

# **SPIRITUAL FESTIVAL OF INDIA**

## **KUMBH MELA 2019**



### **SADHUS AT PRAYAGRAJ**

**BY**

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## KUMBH PARVA

- *Kalashasya mukhevishnuh kanthe rudrah samaashritah --*
- *Muletvasya sthitobrahmaa madhye maatah ganaah sthitaah --*
- *kukshautu saagara asarvesaptadvipaava sundharaa --*
- *Hrigvedo yajurvedosaamavedohayatharvanah --*
- *anguish casahitaah sarvekalashantusamaashritaah --*

The Sanskrit *Shloka* explains that the trinity of Gods – Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the sustainer and Shiva the destroyer– in addition to all the Goddesses, Mother Earth with her seven islands, and all knowledge in the form of the Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda exist in Kumbh. Thus, Kumbh is the symbol of all that is, and all that exists. The Kumbh Parva is a celebration, a festival of the glory of Kumbh. It is a celebration of all knowledge and all life.

A 'Parva' in Sanskrit, literally means a bridge connecting a time gap. Every planetary movement is cyclic and its completion creates a new division on the timescale. Such cosmic transitions are regularly observed with the Hindu rituals and festivals. Rituals also have their mythological connections and spiritual connotations. Kumbh Parva symbolizes spirituality and knowledge.



**LARGEST KUMBH CITY AT PRAYAGRAJ (2019)**

In mythology, the 'Kumbh' or pot of nectar was churned from the ocean and was meant for distribution – not hoarding. Likewise the nectar of knowledge and spirituality must be churned from within us and shared with humanity. In keeping with that philosophy, the holy occasion is aptly named Kumbh Parva or Kumbh Mela. The Kumbh Parva has textual, mythical, and historical roots. It is believed that at the beginning of creation the Gods were under a curse that made them weak. Brahma the Creator-God advised them to churn the oceans in search of the nectar of immortality (*Amrita*) from the primordial ocean of milk (*Ksira Sagar*) and share the nectar equally. According to Puranic legend, the *Devas* (Gods) and the *Danavas* (Demons) churned the ocean (*Amrita-Manthan*) and obtained an *Amrita Kumbh* (pot full of nectar). However when the nectar was gathered up in the *Kumbh* (pot/urn/vessel) the demons ran away with the pot and the Gods chased them. In the ensuing struggle for its possession between the rival parties, when the *Kumbh* was being carried to safety by *devas* a few drops of nectar fell at the site. In commemoration of this event the great festival of *Maha-Kumbh* is organized every twelve years and an *Ardh-Kumbh* after every six years at the site.

Every transition in the planetary movements defines the times scale and is, therefore, observed as 'Parva' in the Hindu customs. As these changes in the planetary configurations give rise to the cycle of season, they also affect human life. Ancient Indian Seers have studied all these effects, and customs are set in accordance the natural phenomena and their effects on our life.

Another version, as related in the *Skanda Purana*, explains that what happened was that at one point during the fight, Indra's son, Jayanta, took the pot and ran toward the heavenly planets. Four demigods (*devas*) assisted him in protecting the pot from the demons. These were Brihaspati (Jupiter), Surya (the sun), Chandra (the moon), and Shani (Saturn). These demigods ran away from the demons with the *amrit-kumbh*. When the demons understood what had happened, they became angry and chased the four demigods with the firm intent of retrieving the pot. The chase lasted twelve days in the life of the demigods (each day of the demigods is one year of our time), at which time the *devas* and *asuras* circled the earth. Over a period of those twelve days of fighting some of the nectar was placed at four locations, or was spilled from the pot and fell onto four places: Nasik, Ujjain, Haridwar, and the *Sangam* at Prayagraj.

**Kumbh Mela:** Held at all four places every three years.

**Ardh Kumbh Mela:** Held at Haridwar and Prayag every 6 years.

**Purn Kumbh Mela:** Held only at Prayag every 12 years.

**Maha Kumbh Mela:** Held only at Prayag every 144 years.

According to a legend, during a waging war between the demigods and demons for the possession of elixir of eternal life, a few drops of it had fallen on to four places that are today known as Prayag, Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nasik. It is believed that these drops gave mystical powers to these places and Kumbh Parva has been celebrated in each of the four places since long. The normal Kumbh Mela is held every 3 years, the Ardh (half) Kumbh Mela is held every six years at Haridwar and Prayag while the Purna (complete) Kumbh mela takes place every twelve years, at four places Prayag, Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nashik, based on planetary movements. The Maha Kumbh Mela is celebrated at Prayag after 144 years (after 12 'Purn Kumbh Melas'). Depending on what position the Sun, Moon, and Jupiter hold in that period in different zodiac signs, the venue for Kumbh Mela is decided. Kumbh is a recurring event which is initiated in Haridwar and then moves to Prayag followed by Ujjain and Nasik. Kumbh Mela takes place every twelve years at one of these places: Prayag, Haridwar, Ujjain and Nashik;

**Kumbh Mela at Prayag;** when Jupiter is in Aries or Taurus and Sun and Moon are in Capricorn during the Hindu month of Magha (January-February).

**Kumbh Mela at Haridwar;** when Jupiter is in Aquarius and Sun is in Aries during the Hindu month of Chaitra (March-April).

**Kumbh Mela at Ujjain;** when Jupiter is in Leo and Sun is in Aries, or when all three are in Libra during the Hindu month of Vaisakha (April-May)

**Kumbh Mela at Nasik;** when Sun and Jupiter are in Leo during the Hindu month of Bhadrprada (August-September).

According to Prof. D.P. Dubey, "It appears that the Kumbh Parva derives its name from an auspicious occasion of ritual bathing that used to take place at Haridwar, every twelfth year, when Jupiter was in Aquarius, and the sun entered Aries.



Kumbh Parva is the greatest spiritual festival of India, the largest and holiest gathering in the whole world. Kumbh Parva is a mega religious bathing event, the greatest and most sacred pilgrimage in the Hindu religion. This festival is held in highest regard as the ritual bath in the sacred water, saturated with flowers and incense amidst chanting of Vedic hymns and *Mantras*, liberates one from all suffering and miseries of life. Kumbh Parva is largest gathering in the world to perform religious activity. For that reason it has been recorded; “the largest number of human beings to ever assemble with a common purpose in the entire history of the mankind”, by the Guinness Book of World Records. That was describing the event in 1989 when 15 million people attended on the *Amavasya* day.

After visiting the Kumbh Mela of 1895AD, Mark Twain wrote: “These pilgrims at the Kumbh Mela had come from all over India, some of them had been months on the way, plodding patiently along in the heat and dust, worn and poor, hungry, but supported and sustained by an unwavering faith and belief. It is wonderful, the power of a faith like 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”

According to the Vedas, it is not the act of taking a bath itself, but the coming into contact with the sacredness of water, and the attainment of such knowledge and proximity that made one sinless and guided the individual to the Eternal Self. Water was considered sacred but it was clarified that man does not pray to water, the physical entity, but to the source of life and spirituality within water. ‘Water is the purified as well as the purifier, the real and spiritually conceived source of life’ (Baartmans, 1990).

India's great rivers are said to be of divine origin and the waters of these rivers are to be a liquid form of the Goddess Shakti. The Ganga and Yamuna rivers both come from high mountain of Himalayas at Gangotri and Yamunotri, part of Char Dham (Uttarakhand) which Hindus undertake with great fervour. Many of India's other sacred rivers are considered holy as well, including the headwaters of the Godavari, called the Godavari Ganga, near Nashik, in Maharashtra; the source of the Narmada at Amarakantaka in the Maikala Hills of eastern India; and the source of the Kaveri at Talakaveri, in the Coorg hills of southwestern Karnataka.

There are thousands of places of pilgrimage across India, called *tirthas*, which draw Hindus to take bath in the sacred rivers and to experience the festive life of a *Mela*. A place of pilgrimage is a *tirtha* or *tirtha-sthana*. The word *tirtha* is from the Sanskrit, *tr / tarati*, meaning ‘to cross over,’ or cross a river. The root *tr* means to surmount, to fulfill, to be saved, as well as its primary meaning is, to cross. The *tr*, also means a boat or ferry, as well as a pilot or savior. The word *tirtha* means river ford, steps to a river, or place of pilgrimage as well as any watering or bathing place. The confluence where two rivers meet is *Sangam* and where the three rivers meet are called the *Triveni*. These places are especially sacred for bathing. A pilgrimage is a *tirtha-yatra* and a pilgrim is a *tirtha-yatri*. The purpose of pilgrimage is to remember the Lord constantly, and to glorify the Lord, therefore, the Lord is known as *tirtha-kirti*.

*“If one bathes and sips water where the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati meet, he enjoys liberation, and of this there is no doubt”.* (Padma Purana Uttara Khanda 23.14)

Prayag is located on the sacred Triveni Sangam, where the three sacred rivers, Ganga, Yamuna and underground Saraswati congregate. The sacred convergence is referred as Prayagraj or *Tirthraj*. The word Prayag comes from Pra and Yaj, meaning ‘to hold a big *Yajna*’. It is mentioned in Skanda Purana, that for all types of *Yajna*, Prayag is the best place, therefore called Prayagraj. After receiving the four Vedas that had been lost, Brahma or Prajapati performed a *Prakrista Yajna* at the place and is therefore called Prayag. It is also called Prajapati Kshetra.

The Khumba Parva is a religious and cultural spectacle which occurs once in 12 years attracting participants from around the globe to take a dip in the holy waters of Ganga, Yamuna and the mystical Saraswati at Sangam, known as Prayag, where the rivers are said to flow with *Amrit*, ‘the nectar of immortality’ during the auspicious period of the Kumbh Pava. According to a legend, the greatness of Prayag is as such that other *tirthas* come to bath as well. Thousands of holy Saints, *Sadhus*, men and women attend the mega event, from all casts and creeds. The *Sadhus* are seen clad in saffron sheets with plenty of ashes dabbed on their bodies as per ancient traditions.

Kumbh Mela provides a means for the spiritual upliftment of mankind. It is held every three years in each of the four different locations - Prayag, Haridwar, Nasik and Ujjain, returning to each of the four places after a gap of every twelve years. Besides the regular Kumbh Mela, an Ardh (half) Kumbh Mela takes place six years after the Maha Kumbh in each of the location. And how it lands up in each location varies according to what position the Sun, Moon, and Jupiter hold in that period in different zodiac signs. It comes to Haridwar when Jupiter is in Aquarius and Sun is in Aries during the Hindu month of *Chaitra* i.e. in the month of March-April. In Allahabad it is celebrated in the month of January-February when Jupiter is in Aries or Taurus and Sun and Moon are in Capricorn during the Hindu month of *Magha*. In the Hindu month of *Bhadrapada* (August-September), when Sun and Jupiter are in Leo, Kumbh Mela comes to Nasik. And Ujjain gets to organize it when Jupiter is in Leo and Sun is in Aries, or when all three are in Libra during the Hindu month of Vaisakh i.e. April-May.

India is also known as the land of festivals and fairs. Hundreds and thousands throng religious fairs known as *Melas* which are held at different places throughout the length and breadth of the country. Thousands of pilgrims visit Prayagraj to take bath in purifying waters during Kumbh Mela. Millions come during Magh Mela (January-February) every year. Every 12 years Magh Mela becomes Kumbh Mela, which lasts 41 days. Millions of devotees assemble at one time during auspicious days for taking holy dip and performing other rituals. When the Sun takes rest in the gathering Aries and Jupiter in Aquarius, Kumbh holds at Haridwar. When the Sun goes through Capricorn and the Jupiter through Taurus, the Kumbh holds at Prayagraj. When both the Sun and the Moon cross Aries, the *Mela* holds at Ujjain and while Jupiter is in the part of Leo, the fair holds at Nashik and these festivals are called Simhastha Kumbh. The fair is called Vrishastha at Prayag and it is called Kumbhastha at Haridwar.

The mythological story of the appearance of *Amrit* (Nectar of life) from the churning of the ocean is related with the occurrence of Kumbh Parva and has a ritualistic importance. The spiritual symbolism is significant. Sun and Moon respectively stand for human rational intellect and mind. Known as '*Guru*' in Sanskrit, Jupiter is the spiritual master. When the sun (rational Intellect) having definite relation with Jupiter (*Guru*) guides the moon (human mind), the result is the realization of the immortality (*Amrit*) of self. Therefore, the Indian tradition gives importance of being at specific places, having a dip in the river, performing religious rituals and attending spiritual discourses during the Kumbh Parva Jupiter takes about 11 years, 10 months and 14 days to complete its revolution around the Sun; it comes back to any specific position on its orbit on completion of nearly 12 years. Since the orbit of Jupiter is 12 years, the Kumbh comes around at this rate. The specific month is determined by the conjunction of Jupiter with a different *Nakṣatar* associated with the place. Thus all these planetary configurations are repeated every 12th year and thus, Kumbh Parva also comes after the same interval.

The Hindus (Thapliyal 2005) consider a bath at Brahma Kund during these celebrations most purifying. The battle for the nectar lasted twelve days and nights (the equivalent of twelve earth years). Drops of the nectar fell to earth during the battle in four locations Prayag, Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nasik. (Hebner 1990: viii)

The *Kumbh Parva* is a great celebration of life. The occasion is celebrated every 12 years at a time when Jupiter is in the constellation of Aquarius or *Kumbh*, the pitcher-bearer. The Kumbh Mela begins on *Makar Sankranti*, an auspicious day when the moon and sun enters Capricorn and Jupiter enters Aries. The observance of Kumbh Mela dates back many centuries in Ancient India, to the Vedic period, where the river festivals first started getting organized. In Hindu mythology, its origin is found the one of the popular creation myths and the Hindu theories on evolution, the *Samudr Manthan* episode (Churning of the ocean of milk), which finds mention in the Bhagavata Purana, Vishnu Purana, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. First written evidence of the Kumbh Mela can be found in the accounts of Chinese traveler, Huan Tsang (602 - 664 A.D.) who visited India during the reign of King Harshavardhan, described a mass bathing ritual held in the reign of Emperor Harsha in 644 AD at the confluence of Ganga and Yamuna in Prayag. King Harshvardhan who arranged the Kumbha Mela as a great fair and meeting of saints, sages and sects, called the Mahamoksha Parishad.

According to few scholars, this fair started in 3464 BC i.e. it is a tradition existing 1000 years prior to Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro culture. In 2382 BC Vishwamitra II, stated importance of having holy bath on '*Magh Purnima*'. In 1302 BC Maharshi Jyotish impressed upon people the importance of holy bath on '*Magh Purnima*.' Historian Kama Maclean's careful analysis has concluded that prior to the eighteen sixties there is no mention in textual sources of a Kumbh in Allahabad or of a special Mela occurring every twelve years, although the Magh Mela was well known. The first modern Kumbh Mela was likely in 1870 AD. Since the mid-nineteenth century, the festival has expanded in size and scope. Ironically, the attempt of the British colonial state to regulate the seemingly chaotic and possible dangerous practice of such a pilgrimage contributed to its success. Maclean writes, "Colonial government intervention in Melas, though often controversial, generally made them safer, which consequently encouraged pilgrimage attendance."

“They came by the millions! Some arrived on overcrowded trains carrying five times their normal capacity. Some came by bus, by car, some by ox drawn carts, and others rode on horses, camels, and even elephants. The rich and famous chartered private planes and helicopters, while the less affluent came on foot carrying their bed rolls and camping equipment in heavy bundles on their heads. Wave after wave, they formed a veritable river of humanity that flowed onto the banks of the Ganges at Allahabad to celebrate the greatest spiritual festival ever held in the history of the world, the Kumbh Mela.” Kumbh Mela has gained international fame as "the world's most massive act of faith." Pilgrims come to this holy event with such tremendous faith and in such overwhelming numbers that it boggles the mind. Faith is the most important thing for the pilgrims at Kumbha Mela; they have an "unflinching trust in something sublime". (Kumbh Mela by Jack Hebner and David Osborn)

Jagatguru Adi Shankaracharya first started celebration of Hindus' religious festivals as Indian festivals motivating Saints and religious leaders from different sects and following different religions to take part in the same. With his inspiration, the Saints and religious leaders from various parts of the country and different religions and Sects started taking part. By giving Vedic form to it, Adi Shankaracharya conferred more prestige to it and hence it got more recognition and participation of Saints and religious leaders in 'Kumbh Parva' increased. Now, many of India's elevated mystics, Sages and Yogis from different parts of the country also attend.

The great Vaisava ecstatic mystic Caitanya Mahaprabhu, the original lineage founder of the modern Krishna Consciousness movement, is recorded as attending the Kumbha Mela at Prayagraj in 1514 AD. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu had come from Bengal to participate in Kumbh Parva. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu had visited Prayag twice; once on His way to Vrindavana from Jagannatha Puri, and again on His return trip when He bathed ten days in a row during the early Magh Mela festival. Here He imparted to Sri Rupa Goswami, one of his principal disciples, the deeper teachings of Gaudiya Vaishnavism. The Mahaprabhu stayed at the Beni Madhab temple, near the Dasaswamedh Ghat and sat under a Banyan tree with Sri Rupa for religious discourses. The place is still recognised as Sri Rupa-Sikshasthal, which is visited by the Vaishnavas as a holy spot. This is fully described in *Caitanya-caritamrita, Madhya-lila*, (Chapters 17-19).

Prayagraj was included in the Gupta Empire. The Allahabad pillar inscription contains the Prasasti of poet Harishena of Samudra Gupta (320-380AD). Prayag was also a part of Harsha's empire. Two international gatherings took place in Harsha's reign, one at Prayag and other at Kanauj. Prayagraj was first conquered by Muslims in 1194 AD, under Sahab-ud-din Ghorī. James Forbes account of the early 1800s claims that it was renamed Allahabad or "abode of God" by Jahangir after he failed to destroy the Akshayabat tree. The name, however, predates him, with *Ilahabas* and *Ilahabad* mentioned on coins minted in the city since Akbar's rule, the latter name became predominant after the emperor's death. Warren Hastings took Kora and Allahabad from the Mughals.

The historic city of Prayagraj reclaimed its original identity after several centuries on January 1, 2019 when Indian Central Government approved the October 17, 2018 order of Uttar Pradesh Government renaming it.



“During the Kumbh Parva, the Hindu *Shastras* ordain particular bathing norms to pilgrims. Observance of these rituals and baths are greatly eulogized are said to aid in the liberation from the cycle of life and death as well as earn praise from the Gods. *Akharas* have exclusive rights to the most holy bathing areas, and the procession of royal baths is known as *Shahi Snans*. *Akharas* are sects or religious orders, however in the instance of the *Kumbh Akhara* refers to the great congregation of *Sadhus*, and members of mostly celibate religious communities. Each *Akhara* will have a large compound with many tents to hold thousands of members. The *Akharas* hold weapons and banners symbolizing royal authority, and are highly scripted. Before 1800AD, the bathing-order reflected the individual’s status in relation to one another.” (Lochtefeld)



### SHAHI SNAN AT PRAYAG

*Shahi-Snan* or *Rajayogi Snan* is the royal bath, in which members of various *Akharas* are given priority access in a pre-arranged order for bathing. When *Akharas* are bathing other pilgrims are not allowed to bathe. The procession of the *Akharas* is an elaborate ritual and one of the most colorful events of the Kumbh Mela. Among the Nagas, there are 13 main *Akharas* or branches, each march in their own group and bathe at different times. Then follow *Agni* and *Aavahan Akharas*. The Nagas are mostly Shaivites, worshippers of Shiva, while the *Agnis* and *Aavahans* are Vaishnavas, worshippers of Vishnu, Krishna. After the eulogies and first rights to bathe in the Ganga, the crowds of millions are allowed to walk in and perform the sacred ritual bath.

The origin of *Akharas* can be traced to Hindu Monasteries called Maths. *Akhara* is a special form of 'Math'. Saints belonging to these *Akharas* normally stay together in one camp. The objective of Maths was to impart intellectual, physical, and spiritual training to those who were willing to lead the austere life of an ascetic. Later Adi Shankaracharya, in his effort of national integration and cultural enhancement, formed four such Maths, one at Dwaraka in the West, another at Jagannatha Puri in the East, Badrinath in the North, and Mysore in the South.

The saints were further divided into ten sects: namely Giri, Puri, Bharati, Tirth, Vaan, Aranya, Parvat, Ashram, Sagar, and Saraswati. Besides Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya also established eight Maths, and Madhavacharya established eight Maths. The spiritual and religious head of the Maths are called Shankaracharyas. Other Hindu sects include the Arya Samajis, Kabir Panthis (followers of Saint Kabir), Rama Krishna Missionaries, and ISKCON followers, among others.



These are also divided into the Kalpwasis: Pilgrims who spend the whole of Kumbh Mela on the sandy bed of the Sangam. *Kalpa* means a day of Lord Brahma. It is believed that if one spends the whole month of Magh at the banks of the Ganga leading an austere life in thatched huts and sleeping on the sandy river bed listening to discourses, giving alms, bathing thrice daily in the holy confluence, eating once in 24 hours, they purportedly can be freed from the cycle of death and attain *Moksha*.

The *Akharas* are divided into different types according to the concept of God they worship: Shaiva *Akharas*: These are the followers of Lord Shiva, although some also show respect for Lord Vishnu. Some of these are also known as 'Nagas'; they lead a very austere life and are naked and are good in the use of arms for the defense of their religion.

The religious preacher and the head of the *Akharas* of ascetics are popularly known as *Mahamandaleshwars*. They are held in high esteem and reverence by the inmates of the *Akharas* and are carried around in beautifully decorated palanquins during the procession of the *Shahi Snan*.

The Shaiva sects are divided into further groups or *Akharas* which are called Dashnami *Akharas*. These are:

MAHANIRVANI AKHARA, ATAL AKHARA, NIRANJANI AKHARA, ANAND AKHARA, BHAIKAV AKHARA, AWAHAN AKHARA, AGNI AKHARA

The Vaishnava or Vairagi *Akharas*:

These are the wandering mendicants who are followers of Lord Vishnu. They see themselves as parts of the Supreme Lord and live a life of service and dedication to the Lord. The initiator of these is said to be Shri Balanand Ji. They are divided into three broad categories:

Nirmohi Ani Akhara: The various sub-sects of this *Akhara* are Ramanandiya Nirmohi Akhara, Ramanandiya/Jhariya Nirmohi Akhara, Ramanandiya Maladhari Nirmohi Akhara, Ramanandiya Mahanirvani Nirmohi Akhara, Harivyasi Nirmohi Akhara, and Dadupanthi Akhara.

Nirvani Ani Akhara: The various subdivisions of this Akhara are Ramanandiya Nirvani Akhara, Ramanandiya Khaki Akhara, Ramanandiya Niralambiya Akhara, Ramanandiya Tatambari Akhara, Harivyasi Nirvani Akhara, Harivyasi Khaki Nirvani Akhara, and Balbhadr Akhara.

Digambar Ani Akhara: This is further divided into Ramji Digambar, Shyamji Digambar.

Udasin Akhara: These are the followers of Guru Granth Sahib and comprise Sikhs who have converted to Hinduism. This is further divided into: Udasin Panchayati Bara Akhara and Udasin Panchayati Naya Akhara.

Nirmal Akhara: These are Sikh followers of Guru Nanak Ji. The *Akhara* is known as Nirmal Panchayati Akhara.

### **The famous *Akhadas* at Kumbh Mela 2019;**

#### **Shree Panch Dashnaam Juna Akhada**

Headquarters: Varanasi

Specialty: Largest of the 13 Akhadas

Following: Shaivites (Followers of Shiva)

Head: *Acharya Mahamandaleshwar* Swami Avdheshanand Giri

Juna is a Shaivite Akhada following under the Dashnaami Sampraday (sect) founded by Adi Shankaracharya. This *Akhada* is attached to the four mutts established by Shankaracharya at Dwarka, Puri, Shringeri and Jyotirmath. The Juna Akhada worships Bhagwan Dattatreya and their 52-foot high holy flag. Their greeting chant is Om namo Narayan. The administrative body of the *Akhada* is Shree Panch — the members of which are elected during the Kumbh and Mahakumbh Mela. The *Akhada* has a rich tradition of warrior ascetics (Naga Sadhus) who are ordained to this post only during the Kumbh and Mahakumbh Mela. The Juna Akhada also comprises the Astradhari (weapon-bearers) seers and Shastradhari (scripture-bearers) seers.



**Sadhus of Juna Akhara sit inside their tent at Kumbh Mela at Prayagraj**

### **Shree Panchayati Akhada Niranjani**

Headquarters: Daraganj (Prayagraj)

Specialty: Educated. Have members with doctorate and post graduation

Following: Shaivite

Head: Swami Mahant Ravindrapuri

Shree Panchayati Akhada Niranjani has a strong base in Prayagraj. Niranjani Akhada worships Kartikeya (Son of Lord Shiva and Parvati). The *Akhada* is believed to be founded in 904 AD in Mandavi, Gujarat. After Juna, Niranjani is believed to be the second largest *Akhada*. Niranjani Akhada also consecrates a 52-foot high holy flag in their camp in Kumbh and Mahakumbh Mela. The number 52 symbolises the 52 houses of seers to which the Shaivite Akhadas belong.

### **Shree Shambhu Panchayati Atal Akhada**

Headquarters: Varanasi

Specialty: One of three oldest *Akhadas*

Following: Shaivites (Followers of Shiva)

Head: *Acharya Mahamandaleshwar* Swami Vishwatmanand Saraswati

The *Akhada* is run by a 12-member administrative body with Shreemahant Swami Satyamgiri as the main head for the Kumbh Mela 2019 and claims to be among the three oldest *Akhadas*. The *Akhada* worships Lord Ganesha and the holy symbols of Surya Prakash Bhala and Bhairva Prakash Bhala. The seers of the Atal Akhada are also called Atal Badshah. In the Kumbh Mela, Atal Akhada conducts an ordination ceremony of Naga Sadhus in the second *Shahi Snan* (Royal bath).

### **Shree Panchayati Akhada Mahanirvani**

Headquarters: Prayagraj

Specialty: Dashnami Akhada (An order set by Shankra)

Following: Shaivite

Head: Governed by a five-member body

Shree Panchayati Akhada Mahanirvani worship Kapilmuni Maharaj and the holy symbols Surya Prakash Bhala and Bhairva Prakash Bhala. Shree Panchayati Akhada Mahanirvani elects its administrative body through an election.

### **Shree Panchayati Akhada Bada Udasin**

Headquarters: Allahabad Specialty: Known for its grandeur

Following: Udasin (People who follow the teachings of Shri Chand, the elder son of Guru Nanak) Head: Governed by members of Shree Panch (A high council of five senior seers who take decisions)

The Akhada was founded by seer Yogiraj Shree Nirvandeve ji Maharaj in 1825 in Haridwar. The sect worships Jagatguru Bhagwan Shree Shreechandra Ji. They consecrate a 75-foot-high holy flag in Kumbh and Mahakumbh Mela. The Shree Panch members are Shree Mahant Maheshwar Das, Shree Mahant Raghumuni, Shree Mahant Durgadas and Shree Mahant Advaitanand.

### **Shri Panchayati Akhara Naya Udaseen**

Headquarters: Haridwar

Specialty: Simplicity,

Following: Udasin

Head: Governed by members of Shree Panch

The *Akhada* was founded in 1846 after a dispute with the Bada Udasin Akhada. Mahant Sudhir Das was the founder of the *Akhada*. It follows different traditions, as compared most other monastic orders. Its royal entry processions have no *Acharya*, no palanquin and no spears or arms. The *Akhada* follows Shri Chandra Bhagwan, a saint from the 15th century.

### **Shree Panch Nirmohi Ani Akhada**

Headquarters: Haridwar

Specialty: Hoisting a 52-foot high white flag

Following: Vaishnav (followers of Vishnu)

Head: Governed by members of Shree Panch

Shree Panch Nirmohi Ani Akhada is one of the three Vaishnav Akhadas recognised by the Akhil Bharatiya Akhada Parishad. Two members, who have been appointed by the Shree Panch, run the administrative body of the *Akhada*. They are, Mahant Rajendra Das and Mahant Ramji Das. The Nirmohi Akhada worships Lord Hanuman and was formed in Vrindavan, uniting 18 Vaishnav groups and four sects with common ideologies.

### **Shree Panch Digamber Ani Akhada**

Headquarters: Haridwar

Specialty: Worship five colour flag

Following: Vaishnav

Head: Governed by members of Shree Panch

The two administrative heads of Akhada are Mahant Krishna Das and Mahant Ramkishor Das. They have a particular way of greeting each other. The seers of the Akhada are generally dressed in saffron. They travel spreading the message of



the 'Sanatan Dharma'. They also worship ancient weapons.

### **Shree Panch Nirvani Ani Akhada**

Headquarters: Haridwar

Specialty: Red colour flag

Following: Vaishnav

Head: Governed by members of Shree Panch

Shree Panch Nirvani Ani Akhada worships Lord Hanuman as its presiding deity.

The members who represent the administrative body of the Shree Panch Nirvani Ani Akhada are Mahant Dharamdasji and Mahant Mohandas ji.

### **Shri Panchayti Akhara Nirmala**

Headquarters: Haridwar

Specialty: Linked to Sikhism

Following: Nirmal Sampraday (A separate sect of Hindus)

Head: Mahant Pt Gurudev Singhji Vendantacharya

The *Akhada* was founded by Durga Singh Maharaj in 1856 in Punjab. The *Akhada* has close ties with Sikhism, especially Khalsi Sikhs. Guru Gobind Singh had sent a batch of five saffron robe seers (Panch Nirmal Gaurik) to learn the Vedas, Vedang and Dharma-Shastra to Varanasi. However, after learning, these seers are believed to have formed their own sect by the name of Nirmal Sampraday. The *Akhada* was established at Kankhal near Haridwar.

### **Shri Shambhu Panchagni Akhara**

Headquarters: Junagarh, Gujarat

Specialty: Known for anointing Brahmchari saints

Following: Shaivites

Head: Sabhapati Brahmchari Mukttanandji Maharaj

This *Akhada* stands out in its customs and traditions as compared to other Shaivaite Akhadas. Saints of this Akhada also do not practice the fire sacrifice or *Dhuni*. Also the saints of this Akhada do not consume any intoxicant. Saints of this Akhada consume only self-prepared food.

### **Shri Panchdashnaam Aavahan Akhara**

Headquarters: Haridwar

Specialty: Considered the oldest monastic order

Following: Shaivites

Head: *Acharya Mahamandaleshwar* Shivendrapuri Ji Maharaj

The deity of this *Akhada* is Dattatreya and it has offices and Ashrams spread across the country. As the name '*Aavahan*' indicates, the Saints of this *Akhada* were the first to respond to the call of the Shankaracharya to devote them to the defense of the Santan Dharm.

### **Taponidhi Shri Anand Akhara Panchayti**

Headquarters: Nasik, Maharashtra

Specialty: Known for its opulence

Following: Shaivites

Head: Acharya Peetadheeshwar Balkanand Giri Ji Maharaj

This *Akhada* is considered the second oldest in the country. The deity of this Akhada is Dev Bhuwan Bhaskar Suryanarayan. It has offices and ashrams spread across the country. (Courtesy—Hindustan Times January 13, 2019)

Bathing during the time of Kumbh Mela is thought by Hindus to be of immeasurable significance. It also becomes a time in which people of different sects resolve their differences to bathe in holy waters, to resolve sins that all share in. Millions of people gather in the world's largest pilgrimage during an astrologically auspicious time to absolve their sins. Mythology, literature and history become one as a culture and a religion is celebrated. Class and caste although carefully defined come together in a world renowned event. Besides ascetic orders, there is large number of leading spiritual Gurus and teachers who offer daily religious discourses on different aspects of Hinduism to pilgrims, which in turn redefines the Kumbh Mela.

Prayag or Prayagraj has a most sacred place of Hindus, confluence or Sangam of sacred Ganga, Yamuna and the mystical Saraswati rivers. The Sangam is the location where Ganga comes from the north and meets the Yamuna, which flows from the west, although both the rivers have their origins in the Himalaya. According to Rig Veda, the Ganga is whitish and the Yamuna is bluish, coloured streams, which mingle at Drayage, which give immortality to humans when they bathe in it. It is further said in Vishnu Purana that one gets more benefit from bathing at Sangam during the Kumbh Parva than performing 1000 *Ashwamedha Yajnas* and sins of 88 generations are also washed away.

In the Varaha Purana, Chapter 144, it is stated; "In Prayag, there is Triveni—the confluence of three sacred rivers, Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati, where Shiva resides and is known Sulatanka or Somesvara. Lord Vishnu is known as Venu-Mahadeva where the Rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati meet. By bathing there one goes to heaven, and by dying there one gets libration. It is the king of all *tirthas* and dear to Lord Vishnu."



### **SADHUS AT KUMBH PARVA**

*"Those who bath in the bright waters of the Ganga where they meet the dark waters of the Yamuna during the month of Magh will not be reborn, even in thousands of years". - Matsya Purana 107.7*

The Matsya Purana narrates the importance of bathing and staying at Paryaga in 151 *Shlokas*. In one *Shloka* it states; "If a man stays for a month at Prayaga, he is cleansed of all sins and find a birth in Rudraloka, the abode of Shiva."

Actually the Prayag means the place where the sacred rivers meet and where great sacrifices are performed. Lord Rama, Sita and Lakshmana stayed at Bharadwaj Ashram near Sangam. From there Rama went on to Chitrakoot where He spent eleven of His 14 year exile. The five Pandavas also spent time at

Prayaga during their exile, as described in the *Mahabharata*. Lord Balarama also visited Prayaga after going to Naimisharanya when touring the holy places 5,000 years ago during the battle of Kuruksetra. In this Mela, followers of Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism also take part. During the pre-Independence era and even the pre-British era, long before electrification, railways, modern roads, modern policing etc., making pilgrimages to the great religious fairs was not a simple affair.

The deep-seated sectarian conflicts and rivalries often came to a head at the Kumbh Melas leading to violent confrontations among rival sectarian ascetic groups. These violent confrontations occurred over precedence in the bathing parades; for patronage and donations. Although it is generally agreed that the Shaiva Naga have precedence in these parades nevertheless heated arguments even among Naga *Sanyasin* themselves over precedence occur at Kumbh Melas.

According to an account offered by Jadunath Sakar, Naga Shaiva Sanyasins led by Bhavanananda, Surananda and Kamalananda are understood to have inflicted a severe defeat upon the Vaishnava, Bairagi ascetics at a Kumbh Mela held in Haridwar in 1266 AD. Further the Mugal Timor is certainly known to have massacred a large number of pilgrims at a fair held in Haridwar in 1398 AD. Later in 1760 AD, a battle was fought at Haridwar between Shaiva Naga Sanyasins and Vaishnava Naga Bairagis. This battle is recorded to have left as many as eighteen thousand dead. Their defeat in this battle led to the exclusion of Vaishnava participation in the Haridwar Kumbh Mela until the period of British control of this region from the mid-19th, century AD. A further battle in 1796 AD., fought between armed Sikh pilgrims and Shaiva Nagas led to the deaths of five thousand pilgrims. Smaller battles between Naga *Sanyasins* and Naga Bairagis also occurred in Ujjain and Nasik. It is believed that the festival at Ujjain was classed as Kumbh in the 18th century, with Ranoji Rao Shinde, a general to Peshwa Bajirao, inviting *Sadhus* from Nashik to organise it. At the Kumbh Mela held at Prayagraj in 1954 AD., the first after Indian independence, hundreds, possibly thousands died during a stampede by pilgrims to bath at the appointed place, time etc. Crushes leading to deaths have occurred to a lesser degree at later Kumbh Melas, mostly during attempts to bath in the very confined bathing areas in Haridwar and Nasik.

“On Makar Sankranti, at dawn the sky reddened and the sun rose to reveal a crowd of five million enthusiasts slowly advancing towards the Sangam. From the center of that mass of humanity came out a marvelous procession announcing the official beginning of the Kumbh Mela. Bands played, people danced in jubilation, and colorful flags and banners flew above the crowd. At the head of the procession were the Nagas, India's famed naked holy men. These holy men engage themselves in renunciation of the world in search of equilibrium. They hope to escape the world's concomitant reactions and suffering by their austere practices such as complete celibacy and non-accumulation of material possessions. Thus they are known as liberationists. With matted locks of hair, their bodies covered in ashes, and their tridents (the symbol of a follower of Shiva) raised high, they descended upon the bathing area. Entering the water in a tumult, blowing conch shells and singing ‘Shiva ki jai, Ganga ki jai,’ they splashed the sacred waters upon each other and played just like children. Indeed, they are said to be the very children of the Ganga.



Next were the Vaisnava Vairagis, the wandering mendicants who dedicate everything to Vishnu, the Sustainer. These Saints live a life of service and complete dedication. Then came the innumerable other sects of ascetics dressed in saffron colored cloth and carrying their staffs of renunciation. All the centuries gone by of India's spiritual evolution were simultaneously there together in the procession. Each in turn bathed in the Sangam. Several hours passed before the procession had finished, then began the mass bathing of the pilgrims. From the high banks of the river one could see the dark blue water of the Yamuna mixing with the silver gray water of the Ganga. Bathers, immersed up to the waist, scooped up water with folded palms and offered it to heaven in a timeless gesture. Boatmen rowed their boats full of pilgrims to a small sandbar in the middle of the Sangam which soon disappeared under a cloud of bathers.

At the northern end of the festival grounds, cast against the still blue sky, stood alone a grass hut built upon sturdy stilts, the *Ashram* of Devara Baba who, according to his followers, is more than 200 years old. Devara Baba is a lifelong vegetarian and celibate yogi. His admirers believe that his exceptional longevity is due to the fact that he only drinks and bathes in the Ganga, whose waters are considered very sacred. When we asked Devara Baba about his exact age, he replied, "I have lost count of the years. It has been a very long time."

Every morning and evening tens of thousands of pilgrims walked the two mile stretch along the Ganga to the *Ashram* of Devara Baba with the hope that they might get a glimpse of this ancient Sage. Much to their delight Devara Baba was always willing and even happy to accommodate them. Sitting on the veranda of his simple raised hut, the old Sage relaxed in the warm rays of sunlight and blessed the pilgrims. Sometimes smiling or raising his hand in a gesture of grace Devara Baba radiated the aura of peacefulness. Some pilgrims brought offerings of fruits and flowers, while others came only with their prayers for blessings. It was our prayer to the sage that he allowed us to take a few photographs, and in his usual gracious manner he consented.

As prominent as Devara Baba was, we sensed that there were many great souls who went undetected in our midst. We photographed until we ran out of film and were left only with a feeling of helplessness. Kumbh Mela was indeed a magnificent and awesome encounter. It was impossible to capture the festival. Indeed, it was the festival that captured us. Words, film, print, and paper cannot do justice to the event — it is one that has to be experienced personally." (Kumbh Mela by Jack Hebner and David Osborn)

Sankrant Sanu in his essay 'Why India is a Nation' writes: "From the Manusmriti, we learn of the land of Aryavrata stretching from the Himalayas and Vindhya all the way to the eastern and western oceans...The story of Mahabharata shows a remarkable degree of pan-Indian context and inter-relationships, from Gandhari, the wife of Drithrashtra who came from Gandhara, (spelled as Kandahar in present-day Afghanistan), Draupadi from Panchala (present day Jammu and Kashmir), all the way to Arjun meeting and marrying the Naga princess Uloopi on a visit to Manipur in the east (from where he gets the 'Mani' or Gem). Interestingly, Arjuna is said to have gone on a pilgrimage to the holy places of the east when this happens, showing the current North-East was very much linked in this....Similarly, the story of Ramayana draws the north-south

linkage from Ayodhya all the way down to Rameshwaram, at the tip of which is finally the land of Lanka. Note that it is not, for this particular thesis, important that the stories are historically accurate. What we are interested in rather is whether the idea of India or Bharatavarsha or Aryavrata as a culturally linked entity existed in the minds of the story-tellers and ultimately in the minds of the people to whom these stories were sacred. And these stories were then taken and told and retold in all the languages of the people of this great civilization, till the stories themselves established a linkage among us and to the sacred geography they celebrated. This sacred geography is what makes Northerners flock to Tirupati and Southerners to the Kumbha Mela.”

Kumbh Parva, provides a means for the spiritual upliftment, the grandest of all gatherings when millions of souls that come together to purge themselves before entering the heavenly realm of God; it is an open invitation, which is grabbed on like the very last opportunity by the devotees to deem themselves fit for an entry.

#### **KUMBH PARVA AT NASIK;**

Nasik city is on the banks of river Godavari, the place has plenty of religious and cultural importance for the Hindus. The celebration of the Kumbh Mela adds more grace to the place and is also referred to as Nashik Trimbakeshwar Simhastha. Tryambakeshwar, a place of pilgrimage is mainly known for performing rituals like ‘*Narayan Naag-bali*’ and ‘*Tripindi Shradha*’. There has been an ancient and special incident that had taken place at Tryambakeshwar. After abduction of Sita by Ravan, Sri Ramchandar had performed a ritual at ‘Kushawarta’ in Tryambakeshwar for accumulating merits so as to gain victory over Ravan. With the accumulation of merits Sri Ramchandar could defeat Ravan. This incident has been mentioned in Skanda Purana. Sri Ramchandar came to *Panchavati* in search of Sita after her abduction by Ravan. That time, Sages Kashyap and Vasishtha told Sri Ramchandar about the ‘Simhastha’ ritual and advised him to perform it before wedging war against powerful Ravan and to gain victory over him. The Sages advised him that it was difficult to defeat Ravan who was a great ascetic and a staunch devotee of *Shiva*; without performing the ritual. Sri Ramchandar then performed this ritual as instructed by Sage Vasishtha at ‘Kushawarta Tirtha’ in Tryambakeshwar; due to which Sri Ramchandar could have ‘*Darshan*’ of his father Dasharath and with the merits accumulated by performing the ritual, defeated Ravan in the battle. Since then, ‘Simhastha’ ritual got more recognition and is performed by many people. This ritual is performed for accumulation of merits and to get relieved from the debts of ancestors. The three important rituals among them are ‘*Ganga-Pujan*, ‘*Tirtha-Shradha*’ and ‘*Kumbh-Daan*’. The Ujjain Kumbh is celebrated when Jupiter ascends into sun sign Leo's quarter or the Simha constellation of zodiac, which is why it is called 'Simhastha'. The Simhastha is special in Ujjain as it is the seat of divine Mahakal - the Lord of all times. The ritual of bathing in the holy waters of *Kshipra* begins on the full moon day of the Hindu month of *Chaitr* (March-April) and continues on various dates until the full moon shows up in the following month of Vaishakh.

The Indian Express reports; “*Maha Kumbh Akhand Jyot*, a one-of-its-kind lamp having the longest wick of 3,617-km, the same as the distance from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, was illuminated on the opening day of the Simhastha Kumbh here and will continue to burn for all the 108 days. According to the Kumbh organisers,

the lotus-shape lamp, lit on July 14 by Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray during the flag hoisting (*dharma dhwaja rohan*) ceremony, is 8-ft high and will hold the Akhand Jyot up to October 10 as a symbol of India's unity and diversity. 'Maha Kumbh Akhand Jyot', a one-of-its-kind lamp having the longest wick of 3,617-km, the same as the distance from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, was illuminated on the opening day of the Simhastha Kumbh here and will continue to burn for all the 108 days. This unique bronze lamp, with a radius of 8 meters, is fed with hundreds of liters of til (sesame) oil everyday and its 4-inch thick wick is driven by hand-held machines, former cabinet minister of Maharashtra and Sena leader Babanrao Gholap said. The wick, prepared by cotton threads woven together has been bundled into a half-kilometer long ball kept nearby.



Describing the importance of this gigantic *Diya*, erected adjacent to the Sadhugram, Shri Ramanujacharya Himalay Baba, under whose guidance the lamp was set up said, "This is a unique way to unify devotees spiritually."

"Our country is spread from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and this is why we have chosen to keep the wick of the lamp akin to the distance between them (two destinations) to unite the country forever culturally," he said.

"Whosoever comes here and gets the *Darshan* of this *Diya*, is bestowed with all sorts of blessings of health, wealth and spirituality," he added

#### **Ambubachi Mela: Celebrating Kumbh of the Northeast**



*Hinduism is a fascinating religion where there are numerous festivals and rituals. The Ambubachi Mela is one such festival, held near Kamakhya Devi temple in Guwahati. The Mela is held every year in June and last for 4 days. Each year, during these 4 days the temple doors of Kamakhya remains closed. No deity of the temple in worshiped, farmers don't go to the field, daily worship and religious activities are stopped during the Mela. It is believed, Maa Kamakhya goes through Her yearly menstrual cycle during the Ambubachi days and the atmosphere is*



thought to be unclean. The temple reopens on the fourth day and *Prasad* is distributed. Lakhs of devotees throng the temple to have a glimpse of Devi Kamakhya. The temple is known to be the heart of all tantric traditions and thus, Ambubachi Mela is performed to mark the essence of this festival.

### **KUMBH PARVA OF SOUTH;**

The Mahamaham, referred to as Kumbh Parva of South, is one more example of the rivers as divine cleansing and healing agent. Bathing in the waters of Mahamaham tank on Mahamaham day, the auspicious day when waters of all holy rivers of India manifest in the huge tank at Kumbakonam, once in 12 years, like Kumbh Parva, is said to cleanse the bather of accumulated sins.

The main event of the Mahamaham festival, which occurs once in 12 years, is observed in Kumbakonam, with lakhs of devotees taking a holy dip. It is believed that a dip in the 20 sacred wells inside the tank and in other spots in the temple town of Thanjavur district in Tamil Nadu removes one's sins. Due to its significance and the large number of pilgrims who attend, Mahamaham is also referred to as the Kumbh Mela of the South.



**Cleansing Dip**

### **Vrindavan Kumbh Mela;**

There is Kumbh Mela in Vrindavan also before the Haridwar Kumbh. Many years ago the Shivites attacked the Vaisnavas at the Haridwar Kumbha Mela, so since that time, the Vaisnavas have their own Kumbha Mela in the most Holy Dham of Sri Vrindavan. This is a purely Vaisnava Kumbha Mela on the banks of the Yamuna. Vrindavan Kumbha Mela is held once in twelve years on the bank of Yamuna at holy place Brindavan, associated with Lord Krishna, in Uttar Pradesh. Legend has it that after the Churning of the Ocean (*Samudra Manthan*), the nectar pitcher or *Amrut* pot was carried by Garuda (*Vahana* of Lord Vishnu) around the world and the Garuda is believed to have sat on Kadamba Tree at Kali Dah in Vrindavan.



The main ritual during the Vrindaban Kumbh Mela includes taking bath in the Yamuna to attain *Moksha*. A few groups of Hindu saints like the *Bairagis* attend Vrindavan Kumbh before setting out for *Shahi Snan* during Haridwar Kumbha Mela

### **PRAYAG TIRTHA OF KASHMIR--- SEAT OF KUMBH PARVA**

*Yaani Tirthani Bharat Varshe Taani Tiirthai Kashmir Mandale,  
Yaani Tirthani Kashmir Mandale and Taani Tirthani Vitastaayaam.*

Whatever the *Tirthas* are in the *Bharata Varsha*, are all found in Kashmir. Whatever the *Tirthas* in Kashmir, all find their abode in the Vitasta River.



### **PRAYAG TIRTHA OF KASHMIR**

A great event was held on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2016, at Prayag---Shadipur, known as Bod Dashehar or Kumbh of Kashmir after a period of 75 long years. The Hindus of Kashmir consider the confluence of river Vitasta (Jehlum) and the river Sind, at Shadipur, situated at a distance of eighteen kilometers from Srinagar, as the Prayag. Both Vitasta which is linked to Goddess Parvati and Sindh which flows from holy cave of Amarnath are sacred rivers for Hindus of Kashmir. The Hindus all over India travel to Prayag, the confluence of Yamuna and Ganga at Allahabad to immerse the ashes of their dead. The Hindus of Kashmir immerse the ashes of their dead at the confluence of Vitasta and Sind at Shadipur. In the middle where the river Vitasta and the river Sind meet, there is a small island built in solid masonry. In the center of the platform on the island, is an old Chinar tree. At the base of trunk of the Chinar tree, several stone idols are placed in open. A popular legend among the Hindus is that the Chinar tree has been there from ancient times, but has neither grown with time nor decayed. The Hindus of the adjoining villages believe that the island rises with the rise in the level of water, whenever there are floods and the rivers are swollen.

On rare occasions, when the planetary alignments enter into a phase known as *Ashtagrah*, the Hindus of Kashmir assemble at Prayag and perform the *Shradha* of their ancestors. The occasion is called '*Bod Dashhar*' the 'Great Dussehra'. The planetary alignment of '*Bod Dashhar*' comes after ten years or twenty years. '*Bod Dashhar*' is believed to have the sanctity of a 'Kumbh Mela' and the Hindus of Kashmir believe that a *Shradha* of their ancestors at the Prayag on '*Bod Deshhar*' brings salvation to their dead.


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# SPIRITUAL FESTIVAL OF INDIA KUMBH PARVA

KASHMIRI PANDITS AT PRAYAGRAJ

**SHARDA PEETH IN POK – MAHA SHAKTI PEETH**



**SHARDA KUMBH SNAN**  
08-02-2019

**SHARदा कुम्भ स्नान**  
08-02-2019

**MAHA KUMBH AT PRAYAGRAJ (U.P.)**  
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