

Design Resource

Kumbh Mela

Spiritual Gathering of all Hindus

by

Sachin Susheel

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/kumbh-mela>



1. Introduction
2. Place
3. Mythological Aspect
4. Akhada
5. Shahi Snan
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Introduction

Kumbh Mela is a spiritual gathering of all Hindus. Kumbh means Kalash and mela means a gathering. It is held once in every 12 years at Prayag, Haridwar, Ujjain and Tryambakeshwar-Nashik. Nashik kumbh mela is also known as simhashta parva as Jupiter (Guru) and Sun (Surya) enters in Leo (Simha) zodiac sign. Tryambakeshwar is situated on the banks of Godavari River in Maharashtra which is 36 kms from Nashik city. During the Kumbh Mela sages, mahantas, devotees and pilgrims perform religious rituals such as offering poojas, taking spiritual bath in holy river to destroy their sins, meditating, Yadnya-yaga, shraddha (ritual for departed ancestors) and spiritual practice.



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Local Stalls



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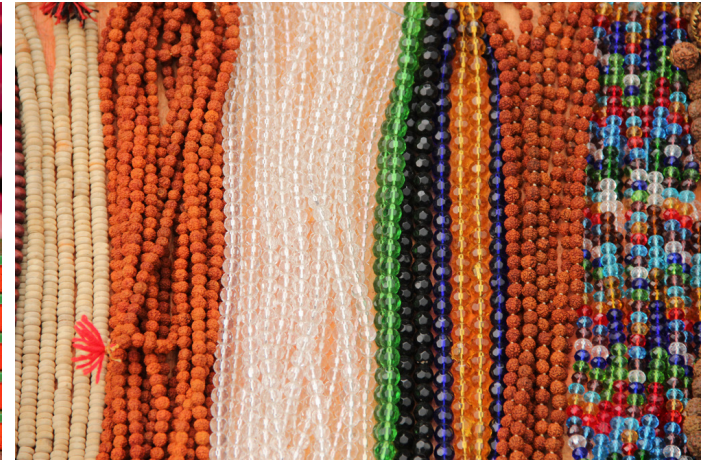
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Security System



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Place

Singhashta Kumbh Mela of the year 2015 was held at Trimbakeshwar Nashik, Maharashtra.



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Source:

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Mythological Aspect

As per the mythology the reason behind Kumbh mela was a story of samudra manthan (churning of ocean). Samudra manthan was done by gods and demons to achieve Amrut (drink of immortality). While churning the divine physician Dhanvantari emerged from the ocean holding Amrut Kumbh. He flew away with the pot of Amrut to prevent the demons from seizing it. The battle between gods and demons took place for 12 days and 12 nights which are 12 years for human beings. While carrying Amrut Kumbh drops of Amrut spills at four places namely Haridwar, Prayag, Ujjain and Trambakeshwar. Moon protected the amrut from spilling, Sun protected the Kumbh from cracking and Jupiter protected it from demons. Hence whenever Sun, Moon and Jupiter enters Aquarius or Kumbh (Zodiac sign) Kumbha Mela occurs. And Temples of Gods have been erected at the same places near Kumbh Mela.



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Akhada

Akhada means a complete organization of saints. It's an umbrella organization under which the various sects come within the Hindu tradition. There are all together 13 Akhadas. During the historical period when Hindu dharma was declining the Ascetics and renunciants came forward to protect dharma.

They held weapons which symbolized strength. They began to give lessons on religious scriptures and training in using of various weapons such as swords. All the saints and disciples belonging to different Akhadas stay together during Kumbh mela. Nashik city had 3 Akhadas of Vaishnav Pantha viz Shri Digambar, Shri Nirmohi and Shri Nirvani Akhada. Trambakeshwar had 10 Akhadas which included Shri Panch Dashnaam Juna Akhada, Shri Panch Naam Avahan Akhada, Shri Panch Agni Akhada, Shri Niranjani Akhada, Shri Taponidhi Anand Akhada Panchayati, Shri Panchayati Akhada Mahanirvani, Shri Panchayati Atal Akhada, Shri Panchayati Akhada Bada Udasin, Shri Panchayati Akhada Naya Udasin, and Shri Panchayati Akhada Nirmal.

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Shahi Snan

Ritual bathing or Shahi Snan is one of the important events of Kumbh mela. The saints of different Akhadas along with their disciple take a bath at the banks of the river on the prescribed date. On this day the huge procession takes place. Local people decorate roads with rangolis and petals. Shahi Snan begins at 4 am early in the morning. There was a huge crowd when saints started for going Shahi Snan procession with their weapons. The Akhadas, saints and disciples proceeds one by one on the route towards the place of Shahi Snan. Some saints sit on elephants, horses, camels, etc. and some on Rathas (Chariots) made of tractor-trolleys. Decorated umbrellas were held on saint's head by their disciples. The devotees shower flowers on them. The entire locality recited with the slogans such as "Har Har Mahadev" "Har Har Gauri Shankar" with the sound of musical instruments such as dhol, Tasha, nagare, etc. The complete procession itself is remarkable.



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Naga Sadhus

One can easily identify the Naga sadhus by their matted long hair and bhasma (ash) on their body. They consider bhasma as their cloths. They are protectors of religion and morality. Adi Jagadguru Shankaracharya created the Naga sanyasis. One can become Naga sadhu after following the customs and rituals of Akhada and being in Brahmacharya. They also practice the sport of wrestling. In ancient time when there was a trouble on dharma the weapon holder sadhus could kill to protect it. Since then they had given first preference to bath in Shahi Snan to wash away their sins. Naga sadhus taught to devote themselves to God.



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