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Different Dimensions of Kumbh: A Religious Dynamism

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To understand India in miniature one is compelled to witness Kumbh. The cycle of 12 years 'Kumbh', it is a timeless journey of faith for millions of people. Kumbh is the largest congregation in the world, it is an emotional and religious unity for millions of people as it is believed that a holy dip in the Sangam is a road to heavenly abode and their sole objective is to get blessings and salvation.

Faith is an intangible thought that nestles in the deepest corner of the heart and in the realm of the subconscious. Few things cannot be defined it can only be experienced. 'Kumbh' of Prayagraj is one of them. Kumbh takes place at an interval of 12 years this festival/ fair is termed as 'Maha Kumbh' and the fair that happens at an interval of 6 years is termed as 'Ardh Kumbh'. Kumbh is celebrated at many parts of India like Haridwar, Nasik, Ujjain and Prayagraj. It combines the power of hope with the unshaken belief that there is an omniscient being that guides and shapes our destinies before which we bow in reverence.

Prayagraj's Kumbh is the most significant and special one because it is covered under the vast area. No other Kumbh expands to 20km square much as this area is covered by the Kumbh.

Devotees, seers, ascetics, tourist, academicians, sages and many other people are drawn from every nook and corner of the world to witness this fair that lasts for about 1.5 months. It is a spectacle experience that witness bathing of so innumerable people, religious cavalcades, alms giving, spiritual discourses and many other experiences that is a life time experience.

Every Kumbh creates a history as it is a sea of humanity, experiencing the bliss of salvation and immortality at the confluence of faith and conviction. Kumbh is an ancient culture but the thrill and the experience it creates at a celestial chronometer of a cycle of 12 years is something worth the wait. India stretches from sea to sea in the north the Ganga and the Yamuna washing the central plains, the Vindhya and the Sahyadri mountain ranges in the South, stopping short of the peninsular tip, where the waves of Indian Ocean touch the gleaming sands of

Kanyakumari, another spot of worship for the devout. It is when Jupiter enters Taurus from the house of Aries. The event of Kumbh is associated with the fight between Gods and the Demons over the possession of urn containing nectar following churning of the ocean of the ocean of milk. These memories are firmly engraved in the Vedic Literature and its significance is in the modern world. Though in the 21st Century things have developed where liberalization, privatization, globalization and modernization are dominating the minds and soul of the citizen but the social, culture and the philosophical aspect of Kumbh remains unchanged, and the charm is felt when the millions of Indians take the holy dip in the 'Sangam'.

Kumbh has its significance in many ways the mythical origin is the 'Samudra Manthan'. In all the versions, the archrivals reach the temporary truce in order to organize the churning of the great ocean, the Samudra Manthan Lord Vishnu turns into a great giant tortoise, which acts as the pivot on which is placed Mount Mandar, the churn. The great snake Vasuki agrees to act as a rope in which Danavas hold the tail and the Devatas holding the head. It takes the combined efforts of all these to generate the products of manthan or churning- not just the nectar, but 14 ratans ('gems' so called since they were invaluable celestial products) altogether which were divided among the two sides by consensus. The final product the coveted 'amrit' was snatched by the demons. Lord Vishnu assumed the avtar of Mohini, the temptress and tricked the Danavas out of amrit. He delivered it to Jayata, Indra's son, who flew with it heaven. It also says that in the fight drops of amrit fell in four places- Prayag, Haridwar, Ujjain and Nasik. It also says that this was followed by a war among Devas and Danavas that last 12 days. With one celestial equal to a human year, the Mela travels between these four sites within twelve years.

Based on the narratives of Samudra Manthan, the Hindus believe that the positions of the planets and the sun contribute to the sanctity of water and the air at the confluence of the three rivers in Prayag. These astrological positions determine the time of holy dip. It is believed that a dip at the ordained times bestows a spiritual virtue attainable only at sacred times. The famous snans are Mauni Amawasya, Makar Sakranti and Basant Panchami. Millions of people gather from the nook and corner of the world just to have a holy dip at one the important day.

The Kumbh Mela is referred to in the Rig Veda, Shrimad Bhagwat various Puranas and in epics like Ramayan and Mahabharat. Recorded history continuously claims that this fair has been continuously held since the Gupta period from 4th to the 6th century CE. Chinese traveler and scholar Hsuan Tsang, writing in the 7th Century describes the congregation at the Kumbh and also reports the rituals of the various Sadhu sect. he wrote that this is a age long tradition and King Harsha gave all his possessions in the fair and came back wrapped in a piece of cloth. The earliest text to refer Kumbh is Khulasat- ut-Tawarikh.

The main stakeholders in this magnificent kaleidoscope are the Akharas and the pilgrims and everything has to be fine-tuned accordingly. The Akharas are unified bodies of religious people.

Historically, they were made of sadus and warriors who virtually fought to safeguard their religion. The concept of fighting has been preserved and in their traditional processions, a familiar sight is that sadhus on horses, holding aloft weapons like trishuls and swords. Their bathing is considered holy and it is often termed as the Peshwai of the sadhus.

This year Kumbh was special because with each passing year this Kumbh became 'Divya, Bhavya, Digital Mahakumbh'. With this phase it is clear that the digitalization has played a crucial role in making Kumbh a successful event. Of all the Akharas Juna Akharas became the eye catching which became a resident of the naga baba a centre of attraction of Kumbh. Kinner Akhara was also able to steal the light as this akhara has been recently founded.

The 5 shahi snan days made us witness the faith which people are having in the holy dip. People all over the world were coming for a holy dip. The temperature was 5 degree at night but the zeal among people was so high that the temperature could not play any significant role.

Massive pandals were made all the required arrangements were made for the people by the people. The management done by the police forces and the cleanliness department was worth mentioning. The work done by the police forces is worth mentioning because every stranger has a ray of hope worth the khaki people. Police personnel never failed to discharge their duties if it demanded more than 15 hours a day.

In order to promote the products of small districts government took an initiative of organizing 'One District One Product' which gave a chance for the small districts of Uttar Pradesh to showcase their talent at a big platform.

This year Kumbh became a blend of western culture but deeply rooted with the Indian roots. People travelled both latitudinal and longitudinal. It did not become famous for just holy dip many things equally played a significant role like the drone show which tried to capture the entire history of kumbh through the drone show. This year Kumbh has greatly focused on the digitalization which embarks the development of the country. Holding a massive event with nearly 60 cr people is eye witnessing people were not afraid of the anonymity but the faith pulled them for the kumbh. It has banded major revenue of the state as well as for the country. There was endless bhandaras where no one was allowed to leave empty stomach. The pilgrims and devotees all had come with a sentiment a hope that could not be belied.

Today it is managed by the State Government. The charm of Kumbh is the same but as our country has progressed massively in the technically and economically so at many stages the handling of crowds has become easy. Everything is monitored well so that no mishappening takes place. The time when Kumbh is started the city has its own vibrancy which is unmatched and unparallel. The interlink era of technology, good governance and progressive country is all personified in the one "THE KUMBH". Millions respond to the invitation given thousands of years ago.

The memories which this religious fair gives it linger in our mind since more than a decade. It is an unforgettable memory that it gives

and the memories remain as fresh as it is of yesterday. The foundation of Kumbh is the trust, faith and confidence which became unshakably from the first day till the last day kumbh. When it ended it gave a feeling of emptiness as well as numbness with thousands of precious moments that have been embarked which could never be lived again.

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