

Chokhamela ([Marathi](#) : चोखामेळा) was a [Hindu saint](#) in [Maharashtra, India](#) in the 14th century. He belonged to the [Mahar caste](#), ^{[[need quotation to verify](#)]}, which was considered that time one of the low castes in India. ^{[1][2]} He was born at Mehuna Raja, a village in [Deulgaon Raja](#) Taluka of [Buldhana district](#). He lived at [Mangalvedha](#) in [Maharashtra](#). He wrote many [Abhangas](#). One of his known Abhangas is 'Abir Gulal Udhlit Rang'. Social activist Arvind Prabhakar Kayande Started Celebrating "Chokhamela Festival" in Deulgaon Raja. ^[3] He was one of the first low-cast poets in India.

Life and Family

Chokhamela lived with his wife Soyarabai and son [Karmamela](#) in Mangalvedha. Chokhamela's task was to guard and work in farms of upper-caste people. His family also followed [varkari](#) sect. ^[4]

- [Soyarabai](#) - Wife ^[5]
- [Nirmala](#) - Sister and her husband [Banka](#) (who is brother of Soyarabai) ^{[4]: 84} ^[5]
- [Karmamela](#) - Son ^[5]

Chokhamela was initiated into [bhakti](#) (spirituality) by the poet-saint [Namdev](#) (1270-1350 CE). Once when he visited Pandharpur, he listened to Sant Namdev's kirtan. Already a devotee of Vitthal ([Vithoba](#)), Chokha was moved by Namdev's teachings.

Later, he moved to [Pandharpur](#). The traditional story is that the upper castes here did not allow him to enter the temple, ^[6] nor did they allow him to stand in the door of the temple, so he instead built a hut on the other side of the river [Chandrabhaga](#).

While working on construction of a wall in Mangalvedha, near Pandharpur, the wall fell down, crushing some workers. Chokha was one of them. His tomb is in front of the Vitthal temple, Pandharpur, where it can be seen to this day. According to a legend the bones of the dead Chokhamela were still chanting *Vitthal* , *Vitthal*, yearning to visit the Vitthal temple. The bones were buried at the footsteps of the Vitthal temple. In early 20th century, the [Dalit](#) leader [B. R. Ambedkar](#) attempted to visit the temple, but was stopped at the burial site of Chokhamela and denied entry beyond that point for being a [Mahar](#).