

The Great Conjunction of the Great Kumbh

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Abstract

The Mahakumbh at Prayagraj, held every 12 years, is a massive religious event that draws millions of devotees from around the world. The 2025 edition of the Mahakumbh was expected to surpass 50 crore attendees, making it a global spectacle. However, it has crossed 66 crore. The event, which culminates in sacred bathing rituals at the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati, is deeply rooted in Hindu traditions, with spiritual merit and divine blessings being central to its significance. The Mahakumbh's grandeur is enhanced by astrological alignments, such as the rare "Amrit Yog," which is believed to imbue the waters with nectar-like qualities. The event has evolved over time, especially since India's independence, gaining international recognition and attracting pilgrims from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, the event has significant economic impacts, with investments in infrastructure, including roads, railways, and airports, leading to an economic boost for Uttar Pradesh. The Mahakumbh serves as a hub of spirituality, culture, and tourism, contributing to the state's growth while offering devotees an unparalleled opportunity for spiritual and physical purification.

Keywords: Mahakumbh, Prayagraj, Spiritual pilgrimage, Amrit snan, Economic impact

Introduction

After 14 years, at the Prayagraj Mahakumbh, more than 42 crore devotees had taken a dip in the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati by 6 PM on February 8, during the Ekadashi of the bright half of the month of Magh. It is estimated that by Mahashivaratri, this number will exceed 50 crore. More devotees, including men, women, children, elderly, and youth, are attending the Mahakumbh than expected. The world is amazed by the power of Sanatan as seen during the Mahakumbh at Prayagraj, which has become a center of attraction globally, along with Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nashik.

The inauguration of the divine Mahakumbh was grand. On Paush Purnima, more than one and a half crore people took a holy dip. About 12 kilometers of ghats were prepared for bathing. The first bath on the banks of the Sangam saw such an extraordinary aura of faith that all estimates of the Prayagraj Mela Authority were left behind. Never before had so many people gathered on Paush Purnima. Then, when the Sun entered Capricorn from Sagittarius and became Uttarayan, on January 14, during Makar Sankranti, a wave of faith surged, and over four crore devotees took a dip at the Sangam. On Mauni Amavasya, all previous records were broken.

The state government estimates that between eight to ten crore devotees will come to take a holy dip at the Sangam, driven by the desire for spiritual merit. This is the main bathing festival of the Mahakumbh. Two days before, millions of devotees had already gathered for the dip. Before the Amrit Snan of Mauni Amavasya, on Sunday and Monday, more than three crore devotees bathed at the Sangam and nearby Ganga ghats, setting a new record. On Republic Day, 1.74 crore devotees bathed, and by the next day, Monday,

until 8 PM, 1.55 crore devotees had taken a dip, including one million Kalpvasis. By Tuesday evening, before Mauni Amavasya, over 17 crore devotees had bathed at the Sangam.

The magnitude of the Mahakumbh can be gauged from the words of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath: "I estimate that the population here will be equivalent to the third-largest in the world, after India and China." The Mahakumbh area, spread over 4,000 hectares along the Sangam, is filled with devotees from all directions. Devotees from distant areas, other states, and neighbouring countries like Nepal, as well as prominent figures from wealthy countries across the seven seas, all blend in here. This tradition has been ongoing for centuries. The Mahakumbh occurs every 12 years in Prayagraj, and the Ardhakumbh every six years.

The rivers transform themselves due to changes in planetary positions, and their water becomes like nectar. This conjunction occurs every 12 years. Jupiter has entered Taurus, and the Sun and Moon have entered Capricorn together, forming the Amrit Yog, making the bath an Amrit Snan. This year, a rare conjunction of 144 years is also being completed. The Mahakumbh occurs every 12 years, and after 12 cycles of 12 years, it is called the "Purna Mahakumbh." This time, a special thing happened when the name of the royal bath during the Kumbh Mela was changed to "Amrit Snan," moving away from Mughal-era names.

The second Amrit Snan, Mauni Amavasya (January 29, 2025), was the largest bathing festival of the Mahakumbh. Bathing and donating on this day yield many times more spiritual benefits. The dates for bathing during the Mahakumbh are determined based on astrological calculations and special planetary positions. After Mauni Amavasya, Amrit Snans will occur on Vasanta Panchami (February 3, 2025), Magh Purnima (February 12), and Mahashivaratri (February

26). On these dates, crores of devotees from across the country and abroad will come to take a dip at the Triveni Sangam.

Divinity and Grandeur

The Mahakumbh in Prayagraj is a symbol of tapas and tyaga, with crores of devotees and sadhus gathering from around the world. The Kalpvasis follow strict rules to attain spiritual merit. As the largest religious event globally, the Kumbh attracts interest from both domestic and international audiences. People from all corners of the world want to witness the astonishing sights of the Kumbh and Mahakumbh.

Historically, during the Mughal and British periods, the perspective on Kumbh and Mahakumbh was different, but since independence, the events have become more vibrant. In 2019, before the Kumbh, the government transformed it into a more divine, grand, and modern event, attracting people across religious and geographical boundaries. The new generation has become familiar with the divinity and purity of the Kumbh. The 2025 Mahakumbh has not only captured global attention but also become a booster for Uttar Pradesh's economy. It is said that preparations for the Mahakumbh involved an expenditure of ₹7,500 crore. In an interview with a private channel, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath clarified that ₹7,500 crore was not just spent on the Mahakumbh but also on connecting roads, highways, railway stations, airports, and the overall development of Prayagraj city. He stated that this would lead to a growth of at least ₹2 lakh crore in Uttar Pradesh's economy.

The Mahakumbh benefits everyone, from small to large businesses, both economically and spiritually. Many industrialists from India and abroad want to visit Prayagraj directly by air and take a dip before returning. Such visitors spend an average of ₹20 lakh per visit. Those traveling by train, bus, or private vehicles spend between ₹1,000 to ₹10,000. Assuming an average expenditure of ₹5,000 per devotee, if 40 crore devotees attend, the income would be ₹2 lakh crore, and if 45 crore attend, it would be ₹2.25 lakh crore. This income benefits not only large and medium-sized businesses but also small vendors selling flowers, prasad, and food items, strengthening their economic status.

During the Amrit Snan festivals of the Mahakumbh, the Yogi Adityanath government also arranges for flower showers from aircraft over the saints and devotees bathing in the sacred Triveni. This spectacle was first seen on Paus Purnima, when the entire Sangam area resonated with chants of "Har Har Gange" and "Jai Shri Ram."

Along with the Mahakumbh, the Kalpvasis begin on the banks of the Sangam, where about 10 lakh Kalpvasis, along with their priests, set up camps. Their daily routine includes bathing three times and eating satvik food once. Outside the camps, devotees sow tulsi and barley, spending their days in Hari Bhajan.

The story behind the Kumbh and Mahakumbh is well-known worldwide. It is associated with the churning of the ocean, where both poison and nectar emerged. The gods and demons fought over the nectar, and during this struggle, a few drops of nectar fell on four places on Earth: Haridwar, Nashik, Ujjain, and Prayagraj. These places are considered sacred due to these drops.

Each pilgrimage site has its unique significance, but Prayagraj stands out as it is the confluence of three rivers—Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati—making it the "Tirtharaj." The Vedas and Puranas extol the greatness of Prayagraj. While Haridwar's Kumbh is held on the banks of the Ganga, Nashik's is on the Godavari, and Ujjain's on the Shipra, Prayagraj uniquely combines three rivers.

Preparations and Global Outreach

The Yogi Adityanath government prepared extensively for the Mahakumbh, expecting over 40 crore devotees from January 13 to February 26, 2025. However, with the arrival of more devotees than expected, the number is likely to exceed 50 crore. The entire city of Prayagraj has been transformed, with a massive area of 4,000 hectares dedicated to the event. This includes 1,900 hectares for parking alone, making it larger than many autonomous territories worldwide.

The Mahakumbh area is divided into five main sectors and 25 sub-sectors. Sector one and two are at the Parade Ground, sector three near the Sangam, sector four towards Daraganj, and sector five across the Ganga River. Sectors six to ten are from Nagvasuki Temple to Shivkuti, and sectors eleven to nineteen are in the northern part of Ghusi.

The preparations began months in advance, with the launch of the Mahakumbh logo, website, and mobile app in October. By November, over 80,000 people from countries like Brazil, the USA, France, England, Uruguay, and Australia had visited the website for information. The mobile app was also widely downloaded, signaling the global interest in the Mahakumbh.

The Uttar Pradesh government, along with various departments, worked tirelessly to ensure smooth arrangements. The Mahakumbh has not only transformed Prayagraj but also become a significant economic event, expected to contribute 10% to Uttar Pradesh's GDP.

Conclusion

Mahakumbh 2025 organized at Prayagraj becomes a phenomenal union of spirituality, culture, and international importance. With huge no. of devotees visiting in sacred rituals and availing astrological conjunctions, it strengthens the ageless significance of the Kumbh Mela in Hindu faith. Besides its religious significance, the event has sparked massive economic development for Uttar Pradesh state, India through improved infrastructure and rising tourism. Being a symbol of faith and unity, the Mahakumbh continues to inspire both domestic and international audiences, fostering a deep connection to the ancient spiritual heritage of India while helping to build the country's socio-economic development.