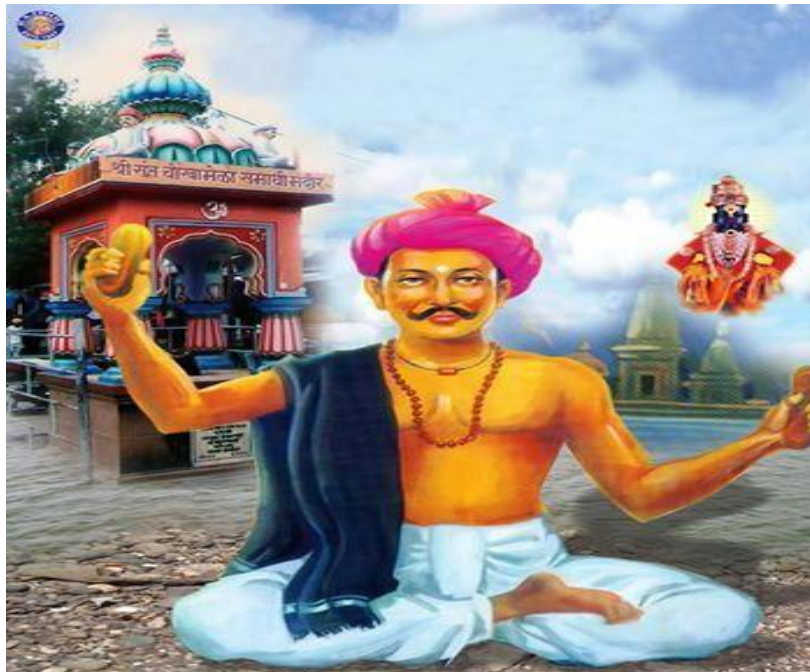


Sant Chokhamela

The inclusive nature of the Varkari sect (sampradaya) led to the rise of its loyal followers in society. Among these devoted followers, there is one Sant called Chokhamela. The gates of Varkari sect were open to all shudras and untouchables. That is why it attracted unprecedented followers. Chokhamela was one such sant from those.

There is a bit of ambiguity regarding his birth year. It is said that he was born as a Mahar in Mangalwedha village of Solapur district of Maharashtra. His father's name was Sudama, and his mother's name was Savitribai. Both were ardent devotees of lord Vitthala. Due to his parents' grace, he got attracted to the Varkari sect. As an ardent devotee of Vitthal, he visited Pandharpur every year. Sant Chokhamela used to consider Namdev as his Guru.



Being a untouchable, he carried the dead animals and their carcasses away from human habitat. Despite this, he kept his mind busy worshipping the eternal God. He had to face a lot of discrimination because of that. But it did not stop his devotion to God. He worked with his family to bring consciousness regarding bhakti. Chanting the name of lord Vitthal was his daily work.

To fill the vacuum of joy and happiness created due to society's unjust behavior towards them, most of them decided to walk on the path shown by Varkari Sampradaya. Devotion towards God was like a ray of hope and enthusiasm in their lives. But a teacher is inevitable if one wants to attain knowledge. Sant Namdev came as a saviour. True devotion towards

God helps to get rid of toxicity in your mind. Sant Chokhamela liberated himself from the toxicity with true faith in God.

Sant Chokhamela always preached the importance of truthfulness and purity of character. He also cherished this ideal till the end of his life. Due to the purity and sacredness of his character, he was respected by everyone. He struggled throughout his life to establish new values by opposing discrimination like caste, creed in the path of devotion. In some verses, Sant Chokhakhameela penned out the pain of being untouchable.

अवध्या वर्णमाजी हीन केली जाती। विटाळ म्हणती क्षणोक्षणी।

कोणीहि अंगिकार न करिती माझा। दूर-दूर हो जा अवघे म्हणती॥

He says, is my body impure? Is my speech impure? Why do others stay away from me? Why everyone hesitates to accept me?

Sant Chokhamela had achieved the position of the best devotee through his devotion and the grace of the Saints he had received, even without entering the temple. Because of his caste, he was not allowed to enter the temple. He says,

आंत जाऊन घ्यावे दर्शन। हा अधिकार नाही त्याकारण।।

म्हणेनि घ्यानी आणेनि जगज्जीवन। दुरुनि नमन करीत से।।

Sant condemned the very thought processes that believed in untouchability and discrimination. One human considering the other one impure or untouchable is so blatantly erratic. He spent his whole life making people leave untouchability. He followed the path of Bhakti and never believed in religious rituals. Apart from chanting the name, he never adopted any code of conduct for devotion to God.

Opposing the religious values established during the time of Sant Chokhamela was an arduous and courageous task. But Sant Chokhamela took pains to protect the interests of the Bahujan Samaj and to make them recognize the actual values of policy and philosophy. To popularize the simple form of devotion, he brought it to the people in the most straightforward way for all the people.

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