderao had become well versed in all the scriptures, rites and rituals and was thus qualified to look after the spiritual needs of the *Sampradaya*, he decided to take *Samadhi*. The news came as a shock to the devotees. Surely this was not the age for the Maharaj to take *Samadhi*. Besides, there was much work ahead to consolidate the

values prescribed by Shri Manik Prabhu. Even though the foundations were properly laid down by Shri Manohar Manik Prabhu, it was expected that he would also lead the *Sampradaya* for some more years to consolidate its values and principles.

In the tradition laid down by Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj, Shri Manohar Manik Prabhu also got himself initiated in *Sanyas*. On an auspicious day (28th October 1877), he took his seat in the underground cellar which he had got constructed for himself behind the *Samadhi* of Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj. Then sitting in *Yogic Padmasana*, controlling his breath, he merged his breath with the Primal Breath. Thus, Shri Manohar Manik Prabhu merged in the Infinite Bliss, the Brahman.



13. Shri Martand Manik Prabhu

(1861-1936)

In Bhagvad Gita, (XI.32) Shri Krishna declares: “Time am I, grown mature by destroying the worlds and ever engaged in subduing the worlds” (कालोऽस्मि लोकक्षयकृत्प्रवृद्धो लोकान्समाहर्तुमिह प्रवृत्तः । ऋतेऽपि त्वां न भविष्यन्ति सर्वे येऽवस्थिताः प्रत्यनीकेषु योधाः ।) Here the Time referred to by the Lord is the PRESENT MOMENT, that which is NOW. The Lord never lives in the conventional time, which is made of Past, Present and Future. Because the Past is the

Present Moment which has lapsed in the Past. The Future is the Present Moment which is yet to come. Thus, both the Past and the Future are worlds created by the concepts of the Mind. The Lord, who is Truth remains always in the Present Moment. Therefore, he is known only when the Past and the Future, which are the Worlds of Becoming, are destroyed. The Lord is thus always engaged in the destruction and subduing of the concepts of Past and Future.

The Lord is thus present as the Immutable, ever stable in his essential aspect. Truth does not change with conventional Time. The medium may change but the Truth remains ever. Similar is the case with the *Sampradaya* initiated by Shri Manik Prabhu. The assurance which he had given in his time, he was fulfilling through one or the other powerful medium in the years to come. If the medium itself had not been well qualified and capable, the assurance would not have been sustained. Therefore, even though the seat

was vacated by the gross human body of Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj, the Powerful Truth, the essential Truth continued to remain ever established and ever vibrant in ever increasing glory.

Consequently, each of the successors of Shri Manik Prabhu was possessed of the *Shakti*, the Divine Energy, to further enhance the glory of the *Sampradaya* as its torch bearer. Shri Manohar Manik Prabhu had little time, only twelve years, to consolidate and make the pedestal strong and lasting. Shri Khanderao, who took the name of Shri Martand Manik Prabhu on ascending the *Gadi*, had fifty eight years. The Divine Will has its own scheme according to which it operates. Neither the Lord nor his Cosmic Laws are whimsical. Spiritual initiation is not like conventional initiation. What is needed to be considered is the spiritual time.

When the responsibility of the *Gadi* fell on Shri Martand Manik Prabhu, he visualized

a large spectrum of spiritual awakening among the devotees. To speak about *Satya* is to speak about Existence, the Eternity. There is no such thing as Hinduism; there is only the *Sanatana Dharma*, Universal Perennial Principles.

Shri Martand Manik Prabhu was more practical and was an activist in spiritual matters. He took it upon himself to explain the basic tenets of *Dharma*, the Perennial Principles. He mastered philosophy because that was the science of life. *Adhyatma Vidya* is not only the manifestation but is the Lord himself. In Gita (X.32) he declares “*adhyatmavidya vidyanam*” (सर्गणामादिरन्तश्च मध्यं चैवाहमर्जुन । अध्यात्मविद्या विद्यानां वादः प्रवदतामहम् ॥). Consequently in his book “*Dnyan Martand*” which was his Magnum Opus, even while explaining the *Sakalamata Sampradaya*, he gave vocal expression to his universal vision. His exposition was easy to understand and could be assimilated even by a lay person. Anyone who makes a *Sankalpa* (resolve) to come one

step nearer the essence of God has this source-book at hand.

Learned thinkers spoke about the lucidity of his exposition. The Pundits of Varanasi called him “*Abhinava Shankaracharya*”. He was a tireless writer in Marathi, Hindi and Kannada. His *abhangas* are full of philosophical truths. His other books, ‘Guru Sampradaya’, ‘Mahamauna Shataka’ and ‘Manik Nirvikalpabodha’ have proved immensely beneficial for the followers of the sampradaya in understanding its true values. For one who has gone through the lives of the persons who have ascended the *Gadi*, one thing becomes clear. There is a definite scheme for exposition of Truth according to the time and the need of the people. While Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj sourced the Primal Energy, Shri Manohar Manik Prabhu gave it the mystical foundation by laying down the rites and the rituals, *stotras* and *shlokas* of worship and adoration. Then came the time of Shri Martand Manik Prabhu to explain the philosophy behind the

Sampradaya, the meaning and the intent behind the Energy which is being handed over from one generation to the other.

Shri Martand Manik Prabhu was not merely a philosopher but also a practitioner. A *sadhaka* as well as an *Anubhavi*. It is one thing to know Truth intellectually and quite different a thing to feel and experience IT. This is possible only for those who are seeped in austerities. He had mastered *Mantra Shastra* and had exceptional *Yogic* powers. In spite of all these attainments he was like a child and his heart melted for the devotees. His stern exterior belied his immense love and compassion. He was , indeed, a rare combination of *Jnana*, *Bhakti* and *Vairagya*.

He was not content to sit in the ivory tower and contemplate on the Eternal Brahman. He was as much concerned with the life of the common people and the travails through which they were passing. He travelled throughout the length and breadth of the

country to propagate the Shri Manik Prabhu Sampradaya, which alone would lift the people from the misery of *Samsara*. People were awestruck by his imposing personality and words of wisdom.

When it was found that devotees of the *Sampradaya* had spread throughout India, he decided to publish a magazine to disseminate the message of the *Sampradaya*. He named the monthly magazine "*Sakalamatacharya Shri Manik Prabhu*" and the first issue was released on Datta Jayanti in December 1921. The main objective of the magazine, which was penned by Shreeji himself, was to put concisely the entire philosophy of the *Sampradaya*. He wrote:

"Our purpose is to exchange thoughts with our readers. There should not be any enmity amongst any persons. Spreading love and compassion all around to remove the misery, is our purpose. This is the cardinal teaching of Shri Prabhu. This message should

be spread around the world. This is our objective.”

“We may reiterate that the foundation on which this *Sampradaya* is based is LOVE. There exists, therefore, no scope for any enmity. Just as the bees select honey irrespective of the type of the flowers, our *Sampradaya* believes in collecting all the essentials from all religions, creeds and beliefs and offering them in collected form at the feet of Shri Prabhu.”

“Shri Prabhu Sampradaya does not depend on following one or the other path. It depends exclusively on reflection and meditation of *Jnana*. Each one should try to acquire *Jnana*, following the Path laid down by his own caste and creed. This is the principle adopted by this *Sampradaya*.”

*Keeping Shruti and Dharma intact,
Respect other's beliefs intact.
In each one's heart is seated the soul,
Don't be critical of another's role.*

This is the teaching of
SAKALAMATA SAMPRADAYA.

(श्रुतिधर्म रक्षुनि सकलमताते वन्दा । सर्वान्तरि आत्मा नको कुणाची निन्दा ॥)

“All religions and creeds in the world have a common source and also a common goal. Only due to ignorance does one see the differences. In fact all are woven with the common thread of LOVE. There is no need for conflict. This has been so declared in our *Sampradaya*. There is no need to influence Shri Prabhu or any one in higher or lower grades, nor is there any need to offer wealth. If there exists sufficient *Shraddha* and Love, then one gets the highest stage and grace from Shri Prabhu. This has been so declared in our *Sampradaya*.”

“The Lord who has manifested in this *Sampradaya* is the all pervading Brahman. He is not subject to Time or Space. He is universally and eternally experiencing the Blissful state of Existence. He is of

Indescribable form of LOVE. Therefore, whichever path the *Jiva* and *Shiva*, the disciple and the Teacher take, the Gross and the Subtle become one. That is the Path of Brahman.”

“*Vedanta Dharma* is capable of becoming the sole representative of all the religions of the world. All the existing religions of the world can have access to our *Dharma*. Moses of Israel, Jesus of the Christians, Paigambar of the Muslims are the same as Shri Prabhu; of the Jains, of the Buddhists or of the Zoroastrians, the Supreme God is the same as ours.”

“Not only that, even atheism of the atheists is symbolised as our God. The followers of such *Dharma* can never have enmity with any other beliefs.”

“Therefore, we propose to make known this Wisdom widely to the world, so that ignorance may be destroyed entirely and knowledge and wisdom may increase. The

sorrows will disappear. All will have Peace. Alien chains will be cut asunder and this will give freedom to all. Shri Prabhu will spread his Grace and Compassion on all”.

The Philosophy of Shri Manik Prabhu Sampradaya could not have been more forcefully and effectively stated than by what has been enunciated by Shri Martand Manik Prabhu Maharaj. In fact, his thoughts almost reverberate the words of Shri Dattatreya, “Liberation is Liberation when one is liberated while still in the body, The (mere) liberation with the fall of the body is similar to the liberation of the dogs and pigs. Even as the Sun illumines the whole world, so does Brahman. (One who realises this) the immanence in all creatures is said to be liberated while alive.” (जीवन्मुक्तिश्च या मुक्तिः सा मुक्तिःपिण्ड पतने सा मुक्तिःशुनि सूकरे ॥ एवं ब्रह्मा जगत्सर्वं अखिलं भासते रविः । समस्थितं सर्वभूतानां जीवन्मुक्तिः स उच्यते ॥) (Jeevanmukta Gita 2 & 4) Similarly he said, “All that forms the quintessence of the final teaching of Veda, of Wisdom and of special scriptures is this --

I am Self, formless and of all pervading nature". (वेदान्तसारसर्वस्वं ज्ञानं विज्ञानमेव च । अहमात्मा निराकारः सर्वव्यापी स्वभावतः ॥) (Avadhoot Gita I.5)

Shri Martand Manik Prabhu was the perfect embodiment of the *Samanvaya*, equipoise. His entire life bears testimony to this fact. His temporal life and the problems which it brought for him, did not disturb his inner composure or peace. He was a perfect *Jnani*, a *Stithaprajna* a *Gunateeta*. As mentioned in Gita (II.56), "He whose mind is untroubled in the midst of sorrows and is free from eager desires amidst pleasures, he, from whom passion, fear and anger have passed away, he is called a sage of settled intelligence (*Stithaprajna*)" (दुःखेष्वनुद्विग्नमनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः । वीतरागभयक्रोधः स्थितधीर्मुनिरुच्यते ॥)

The magazine collected all the *Bhajans* composed by Shri Manik Prabhu and Shri Manohar Manik Prabhu. The *Stotras*, *Ashtakas* etc. composed by Shri Manohar Manik Prabhu also found a place here. In addition Shreeji

was also writing extensively explaining the different aspects of the *Sanatana Dharma* but later, since his time was required for other important purposes, the magazine became irregular and had to be discontinued ultimately. This was a great loss to the *Sampradaya*.

However, he saw to it that he completed his Magnum Opus, “Dnyan Martand”, the treatise which explained all the fundamental principles which the *Sampradaya* stood for and for which it came to be established. While it is true that all the *Bhajans* contain the essence of the teachings of all those who have graced the *Gadi*, it is never the less necessary that this book should be read as one of the fundamental expositions of the *Sampradaya* by one who desires to know what the *Sampradaya* really stands for and how vast was the vision of Shri Manik Prabhu and how deep was the insight of Shri Martand Manik Prabhu. Vedas and Vedanta are the onetime experiences of the Seers who experienced the Supreme Reality.

Unless the glimpse of such an experience is realised by us even to an infinitely small extent, life would not be worth living.

Shri Martand Manik Prabhu had infinite capacity to devote his entire life to the *Sampradaya*. He took as much interest in the temporal matters of Maniknagar as he did in rejuvenating the spiritual aspirations of the devotees of the *Sampradaya*. His personality was such that neither people nor wealth were lacking wherever he went. All the wealth received was spent to improve the facilities for the devotees at Maniknagar. During his time he extended Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj's Samadhi - Mandir and constructed Devi Venkamma's Temple, Bhandarkhana, Naubatkhana and many other grand buildings in Maniknagar.

Shreeji was himself an accomplished player of *Pakhawaj*, a percussion instrument. He also was a great patron of Indian classical music. Great maestros such as Pandit Vishnu

Digambar Paluskar, Ustad Abdul Kareem Khan Saheb, Ustad Rahmat Khan Saheb and Pandit Bhaskar Buva Bakhle all performed before him and were honoured by him. Upcoming musicians used to throng to him for his encouragement and blessings. He had started writing a book in Marathi explaining the utility of music in achieving spiritual perfection. He had named the book as “*Gaana Martand*” and had even prepared several notes to be incorporated in it. Unfortunately he could not complete the book, which, if completed would have served the purpose of a text book for the students of *Naad Upasana*.

The Royal family of the Nizam of Hyderabad had links with Shri Manik Prabhu Samsthan since the time of Shri Manik Prabhu himself. These links were further strengthened during the tenure of Shri Martand Manik Prabhu as the Peethadhipati of the Samsthan. The VII Nizam of Hyderabad, His Exalted Highness Meer Osman Ali Khan Bahadur

specially invited Shreeji to Hyderabad and sought his blessings.

The then Prime Minister of Hyderabad, Sir Kishan Prashad Bahadur, an acknowledged poet, composed an Urdu couplet describing the greatness of Shreeji:

Great Success has he achieved,
Hundreds of thousands bow before him,
Is there any under the Sun like him,
My Shri Martand Manik.

(हजारों फोज पाए हैं कि लाखों सर झुकाए हैं।
हे कोई करम में ऐसा तो मार्टण्ड मानिक मेरा ॥)

The *Sajjada Nashin* (chief priest) of the holy mausoleum at Gulbarga was so impressed with Shreeji's belief in the oneness of God and his extraordinary command over the teachings of the Koran, that he presented a letter of authority and distinction to Shreeji bestowing upon him the *Khilafat* (honour and authority) of the exalted *Kadaria* Order. The

Sajjada Nashin in his letter said-- “Truly speaking Martand Manik Prabhu is not a mere follower of Manik Prabhu in piety, *Fakeeri* and saintliness but has made further progress and has become possessed of all praiseworthy qualities. Finding him perfect in austerity and his belief in the oneness of God, I under the orders of my spiritual guide, am glad and ready to confer upon him the *Khilafat* of His Holiness Syed Mohammed Mohammed-Al-Hussaini Gesu Daraz Bande Nawaz

By 1935, Shreeji had travelled extensively for the purpose of the Samsthan. He established many branches of the Samsthan in places like Bombay, Madras, Hyderabad, Pune, Sholapur and Raichur. This effort had an effect on his health. Age was catching up with him fast and the body was losing its capacity to work though the spirit was willing. He bore illness with stoic indifference. He had realised the value of his body and the importance of the Spirit, the Self within. In one of his poems he expresses these sentiments vividly.

*Free from Illusion, Avadhoot am I,
 The knower of five-fold world, am I,
 Of the waking, dreaming
 and dreamless stages, am I,
 I have neither fear of birth
 nor the desire to die.
 I am neither bound by
 the pleasure of the Senses,
 What deliverance can I gain
 from Space substances,
 When I am aware of
 the very Primal Essence?
 When I am aware, I am Brahman,
 the Truth Essence.
 Martand, the Wise,
 is surely aware of his Essence,
 United in that very Essence,
 devoid of all Illusion.*

(मायामलधूत आम्ही अवधूत । दृष्य पंचभूत जाणूं आम्ही ।ध्र ॥
 जाणूं आम्ही स्वप्न सुषुप्ति जागृती । जन्म-मरण-भीती नाही आम्हां ॥
 नाही आम्हां देह वासना सम्बन्ध । केंचा मोक्षबन्ध चिदाकाशी ॥
 चिदाकाशी चित्र निर्गुण सगुण । आम्ही ब्रह्म पूर्ण सत्य ज्ञान ॥
 ज्ञानमार्ताण्ड हा बोध अभंग । झाला भवभंग हरपली माया ।.)

The illness continued unabated. The thought of a successor to the *Gadi* was always there in his mind. Shreeji's long reign had made people immune to the thought that his mortal frame would one day not be with them. In the *Darbar* during Datta Jayanti in 1935, he made a reference to his ill health and made a remarkable statement, of which few could understand the significance at that time. He said, "Tell me with your faith in Shri Prabhu, whether I could die? I am Eternal. Who can perform the *Prabhu-seva* except me? When there are so many devotees around me, why should I worry for a successor?"

Shri Martand Manik Prabhu had two sons and one daughter. However as willed by the Lord, both the sons left their mortal coils during his lifetime. Anyone else would have despaired but Shreeji saw the Divine Will in these events. He would say, "Perhaps the Lord does not need service from *Shrivatsa Gotra* any more".

When Shri Martand Manik Prabhu was busy with his spiritual activities, the administrative matters were handled by his sister's son Shri Shankarrao Dikshit. Shreeji had paternal love for this boy. He had great faith in him and all the affairs of the Samsthan were left to his supervision whenever Shreeji would be on tour. He had not only shown excellent administrative ability but also a spiritual bent in attending to the minutest details of the rites and rituals to be conducted at Maniknagar day in and day out. Shri Martand Manik Prabhu had not to search far for his successor.

As the days passed Shreeji found it difficult to perform even the daily rituals and sometimes he had no strength even to change his side in sleep. He gave up taking food and seemed to be lapsing in the realm of the Subtle Silence. There is a belief that the great *Yogis*, when the time comes to shed their bodies, enter the Blissful state, stage by stage withdrawing themselves sheath by sheath.

This is known as withdrawing into one's *Sukshma Sharira* from the Gross one. They withdraw step by step and leave the mortal body like the snake sheds its skin. Finally the day arrived, Thursday, 12th March 1936, when he left this decaying body and entered the Eternal Space, which was essentially his essence.

When the news spread, there was silence all around like the one when a great storm uproots a mighty banyan tree but even as the people saw the tree lying uprooted, they could also see a fresh sapling ready to take its place and rear the devotees under its growing branches. Shri Manik Prabhu's Gadi never remains without a successor and the successor was there in the form of Shri Shankarrao Dikshit. He formally ascended the Gadi and took the name Shri Shankar Manik Prabhu.

After performing all the rituals, a *Samadhi* was constructed for Shri Martand Manik Prabhu, and the mortal coils were laid to rest.

The final stone was laid on the *Samadhi* and the door was closed but this did not foreclose the influence of Shri Martand Manik Prabhu, for had he not declared: “For Dnyan Martand, there is no beginning nor any end” (ज्ञानमार्ताण्डा उदय नाही बा अस्त नाही).

And so it was.



14. Shri Shankar Manik Prabhu

(1895-1945)

Shri Shankar Manik Prabhu was no stranger to Maniknagar, even though he was not a direct descendant of the family of Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj. Having been nurtured by Shri Martand Manik Prabhu in the environment of the *Sampradaya* from the very childhood, he was breathing nothing if not the spiritual aura that was prevailing in that area.

He had all the opportunity for sharing the vast vision of his predecessor and when the latter was on tour, the entire administration of Maniknagar was left to the able hands of Shri Shankar Manik Prabhu. Under the guidance of Shri Martand Manik Prabhu he had all the opportunity for doing the *Sadhana*, which for him was as imperceptible as breathing itself.

When Shri Martand Manik Prabhu inducted him in the administration of the Samsthan, he took his work itself to be his worship. He seemed to have imbibed unknowingly the precept of the Lord in Gita (IX.34), "On Me fix your mind; to Me be devoted; worship Me; revere Me; thus having disciplined yourself, with Me as your goal, you shall surely come to Me" (मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु । मामेवैष्यसि युक्त्वैवमात्मानं मत्परायणः ॥) The day Shri Martand Manik Prabhu assigned him his work, that became his goal, that became his worship and that also became his divinity. He was so particular and methodical

in his work that perhaps he saw Shri Manik Prabhu in every act of his.

It may be said that he had no interest other than the work assigned by his mentor. His life was the perfect specimen of the *manasa pooja* as described by Shri Shankaracharya in “Shiva Manasa Pooja”.

*“You are my Self,
and intellect verily, is Girija,
Companions are the breaths;
body, verily, is the abode.
Sense experience is adoration;
sleep, verily, is samadhi.
Walking on feet is Pradakshina;
worship, verily, is wisdom.
Every action I perform, O Shambho,
all those are for your propitiation.*

(आत्मा त्वं गिरिजा मतिः सहचराः प्राणाः शरीरं गृहम् । पूजा ते
विषयोपभोगरचना निद्रा समाधिस्थितिः । संचारः पदयोः प्रदक्षिणविधिः
स्तोत्राणि सर्वा गिरो । यद्यत्कर्म करोमि तत्तदखिलं शम्भो तवाराधनम् ॥)

Shri Martand Manik Prabhu had special affection for this boy. He had given him all the education. He studied law and qualified as a High Court Pleader. In selecting him as the administrator, Shreeji could not have made a better choice to take care of the changing times. A life time of spiritual and temporal induction made him an exceptional choice for the *Gadi*.

He authoritatively took charge of the affairs, yet there was no trace of arrogance in him. On taking over the *Gadi*, the personality of Shri Shankar Manik Prabhu changed dramatically. His inbuilt humility endeared him to all. He had no unkind word for anybody. Even when he disagreed, it would be couched in the mildest of words.

He had identified with Shri Manik Prabhu's ideal to the fullest extent and he knew the role which had been assigned to him. Even when some would disagree with him, he would in all humility say, "I am after

all the servant of Shri Manik Prabhu. Whatever he impels me to do, I do. Even if you do not agree with what I say, or do not desire to give respect to me, at least give respect to the *Gadi*, the *Padukas* and the memory of Shreeji” .

He was a scholar and had studied all the scriptures. His philosophical essays show the depth of his assimilation of the basic principles of *Advaita* philosophy. He was a regular writer in “Tattvadnyan Mandir” a monthly magazine dedicated to philosophy published by the Indian Institute of Philosophy at Amalner. He had also cultivated considerable interest in Astrology, Medicine and Music.

One may say that after the dominating personality of Shri Martand Manik Prabhu, the period of Shri Shankar Manik Prabhu came like a breather, to consolidate the vision of Shri Martand Manik Prabhu but those who had come to know him closely were impressed by his immense organizational capability, but for which the entire edifice so devotedly raised

by Shri Martand Manik Prabhu would not have been sustained. It was possible that this was fully realised by Shri Martand Manik Prabhu himself and that was the reason of his being designated as the successor to the *Gadi*.

Consequently, he created a new awareness among the devotees of Maniknagar. The number of devotees visiting Maniknagar increased. He was available to every one. None would return without meeting him and receiving his blessings. His interest in education made him start a school in Maniknagar, where, along with modern education, emphasis was also given to religious, ethical and cultural education. The school was named as “Manik Vidyalaya” and Shreeji took personal interest in the day to day affairs of the school. There is nothing like the all-around development of human personality. His emphasis therefore was to impress the devotees visiting Maniknagar that the place was a *Shakti-sthala*, the center of energy from where each one could draw his

energy. It is more important that one should also intellectually understand the Message given by Shri Manik Prabhu and assimilate it in one's daily life. He had made his own life the symbol of humility, which is born out of wisdom of the Universality of the Supreme Self. Therefore, he would encourage intelligent discussion on the teachings of the previous *Peethadhipatis*.

Shri Shankar Manik Prabhu undertook extensive tours and travels to propagate the message of Shri Prabhu's *Sampradaya*. Where ever he went he was received with great love, devotion, respect and honour. His tours to Raichur, Narayanpeth, Bhongeer, Yadgeer and Tandur have a very special significance in the history of Manik Prabhu Samsthan.

Shri Shankar Manik Prabhu was, however, not destined to lead the *Sampradaya* for long. His innumerable duties which were assigned to him from his very childhood had tired him physically. While the spirit in him

rose to fulfil the role assigned to him, his body could not sustain the ravages of time. When the time came for him to leave on the 28th of February 1945, he already had a son Siddharaj, who was hardly six years of age, whom he left to the loving care of his wife and the compassionate grace of Shri Manik Prabhu.



15. Shri Siddharaj Manik Prabhu

Shri Siddharaj Manik Prabhu (born on 1st February 1939), the fifth incumbent of the *Gadi*, was but a child when he ascended the *Gadi*. Many had misgivings about the choice. As said earlier, people forget that the succession to the *Gadi* is not an elective post. It is the Divine Will which determines the selection, where a person becomes but a medium through whom Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj decides to make His presence manifest. In spiritual matters, it is rarely the person who matters as much as the

Shakti that is posited in him. None should forget that Shri Manik Prabhu's *Gadi* is the *Shakti Peetha*, in respect of which Shri Manik Prabhu has assured his presence for all time to come.

This fact was demonstrated by the young Shri Manohar Manik Prabhu through his extraordinary achievements even during his short span of empirical life. This was further demonstrated by Shri Martand Manik Prabhu through his vast and all comprehensive capacity in expanding the range and sphere of influence of *Shri Manik Prabhu Sampradaya* and by Shri Shankar Manik Prabhu, who, through his humility and open candour expressed the true role of each occupier of the Seat.

Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj had seen that for every generation he provided a person to grace the *Gadi*, suitable for the time and conditions prevailing. The ascending of the *Gadi* by Shri Siddharaj Manik Prabhu,

therefore, should be seen in this context. Through the medium of Shri Shankar Manik Prabhu, it was shown how important education was to be in the life of people. Shri Siddharaj Manik Prabhu was to carry on the mission, for which the previous incumbent had laid the foundation stone. To make him capable of shouldering this enormous task, it was decided that he should be educated in the well-known Scindia School at Gwalior. Here, Shreeji was to stay with people who were being educated in all the modern disciplines. This broad spectrum of education gave him a comprehensive vision to shape the future of Maniknagar. In the midst of scepticism, superstition and seeming lack of confidence in the efficacy of religion in modern society, influenced by the blinding glare of modern science and technology, Shreeji had to reconsider his role and the means of imparting the ancient wisdom to the modern mind.

All of Shri Siddharaj Manik Prabhu's activities were guided by these thoughts.

While new ideas were not rejected just because they were new, the old values also were not forgotten because they were old. Out of the historical heritage, from which humankind had gathered cultural, ethical, moral and social norms, the things which are permanent in nature and Eternal in essence were required to be protected and inculcated in the coming generation. This is what Shri Siddharaj Manik Prabhu did with great sense of passion and dedication.

For all these generations, *Shri Manik Prabhu Sampradaya* was looking for traditional values to inculcate in the character of the human being. *Bhakti* and unquestioned faith in *Guru's* Grace were predominantly emphasised. Shri Martand Manik Prabhu gave a direction to *Jnana*, wisdom of the *Dharma*. Shri Shankar Manik Prabhu and Shri Siddharaj Manik Prabhu felt that along with these, sense of enquiry should also be inculcated in the devotees. They should enquire how they happened to be here in this world? What is the

characteristic of the diversity which they see before them? Where is one proceeding and what should be one's role and objective?

Realising this fact, Shreeji opened a school in Maniknagar, on the model of the school in Gwalior where he had taken his education. Here education was not teaching the pupil only the essentials to make him pass the examination and be prepared to earn his livelihood, but to make it the basic forum which will make him enquire and think about life in general and its values in particular. It is rightly said by Shri Krishna in Gita (IV.38) "There is indeed nothing in the world equal in purity to wisdom. He who becomes perfected by *yoga* finds this of himself in his very Self in course of time" (नहि ज्ञानेन सदृशं पवित्रमिह विद्यते । तत्स्वयं योगसंसिद्धः कालेनात्मनि विन्दति ॥)

This does not mean he gave lesser importance to religious rites and rituals. The tragedy of the modern mind is that what he considers as knowledge is but the

collection of information and not wisdom born out of one's own endeavour or experience which comes out of hard work, sacrifice, austerity or *Tapas*.

In the humble opinion of the writer, Shri Siddharaj Manik Prabhu represented the essential characteristics of Shri Dakshinamurti, who through his very silence instructed each one of his disciples to perceive, hear, reflect and meditate upon the Self, which is Truth.. Yajnavalkya had commended to his wife Maitreyi, "Verily, O Maitreyi, it is the Self that is to be seen, heard of, reflected on and meditated upon" (आत्मा वा अरे दृष्टव्यः श्रोतव्यो मन्तव्यो निदिध्यासितव्यः) (Brihad Aranyak Upanishad II.4.5).

In following the ancient instructions, Shreeji did not find any dichotomy between the vision of the ancient Vedic Seers and the modern scientists. To him, it did not appear strange that when the first atomic bomb was exploded in Nevada, the Atomic Scientist

should exclaim quoting the words of Gita: “If the light of thousand suns were to blaze forth all at once in the sky, that might resemble the splendour of that Exalted Being” (दिवि सूर्यसहस्रस्य भवेद्युगपदुत्थिता । यदि भाः सदृशी सा स्याद्भासस्तस्य महात्मनः ॥) (XI.12). Many of the famous scientists and physicists have bordered between scepticism and belief in an unseen, unknowable Reality which they have not been able to explain.

The entire outlook of Shreeji, therefore, represented the ideal of *samatvam*, equanimity. He would neither be perturbed with unpleasant invitation nor would he be elated with rapturous reception. His patience and humility was the hallmark of his personality. His spiritual capacity was shrouded in his childlike simplicity. He was as keen a participant in philosophical discussion as he was in Cricket and other mundane activities. Brihad Aranyak Upanishad talks of the ideal knower of Brahman. “Let a *Brahman* (the knower of Brahman), after he has done with learning, desire to live as a child. When he has

done both with the state of childhood and with learning, then he becomes a silent spectator. Having done with both meditative and non-meditative states, then he becomes a *Brahman* (knower of *Brahman*)” (तस्माद्ब्राह्मणः पाण्डित्यं निर्विद्य बाल्येन तिष्ठासेत् ॥) (III.5.1).

For one who is inculcated in *Shri Datta Sampradaya*, Shreeji appeared like an *Avadhoota*, taking life as it came and observing the activities of the world as a *Stithaprajna*. He identified himself so much with Shri Manik Prabhu that it was common for him to say, “Shri Manik Prabhu’s Will prevails...” He had nothing of his own, needed nothing for himself. He had the simplicity of Shri Manik Prabhu as well as the grandeur of the Seat which he occupied.

He was a great mystic, which is evident from the *Bhajans* composed by him. What he spoke was heard with attention because it came staright from his heart. He belonged to the tradition of Tukaram, Tulsidas, Kabir,

Rohidas, whose every word speaks love and adoration of the Lord. His emphasis on *Bhakti* and *Bhajans* is because of the disinclination of the modern generation to philosophical learning. In one of the *Bhajans* composed by him he speaks of his great devotion to Shri Manik Prabhu Maharaj:

*When Shri Prabhu Maharaj is near,
Why need there be for me, any fear ?
Who, verily, is That One,
whose be that power,
When he is your Self,
why search for another.
Why such thoughts should for me appear,
When Shri Prabhu Maharaj is near,
Why need there be for me, any fear ?
Pleasures, sorrows or the worldly woes,
Of wealth or of the senses as they arose,
Why should these thoughts
make me morose,
When Shri Prabhu Maharaj is near,
Why need there be for me, any fear ?
By Yoga, by Shakti or Shakta austerities,*

*By Mantras or Tantras or such entreaties,
When I, in such Bliss,
revel with uncertainties,
When Shri Prabhu Maharaj is near,
Why need there be for me, any fear ?
The Vedas, Upanishads,
Shrutis and the Scriptures,
All speak of One Lord,
varied though be the scriptures,
Why should I, in my Bliss,
confuse my Lord in raptures,
When Shri Prabhu Maharaj is near,
Why need there be for me, any fear ?
Austerities may bring
merit and also demerit,
Having faith in my Teacher's
auspicious feet,
Symbolised as
Shri Siddha Sakalamat Seat,
When Shri Prabhu Maharaj is near,
Why need there be for me, any fear ?*

(श्री प्रभु जवळी असता असता मग चिन्ता मज कां?धु ॥ कोण कुणाची
कसली सत्ता । कोण स्वतः आणि कोण पराचा । हा विचार मज कां ।

सुखादिदुःख प्रपंच यातना । वित्तादि विषयाची ती वासना । कल्पुनि मग
भ्रमूं कां ॥ योगादि शक्ति शाक्तोपासना । मंत्रादि यन्त्राची ती साधना ।
साधनी मी रमू कां । वेदादि श्रुति उपनिषद पुराणा । देव तो एकचि रूपे
नाना । संशय मनीं करूं कां । पुण्यादि पापाची तो भावना । सिद्ध सकलमत
प्रभुच्या चरणा । अर्पुनि मग भय कां ॥)

His presence inspired such close affinity that many persons tended to be familiar with him, when they should have remained quiet and respectful. Often devotees played on his patience when his intention was to be compassionate and shed his love. His love for music made each one participant of the *Naad-Brahman* and made each one forget himself and made each one feel that they were the closest to him.

One often felt like asking him the question which King Yadu asked Shri Dattatreya. "Remaining inactive, as it were, whence did you acquire this vast wisdom, even after which, you move like an innocent child? Generally men strive for spiritual merit, riches or enlightenment or for long life, renown or

good fortune. You, yourself, are of able body, learned, skilful, handsome and soft spoken. You do nothing, covet nothing and behave like a simpleton, lunatic, or a devil. In the midst of people burning with the fire of greed and desire, you remain unscathed like a Lord of the Elephants standing in the waters of Ganges. Tell me, who is enquiring thus, the reason of the joy abiding in your mind, even though you are living alone and devoid of enjoyment” (कुतो बुद्धिरियं ब्रह्मन्नकर्तुः सुविशारदा । यामासाद्य भवाँल्लोकं विद्वांश्चरति बालवत् । । प्रायो धर्मार्थकामेषु विवित्सायां च मानवाः । हेतुनैव समीहन्ते आयुषे यशसः श्रियः । त्वं तु कल्पः कविर्दक्षः सुभगोऽमृतभाषणः । न कर्ता नेहसे किञ्चिज्जडोन्मत्तपिशाचवत् ॥ जनेषु दह्यमानेषु कामलोभदवाग्निना । न तप्यसेऽग्निना मुक्तो गंगाभस्थः इव द्विपः ॥ त्वं हि नः पृच्छतां ब्रह्मन्नात्मन्यानन्दकारणम् । ब्रूहि स्पर्शविहीनस्य भवतः केवलात्मनः ॥) (Bhagavat Purana XI.7.26-30).

No one possibly asked this question to Shreeji. None, in fact, needed to ask. Blessed are those who got an opportunity to interact with Shri Siddharaj Manik Prabhu. None can surely describe the taste of honey who have not, in the first instance, tasted it. We may,

therefore, with the seer of Brihad Aranyak Upanishad speak, “Let a wise *Brahman* after knowing him alone, practise the wisdom (spoken by him). Let him not reflect on many words, for that, verily is mere weariness of speech” (तमेव धीरो विज्ञाय प्रज्ञां कुर्वीत ब्राह्मणः । नानुध्यायाद्ब्रह्मच्छब्दान्वाचो विग्लापनंहि तदिति ॥) (IV. 4.21).

Shreeji’s more than five-decade-long efforts of developing of Shri Manik Prabhu Samsthan not only as a spiritual organisation but also as a social institution committed to the cause of wider societal development, bore fruits of success and thus Maniknagar was transformed from a sleepy little hamlet into a throbbing centre of social, educational and cultural activities.

After successfully heading the Samsthan for more than six decades, after bringing material and spiritual happiness and a sense of purpose into the lives of thousands of his devotees, after spreading Shri Prabhu’s divine message of love and

equality into every nook and corner of the country, after bringing Maniknagar on the forefront of the spiritual social and educational map of India, Shreeji attained Maha-Samadhi on the 6th of October 2009.



16. Shri Dnyanraj Manik Prabhu

Shri Dnyanraj Manik Prabhu Maharaj was born to His Holiness Shri Siddharaj Manik Prabhu Maharaj and Sow. Meerabai Saheb on 3rd December 1958 as their eldest child. He was sent to the famous Scindia School for his education. The serene, regal and educationally inviting atmosphere of the historic fort of Gwalior in which the school is situated and the able guidance from his illustrious teachers provided him the right kind of opportunity and environment to blossom into a fine young

gentleman with a keen sense of enquiry, a deep understanding of the subjects, a flair for public speaking and literary writing and above all an out-of-the-box thinking, which is the characteristic of his scholarly but endearing personality. He was awarded the President of India's Gold Medal for his outstanding performance in the All India Secondary School Examination of the C.B.S.E. and was also adjudged as the 'Best Boy' of the Scindia School.

After completing his scholastic education at the Scindia School he returned to Maniknagar to take charge as the Secretary of Shri Manik Prabhu Samsthan in the year 1975 and under the able guidance of His Holiness Shri Siddharaj Manik Prabhu Maharaj took up the challenge of transforming Shri Manik Prabhu Samsthan into a leading socio-spiritual organisation of the country. During his stint as the Secretary of the Samsthan he brought about revolutionary changes in the administrative setup of the Samsthan, took up

construction of Dharmashalas and Guest-Houses, created other important and necessary facilities for the benefit of the visiting devotees, gave a complete face-lift to the Bhandarkhana (Temple-Kitchen), introduced Nitya Anna Daan (free meals for the visiting pilgrims), started the publication of Samsthan's monthly journal 'MANIK RATNA' and edited it himself, published a lot of new books for the propagation Shri Prabhu's 'Sakalamat Siddhant', successfully organized various celebrations such as Shri Manohar Manik Prabhu Maha-Niryan Shatabdi in the year 1977, Shri Martand Manik Prabhu Mahaniryan Ardha-Shatabdi in the year 1986, Shri Siddharaj Manik Prabhu Maharaj Ji's 50th birthday Celebrations in the year 1989, Saardha Shata Samvatsarik Jayanti Mahotsav in the year 1995 and the diamond jubilee celebrations of the Peetharohana of Shri Siddharaj Manik Prabhu Maharaj in the year 2005.

He is a prolific writer in Hindi, Marathi and Urdu and has composed over five

hundred compositions in Hindi and Urdu with equal command portraying the various shades of human emotions and spanning over a broad spectrum of subjects such as philosophy, religion and current affairs. Recognising his contribution to the fields of literature and philosophy the Gulbarga University honoured him with an Honorary Doctorate.

Shreeji ascended the holy Seat of Shri Prabhu as its sixth Peethadhipati after the Maha-Samadhi of Shri Sadguru Siddharaj Manik Prabhu Maharaj in October 2009. Shri Maharaj ji inherits the illustrious legacy of his predecessors and combines in him the best of all his preceding *Acharyas* in terms of the level of spiritual attainment, the deep understanding of the scriptures with special regard to the principles of *Advaita Vedant*, which form the basis of Shri Prabhu's *Sakalamat Siddhant*, the capacity to influence his followers to tread the path of righteousness through his knowledge-packed spiritual discourses, the

deep sense of concern for the spiritual and material well-being of the society at large and the missionary zeal of his immediate predecessor His Holiness Shri Siddharaj Manik Prabhu Maharaj to work selflessly for the educational and social development of the poorest of the poor.

The Samsthan is set to scale newer heights in the service of humanity under his able and inspiring stewardship.





श्री माणिकप्रभु संस्थान

माणिकनगर, जिला बीदर, कर्नाटक - ५८५३५३



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