

ALLAHABAD MAHAKUMBH - 2013 A JOURNEY**Dr. Hariom Prakash Singh**

(Associate Professor, Department Of Political Science)

H.N.B. Government P.G. College Khatima, U.S.Nagar U.K.

Kumbh Mela is a mass Hindu pilgrimage of faith in which Hindus gather to bath in a sacred river. It is considered to be the largest peaceful gathering in the world where around 100 million people were expected to visit during the Maha Kumbh Mela in 2013 in Allahabad. It is held every third year at one of the four places by rotation: Haridwar, Allahabad (Prayaga), Nashik and Ujjain. Thus the Kumbh Mela is held at each of these four places every twelfth year. *Ardha* ("Half") *Kumbh Mela* is held at only two places, Haridwar and Allahabad, every sixth year. The rivers at these four places are: the Ganges (*Ganga*) at Haridwar, the confluence (*Sangam*) of the Ganges and the Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati at Allahabad, the Godawari at Nashik, and the Shipra at Ujjain. The name Kumbh Mela comes from Hindi, and in the original Sanskrit and other Indian languages it is more often known as Kumbha Mela. *Kumbha* means a pitcher and *Mela* means *fair* in Sanskrit. Mahakumbh at Allahabad is perennial process of a tradition that date back to centuries. First mention of this mega event can be found in the writings of Hieun - Tsang during the reign of Harshvardha in seventh century A.D. This tradition of Mahakumbh started with the belief that during Samudra-Manthan, when Amrit came out, war broke out between Devas and Ashuras for the possession of AmritKalash in the ensuing scuffle drops of Amrit fell at four places i.s. Haridwar, Allahabad, Ujjain and Nasik. From then on Kumbh-Mela is organised at every twelve years and Ardhakumbh at every six year at the above mentioned places. Crores of people come in search of Amrit at every kumbh to achieve immortality.

Kumbh Mela takes place every twelve years at one of four places: Allahabad, Haridwar, Ujjain and Nashik. The Mela in its different forms alternates between Prayag, Nashik, Ujjain and Haridwar every third year.

- Kumbh Mela: Held at all four places every three years.
- Ardha Kumbh Mela: Held at Haridwar and Prayag every 6 years.
- Purna Kumbh Mela: Held only at Prayag every 12 years.^[16]
- Maha Kumbh Mela: Held only at Prayag every 144 years.^{[17][18]}

Kumbh Mela is celebrated at different locations depending on the position of the planet of Brhaspati (Jupiter) and the sun. When Jupiter and the sun are in the zodiac sign Leo (Simha Rashi) it is held in

Trimbakeshwar, Nashik; when the sun is in Aquarius (Kumbh Rashi) it is celebrated at Haridwar; when Jupiter is in Taurus (Vrishabha Rashi) and the sun is in Capricorn (Makar Rashi) Kumbh Mela is celebrated at Prayag; and Jupiter and the sun are in Scorpio (Vrishchik Rashi) the Mela is celebrated at Ujjain.^{[23][24]} Each site's celebration dates are calculated in advance according to a special combination of zodiacal positions of Sun, Moon, and Jupiter.

Being from Allahabad I have grown-up watching this spectacular event time and again during my span of 45 years. Mere flow of people at one place at a time without any apparent reason-merely on the basis of faith has baffled rationalist and intellectuals alike. Mahakumbh is a spectacular display of faith, which also serves as a reminder of how order and organisation flow out of utter chaos. It is easily one of the Hinduism great traditions, on which with its almost limitless diversity is the antithesis of a globalised monochromatic world of materialism. Mahakumbh signifies the varieties of societal and religious beliefs and ways to self - realisation. No two paths need to be alike; one is most a Hindu when one is least a Hindu. Hinduism propensity to absorb a multitude of thoughts including even atheism makes it as one of diverse religious culture to exist.

Hinduism is perhaps the only religion that does not require a person to make one a Hindu. Infact there is no requirement at all, the reason why there is no ex-communication from Hinduism. In Hinduism schema, even adharma, opposed as it is, must be acknowledged as having sprung from dharma. Another important feature about Hinduism is that it is perhaps the only major religion pre-dominantly contained within an ethnic and geographical boundary, unlike Judaism, Christianity and Islam and apparently unorganized, it is at Mahakumbh that the organisation behind Hinduism becomes evident.

Another reminiscence of organisational Hinduism is the colour saffron. Hinduism when challenged by Buddhism, Adi-Sankaracharya re-established the Sanatan Dharma by creating four seats of Hinduism, began monistic tradition, and gave the monks saffron colour-a colour derived from flame. Shankar said anyone who wears a flame-coloured robe must imagine himself unflinchingly on the chitta or the funeral pyre, burning his shanskars and making sure none is added.

In congregation of akharas at Mahakumbh again signifies that some sort of order is in place from the apparent chaos that is witnessed in Mahakumbh. The word Akhara is the corruption of word 'Aksara', which means indestructible. These Akharas were armed camps to secure Sanatan Dharma from both external aggression and internal disorder. The seven camps were Avahan, Atal, Mahanirvani, Anand, Niranjani, Juna and Agni, who worshipped the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. But mutation being the nature of the things, the seven Akharas split into three more after war erupted between the

followers of Vishnu and Shiva. This led to vaishnav Acharayas, Ramanand, Ramanuj and Vallabh creating the Digamar, Nirvani and Niromohi Akhras for the followers of Vishnu.

Then there was sixth entry into the fold with Sri-chand, son of Guru Nanak, a devoted disciple of illustrious Guru, Sri-chand always believed he would succeed Nanak as the leader of the new faith. But when time came to declare a successor, Nanak named Bhai Lehna and not Sri-chand-who was deeply disappointed. Bhai Lehna as Guru Angad took over the reins of Sikh Faith. Learning not to have any expectations or desire, as these inevitably lead to disillusionment, Sri Chand found Udaseen sect which cultivates indifference to everything. Since all temporal power and glory are fleeting. Udaseen was rejected by Sikhism and embraced by Hinduism. Later Udaseen broke into Bada, Naya and NirmalUdaseen, taking the number of Akaharas to Thirteen. Apart from Akaharas there are multitudes of organisation which contribute their bit in giving Hinduism an organisational Symbol. People of different faith and religion have come and joined this faith; therefore it is difficult to lay rigid rules or any rule at all.

At Mahakumbh one come to witness a spectacular flow of Humanity, the sheer number of human - beings gathering at a place at a particular point of time and taking the holy dip is a challenge to both rationalists and atheist alike and underlines the importance of permanence of faith and ideas. 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, marvelous to our kind of people, the cold whites.”

The order of entering the water is fixed, with the Juna, the Niranjani and Mahanirvani akharas preceding.

It would not be just if I fail to appreciate the Mela administration for all the efforts they had put in to make it a success. It is not easy to manage to crowd of over three crores at a confined place on a particular day and time. Mela administration has done all to facilitate comfortable dip at sangam. Hospitals were at place in each sector. Each sector had a SDM, CO and Thana or general administration. Length and breadth of the Ghats were spread so that the devotees could have a comfortable Bath. Number of Mobile towers was erected and people were given the facility of internet and broad-band. Connectivity allowed people to remain in contact with each other so that there was appreciable drop in

the rate of the people lost. Electricity department had done wonderful job and even the remote places were lighted. It was a mega event that was to be seen and believed. Apart from this, the unfortunate event of stampede at sector - 12 and Allahabad railway station where more than forty people died, underlies the fact that it is the ultimate force that decides about the fate of the things no matter how hard we strive. This reinforces our belief in mysticism, faith and above all God.

REFERENCES

- "Nashik Kumbh Mela dates declared – Indian Express". *The Indian Express*. 2011. Retrieved 15 January 2013. First Shahi Snaanam will be held on August 29, 2015, at Rama Kunda, the second on September 13 and the third on September 18
- "Business Line: Features News: Stage set for Maha Kumbh Mela 2013". *Business Line*. 2013. Retrieved 15 January 2013. Will conclude on Maha Shivaratri on March 10.
- "India's Kumbh Mela festival holds most auspicious day". *BBC News*. 11 February 2013.
- Sugden, Joanna (2 February 2013). "How the Kumbh Mela Crowds Are Counted - India Real Time - WSJ". *The Wall Street Journal*. Wall Street Journal. Archived from the original on 3 February 2013. Retrieved 26 May 2014.
- McLean, Kama. "Seeing, Being Seen, and Not Being Seen: Pilgrimage, Tourism, and Layers of Looking at the Kumbh Mela." (2009): 319-41. Ebscohost. Web. 28 Sept. 2014..
- The Maha Kumbh Mela 2001 indianembassy.org
- Rashid, Omar (February 11, 2013). "Over three crore devotees take the dip at Sangam". *The Hindu* (Chennai, India).
- Kumbh Mela – Timeline *What Is Hinduism?: Modern Adventures into a Profound Global Faith*, by Editors of Hinduism Today, Hinduism Today Magazine Editors. Published by Himalayan Academy Publications, 2007. ISBN 1-934145-00-9. 242–243.
- Kumbh Mela *Channel 4*.
- Ramayana, Book I; Canto: XLV – *The Quest for the Amrit Ramayana of Valmiki*.
- The Holiest Day in History *Time*, 31 January 1977.
- Urn Festival *Time*, 1 May 1950.
- official 2013 Kumbh website
- K Shadananan Nair, "Role of water in the development of civilization of India: A review of ancient literature, traditional practices and beliefs", pp. 160–166 of *The Basis of Civilization: Water Science?*, ed. J. C. Rodda and Lucio Ubertini (Wallingford, Oxon: International Association of Hydrological Science, 2004. ISBN 1-901502-57-0), p.165. Here [1] at Google Books.

-
- John C. Rodda; Lucio Ubertini; Symposium on the Basis of Civilization Water Science (2004). *Water Science*. IAHS Press. pp. 165–. ISBN 978-1-901502-57-2. Retrieved 15 January 2013.
 - "Purna Kumbh Mela at Prayag". Explora Films. Retrieved 24 October 2012.
 - Huston Smith; Phil Cousineau (4 September 2012). *And Live Rejoicing: Chapters from a Charmed Life: Personal Encounters With Spiritual Mavericks, Remarkable Seekers, and the World's Great Religious Leaders*. New World Library. pp. 73–. ISBN 978-1-60868-071-9. Retrieved 15 January 2013.
 - Chris Philpott (24 January 2011). *Green Spirituality: One Answer to Global Environmental Problems and World Poverty*. AuthorHouse. pp. 45–. ISBN 978-1-4520-8290-5. Retrieved 15 January 2013.
 - "Lakhs take holy dip as `Maha Kumbh` begins". *zeenews.india.com*. 2013. Retrieved 15 January 2013. millions of pilgrims in taking a holy dip in the Sangam the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati
 - "Preparation for 2015 Kumbh caught in bureaucratic procedures, politics". *The Times of India*. 2012. Retrieved 15 January 2013. The Shaiv Akhadas take a holy dip at Kushavart in Trimbakeshwar
 - "Shahi Snanam begins at Kumbh Mela". *mid-day.com*. 2003. Retrieved 15 January 2013. The Vaishnavites have a bath in Nashik, while the Shaivaites at Trimbakeshwar.
 - "Madhya Pradesh clears Rs 192 crore for water facility during 2016 Kumbh Mela". *Ahmedabad Mirror*. 2012. Retrieved 15 January 2013. 2016 Simhastha Kumbh Mela in Ujjain.
 - Kumbh Mela *Students' Britannica India*, by Dale Hoiberg, Indu Ramchandani. Published by Popular Prakashan, 2000. ISBN 0-85229-760-2. Page 259-260.
 - Haridwar *The Imperial Gazetteer of India, 1909, v. 13, p. 52*.
 - Kumbh Mela 'Encyclopædia Britannica.
 - India's Hindu Kumbh Mela festival begins in Prayag, a 14 January 2013 article from BBC News
 - "Ardha Kumbh – 2007: The Ganges River". Mela Administration. Retrieved 2012-01-05.
 - Kumbh Mela pictured from space – probably the largest human gathering in history BBC News, 26 January 2001.
 - Kumbh Mela: the largest pilgrimage – Pictures: Kumbh Mela by Karoki Lewis *The Times*, 22 March 2008. Behind paywall.
 - Kumbh Mela, *New Scientist*, 25 January 2001
 - "Millions of Hindus take to the Ganges at Maha Kumbh Mela | Reuters". Reuters. 14 January 2013. Retrieved 15 January 2013. Officials believe that over the next two months as many as 100 million people passed
-

-
- "Kumbh Mela: 'Eight million' bathers on first day of festival". BBC. 14 January 2013. Retrieved 15 January 2013. More than 100 million people attended the 55-day festival.
 - Mark Twain, "Following the Equator: A journey around the world"
 - Nandita Sengupta (13 February 2010). "Naga sadhus steal the show at Kumbh", TNN
 - Autobiography of a Yogi by Paramahansa Yogananda Chapter 36 *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Paramahansa Yogananda, wikisource.
 - 39 killed in Kumbh Mela stampede *The Hindu*, 28 August 2003
 - "Holy man's gift blamed for 39 dead in stampede" *The Guardian*, 28 August 2003
 - Yardley, Jim; Kumar, Hari (14 April 2010). "Taking a Sacred Plunge, One Wave of Humanity at a Time". *The New York Times*. Retrieved 15 April 2010.
 - Millions dip in Ganges at world's biggest festival, Agence France-Presse, 13 April 2010
 - Foreigners join huge crowds at India's holy river festival, The Gazette, 14 April 2010
 - "More trains during Kumbh Mela". *The Times of India*. 11 April 2010. Retrieved 16 April 2010.
 - Five die in stampede at Hindu bathing festival, BBC, 14 April 2010
 - "Allahabad stampede kills 36 Kumbh Mela pilgrims". Reuters. 11 February 2013. Retrieved 2013-02-12.
 - "10 million to gather for 2015 Nashik Kumbh Mela". Zee News. Retrieved 14 June 2014.
 - *Kumbh Mela: The Greatest Show on Earth* at the Internet Movie Database
 - *Short Cut to Nirvana* at the Internet Movie Database
 - Mela films
 - *Kumbh Mela: Songs of the River* at the Internet Movie Database
 - *Invocation, Kumbh Mela* at the Internet Movie Database
 - <http://melafilms.com>
 - <http://amritfilm.net>, Amrit Nectar of Immortality Website
 - <http://ahamot.org/en/kumbhmela2013-living-with-mahatiagi> | Kumbh Mela 2013: Living with Mahatiagi