



Kumbha Mela

"More than 70 million Hindu pilgrims took part in the Kumbha Mela pilgrimage, making it by far the largest peaceful gathering anywhere in the world."

Kumbha Mela is a sacred Hindu pilgrimage that takes place four times every twelve years (approximately once every three years) at one of the following four locations of India:

Haridwar (Uttar Pradesh), which literally means the "*Gateway to God*", where the river Ganga enters the plains from the Himalayas. This is where the next Kumbha Mela will take place in March & April 2010.

Prayag, also known as Allahabad, in the state of Uttar Pradesh at the confluence of three holy rivers: Ganga (Ganges), Yamuna and Saraswati where it will be held in 2013.

Ujjain (Madhya Pradesh), on the banks of the Shipra river.

Nasik (Maharashtra), on the banks of the Godavari river.

Kumbh Mela is attended by millions of people on a single day. On January 15th 2007, the most auspicious day of the Kumbha Mela in Allahabad, more than 5 million participated. Over 45 days beginning in January 2007, more than 70 million Hindu pilgrims took part in the pilgrimage, making it by far the largest peaceful gathering anywhere in the world. Thousands of holy men and women (monks, saints and sadhus) also attend, and the

auspiciousness of the festival is in part attributable to this.

The major event of the festival is to bathe at certain sacred spots of the river on certain auspicious days. Other activities include religious discussions, devotional singing, mass feeding of holy men and women and the poor, as well as religious assemblies where doctrines are debated and standardized. A large tented city is erected and pilgrims stay at tents owned by Pandas (religious and spiritual guides) and at various ashrams. Others will just camp on the ground or turn up for the actual bathing day.

Origins and History of the Kumbha Mela

The Kumbha Mela is celebrated according to Hindu Vedic Astrology when the planet of Brihaspati moves into the zodiac sign of Aquarius or Kumbha. It finds mention in several Hindu sacred scriptures including the Srimad Bhagavatam, Vishnu Purana, Mahabharata and Ramayana.

The Gods had lost their strength, and to regain it, they thought of churning the Ksheera Saghara (primordial ocean of milk) for amrit (the nectar of immortality). This required them to make a temporary agreement with their arch enemies, the demons or Asuras, to work together with a promise of sharing the nectar equally thereafter. However, when the Kumbha (urn) containing the amrita appeared, a fight ensued. For twelve days and twelve nights (equivalent to twelve human years) the gods and demons fought in the sky for the pot of amrita. It is believed that during the battle, the celestial bird Garuda, the vehicle of Vishnu, flew away with the Kumbha of elixir and drops of amrita fell at four places on earth:



Prayag, Haridwar, Ujjain and Nashik, and that is where the Kumbha (pitcher) Mela (gathering) is observed every twelve years.

Churning the Ocean of Milk

The Devas (Gods) and Asuras (Demons) churn the ocean of milk to acquire amrit, the 'Nectar of Immortality'

After visiting the Kumbh Mela of 1895, Mark Twain wrote:

"It is wonderful, the power of a faith like that, that can make multitudes upon multitudes of the old and weak and the young and frail enter without hesitation or complaint upon such incredible journeys and endure the resultant miseries without repining. It is done in love, or it is done in fear; I do not know which it is. No matter what the impulse is, the act born of it is beyond imagination, marvellous to our kind of people."



Sivananda Pilgrimage to Holy Hardwar and the Himalayas, North India



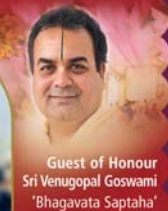
Swami Sivananda (1887 - 1963) Swami Vishnudevananda (1927 - 1993)

The programme includes one week at the Kumbha Mela in Hardwar, plus a week of yoga Sadhana in Uttarkashi, Himalayas

Kumbha mela

February 14 - March 1, 2010

"All glory be unto Mother Ganga, the giver of life, light and love."
- Swami Sivananda



Guest of Honour Sri Venugopal Goswami 'Bhagavata Saptaha'



Sri Potti Swami 'Devotional Indian Ceremonies'

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