

Kumbha Mela- World's largest spiritual fair.

By [Government of Uttar Pradesh](#) | Published 09/7/2007



The Kumbh Mela, believed to be the largest religious gathering on earth, is held every 12 years on the banks of the Triveni Sangam - the confluence of the holy rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati. Here, the pale yellow water of the Ganges merges with the brilliant blue-green of the Yamuna.

The Mela alternates between Nasik, Allahabad, Ujjain and Haridwar every three years. The one celebrated at the Holy Sangam in Allahabad is the largest and holiest of them. The Mela is attended by millions of devotees, including Sadhus. A holy dip in the sacred waters is believed to cleanse the soul. The Sangam comes alive during Kumbh and Ardh Kumbh with an enormous temporary township springing up on the vacant land on the Allahabad side of the river.



The Mela has its roots in the pastimes of the demigods and demons fighting for a pot of nectar (Amrit Kumbh): the nectar of immortality. Lord Vishnu, disguising himself as an enchantress (Mohini), seized the nectar from the demons. While fleeing from the evil ones, Lord Vishnu passed the nectar on to his winged mount, Garuda. The demons finally caught up with Garuda and in the ensuing struggle, a few drops of the precious nectar fell on Allahabad, Nasik, Haridwar and Ujjain. Since then, the Kumbh Mela has been held in all these places, alternatively, every 12 years.



Allahabad is built on a very ancient site formerly known as Prayag. Cover 2,261 square kilometers, it is located at the junction of the holy rivers Ganga and the Yamuna. The city acquired its present name from one of the largest religious gatherings in the world, held every 12 years at the confluence of the holy rivers. This historically famous city was a centre of the Indian Independence movement and the home of the Nehru family. Today Allahabad is a rapidly growing commercial and administrative city in Uttar Pradesh, with a population of 49 million.

Ardh Kumbh Mela and Magh Mela

The Ardh or 'half Kumbh' Mela, is held every six years on the banks of Sangam. Second only to the Kumbh in sanctity, the Ardh Kumbh also attracts devotees in the millions, from all over the world. Magh Mela is an annual event held at the Sangam.

The Kumbh Festival begins on the full moon night (Purnima) of the month of Paush. While the Kumbh Festival is held at Haridwar, Ujjain and Nasik every four years, the Kumbh at Prayag has a special significance. The Kumbh Festival is marked by the fact that it is held at the banks of holy rivers every 12 years. In Prayag, however, it is held on the banks of the rivers Ganga-Yamuna, with the underground Saraswati joining in. In Haridwar it's held at Ganga and in Nasik at the Godavari. A great fair is held on these occasions on the banks of these rivers with a huge congregation of devoted pilgrims. The Prayag Kumbh is also considered to be the most significant because it marks the direction of wisdom or light. This is the place where the sun, symbolizing wisdom, rises.

Prajapati Brahma is said to have created the Universe after conducting the Ashwamedh Yagna at the Dashashwamedh Ghat here. The Dashashwamedh Ghat and the Brahmeshwar Temple still exist here as symbols of that holy yagna, and that is another reason for the special significance of the Prayag Kumbh. In fact Prayag and Kumbh are synonymous to each other.



The Meaning of Kumbh

The literal meaning of Kumbh is a pitcher, but its elemental meaning is something else. Even as a symbol of pitcher, Kumbh is synonymous with holy activities as in daily life a pitcher (or kalash) is an integral part of all sacred activities in Hindu culture, and this pitcher is a symbol of Kumbh.

Holy scriptures say that in a pitcher, its mouth (opening) symbolizes the presence of Vishnu, its neck that of Rudra, the base of Brahma, all goddesses in the center and the entire oceans in the interior, thus encompassing all the four Vedas. This itself establishes the significance of the Kumbh as symbolized by the pitcher.



Different Forms of Kumbh

We shall not dwell upon the literary meaning of the word Kumbh, but we would like to mention the synonyms and origins. The Kumbh is a pitcher. Kumbh is the human body, it is the abdomen, and the sea, earth, sun and Vishnu are synonyms of Kumbh. The pitcher, sea, river, ponds and the well are symbols of Kumbh as the water from these places is covered from all sides. The sky has the cover of the wind, the sun covers the entire universe with its light, and the human body is covered with cells and tissues. That is why it is Kumbh. Desire, that is longing, is also Kumbh. Vishnu is also Kumbh as He pervades the entire creation, and the creation pervades in Him.

Kumbh is the confluence of all our cultures. It is the symbol of spiritual awakening. It is the eternal flow of humanity. It is the surge of rivers, forests and the ancient wisdom of the sages. It is the flow of life itself. It is the symbol of the confluence of nature and humanity. Kumbh is the source of all energy. Kumbh makes humankind realize this world and the other, sins and blessings, wisdom and ignorance, darkness and light. Holy rivers are the symbols of the lyrical flow of humanity. Rivers are indicators of the flow of water of life in the human body itself. In the human body that is an embodiment of home, nothing is possible without the five elements. The elements - fire, wind, water, earth and sky - symbolize the human body.

The Himalaya is the abode of the soul of the gods. The Holy Ganga embarks upon its journey from there, encompassing the forests, the mountain sages and the culture of the villages. The Yamuna is a co-traveler as it puts an end to all sins, and it is known variously as Tripathga, Shivpuri and other names. This is the Ganga that liberated the children of the Suryavanshi king Sagar. Its holy water is considered nectar itself.

Astrological View

It is explained in the Churning pastime that the stars are directly related to the Kumbh festival. Jayant took 12 days to carry the nectar kalash to the heavens. One day of gods was equal to one year of the human. It is that sequence of stars which result in the 12th year Kumbh being held at festival places.

It is clear that the Kumbh festival and Ganga are specially related. Ganga does flow in Prayag, but Godavari of Nasik is also called Ganga. It is known by the name of Gomti Ganga. Shipra is recognized as the north branch Ganga of Kashi. From that place, Shipra becomes the east branch, where it was once assembled with Ganga. Gangeshwar is worshipped there by Ganga. This fact is explained in Brahm Purana and Skandha Purana.

Astrological calculation of the Kumbh takes place in several ways:

- Upon the event of entrance of Jupiter in Aquarius and entrance of the Sun in Aries, Kumbh Festival is held at Haridwar.
- Upon the event of entrance of Jupiter in Aries circle and entrance of the Sun and Moon in Capricorn, Kumbh Festival is held at Prayag on the lunar conjunction day.
- In another series of calculation, in the event of entrance of the Sun in Capricorn and entrance of Jupiter in Taurus, Kumbh Festival is held at Prayag.
- In the event of entrance of Jupiter in Leo, Kumbh Festival is held at Nasik on the bank of river Godavari. In the event of the entry of Jupiter in Leo and entry of Sun in Aries, Kumbh Festival is held at Ujjain.
- Astrological options, as that of Prayag, are also available for Nasik and Ujjain.
- When Jupiter, Sun and Moon enters Cancer on lunar conjunction (Amavasya - last day of the dark half of a month) then also Kumbh Festival is held on the bank of river Godavari.
- When Jupiter enters in Libra and the Sun and Moon remain together on Kartik Amavasya (8th month of Hindu year), then also [moksha](#) Dayak (free from all bonds), Kumbh Festival is held at Ujjain.

Kumbh Festival starts from Haridwar in the interval of every 3 years. It is said that after Haridwar Kumbh Festival it is celebrated at Prayag, Nasik and Ujjain. Kumbh festival at Prayag is celebrated after 3 years of Kumbh Festival at Haridwar and there is a difference of 3 years between the Kumbh Festivals at Prayag and Nasik, but the Kumbh Festival at Nasik and Ujjain is celebrated in the same year. Sometimes Kumbh Festival at Nasik is celebrated before Ujjain.

Kumbh Festivals of all the four places are related with astrological calculations and main dates of Holy Bath. There have been differences of opinions among different scholars regarding 'Kumbh Cycle'. Some scholars opine a 12 year period for the Kumbh Festival. According to a second opinion, till the time of an auspicious moment is derived by astrological calculations the auspicious moment for Kumbh Festival cannot be held. If the equation of planets does not match the opinion of Sastra, then Kumbh Festival can be held in 11th and 13th year. This situation arises due to the posterior effect of Jupiter and time taken to revolve round the sun. A cycle of 11.78 years is taken by Jupiter to revolve round the Sun, resulting in loss of 50 days in 12 solar year cycle. This period becomes approximately 1 year between 6th and 7th Kumbh Festivals.

In continuation of astrological calculations, Jupiter takes a period of 84 years to shift from one astrological circle to another circle. As such, out of 7 Kumbh Festivals every Kumbh Festival is celebrated in 12th year and 7th Kumbh Festival is celebrated in 11th year. This happens minimum once in every century. There is an important role of Jupiter in deciding Kumbh

Festival. In view of the distribution of period out of 27 paths of the planets in solar system, 12 zodiac signs and 9 planets Aquaris is the 11th zodiac sign. Aquaris is an aquatic zodiac sign, master is Saturn, Saturn is airy element. Water and air, this is the climate/atmosphere. Superiority of Sun, Earth and fire element is already there. Kumbh Festival of Haridwar is the indication of this Zodiac sign. There is a difference of auspicious moments of planets and zodiac signs in the Kumbh Festivals at Prayag, Nasik, Ujjain, but along with the Sun and Moon superiority have also been provided to Jupiter i.e. element of life and Sun.

Kumbh (a festival occurring every 12 years) Festival is held only when the presence and conjunction of Sun, Moon and Jupiter is there in the same zodiac signs at the time of immortal deterioration point. Kumbh Festivals cannot be celebrated in the absence of these auspicious moments. There are total 12 Kumbh Festivals in 12 days of gods and 12 years of humans. On earth among human beings and 8 Kumbh Festivals in egyptious among gods are held. In continuation of astrological calculation Sun, Moon and month meets every year but a gap of 12 years exists to meet Jupiter only. Present period of Sun is 365/15/31. Present period (middle part of zodiac sign) of Jupiter has been given as 365/1/36. The difference between periods is 4/13/55. Therefore, after 12 years this difference in period is $12 \times 4/13/55 = 50/47$. This difference in (12x7) 84 years comes to 355 days, 29 hours, approx. one year and after a particular point of time Jupiter completes the cycle in 11 years instead of 12 years.



Kumbh Festival or Mini India

In early days, the shape of the Kumbh festival was small, but now from 12th century onward the festival has developed into the largest festival. It is seen spread all over the area from the Parade ground to under Triveni Dam; from Daraganj to the border of Nagvasuki; from Jhunsi (Pratishthanpuri) and in Arail (Alarkpuri). The shape of the festival depends on the direction of Ganga, wherever it takes turns, whatever space is left by it, that makes it obvious what area is to be covered by the festival.

The festival of Kumbh or Ardh Kumbh is not a festival of market or fair, instead it is the festival

of knowledge, asceticism and devotion. Religious atmosphere is seen everywhere in this festival. Whichever camp you visit, in between smoke of Yagya (religious sacrifice), voice of Vedic mantras is heard, elucidation, dances based on sastric epics, prayers, preaching of saints and sages, a different society is seen. Traditional procession of Akharas, shining swords of naga, sages in Shahi Snan (royal bath) between elephants, horses, musical instruments, horse race attracts lakhs of devotees to visit Kumbh. At the last Ardh Mela, Srila Prabhupada murti was processed by two of Krsna's bulls.



It is a festival of leaders of different religions of society. Seeing the growing population in the festival, small markets have taken the shape of a large market, Government and Administration has also involved itself for the convenience of the festival. This festival is the festival of honor and dignity of Prayag. It is the festival of utmost devotion of lakhs of sacred performers. Food is provided in many areas by donators for providing food to the poor, helpless and saints. Ganga is the mother of all in this festival. All are her sons.

Such a huge size of public persons does not assemble at one place continually for a month in any other part of the world. The land of Prayag, the decider of sins and holy acts, has the honor to conduct this festival.

This festival too is celebrated in a town made of tents, not that of houses of bricks and stone. It is held on the cold sand of Sangam. It is held under open sky covered with fog. It is a tough test of human devotion. People come to this festival with the spirit of earning pious credits. Sinners end automatically. This is the festival of self-thinking. This is a festival of this world and the other world, where provision of all the donations including cow-donation, gold-donation, secret donation, donation/offering is there.

This is the festival of wishes. People from every religion and caste are present in the festival in one or another form, saints and sacred performers from every caste are present. A small place takes the shape of a mini-India. Different types of language, tradition-culture, dress, food, way of living can be seen at various places, and the most important specialty is that crores of people

reach here without any invitation.

A nice video clip of the most recent Ardh Kumbha Mela has been made available by the Government of Uttar Pradesh: