

Existence and Importance of Kumbh-Parva in the Vedas

Sonal Singh^{1*}

1. Assistant Director, Mahayogi Shri Guru Gorakshanath Shodh Peeth, Deen Dayal Upadhyay, Gorakhpur University, Gorakhpur. Email: sonal.mgs@ddugu.ac.in

Abstract

The Kumbh Parva, an ancient religious festival, holds significant cultural and spiritual importance in Indian society. This sacred gathering is based on the Vedic principles and is one of the largest religious congregations globally. The festival's origins can be traced to ancient Vedic texts, where the word "Kumbh," meaning "pitcher," has multiple interpretations symbolizing purification, abundance, and spiritual unity. The festival, held at specific sacred locations like Prayag, Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nashik, symbolizes a confluence of physical, mental, and spiritual cleansing. In the Vedas, Kumbh is associated with the divine and is described as a means to purify the body and soul, allowing participants to attain spiritual liberation. The festival also promotes social unity, devotion, and human cooperation, transcending individual differences. The Vedic scriptures, such as the Rigveda, Samaveda, and Atharvaveda, all reference the Kumbh, linking it with both material and spiritual blessings. The Kumbh festival is thus not only a celebration of faith but also a manifestation of India's rich cultural heritage, where each action, be it bathing in the holy rivers or meditating, is considered to purify the individual. Through its spiritual essence, Kumbh serves as a reminder of the importance of virtuous deeds and the eternal pursuit of happiness and liberation.

Keywords: Kumbh Parva, Vedic Scriptures, Spiritual Cleansing, Hindu Rituals, Social Unity.

Introduction

From ancient times, the religious perspective has been paramount in society. Religion is the supreme guide that teaches us virtues and makes us aware of our duties. The word "dharma" is derived from "dhārayati iti dharma," meaning what is upheld or sustained. In Indian society, faith in religion is extremely strong. Through devotion, faith, and trust, it teaches us to live life easily even on the most difficult paths. It also instills reverence for sacred places, even in this technological era, where we will observe the Kumbh pilgrimage site.

Kumbh is a major religious festival of Sanatan Dharma. People from various countries and provinces come with devotion to bathe, donate, chant, and perform worship. This festival is not only attended by Indian Hindus but also affects people from every country. Here, saints, householders, politicians, and officials gather in a spirit of harmony to bathe and meditate. This festival also spreads the message of social unity. Everyone is equal here. They try to purify their minds along with their bodies in the sacred waters of the Ganges. And this is such a festival that every moment on this sacred land fills your heart with unique emotions, thrilling and exhilarating. Those who have witnessed its activities firsthand or are aware through newspapers and media are all part of this sacred festival. The importance of this festival dates back to ancient times, as described in the scriptures. Among these, we will discuss how the depiction and explanation of Kumbh are presented in our apaurusheya Vedas.

The word "Kumbh" is described in the third chapter of "Nāmalingānuśāsana" by Amara Simha as a noun meaning "pitcher." In "Amarakosha," the word

"Kumbh" also means "elephant's head" and "Commiphora mukul tree." In "Śabdakalpdrum," the meaning of "Kumbh" is derived from "kumbh bhūmim umbhati gandhena pūrayati." In English dictionaries, it is accepted by scholars as a "pitcher." Thus, it is confirmed that the word "Kumbh" means "pitcher," but the question remains why the fair held in Prayag is named Kumbh? In this context, a mythological story related to the churning of the ocean is prevalent, with which everyone is familiar.

The meanings of the word "Kumbh" are also described in the scriptures as follows

The earth is informed of future well-being by the planets like Brihaspati gathering at sacred places like Haridwar and Prayag, which is called Kumbh. Kapildev Dwivedi says that the earth is blessed by the gathering of great souls and their benevolent teachings, which is called Kumbh. The word "Kumbh" has various meanings. It refers to something that provides water supply to alleviate droughts and famines. It is also used for the cleansing of sins and the increase of virtues, which lightens the burden of the earth. It is called Kumbh when it fills the earth with auspicious honors. It is Kumbh when it illuminates the earth with increased radiance and prosperity. It is Kumbh when it nourishes the earth through various sacrifices. It is Kumbh when it removes impurities from the world with a benevolent intention.

In the Vedas, the form of Kumbh, or the pitcher, is described as follows:

कलशस्य मुखेविष्णुः कण्ठे रुद्रः समारितः।

मूले त्वस्य स्थितो ब्रह्म मध्ये मातृगणाः स्थिताः।

कुक्षौ तु सागराः सर्वे सप्तद्वीपा वसुन्धरा।

ऋग्वेदोऽथयजुर्वेदः सामवेदो ह्यथर्वणः।

अङ्गैश्च सहिताः सर्वे कलशं तु समाश्रिताः।

Meaning, in the mouth of the Kumbh (pitcher) is Vishnu, in the neck is Rudra, at the base is Brahma, in the middle are the maternal deities, in the belly are all the oceans, the seven continents, and the earth, and all the Vedas—Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, and Atharvaveda—are supported by its limbs. This verse indicates that Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh, and the four Vedas reside in this pitcher. The drops of nectar from this pitcher fell in the Prayag region, where the confluence of three rivers occurs, making the festival held there during the month of Magh extremely glorious.

Description of Kumbh in the Vedas: In the ancient history of world literature and culture, the Vedas hold a very important place. They are the strong foundation of Indian culture and civilization. The Vedas are the oldest and largest texts in the world. They contain divine experiences of Indian sages in the form of Vedic mantras. These mantras include hymns to various deities, knowledge, science, philosophy, rituals, Ayurveda, architecture, etc.

The Vedas have had a profound and widespread impact on Indian thought. All philosophies are inspired by the Vedas. The Vedas provide high-quality moral education and reveal excellent human values.

The word "Veda" is derived from the root "vid," meaning knowledge. It refers to knowledge that is filled with cosmic thoughts, always existing, and useful for humans across all ages.

There are four Vedas—Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, and Atharvaveda. The emergence of the Vedas is believed to have occurred between 3000 BCE and 1000 BCE, while Lokmanya Tilak considered them to have been composed 6,000 years before Christ. This fact unequivocally accepts the Vedas as the oldest texts in the world.

The Vedas consist of a collection of mantras. Some of these mantras are in verse, while others are in prose. The verse mantras are called "ṛk" or "ṛcā." The Veda that contains a collection of ṛcās is called the Rigveda, and when these ṛcās are sung, they are called the Samaveda. The Veda that is primarily in prose is called the Yajurveda, and the one whose mantra collection was done by Atharva Rishi is known as the Atharvaveda. The Atharvaveda covers various subjects.

The description of the Kumbh festival is adequately found in the Vedas. This Kumbh festival is very ancient and imbued with Vedic religion. In the Vedas, the description of Kumbh is as follows—A person attending the Kumbh festival himself achieves the fruits of virtuous deeds like donations and sacrifices, which cleanse his sins like an axe cuts wood. Just as the Ganges and canals destroy their banks while flowing, the Kumbh festival destroys the physical sins accumulated from past deeds and provides new creation like a mountain, destroying clouds and bringing beneficial rains to the world.

In the Rigveda, it is mentioned:

जघान वृजं स्वधित्विर्वनेव सरोज पुरो अरदन् सिन्धून्

विभेद गिरिं नवभिन्न कुम्भभागा इन्द्रो अकृणुता स्वयुग्मिः

Meaning, Indra, with his own pair, created the Kumbh portion, breaking the mountain and the earth, and destroying the rivers.

In the 12th mandala of the Rigveda, it is said:

कुम्भी वेश्वां मा व्यथिष्ठा यज्ञायुधैराज्येनातिषिक्ता।

Meaning, O Kumbh, do not suffer hardship in the sacrificial altar, being satisfied with ghee through sacrificial weapons.

In the first mandala of the Rigveda:

युवं नरास्तुनते पञ्जियायकक्षीवते अरदतं पुरन्धिम्।

कारोतराच्छकादध्वस्य वृष्णः षतं कुम्भां असिञ्चतं सुरायाः।

Meaning, the people and the gods together praise and worship the goddess Purandhi, and the Vrishnis pour a hundred pitchers of Sura (a divine drink).

In the Shukla Yajurveda, it is mentioned that the Kumbh festival is a source of physical happiness in this life and supreme happiness in future lives through virtuous deeds.

In the Samaveda:

अविशन्कलशर्तं सुतो विश्वाऽमर्षन् मिश्रियः।

इन्दुरिन्द्राय धीयते।

Meaning, the full pitcher is offered to Indra.

In the Atharvaveda, it is said:

पूर्णः कुम्भोऽधिकाल अहितस्तं वै प्यामो बहुधा नु सन्तः।

सऽदूमा विश्वा भुवनानि प्रत्यंग कालं तमाहुः परमे व्योमन्।

Meaning, the full Kumbh occurs at a specific time, which we often see at sacred places like Prayag. It is said that this Kumbh happens due to the conjunction of planets in the vast sky.

The Atharvaveda also says:

चतुरः कुम्भाच्चतुर्धा ददामि।

Brahma says, "I create and give you four Kumbh portions, which provide worldly and spiritual happiness, at four places—Haridwar, Prayag, Ujjain, and Nashik."

The spiritual form of Kumbh: The true purpose of the Kumbh festival is for humans to attain the essence of immortality and achieve liberation. The human body is like a pitcher. It has four places where the essence of immortality resides, and through yogic practices, these places are awakened, and the dwindling nectar is consumed, leading to liberation. These four places in the human body are:

1. Brahma Randhra or Sahasrara Chakra
2. Ajna Chakra
3. Anahata Chakra
4. Manipura Chakra

The true form of Kumbh is a spiritual knowledge-yajna and an indicator of the real fulfillment of karma. The Skanda Purana states that both gods and humans receive happiness and sorrow based on their actions.

देवानां दानवानां च मनुष्याणां विशेषतः।

कर्मव सुखदुःखानां हेतु भतं न संशयः।

Meaning, there is no doubt that the cause of happiness and sorrow for gods, demons, and humans is their actions.

The Padma Purana says that both auspicious and inauspicious actions lead to happiness and sorrow.

सर्वत्र कारणं कर्म शुभाशुभं न संशयः ।

पूण्येन कर्मणा पुनः नरः सौख्यं प्रमुञ्चति ।

दुष्कृतं मुञ्चते चाज पापयुक्तेन कर्मणा ।

Meaning, there is no doubt that karma is the cause everywhere, and through virtuous actions, humans enjoy happiness again, while through sinful actions, they suffer.

The Kumbh Mahaparva offers the ability to overcome sin, suffering, and attain divine power. Similarly, the sacred place of Prayag has immense significance, and residing there during the Kalpavas is highly rewarding. Bathing in the Ganges, Yamuna, and hidden Saraswati during the month of Magh yields thousands of benefits. Here, the Ganges represents devotion, the Yamuna represents action, and the Saraswati represents knowledge. Thus, the confluence of action, devotion, and knowledge is achieved here, fulfilling all desires.

The Kumbh festival is unique and divine. It is not just a common fair that has been held for millennia but a global mega-festival for believers in Indian culture beyond national borders.

This Kumbh festival, despite religious, philosophical, and sectarian diversities, has been a shared element of the Kumbh consciousness, promoting renunciation, penance, and yogic practices for centuries, organizing India as a conceptual and spiritual nation.

Kumbh brings an extraordinary message of faith, renunciation, dedication, cooperation, and human management to the world, and we bow to the glory of this festival. Along with us, the world is also amazed by this divine festival as a celebration of the glory of India's ancient culture.

Conclusion

The Kumbh Parva is more than just a religious festival; it is a profound expression of India's spiritual and cultural values, deeply rooted in the Vedic tradition. The festival's significance, as outlined in the Vedas, extends beyond mere rituals, promoting an all-encompassing transformation of mind, body, and soul. With its universal message of purification, unity, and devotion, the Kumbh serves as a timeless celebration of humanity's quest for truth, virtue, and spiritual liberation. The festival not only connects individuals

with the divine but also fosters a sense of collective harmony and shared purpose, making it a unique global phenomenon of immense cultural and spiritual importance.

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