

# INDIA'S INTANGIBLE HERITAGE : KUMBH MELA

An aerial photograph of the Kumbh Mela festival. The image shows a large body of water with a massive crowd of people gathered along the shoreline. Numerous small boats are docked along the water's edge. The crowd is dense and colorful, with many people wearing traditional Indian attire. The water is a deep green color, and the sky is a clear blue.

PRESENTED BY: Mohit Singhal  
Gaurav Meena  
Prabhat Kumar (M26)

# INDEX

- INTRODUCTION
- HISTORY
- SIGNIFICANCE OF KUMBH MELA
- IMPACT OF KUMBH MELA
- RITUALS
- IN CULTURE



# INTRODUCTION

- ❑ Kumbh Mela is a major pilgrimage and festival in Hinduism.
- ❑ The festival is one of the largest peaceful gatherings in the world, and considered as the "world's largest congregation of religious pilgrims". It has been inscribed on the **UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**.
- ❑ The ***Kumbha*** in Kumbha Mela literally means "jar, pot" and the word ***mela*** means "unite, move together, assembly" in Sanskrit, particularly in the context of fairs, community celebration.
- ❑ It is celebrated in a cycle of approximately 12 years, based on the Hindu Luni-solar calendar and the relative astrological positions of Jupiter, the sun and the moon, at four river-bank pilgrimage sites: **Prayagraj** ([Ganges-Yamuna-Sarasvati](#) rivers confluence), [Haridwar](#) (Ganges), [Nashik](#) ([Godavari](#)), and [Ujjain](#) ([Shipra](#)).

- The festival is observed over many days, with the day of **Amavasya** attracting the largest number on a single day.
- The festival is marked by a ritual dip in the waters, but it is also a celebration of community commerce with numerous fairs, education, religious discourses by saints, mass feedings of monks or the poor, and entertainment spectacle.
- The seekers believe that bathing in these rivers is a means to **prayascitta** (atonement) for past mistakes, and that it cleanses them of their sins.
- Elsewhere in many parts of India, similar but smaller community pilgrimage and bathing festivals are called the Magha Mela, Makar Mela or equivalent. For example, in Tamil Nadu, the Magha Mela with water-dip ritual is a festival of antiquity. This festival is held at the Mahamaham tank (near Kaveri river) every 12 years at Kumba-konam, attracts millions of South Indian Hindus and has been described as the Tamil Kumbh Mela.

- Types of Kumbh Melas

- ❖ **Maha Kumbh Mela:** It is held only in Prayagraj. It comes in every 144 years or after 12 Purna (Complete) Kumbh Mela.
- ❖ **Purna Kumbh Mela:** It comes every 12 years. Mainly held at 4 Kumbh Mela Places in India i.e. Prayagraj, Haridwar, Nashik and Ujjain. It rotates every 12 years at these 4 places.
- ❖ **Ardh Kumbh Mela:** It means Half Kumbh Mela which is held every 6 years in India only at two places i.e. Haridwar and Prayagraj.
- ❖ **Kumbh Mela:** Held at four different places and is organised by the state governments. Millions of people participate with spiritual enthusiasm.
- ❖ **Magh Kumbh Mela:** It is also known as Mini Kumbh Mela which is held annually and only at Prayagraj. It is organised in the month of Magh according to the Hindu Calendar.

The venue for Kumbh Mela is decided according to the position of the Sun, Moon and Jupiter hold in that period in different zodiac signs.

# History

- The *Mahabharata* mentions a bathing pilgrimage at Prayag as a means of **Prāyaścitta** (atonement) for past mistakes and guilt.
- There are other references to Prayaga and river-side festivals in ancient Indian texts, including at the places where present-day Kumbh Melas are held, but the exact age of the Kumbh Mela is uncertain.
- The festival is traditionally credited to the 8th-century Hindu philosopher and saint Aadi Shankara, as a part of his efforts to start major Hindu gatherings for philosophical discussions and debates along with Hindu monasteries across the Indian subcontinent.
- There is ample evidence in historical manuscripts and inscriptions of an annual Magha Mela in Hinduism – with periodic larger gatherings after 6 or 12 years – where pilgrims gathered in massive numbers and where one of the rituals included a sacred dip in a river or holy tank

- Many devout Hindus believe that the Kumbh Mela originated in times immemorial and is attested in the Hindu mythology about **Samundra Manthan** (churning of the ocean) found in the Vedic texts.
- Some Hindu Scholars describes the creation of a "**pot of amrita** (nectar of immortality)" after the forces of good and evil churn the ocean of creation.
- The Gods and Demons fight over this pot, the "kumbh," of nectar in order to gain immortality. In a later day extension to the legend, the pot is spilled at four places, and that is the origin of the four Kumbha Melas.
- According to James Lochtefeld – a scholar of Indian religions,  
the phrase **Kumbh Mela** and historical data about it is missing in early Indian texts. However, these historical texts "clearly reveal large, well-established bathing festivals" that were either annual or based on the twelve-year cycle of planet Jupiter



# Significance of Kumbh mela

- The Kumbh Mela is believed to be the most sacred Hindu pilgrimage of all, and that is why it attracts millions upon millions of pilgrims, including holy men, devotees and many foreigners also join in.
- Usually extra rail and air services are required to manage the sheer volume of people in attendance.





- The main bathing day, which is usually the busiest day of the festival, is called Mauni Amavasya Snan.
- Another day of huge significance is Bhishma Ekadashi Snan, which is the day Bhishma Pithamaha, the most powerful of the Kuru dynasty (which the Kauravs belonged to) narrated the greatness of Lord Krishna to Yudishtra, the eldest of the 5 Pandav brothers.



## Mythological Significance

- The practice of Kumbh Mela is attributed to a legend of Lord Vishnu described in Mahabharata. According to this legend, drops of nectar which Lord Vishnu was carrying in an earthen pot fell in river Ganga, when he was trying to protect it from the Asuras as the nectar and rendered the river with magical purifying powers.
- This is the primary reason behind holding the fair on the banks of four rivers Ganga, Shipra, Godavari and Yamuna and the confluence of three rivers Triveni Sangam.





# Impact Of Kumbh Mela

- There are many religious impacts of Kumbha Mela on Hindus across the globe. Day by day, people are distancing themselves from their cultures and traditions so it is the best way to rejuvenate themselves.
- This beautiful holy festival and gathering of Hindus has an impact on family relations.



- It also provides adventure and education.
- One can witness saints, Naga saints and Akharas who appeal to common people with their mysticism and spiritual wealth.





- There is a great impact of the Kumbha fair on employment as well.
- As it is already known that Kumbha Mela is the world's largest gathering therefore it emerged to be an economic blessing as well.
- Travel and hospitality sectors get benefitted by it due to the involvement of a large number of people to travel from their location to the location of Kumbha fair.



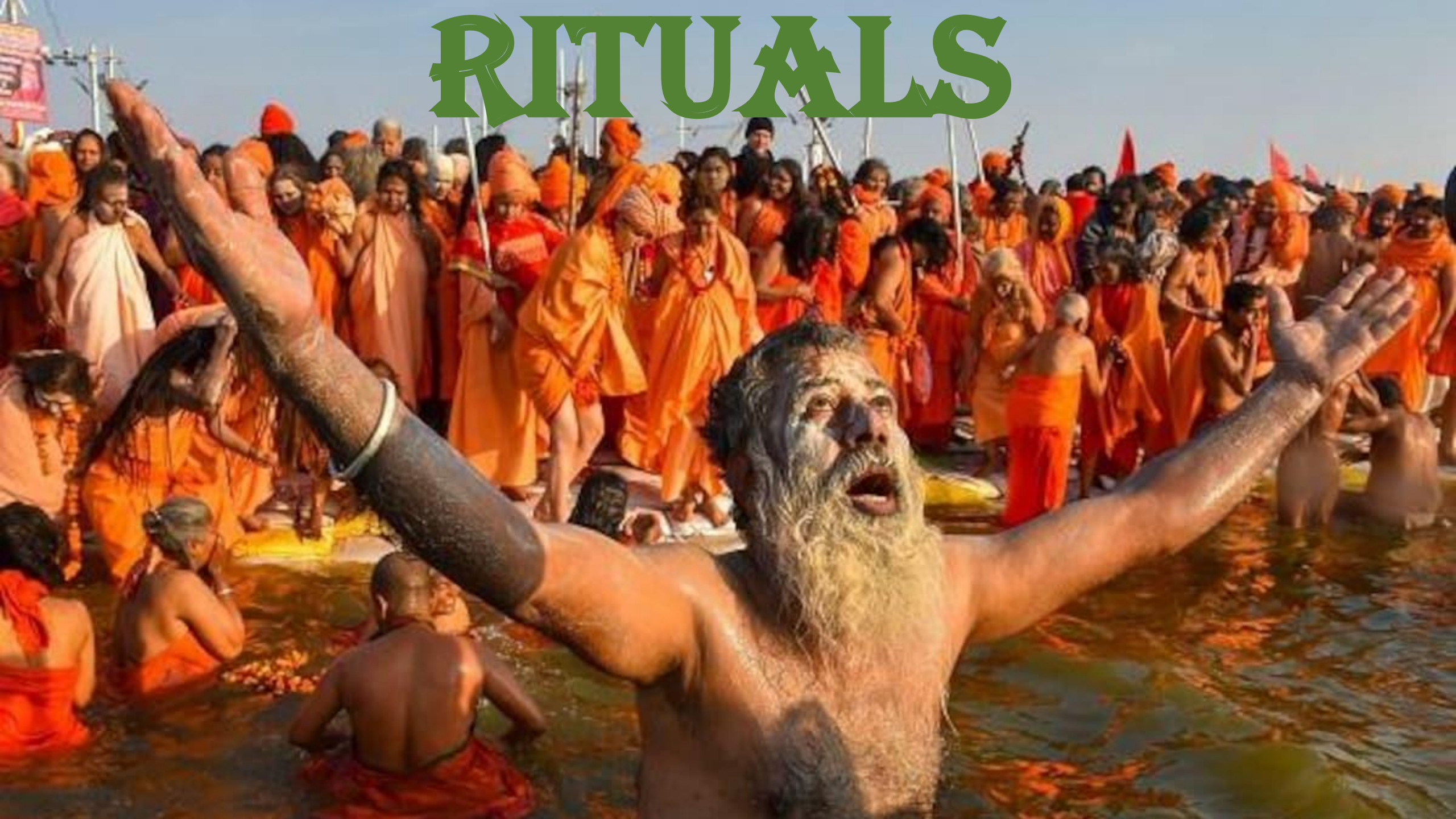


- Locals or people from nearby places can come to sell their commodities at a good price as Kumbh Mela is visited by many foreigners as well.
- According to reports, the Kumbha fair in 2019 was witnessed by more than 120 Million people and due to this reason, approximately more than 6,00,000 employment options were generated.





# RITUALS





# BATHING AND PROCESSIONS





- Amavasya : The most cherished day for bathing
- Shahi Snan or Rajyogi Snan :
  - Thirteen sadhu Akharas to bathe first. This event – called *shahi snan* or *rajyogi snan* – is marked by a celebratory processional march, with banners, flags, elephants, horses and musicians along with the naked or scantily clad monk.
  - The largest contingent is the Juna khara, traced to Adi Shankara, representing a diverse mix from the four of the largest Hindu monasteries in India with their headquarters at Sringeri, Dvarka, Jyotirmatha and Govardhana.





SRINGERI,  
DVARKA,  
JYOTIRMATHA  
AND  
GOVARDHANA.







# FEASTS, FESTIVITIES AND DISCUSSIONS

- *Kalpavasis:*
  - They attend spiritual discourses, fast and pray over the month, and these Kumbh pilgrims are called *Kalpavasis*.
- *Mahaprasada:*
  - These ritual practices are punctuated by celebratory feasts where vast number of people sit in rows and share a community meal – prepared by volunteers from charitable donations.



# KALPVASIS







*Mahaprasada*



# FEASTS, FESTIVITIES AND DISCUSSIONS

- Other activities :
- Religious Discussions ( Pravachan)
- Devotional Singing (Kirtan)
- Doctrines Deabate
- Shastrartha
- *Kalagram* (venues of *kala*, Indian arts), laser light shows, classical dance and musical performances from different parts of India, thematic gates reflecting the historic regional architectural diversity, boat rides, tourist walks to historic sites near the river, as well opportunities to visit the monastic camps to watch yoga adepts and spiritual discourses.



[www.braj.org](http://www.braj.org) - DEHR



# DARSHAN

- Darshan, or viewing, is an important part of the Kumbh Mela
- Members of the Hindu public to interact with the Sadhus and to take "darshan." They are able to "seek instruction or advice in their spiritual lives."
- Darshan focuses on the visual exchange, where there is interaction with a religious deity and the worshiper is able to visually "'drink' divine power."
- The Kumbh Mela is arranged in camps that give Hindu worshipers access to the Sadhus





# IN CULTURE

- Documentaries
- *Kings with Straw Mats* (1998) directed by [Ira Cohen](#)
- *Kumbh Mela: The Greatest Show on Earth* (2001) directed by Graham Day
- [Short Cut to Nirvana: Kumbh Mela](#) (2004) directed by Nick Day and produced by "Maurizio Benazzo"
- *Kumbh Mela: Songs of the River* (2004) by Nadeem Uddin
- *Invocation, Kumbh Mela* (2008), *Kumbh Mela 2013: Living with Mahatiagi* (2013) by the Ukrainian Religious Studies Project Ahamot
- *Kumbh Mela: Walking with the Nagas* (2011)
- *Amrit: Nectar of Immortality* (2012) directed by Jonas Scheu and Philipp Eyer.



THANK YOU

