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COVER
STORY

MAHA KUMBH MELA 202 : A CELEBRATION
OF INDIA'S TIMELESS SPIRITUALITY

The Kumbh Mela is an essential gathering for the Akharas, whose history is deeply intertwined with this grand festival. During the Kumbh Mela, Akharas showcase their spiritual and organizational strength. The Akhara system was established by Adi Shankaracharya, who organized the fragmented sects of Hindu ascetics into structured group to help protect and unify the faith in the face of external threats.



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STRENGTHENING INDIA'S MARITIME PROWESS

INS Surat is the fourth and final ship of the Project 15B stealth guided-missile destroyers. Built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) in Mumbai, the ship is a testament to India's capability in constructing advanced warships.



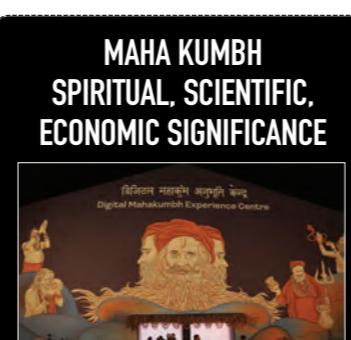
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CANADA'S NEW GOVERNMENT WILL
FORGE BETTER RELATIONS WITH INDIA!



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GIG ECONOMY OR
MODERN SLAVERY!



There is a narrative behind every Hindu festive and ritual. They are honored with zeal and excitement, as well as a solid scientific, historical, and philosophical foundation. All of these characteristics combine to provide a reason to celebrate a festival or perform a ritual.

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OPERATES AND WAYS TO PROTECT YOURSELF

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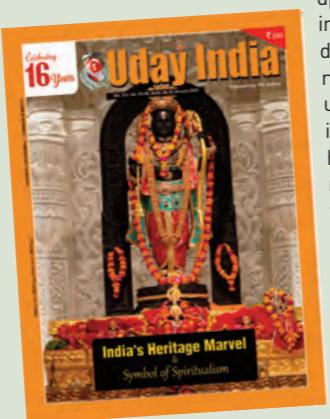
MAILBOX

11 JANUARY 2025

E-MAIL: editor@udayindia.in

I write in response to your enlightening cover story on Sanatana Dharma and Ayodhya, which beautifully encapsulated the essence of this timeless and universal philosophy. Your articulation of its principles—honesty, purity, goodwill, and generosity—resonates deeply, especially in a world that often struggles to uphold these values. Sanatana Dharma's inclusive ethos and emphasis on eternal duties, transcending caste, sect, and even religious boundaries, make it a beacon of unity and peace. The analogy of dharma as inherent duty—like sweetness in sugar or heat in fire—profoundly conveys its natural and unchanging essence. In an age where religious and philosophical beliefs are sometimes used to create divisions, it is refreshing to be reminded of Sanatana Dharma's respect for all forms of life and its commitment to universal love and harmony. The recognition of texts like the Ramcharitmanas in UNESCO's Memory of the World register and the global admiration for the Bhagavad Gita highlight how these teachings continue to inspire humanity across cultures. Your article rightly emphasizes that Sanatana Dharma does not seek to undermine other religions but instead nurtures mutual respect and coexistence. Such a philosophy is crucial today, not only to preserve harmony but also to address global challenges like environmental degradation, which Sanatana principles inherently caution against.

—Nilesh Guha, Bengaluru



The article "Yogi Rescued BJP's Sinking Ship in UP" paints a compelling picture of a year that tested the resilience of India's ruling party. While the consecration of Ram Lalla's temple in Ayodhya was a historic achievement for BJP, the subsequent electoral results in Uttar Pradesh were a sobering reminder that sentiment alone cannot guarantee political dominance. The decline in BJP's Lok Sabha seats, from a commanding 62 in 2019 to just 33 in 2024, underscores a shift in voter sentiment in Uttar Pradesh. This outcome not only reflected dissatisfaction with certain aspects of governance but also highlighted the resurgence of the opposition, particularly the Samajwadi Party and Congress. The INDIA alliance's success demonstrates that a united opposition can challenge even the most formidable political forces. However, it is crucial to note the resilience BJP displayed in the assembly by-elections.

—Anchal Verma, Patna

* * *

The article rightly emphasizes the unprecedented nature of PM Narendra Modi's participation in the Ram Lalla consecration, which resonated deeply with the majority community. Yet, as the election results show, such symbolic gestures must be complemented by tangible progress on pressing issues like unemployment, inflation, and farmers' concerns to maintain political goodwill. BJP's mixed fortunes in 2024 highlight the dynamic nature of Indian democracy. It is a testament to the electorate's discerning judgment and their insistence on accountability from those in power. Moving forward, BJP must address its internal conflicts, recalibrate its strategies, and strengthen its connect with diverse sections of society. As we look to the future, 2024 serves as a reminder that victories are earned not just through historical or cultural milestones but through consistent delivery on promises and an inclusive approach to governance.

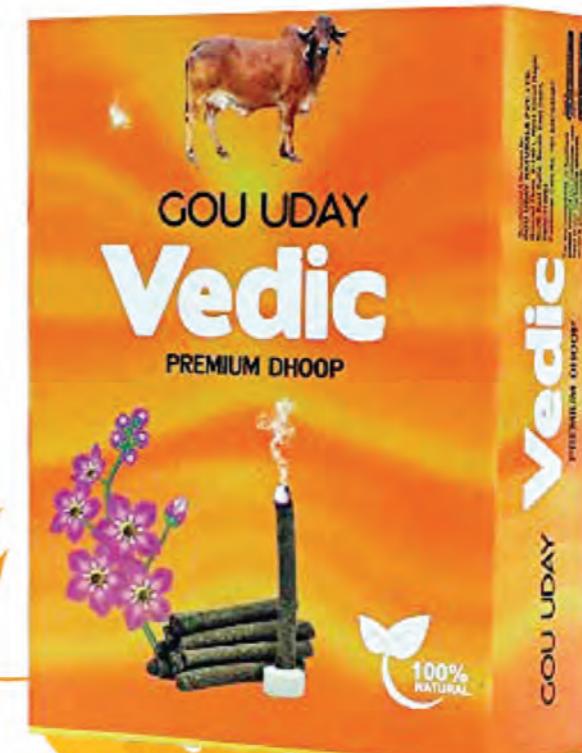
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Women in Combat in India and America

Among the so-called controversial nominations for the top positions in his second Administration that will commence on January 20, 2025, one happens to be former Army National Guard major and former Fox News host Pete Hegseth, President-elect Donald Trump's choice for the Secretary of Defense.

Hegseth happens to be a decorated veteran who served as an Army National Guard infantry officer with tours in Afghanistan and Iraq and at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Apart from being a television-host, he is a prolific writer. He has published five books since 2016, of which two particularly deal with the American defense - "Modern Warriors" in 2020 and "The War on Warriors: Behind the Betrayal of the Men Who Keep Us Free" in June this year.

However, his critics, most of them being Left/Liberals and from Democratic party, are not impressed. And that is mainly because of his strong view that women soldiers should not be

allowed to fight on the front lines. He seems to have reignited a debate on the topic of "the role of women in the armed forces" that many thought had been long settled under the principle of complete equality.

Incidentally, this topic has also resurfaced in India with a five-page letter last month on "command by women officers" — written by corps commander Lieutenant General Rajeev Puri to Eastern Army

Commander Lieutenant General Ram Chander Tiwari. The letter cites an "in-house review" by the force's Panagarh-based 17 mountain strike corps of a "pragmatic performance analysis" of eight women commanding officers (COs) under the Brahmastra Corps.

Lieutenant General Rajeev Puri's recommendation is that the focus should shift from "gender equality" to "gender neutrality" as far as women warriors are concerned, given the increase in the number of officer management issues in units commanded by women officers in the last one year.

Predictably, women officers and many military analysts in India have found General Puri's letter "highly disturbing". And this is something Hegseth's increasing critics in America also seem to share with. They are now urging the Republican Senators to reject the nomination of a "reactionary streak" like Hegseth as the Defense Secretary by Trump.

Let us see what Hegseth has said in his shows and interviews and written in his books to conclude that the military should not lower standards for women to enter combat jobs.

"Women shouldn't be in combat at all," Hegseth is reported



PRAKASH NANDA



to have said in a recent interview. "They're life-givers, not life-takers. I know a lot of wonderful soldiers, female soldiers, who have served, who are great. But they shouldn't be in my infantry battalion."

For Hegseth, allowing women to fight has led to more casualties on the battlefield. "Everything about men and women serving together makes the situation more complicated, and complication in combat, that means casualties are worse".

Of course, Hegseth's ideas of women in armed forces can be said to go along with his overall thesis of his book, "The War on Warriors: Behind the Betrayal of the Men Who Keep Us Free" that the U.S. military has become "too woke, too effeminate, and too vaccinated to be fit for purpose" under the promotion of DEI(Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) project.

He dislikes transgender service members, and trans people and would like to restore "don't ask, don't tell (DADT)," the military's former prohibition on people serving while openly gay, lesbian, or bisexual. "The establishment of DADT, and then ending of DADT, were just policy footholds for radical Leftists, hell-bent on even more radical social change — a full-frontal attack on almost every institution of the military," he wrote in "The War on Warriors".

However, it is to be noted that Hegseth is not opposed to the entry of women in non-combat roles but against their serving in jobs such as SEALs, Army Rangers, infantry, armor and artillery where he thinks "strength is a differentiator." He disapproves of the decision of the then Defense Secretary Ash Carter's order in late 2015 that the military should open all military jobs to women.

It is equally noteworthy that Carter's decision was opposed by the Marine Corps, but in vain. Even "Special operations forces" in surveys done in 2015 and more recently, said women did not have the physical or mental strength to serve in elite commando units and doing so could hurt the units' effective-

ness and lower the standards.

If one goes back to history a little further, women have been in combat roles for the better part of three decades beginning in 1991 and 1993, when Congress repealed the law barring women from combat aircraft and ships, respectively. That was followed by the Navy in 2010 reversing its policy banning women from submarines, and the 2013 repeal of the Combat Exclusion Policy, allowing women to serve in ground combat units. And then came Carter's decision in 2015 that opened all military combat positions to female service members.

Apparently, such progress has allowed women to fill about 220,000 jobs previously off-limits to them, such as special operations, infantry, armor, and reconnaissance units. Today, women account for about 17.5 percent of the military's active-duty force, according to 2022 data from the Defense Department.

However, the women soldiers in America do need to qualify and meet the standards like their male counterparts. The Army and all of the branches still require women to pass strict fitness tests if they want to take on the most physically challenging specialty jobs, like an Army Ranger or Green Beret. And here, only a small number of women have been able to meet the rigorous physical requirements to join those elite ranks.

Reportedly, only about 4,800 women in the U.S. are currently qualified for Army infantry, armor, and artillery jobs. The standard still demanded of the most elite combat roles means that the Navy's Special Warfare combat crew has only two women and the Air Force's special-operations team has three.

Here, the Indian counterparts of the American women warriors are luckier. In 2023, the Indian Supreme Court decided that fitness of women officers could not be equated with that of the men. India's top court said that the requirement that the women officers must have the same fitness standards which are mandated for 25-year-old male officers is "based on gender stereotypes and societal notions on gender roles that men are physically stronger while women are weak and submissive". In the process, it allowed permanent commission in the armed forces to women officers who were disqualified earlier because of lack of fitness that the men-officers displayed.

Accordingly, the Indian Army has broken the glass ceiling by assigning women officers to command roles outside the medical stream for the first time. The Indian Air Force (IAF) and the Navy also allow its officers the command roles in fighter planes and submarines.

As per the available data, the total number of women serving in the Indian Army is 7093, of which 6993 happen to be officers. The IAF, where women join only as officers, the number is 1636. The Navy also recruits women only as officers. The strength of women officers in the Indian Navy is 748, including Medical and Dental officers.

Obviously, the number of women serving in the Indian armed forces is a minuscule, given its total military manpower that is said to be the fourth most potent military force of the world, estimated to be 1.4 million.

The same seems to be the case of the U.S., the world's foremost military power, too. Women make up about 17 percent of the total force in the United States military that is estimated to be 1.5 million, and they are said to be underrepresented in many

it is to be noted that Hegseth is not opposed to the entry of women in non-combat roles but against their serving in jobs such as SEALs, Army Rangers, infantry, armor and artillery where he thinks "strength is a differentiator." He disapproves of the decision of the then Defense Secretary Ash Carter's order in late 2015 that the military should open all military jobs to women.

branches.

Viewed thus, the number of women warriors, whether in India or in the U.S. or in any other is not something that is as worrisome as the critics make out to be. In fact, as Gary Anderson, who lectures on Alternative Analysis at the George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs, has pointed out, the number of women who seek combat roles and meet the physical qualifications is itself very low. So giving women a combat role is not a big issue unless they are "forced into combat units involuntarily in large numbers".

Even the critics, mostly conservatives, whether in the United States or in India, are not opposed to the entry of women officers into the military as such. They are particular about the combat roles the women officers should play. As it is, the doors of the military were always open for women doctors and nurses for permanent services. Gradually more and more were co-opted into what are called passive roles, not active combat duty as seems to be the propagated case now.

Their argument is that combat duties for women in remote, inhospitable and uncongenial areas is not desirable as only physically fit and tough troops can survive here. Besides, there are other issues like the vulnerability of captured female soldiers to rape and sexual torture.

In this context, analyst Mrinal Suman, a retired Major General of the Indian Army, makes an interesting point. According to him, the need for physical effort is dictated by two factors - level of technological development and nature of military's involvement. Requirement for physical prowess undoubtedly reduces as the armed forces advance technologically.

In other words, the quantum of physical effort needed is inversely proportional to technological progression. Thus, as a military evolves technologically, more high-tech jobs get generated where technically qualified women can be gainfully employed. In a high-tech force, a woman sitting in a secure urban centre can effectively guide drone attacks in places or countries that are thousands of kilometers apart.

On the other hand, low-tech militaries are always human-power intensive and depend on extensive physical ground effort, and hence do not lend themselves to useful employment of women, Suman argues.

Viewed thus, even if Hegseth's nomination for US Defence Secretary is confirmed by the Senate, ever-rising technological modernization of the U.S. military will have enough space for its women officers to determine the course of wars that Washington will be fighting.

(prakash.nanda@hotmail.com)



CONSOLIDATING HINDU UNITY ON ECONOMIC PLANKS WAQF and HINDU ANXIETIES

This paper focuses on anti-Hindu implications in the Waqf Act 2013 and in the Prevention of Communal & Targeted Violence Bill 2011 both formulated by the Man Mohan Singh Government, Congress Party and its UPA allies. The Waqf Act 2013 is basically an anti-Hindu legislation to help Waqf Boards grab more and more land from possession of non-Muslims on self declarations and self Assessments of Waqf Boards without ownership documents which is contrary to the basic structure of the Constitution of India and secular laws of India.



(RETD) AMBASSADOR
OP GUPTA

Riding on shoulders of those Hindu voters who either do not go to cast their votes or vote in favour of the Congress Party or INDIA bloc parties, Waqf Boards have increased area of land under waqf from about 50,000 acres in 1954 to over 940,000 acres by 2023 with well coordinated roles silently played by all Muslim

Members of the Parliament across party lines. Land jihad is continuing unabated as a Muslim MP in October 2024 claimed that areas from Vasant Vihar, South Delhi up to Delhi airport are waqf properties. In January 2025 a Muslim Maulana claimed as per ZEE TV and Sudarshan TV that 55 acres of land on which Kumbh is

organized in Prayagraj belongs to the Waqf. Roles played by Muslim MPs in strengthening Waqf are commendable from Muslim point of view but have strained social fabric of India and raised anxiety and unease among Hindu samaj. If someone claims to be inheritor of properties left behind by medieval Muslim rulers he should volunteer to bear the responsibility for atrocities committed by those rulers and pay reparations to Hindu samaj. Waqf Boards are now the third largest holder of land in India after the Indian Railways and the Defence. This increase in waqf area has been made possible by Hindu MPs of the Congress Party and the UPA parties who have been unlawfully and unconstitutionally tilting the law against we Hindus breaching fairness, equal treatment to all citizens, constitutionalism, secularism and basic structures of the Constitution of India which they had taken oath to defend. If we Hindus continue to vote for INDIA parties we and our children may have to surrender more land (as per Waqf Act 2013) to Waqf Boards in future. As per existing laws income and benefits of the Waqf properties can be used for benefits of only and only Muslims.

No waqf Boards are allowed in many Islamic countries as allowed by the Congress Party in India. There are many Islamic countries which do not allow any waqf property. Islamic Countries such as Turkey, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Tunisia, and Iraq etc do not have Waqfs. In Arab countries one does not see any dargah or mazaar. Some Muslim sects consider dargah, mazaars as un-Islamic. In the Islamic Republic of Pakistan sufi shrines

are under frequent attacks. Blasts took place near the Data Dargah in Lahore in May 2019, and the Sehwan Sharif in Sindh in 2017 killing many Muslims. In Pakistan shia mosques are often under attack by sunni groups and vice versa. So things are much better in Hindu majority India for Indian Muslims.

It is good that the Modi Government has drawn attention of the people of India through the Waqf Bill 2024 to the land grabbing mechanism bestowed on the Waqf Boards by Congress Governments and keeping the Bill open for wider public debate by referring it to a Joint Parliamentary Committee. Shri Jagdambika Pal, Hon'ble Chairman, JRC is doing a sterling job by taking JRC team to different parts of India for face to face interactions with more people. As a matter of principle the Government of India is the final custodian of all waqf properties on Indian soil.

This paper focuses on anti-Hindu implications in the Waqf Act 2013 and in the Prevention of Communal & Targeted Violence Bill 2011 both formulated by the Man Mohan Singh Government, Congress Party and its UPA allies.

The Waqf Act 2013 is basically an anti-Hindu legislation to help waqf Boards grab more and more land from possession of non-Muslims on self declarations and self assessments of waqf Boards without ownership documents which is contrary to the basic structure of the Constitution of India and secular laws of India.

Waqf Boards have increased area under waqf from about 50,000 acres in 1950s to whopping 940,000 lakh acre in 2024 dispossessing many Hindus all over India of their lands which they considered their ancestral and had valid ownership documents, that too based on "Muslim laws and Islamic jurisprudence" which according to the Muslim Personal Law Act 1937 are applicable only to Muslims and are, therefore, diktats of Waqf Boards are not enforceable on Hindus and other non-Muslims. Therefore all decisions made by the Waqf Boards and the Waqf Tribunals based on Muslim laws adversely affecting Hindus and other non-Muslims (Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jains, Parsies, public sector undertakings, Sikhs, State Governments and Union Government, defence, railways etc) are null and void ab initio and en toto for want of jurisdiction. The Parliament of India has no competence to impose Muslim laws and Islamic jurisprudence on non-Muslims so what the Parliament itself cannot do its creatures (i.e. Waqf Boards) cannot do. Therefore non-Muslims adversely affected by the Waqf Board decisions from 1937 onwards may like to add this plea in their petitions before High Courts to take back their lands from Waqf Boards or petition in a Revenue court. The Waqf Boards have no competence to issue notices to non-Muslims and to send communications to Revenue Departments to dispossess non-Muslims. Where Waqf Boards think that a waqf property is in illegal possession of a non-Muslim, the Waqf Boards should approach the concerned civil court in that district. Where land has already been mutated by Revenue officials in favour of waqf Boards based on directions of waqf Boards, those affected non-Muslims may write to those Revenue officials to cancel such mutations as Revenue

Officers lack competence to apply Muslim laws on non-Muslims.

Hindu parliamentarians belonging to the Congress Party, UPA and INDIA bloc cheated their Hindu voters in 1995 and in 2013 by doing (i) mischiefs of enabling or letting Waqf Boards to apply Muslim laws and jurisprudence to claims of non-Muslims on properties under non-Muslim possessions, (ii) exempting the Waqf Boards from the Law of Limitation Act, (iii) by providing that decisions of Waqf Tribunals shall be final and appeal against it in Courts were prohibited except in High Courts, (iv) that being a Muslim law based Tribunal staffed by all Muslims it has been wrongly given status of a civil court, waqf tribunals are in fact Sharia Tribunals, (v) that as per section 108(A) of the waqf Act 2013 decisions of the Waqf Boards shall have over riding effect notwithstanding anything inconsistent therewith contained in any other law for the time being in force or in any instrument having effect by virtue of any law other than this Waqf Act 2013. Thus Waqf board decisions have been elevated by the Congress Party to status of Mughal Badshahi firmans. And under section 28 of the Waqf Act 2013 the District Magistrate & Collector shall be responsible to implement the decisions of Waqf Boards in a time bound manner otherwise he has to pay penalty from his pocket. So a District Magistrate and his Revenue Officers land up implementing basically the Muslim Laws on non-Muslims which they are not competent to do.

Section 107 of the waqf Act 1995 reads: "107. Act 36 of 1963 not to apply for recovery of waqf properties.—Nothing contained in the Limitation Act, 1963 shall apply to any suit for possession of immovable property comprised in any waqf or for possession of any interest in such property." Taking advantage of this section, the Waqf Boards are claiming land as waqf properties based on history books, personal diaries of Muslim rulers, nawabs etc. written hundreds years ago when we Hindus were living at mercy of Muslim rulers. As India became independent in 1947 old diktats collapsed irrevocably.

Section 40 of the Waqf Act 1995 reads: "40. Decision if a property is waqf property.—(1) The Board may itself collect information regarding any property which it has reason to believe to be waqf property and if any question arises whether a particular property is waqf property or not or whether a waqf is a Sunni waqf or a Shia waqf it may, after making such inquiry as it may deem fit, decide the question. (2) The decision of the Board on a question under sub-section (1) shall, unless revoked or modified by the Tribunal, be final." So the Waqf Board is the complainant, the investigator, the judge in its own cause and the executioner which is against the basic structure of the Constitution of India. Separation of power is the basic structure of the Constitution. So the Hindu parliamentarians of Congress Party empowered Waqf Boards to claim a land to be waqf if it has reason to believe to be a waqf property, no ownership documents required. It is the High Court and judiciary which demand ownership documents from waqf Boards and courts do so under their own constitutional powers. Not many persons have funds to go to High Courts.



Section 83(4) of the Waqf Act 1995 as well as the Waqf Act 2013 reads: "Every Tribunal shall consist of— (a) one person, who shall be a member of the State Judicial Service holding a rank, not below that of a District, Sessions or Civil Judge, Class I, who shall be the Chairman; (b) one person, who shall be an officer from the State Civil Services equivalent in rank to that of the Additional District Magistrate, Member; (c) one person having knowledge of Muslim law and jurisprudence, Member; and the appointment of every such person shall be made either by name or by designation.

A relevant question arises waqf Boards and Tribunals decide disputes with reference to which laws. The natural reply shall be that the Waqf Boards and Tribunals decide cases with reference to the "Muslim law and jurisprudence", and statutory presence of a person having knowledge of Muslim law and jurisprudence in the Tribunal as a full member as per section 83(4) of the 2013 waqf Act confirms this natural reply. The Waqf Bill 2024 proposes to delete requirement of one person having knowledge of Muslim law and jurisprudence being there in a Waqf Tribunal but it may not make much difference as the operating law of the Waqf Tribunals shall still remain the same that is the Muslim law and jurisprudence which are not applicable to non-Muslims.

Section 83 (5) of the Waqf Act 1993 reads : "The Tribunal shall be deemed to be a civil court and shall have the same

powers as may be exercised by a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (5 of 1908), while trying a suit, or executing a decree or order". In my view our Parliament has no competence to confer status of a civil court on a Tribunal which functions not under secular laws but under the Muslim law and jurisprudence, which is an entity created to cater interest of only one religious community. Conferring a civil court status on Waqf Tribunals which are guided by the Muslim laws and Jurisprudence is against the secularism which is a basic structure of the Constitution of India, and the Supreme Court in the famous Keshvanand Bharti case has held that the Parliament cannot amend or bend the basic structures of the Constitution of India. The Parliament cannot impose Muslim laws and jurisprudence and alamgiri fatwas on non-Muslims in India that too through an entity created by it. What the principal cannot do, its creatures cannot do is a well known settled law in India.

Forcing Muslim laws and Islamic Jurisprudence on non-Muslims through Waqf Act is an act unbecoming of a parliamentarian of secular India so membership of all those members of the Parliament who passed the Waqf Act 1995 and 2013 be terminated, their pensions and perks be withdrawn and where retired their parliamentary pensions and perks be withdrawn. They should not be allowed free entry to the Parliament complex.

What is a Muslim Law? It has not yet been codified by the Indian Parliament. So the Muslim law and Islamic jurisprudence as used by the Waqf Boards are in reality Sunni laws promulgated by Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb who had got Kashi Vishwanath Temple demolished in September 1669 AD. These are known as fatwa-e-alamgiri belonging to hanafi Sunni school of law. In Islamic laws generally evidences given by kaafirs are not admissible against Muslims, kaafirs have no rights to succession and inheritance, kaafirs have no rights to life and property unless they paid zazia, marriage between kaafirs is not recognised under Islamic laws etc. Shia Muslims do not follow fatwa-e-alamgiri, shia Muslims have their own laws known as jafaria laws. Is it not shocking that riding on shoulders of Hindu voters of UPA, INDIA Bloc the Waqf Boards have been deciding cases against we Hindus by invoking fatawa-e-alamgiri. If Hindu voters do not change their voting pattern their children may forfeit their own lands to Waqf Boards sooner than later.

The Waqf Act 1995 and 2013 as these exist have created wide gulf between Muslims and non-Muslims on one hand, and friction among different 73 sects of Islam on the other hand. To remove such social frictions the waqf boards should be made private charitable trusts and every sect of Islam can have its own waqf registered with Charity Commissioners so that there are no intra-sect conflicts in future. Waqf Boards are sectarian bodies so these cannot be allowed to use State emblem of three lions on their letter heads. The national level body of each of 73 sects of Islam should be headed by a nominee of the Central Government and provincial level bodies by a person nominated by the State government and in boards there should be women and some non-Muslims too. Sufi dargahs should have their own waqf bodies. The Waqf Bill 2024 provides for separate waqfs for Bohra and Ismaeli Muslims and inclusion of women and non-Muslims in waqf Boards.

The property endowed or being endowed in the waqf must have been owned by the waqif (the person setting up the waqf) or acquired with the waqif's own funds. It should not involve borrowed money or property that the waqif did/does not own outright. One can donate a land only if he owns it absolutely. So the concept of waqf by usage, or, waqf created by emperors or nawabs out of public funds or State properties are untenable. Waqf by usage promotes culture of illegal occupation of land by putting up mazaars etc which further widens the gulf among communities. Therefore in order to smoothen inter community harmony it is essential that a committee of five persons comprising two retired High Court judges and three retired Revenue officers, all non-Muslims be constituted in every State and UT to look into all waqf properties to ensure that these were endowed by actual rightful owners of properties supported by ownership documents to waqf. If all Muslim staffed Waqf Boards are lawful so also all non-Muslim committees are lawful. Properties left behind by two nation theory Muslims who migrated to East & West Pakistan are evictee properties under exclusive control of the Union Government of India and should not be mixed with waqf properties. Waqf created only by Indian

Muslim citizens can be recognised as a waqf in India.

GRAB MORE & MORE LAND AS WAQF PROPERTIES

In October 2024 Shri Badruddin Ajmal, a sitting Member of Parliament from Dhubri, Assam publically claimed that the area around Vasant Vihar in South Delhi extending up to the Delhi Airport were waqf property. He also claimed that the Parliament House buildings and its surrounding areas in New Delhi were all waqf properties. [INDIA TODAY and HindustanTimes 17.10.2024]. It is a wakeup call for all Hindus living in Delhi to be hyper active on election days to defeat pro-Waqf candidates. Hindu voters of Delhi should not take his statement lightly as he is a responsible type MP. The Zee TV had carried a report that the Delhi Waqf Board has claimed that five Hindu temples in Delhi were built on waqf land though temple managements claim to have all ownership documents. In Delhi the Man Mohan Singh Government in 2013 had gifted 123 properties to the waqf Board which were under the government control. The Modi Government has reclaimed these 123 properties.

In Varanasi, my home town, it was reported that the waqf Board has claimed that the Uday Pratap College was on waqf land so either college should vacate it or pay rent to be decided by the waqf Board. The UP College is spread over 100 acres of land. It is about 120 years old college. Section 104(B)(i) of the waqf Act 2013 reads: " if any waqf property has been occupied by the Government agencies it shall be returned to the Board or the mutwalli within six months from the date of order of the Tribunal or pay rent as decided by the Tribunal." And the Waqf Act 2013 as passed by Hindu MPs of the UPA have made waqf decisions to over ride every other law under section 108(A) so the necessity to amend the Waqf Act 2013 and the economic necessity of Hindus not to vote to INDIA bloc parties in all coming elections so as to save Hindu lands from being taken away by waqf Boards.

It is reported that in Lucknow the Sunni Waqf Board has claimed a 250 years old Shiva temple and its land in Sadatganj as waqf property based on affidavit of a Muslim person that it was a Waqf property. Laxmanpur temple or tile-wali mosque controversy in Lucknow also refers. In Kannoj, UP a temple premises has been claimed as waqf property. In January 2025 Muslims claimed that Mahakumbh in Prayagraj takes place on 55 acres of waqf land.

In January 2025 it was reported that in Rajkot, Gujarat some Muslims destroyed shops of Hindus claiming that shops were on waqf land whereas shop keepers say that shops are on PWD land.

In Karnataka waqf Board recently claimed over 1500 acres of ancestral land of Hindu farmers in Honvada village in Vijaypura district and farmers received notices from Tehsildar for 1500 acres having been transferred to waqf Board on 04.10.2024 in revenue records i.e. farmers' names have been removed from owners column in revenue records. Hindu farmers of Dharwad and Kalaburagi were also adversely affected. Later Shri Siddaramaiah Hon'ble Chief Minister announced that his government will cancel waqf board orders and restore land to farmers in revenue records but a Chief Minister has no authority to cancel decisions of a



land from the waqf Board Hindu farmers of Karnataka shall have to change their voting preference and should not abstain from casting their votes and must vote to NDA candidates. Fight for protecting Hindu land and reclaiming from Waqf Boards has to be waged right from voting booths.

In November 2024 it was reported that the Karnataka waqf Board has claimed 17 properties inside the Bidar fort as waqf properties.

In Fatua and Govindpura villages of Bihar near Patna the Waqf board has claimed land of villages which are predominantly Hindu villages. Waqf Board is reported to have sent notices to Hindu villagers to vacate in 30 days. Hindu voters of Bihar must open their eyes to protect their own land before it is gone.

In Chhattisgarh Jhabua many scheduled tribe Hindus are reported to have lost their lands to waqf Board.

In Kochi Kerala Waqf Board has claimed vast land in Munambam over which about 600 poor Hindus and Christians had their homes over decades. The Waqf Board has claimed ownership of Thaliparamba town in Kerala including 600 acres in the city centre. In Kerala waqf Board has claimed a land under possession of the Defence also.

In Latur, Maharashtra the Waqf Board has claimed ownership of about 300 acres land belonging to about 103 Hindu farmers who claim that the land is their ancestral property. Waqf claims have been made in other cities of Maharashtra.

In a video Shri Abu Azami of Samajwadi Party, Mumbai is

waqf Board. This is happening to the richest Hindu of India.

In 2013 the Madhya Pradesh Waqf board declared the tomb of Shah shuja, Bibi Masjid and a palace in the fort of Burhanpur as waqf properties which the Madhya Pradesh High Court rejected in August 2024 ruling that these were properties of the Government of India.

One may recall sometimes back the UP Waqf board had declared the Taj Mahal in Agra as waqf property and Muslims go there to offer namaj in Taj Mahal compound. The Hindu (August 12, 2005) in an article captioned the Imperial Waqf has quoted Padshahnama written in 1650 AD by Abdul Hamid Nagori to say that 30 villages in pargana of Agra and their revenue were placed under waqf and that names of all such villages are listed in this book. So Hindus of such villages in western UP named in Padshahnama should be on extra-alert on election days to defeat pro-waqf candidates. In independent India such villages cannot be treated as waqf as Shahjahan and Aurangzeb did not own any property out of their personal earnings, and old political acts automatically lapsed in 1947 after independence.

In West Bengal the Raj Bhavan in Kolkata has been claimed to be waqf property by Sidiqulla chaudhary, a Minister in the Mamata cabinet. He further claimed all areas from Dharmatala to Alipur street are waqf properties. Mr Sidiqulla has claimed so riding on shoulders of Hindu voters of TMC.

Waqf Boards claimed that Kashi Vishwanath temple com-

Thiruchenthurai Village, Tamil Nadu: A farmer Rajagopal from Tamil Nadu was unable to sell his agricultural land to repay a loan because the Waqf Board claimed his entire village, Thiruchenthurai, as its property. The requirement for a no objection certificate (NOC) from the waqf board to sell his own property caused financial and emotional distress and brought it to public notice. The Waqf Board claimed that village was historically donated as waqf by Nawab Anwardeen Khan in 1956. Was Nawab owner of entire village land, where are ownership documents, did nawab buy village with his self earned money?

Bengaluru Eidgah Ground Case: In the case of Bengaluru Eidgah ground, even though there was no title transfer to any Muslim organisation as per the government, Waqf's claims that it was a Waqf property from the 1850s. Congress Members of Parliament have exempted the Waqf Boards from the Law of Limitation Act and illegally allowed waqf by usage concept.

Surat Municipal Corporation Case: Recently, the Gujarat Waqf Board had staked claim to the Surat Municipal Corporation building. As per Waqf Board, back during the Mughal era, the Surat Municipal Corporation building was a sarai and used during the Hajj travels.

Islands in Bet Dwarka: Divya Bhaskar had reported that the Waqf Board had written an application to Gujarat High Court staking claim on the ownership of two islands in Bet Dwarka in Devbhoomi Dwarka.

Many old forts and buildings have been declared as protected monuments under the protection of the Archeological Survey of India and the ASI protected buildings are excluded from the 1991 Places of Worship Act. The ASI protected buildings and monuments can never be treated as waqf properties.

There are many more such cases where properties under the State Government offices and the Military have been claimed as waqf properties. Setting up mazars here and there on highways, railway stations, old forts, in deserted areas or within forests is a new tactics to claim land later as waqf properties by usage. Hindu voters should not vote for such candidates who will stab them after landing in the Parliament. Above examples show that land grabbing by Waqf Boards is pan India phenomena both against rich and poor Hindus so in order to prevent it the voting behaviour of all Hindu voters must change in favour of BJP/NDA.

WAQF DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

The Manmohan Singh Govt set up the National Waqf Development Corporation (NAWADCO) on 31.12.2013 with a capital of Rs 500 crore from government fund and a Rs 100 crore paid up capital. All the money in this corporation was invested from government exchequer. This corporation will invest funds to make commercial malls, shops on waqf land which will be given only to Muslims and whatsoever profit this corporation will make or all the capital of this corporation will be spent only on Muslims. This is written in the objectives of this corporation. This anti-Hindu act was done by riding on shoulders of Hindu voters of the Congress Party.

AVOIDANCE OF COMMUNAL VIOLENCE BILL 2011

As the Waqf Act as drafted and passed by the Congress Party controlled Parliament in 2013 was designed to enable waqf boards to grab land from non-Muslims, the Avoidance of the communal Violence Bill 2011 was designed to arrest any Hindu without warrant on complaint of minorities. It made mandatory for Police officers to arrest any Hindu against whom any minority made a complaint, first arrest that Hindu and keep him in jail till a court gave bail which forced many Hindu voters to move away from the Congress Party and its allies in the 2014 Parliamentary election paving the way for the NDA government under Prime minister Modi from May 2014. It was admitted by the AK Anthony Committee that the main reason for defeat of the Congress Party was the wide spread impression in the Hindu community was that the Congress Party was tilted against the Hindu community.

SALIENT ANTI HINDU FEATURES OF Avoidance of Communal Violence Bill 2011

1. A Hindu against whom any Muslim/Christian/minority makes any complaint shall be presumed in law to be guilty by Police & Courts till that Hindu proves himself to be innocent. [Sec 70, 71, & 73]
2. An accused Hindu shall have to be immediately arrested as all offences under this Bill are non-bailable & cognizable [Sec 56]
3. This law can be invoked only by a minority against Hindus whether living in India or abroad.
4. Accused Hindu shall not be informed who has complained against him [sec 38]

5. A minority is not required to give any additional evidence to support his complaints against Hindus [sec 70, 71 & 72] other than his complaint

6. A Hindu refusing to do business with any minority shall be immediately arrested [Sec 3(f) (i)].Taking advantage of such anti-Hindu laws a minority can force a Hindu to sell/rent his property and even surrender his daughters to minorities.
7. A minority cannot be punished for making even false complaints/statements against Hindus [sec 40]
8. All Hindus whether living in India or abroad shall stand deprived of their Human Rights by this law as proposed by Dr Man Mohan Singh Government.

Details of the Avoidance of Communal Violence Bill are available at www.ogpugtbrm.blogspot.com

It is feasible for the BJP and the NDA to win more than two third majority in the Parliamentary elections as well as in the forthcoming State Assembly elections in Bihar and UP by attracting more Hindu voters by proper policies timely put in place. Compared to scandal hit days of the UPA Government of Dr Man Mohan Singh, the strongest point in favour of the Modi Government is absence of corruption cases against Shri Modi and his all Ministers. Result of the 2024 Lok Sabha election shows that mere development (roads, airports, hospitals, universities, ports, manufacturing units, GDP Growth etc.) is not adequate to win even the simple majority, and, that the Modi Government is lagging behind its opponents in information war, weak in presenting its own sterling achievements to voters in time and, weak in explaining at grass root levels to Hindu voters content & depth of anti-Hindu policies of the UPA era and the INDIA bloc parties as to how these have hurt Hindu samaj and how will continue to hurt in the future if Hindus did not change their voting pattern in time.

During 2011-13 this writer on invitation of various organizations addressed meetings of Hindu samaj in Delhi, Varanasi, Kanpur, Prayagraj, Indore, Bhopal, Surat, Ahmadabad, Patna, Jaipur, Mohali, Guwahati, Bhubaneshwar, Panchkula, Gurugram etc to sensitise Hindu community about anti Hindu provisions of the Communal Violence Bill 2011 which added to swing in favour of the NDA. Many Hindu voters were shocked and surprised to know anti-Hindu policies of the UPA parties and used to ask many lively questions after lecture to satisfy their anxiety. Consequently in the 2014 Parliamentary election there was positive swing of 12.2% in favour of BJP and negative swing of 9.24% against the Congress Party. In the 2014 election a good number of Hindus moved away from the Congress Party forcing the Man Mohan Singh government out of office. The AK Anthony Committee also concluded that anti-Hindu policies of the Man Mohan Singh Govt were responsible for the 2014 defeat of the Congress Party.

In the Maharashtra Assembly election 2024 some percentage of Hindu voters moved away from Congress, Sharad Pawar and Uddhav Thakre combine to the NDA fold due to former's electoral commitment to reserve 10% of state jobs to Muslims. No Hindu voter wants to reduce job opportunities for his children in favour of Muslims. Therefore

BJP got unprecedented electoral victory.

In coming elections the Hindu vote shall be the deciding factor. Political salvation for the NDA bloc is in further consolidation of Hindu votes on social and economic grounds which the INDIA bloc is trying to fragment by raising demand for caste census though birth based caste among Hindus is neither sanctioned by Rig Veda (5.60.5) nor caste is defined in the Constitution of India. In Vedic era Varna meant one's profession which changed as one changed his profession. Even Manusmriti (shloka 10.65) sanctions social migration of individuals from shudra (i.e. unskilled & illiterate) to Brahmin (teachers and priests) varna by their own efforts (ie education and training); that Varna was thus not birth based. Even Jawaharlal Nehru in his book (Glimpses of World History pages 24 and 431) has written that notion of birth based caste was not there in Vedic times and was introduced during Mughal and Portuguese periods.

The BJP polled more votes in 2024 than in 2019 but vote share in 2024 parliamentary election marginally declined from 37.7% in 2019 to 36.6% in 2024 and number of Lok Sabha seats declined steeply from 303 to 240. In 2019 parliamentary election BJP got 227.076 million votes and in 2024 got 235.973 million votes. In 2024 the BJP won 29 out of 84 SC seats as against 46 won in 2019. The BJP won 24 out of 47 ST seats in 2024 as against 31 won in 2019. Victory margins of Shri Narendra Modi in Varanasi parliamentary constituency declined from 479,000 in 2019 to only 152,513 in 2024 despite such a massive development works delivered in Varanasi as well as all over India. This decline in my view is primarily due to slack publicity of government achievements and slackness in spreading message of Hindu samarasata deep among Hindu masses. Samarasata and Hindutva emphasise that all Hindus are one, no one is inferior by birth or superior by birth, all prosper by uniting which is the Vedic commandment under RV(5.60.5) "They are brothers, of whom no one is the elder, no one is younger, but who grew up together for their mutual prosperity." Atharva Veda (3.30.6) commands: "Your drinking saloon be the same, in common your share of food, in the same harness do I join you together, united like spokes in a navel." Atharva Veda (30.30.7) says "United, like minded I make you of one bunch....." Further details at www.hindusamarasata.org

This is what Modi is saying "ek hai to safe hai" or Yogi is saying "batoge to ktoooge" in language of the day. In saying so they are not spreading hate against any community but are only reiterating in simple Hindi the Vedic commandments to remain united for collective prosperity of all followers of Vedas. RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat ji has also been calling for unity and samarasata among all Hindus as per these Vedic commandments of unity and social harmony.

The Delhi Police has rightly started action to detect and deport illegal Bangladeshi and Rohingya Muslims who are armed with illegally obtained Indian ID documents. There are other more effective administrative means to identify and flush them out of Indian voter lists all over India, that too by federal agencies. As and when illegals are removed from voters lists election tally of the NDA will go over two third major-

Those Hindus and non-Muslims (Buddhists, Christians, Sikhs, Jains etc) who do not want their ancestral lands to be arbitrarily taken away by Waqf Boards as hitherto, and those who do not want to be sent to jails on basis of even false complaints by minorities as was proposed by the Congress Party must go to election booths to cast their votes and must never vote for Congress and INDIA bloc candidates in all elections to come. BJP functionaries should start holding more meetings in urban and rural areas all over India to promote samarasata and spread messages of economic necessity for unity and harmony among Hindu voters to protect their own properties and izzat by not voting to INDIA bloc candidates.

ity mark. Micro management of policies to suit small segments of voters have to be done, there is no dearth of such micro management policies. For example, the burden to deduct TDS of 1% on purchase of properties on installment basis under Incometax Act be shifted from senior citizen buyers to builders and penalties paid be waived off and refunded as senior citizens are not good in handling computers and it is not safe for senior citizens to give their credit cards to others for online payments. Violent mobs can be stopped from congregating at a place by federal agencies by non-police action with local police being there to control mobs as usual. Kejriwal's promise of samman Rashi of Rs 18000/ pm to Hindu priests and setting up sanatan board shows beginning of real competition for Hindu votes.

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(Writer served as Indian Ambassador to many countries and is founding President of the Samarasata Foundation, a charitable Trust www.hindusamarasata.org)

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Strengthening India's Maritime Prowess

Commissioning of INS Surat, INS Nilgiri, and INS Vaghsheer

■ UDAY INDIA BUREAU

In a landmark moment for India's naval capabilities, Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently commissioned three formidable assets—INS Surat, INS Nilgiri, and INS Vaghsheer—into the Indian Navy. This move underscores India's commitment to enhancing its maritime security and asserting its presence in the Indo-Pacific region. These state-of-the-art vessels represent the pinnacle of India's indigenous shipbuilding efforts under the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative. Here is an exploration of their key features and the impact they are expected to have on India's maritime security.

INS Surat is the fourth and final ship of the Project 15B stealth guided-missile destroyers. Built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) in Mumbai, the ship is a testa-

ment to India's capability in constructing advanced warships. It incorporates radar-absorbing materials and an angular design to reduce radar cross-section, making it less detectable. The ship is equipped with advanced BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles and Barak-8 surface-to-air missiles, along with state-of-the-art electronic warfare systems, modern surveillance radar, and advanced sonar capabilities. Capable of reaching speeds of up to 30 knots and with an operational range of 4,000 nautical miles, INS Surat is a versatile asset designed for anti-air, anti-surface, and anti-submarine warfare, significantly enhancing India's blue-water naval capabilities.

INS Nilgiri, the first of the Project 17A frigates, is



INS Surat is the fourth and final ship of the Project 15B stealth guided-missile destroyers. Built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) in Mumbai, the ship is a testament to India's capability in constructing advanced warships. INS Nilgiri, the first of the Project 17A frigates, is designed to replace the ageing Shivalik-class frigates and integrates advanced technologies, stealth features, and multi-role capabilities.

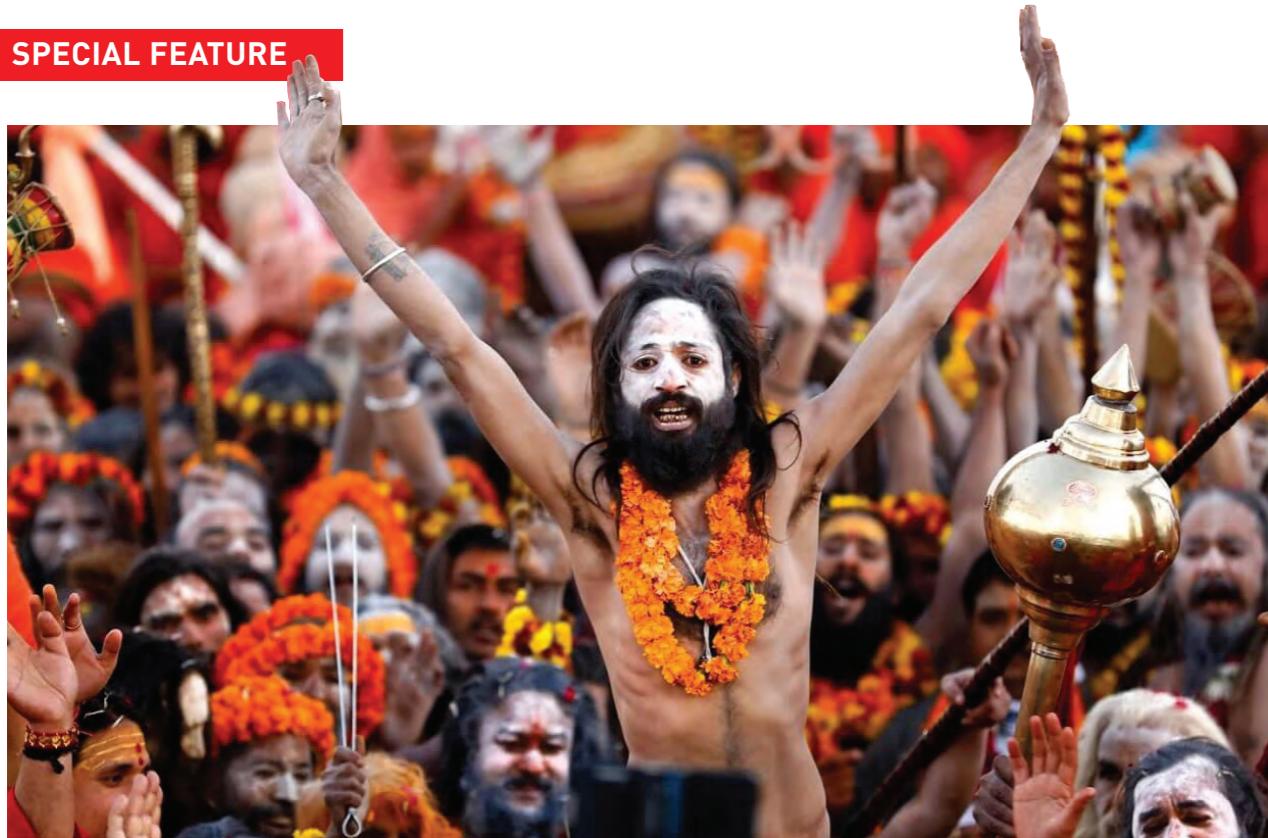
designed to replace the ageing Shivalik-class frigates and integrates advanced technologies, stealth features, and multi-role capabilities. The vessel features a low radar signature due to its sloped superstructure and special hull design, which enhances its stealth capabilities. It is armed with BrahMos and other precision-guided munitions, along with a sophisticated anti-submarine warfare suite. The frigate is powered by a Combined Diesel and Gas (CODAG) propulsion system, which provides improved fuel efficiency and speed. Highly automated systems onboard reduce crew workload and increase operational efficiency, making INS Nilgiri a versatile asset for tasks ranging from escort missions to high-intensity combat operations. This ensures robust protection of India's maritime interests.

INS Vaghsheer, the final Scorpene-class submarine under Project 75, is a diesel-electric attack submarine built by MDL in collaboration with France's Naval Group. It is

designed for silent underwater movement with advanced noise suppression techniques, making it a silent predator beneath the waves. The submarine is armed with torpedoes, Exocet anti-ship missiles, and precision-guided munitions for lethal strikes. It is capable of extended underwater operations thanks to its Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) system and features cutting-edge sonar and perisopic systems for superior situational awareness. INS Vaghsheer bolsters India's underwater combat capability, essential for countering hostile submarines and securing key maritime trade routes.

The commissioning of these three vessels—INS Surat, INS Nilgiri, and INS Vaghsheer—is expected to have a profound impact on India's maritime security. Their deployment enhances India's deterrence against potential adversaries, particularly in the Indo-Pacific, and extends the Navy's operational reach, which is crucial for securing the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). These assets also provide a significant boost to operational flexibility, allowing for simultaneous multi-theater engagements. Symbolizing the success of the Make in India initiative in defense, these vessels reduce dependence on foreign imports while showcasing India's capability in advanced shipbuilding.

The commissioning of INS Surat, INS Nilgiri, and INS Vaghsheer marks a significant milestone in India's journey towards becoming a self-reliant maritime power. These "three titans" not only strengthen the Indian Navy's capabilities but also send a strong message about India's resolve to protect its maritime interests. As global power dynamics shift towards the Indo-Pacific, these assets will play a pivotal role in ensuring regional stability and safeguarding India's sovereignty.



Gods Drive Indian Economy

India's gods have also found a global audience, contributing to the export of religious and cultural products. Diaspora communities worldwide drive demand for items like handcrafted idols, temple jewelry, and traditional clothing. Festivals like Diwali and Holi are now celebrated globally, with significant spending on decorations, sweets, and other essentials.

■ UDAY INDIA BUREAU

India's consumer economy is a fascinating mosaic where ancient traditions and modern market forces intersect, with gods and religious practices playing a pivotal role in shaping spending habits. From ancient times to the present day, the divine has profoundly influenced how Indians consume, creating a unique economy deeply intertwined with faith and culture.

The Roots of Divine Consumerism

India's relationship with its gods and goddesses has always transcended mere spiritual devotion. In ancient times, temples were not only centres of worship but also hubs of economic activity. Lavish offerings, from gold and precious gems to grains and livestock, were common as

devotees sought divine blessings. These offerings sustained local economies, supported artisans, and spurred trade. For instance, the Chola dynasty's magnificent temples in South India became centres of both spiritual and economic prosperity, commissioning intricate sculptures and jewellery that fuelled local crafts.

Festivals, too, have historically been significant economic events. Navaratri, Diwali, and Pongal, among others, have long driven the consumption of goods like textiles, food, and decorative items. The ancient practice of gifting during these festivals, often as part of religious rituals, fostered a culture of exchange that supported local artisans and merchants.

The Modern Intersection of Faith and Commerce

In contemporary India, the gods continue to be formidable economic influencers. The temple economy is estimated to be worth billions, with places like Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh and Shirdi in Maharashtra attracting millions of devotees annually. The donations and expenditures associated with these pilgrimages create significant economic ripples, supporting industries such as hospitality, transportation, and retail.

Religious festivals have become even grander in scale, with modern marketing strategies amplifying their economic impact. Diwali, for instance, is now synonymous with shopping extravaganzas. Retailers and e-commerce giants tap into the festive spirit with discounts and promotions, driving sales of electronics, apparel, and home goods. Similarly, Ganesh Chaturthi boosts demand for clay idols, flowers, sweets, and decorative items, providing livelihoods to countless small-scale artisans and vendors.

Gods in Advertising and Branding

Indian gods and religious motifs also play a vital role in marketing and branding. From traditional mithai boxes adorned with images of Lakshmi and Ganesha to modern advertisements that invoke divine blessings, religion is a powerful tool to connect with consumers. Brands leverage these associations to evoke trust, purity, and auspiciousness, traits deeply valued in Indian culture.

The FMCG sector, in particular, sees extensive use of religious imagery. Products such as incense sticks, ghee, and even packaged foods often carry symbols or names that resonate with divine connotations. Companies like Patanjali have successfully tapped into this sentiment, combining Ayurvedic products with traditional spiritual undertones to create a loyal customer base.

The Rise of Digital Devotion

The digital age has brought new dimensions to India's divine consumerism. Online platforms now offer virtual pujas, live darshan, and e-donations, catering to tech-savvy devotees who seek convenience without compromising their faith. Apps dedicated to astrology, horoscopes, and religious content have gained massive popularity, further embedding spirituality into daily life.

E-commerce platforms see a surge in sales of religious products like idols, prayer beads, and festival essentials, especially during festive seasons. The rise of subscription services for daily devotional content, such as bhajans and religious discourses, indicates how technology is reshaping spiritual consumption patterns.

Impact on Tourism

Religious tourism is another testament to the economic influence of India's gods. Pilgrimage destinations like Varanasi, Amritsar, and Puri attract millions of visitors each year, boosting local economies. Infrastructure development around these sites, including hotels, restaurants, and trans-



port services, creates employment and fosters regional growth. The government's initiatives, such as the PRASAD scheme (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive), aim to further harness the economic potential of religious tourism.

The Global Reach of India's Spiritual Economy

India's gods have also found a global audience, contributing to the export of religious and cultural products. Diaspora communities worldwide drive demand for items like handcrafted idols, temple jewelry, and traditional clothing. Festivals like Diwali and Holi are now celebrated globally, with significant spending on decorations, sweets, and other essentials.

Yoga and Ayurveda, rooted in India's spiritual traditions, have emerged as global phenomena, blending wellness with spirituality. This has created a multi-billion-dollar industry encompassing classes, retreats, books, and products, further underscoring the economic power of India's ancient practices.

Conclusion

From ancient temples to digital platforms, India's gods continue to drive its consumer economy in multifaceted ways. Faith and commerce coexist seamlessly, creating a dynamic marketplace where spiritual values and economic aspirations align. As India progresses, this unique interplay between the divine and the material will likely remain a cornerstone of its economic narrative, blending tradition with modernity in a manner that is quintessentially Indian.

MAHA KUMBH MELA 2025

A CELEBRATION OF INDIA'S TIMELESS SPIRITUALITY

The Kumbh Mela is an essential gathering for the Akharas, whose history is deeply intertwined with this grand festival. During the Kumbh Mela, Akharas showcase their spiritual and organizational strength. The Akhara system was established by Adi Shankaracharya, who organized the fragmented sects of Hindu ascetics into structured group to help protect and unify the faith in the face of external threats.



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Kumbh Mela is one of the most significant cultural and religious gatherings globally, deeply rooted in Indian spirituality and tradition. It is held every 12 years at four sacred locations: Prayagraj, Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nasik based on the belief that the drops of Amrit (divine nectar), which emerged after the churning of the ocean, fell at the sites during the cosmic battle between gods and demons. The battle lasted for 12 days in celestial terms, equivalent to 12 years on earth. The mela's timing is determined by specific planetary alignments, marked by the confluence of Sun, Moon, and Jupiter in specific zodiac signs, which are considered extremely powerful in Hindu astrology for spiritual purification. Additionally, Jupiter's 12-year orbit around the sun influences the timing of the festival. Maha Kumbh Mela occurs at Prayagraj every 12th cycle of the Kumbh Mela, which means every 144 years. This

grander version of the event is considered the most auspicious and spiritually significant among all the Kumbh Melas and holds immense spiritual importance for millions of devotees who believe that bathing in the holy rivers during this time cleanses the sins and liberates one from the cycle of life and death.

The Kumbh Mela is an essential gathering for the Akharas, whose history is deeply intertwined with this grand festival. During the Kumbh Mela, Akharas showcase their spiritual and organizational strength. The Akhara system was established by Adi Shankaracharya, who organized the fragmented sects of Hindu ascetics into structured group to help protect and unify the faith in the face of external threats. Akharas are broadly classified into three main categories based on their deity of worship: Shaiv Akhara (dedicated to lord Shiva), Vaishnav Akhara (dedicated

to lord Vishnu), and Udasi Akhara (rooted in Sikh traditions). There are 13 major Akharas, recognized as the key participants in Kumbh Mela.

Akharas, led by Mahamandaleshwars march in royal grandeur with their saints, mahants (chiefs), and nagas (naked ascetics) in a sequence for taking a sacred dip known as Shahi Snan, which reflects their historical performance. They setup camps to engage devotees with teachings, debates, yoga, and religious ceremonies including Vedic rituals. The Mela also serves as a platform for resolving disputes among Akharas and establishing leadership hierarchies. Mahamandaleshwars also symbolize the unity and diversity within Hinduism, as they bring together monks and followers from various traditions under one umbrella during Kumbh Mela, they hold administrative and spiritual authority over their respective Akharas, managing disciples, resources, and rituals. Although the influence of Akharas declined during the colonial period and revival began in post-independence era. The Mela, being a symbol of Hindu unity, has continued to offer Akharas a platform to reclaim their cultural and spiritual relevance. The Akharas remain custodians of India's spiritual heritage along with promoting interfaith harmony and societal well-being. Their deep-rooted traditions continue to inspire millions during Kumbh Mela, embodying the essence of India's timeless spirituality. It serves as the convergence point for saints, ascetics, and spiritual seekers from various sects, fostering religious discourse, meditation, and reflection.

Beyond its spiritual significance, Kumbh Mela symbolizes India's cultural and social unity. It transcends barriers of caste, creed, and nationality, attracting millions including international visitors in large numbers, to witness the grandeur of Indian spirituality. The UNESCO recognized event showcases India's ability to organize and manage large scale gatherings, incorporating modern infrastructure and traditional values. Kumbh Mela is not just a festival but a testament to the enduring spiritual and cultural heritage of India, fostering unity, faith, and hope across generations.

The Maha Kumbh Mela of 2025, organized from 13th January to 26th February in Prayagraj, spans an area of 4000 hectares. Prayagraj, one of India's holiest cities, is renowned for the Triveni Sangam, the confluence of three rivers known as Triveni Sangam, the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna, and mythical Sarswati rivers. The Yamuna meets Ganga at Sangam, its water is darker compared to Ganga, creating a visual distinction at their confluence. Key dates for Shahi Snan include 14th January (Makar Sankranti), 29th January (Mauni Amavasya), and 3rd February (Vasant Panchmi), alongside other holy dips on 12th January, 12th and 26th February. To ensure the event's smooth organization, extensive infrastructure developments have been made, including enhanced riverfronts, ghats, and upgraded transport networks like roads, railways, bus terminals, and airports. Temporary bridges, flyovers, shuttle services for pilgrims have been setup. Accommodation arrangements feature tent cities and other temporary housing facilities, modern toilets and advanced waste management systems will ensure cleanliness during the event. Medical facilities, including temporary hospitals, first-aid centers, and ambulance services will be available round the clock. High-tech surveillance systems with CCTV cameras, drones, and anti-drone system are being deployed for crowd management and security. Dedicated police and emergency response teams are being posted throughout the area. Mobile apps for navigation, information, and emergency alerts, along with advanced firefighting system, are in place. Online registration systems for accommodations and other facilities are available. The UP government has declared this area as 'Maha Kumbh Mela' district ensuring efficient governance for an event to be attended by over 400 million devotees.

The entire ecosystem around the mela is expected to experience a massive economic boom. The sale of theme-based items like diaries, calendars, jute bags, and stationery is going to see a major surge. The UP government is expected to generate the revenue over Rs25000 crores through taxes, rentals, and service charges. It is likely to provide jobs to about 45000 families. The hospitality, transportation, tourism, and retail sectors stand to gain significantly. The nearby spiritual places like Varanasi, Ayodhya, and Vindhyavasini will also be benefitted from this mega celebration. These arrangements aim to make the Maha Kumbh Mela of 2025 a grand, safe, and enriching event, solidifying Prayagraj's role as a beacon of religious fervor.

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Significance of Mahakumbh

A Confluence of Faith, Culture, and History

Rooted in ancient tradition and mythology, the Mahakumbh is an embodiment of India's deep connection with its spiritual past and its ability to preserve age-old customs amidst rapid modernization. Kumbh Mela is a stop on the cultural journey that has been going on for centuries, which includes rivers, stories, myths, rituals, sanskars, concerns and our countless spiritual and social consciousness, on the basis of which we have been maintaining our traditions well and have been creating and beautifying ourselves.



The Mahakumbh Mela is not merely a religious congregation but a living testimony to India's timeless spiritual and cultural heritage. Celebrated once every 12 years at one of four locations—Prayagraj, Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nashik—this grand event attracts millions of devotees, saints, and spiritual leaders from across the world. Each site's celebration is based on a distinct set of astrological positions of the Sun, the Moon, and the Jupiter. The celebrations occur at the exact moment when these positions are fully occupied, as it is considered to be

the holiest time in Hinduism. The Kumbh Mela is an event that intrinsically encapsulates the science of astronomy, astrology, spirituality, ritualistic traditions, and socio-cultural customs and practices, making it extremely rich in knowledge.

Pilgrims to the Kumbh Mela come from all sections of the religion ranging from Sadhus (saints) and Naga Sadhus who practice 'sadhana' and keenly follow a strict path of spiritual discipline, to Hermits who leave their seclusion and come to visit the civilization only during the Kumbh



NILABH KRISHNA

Mela, to seekers of spirituality, and to common people practicing Hinduism.

During the Kumbh Mela, a number of ceremonies take place; the traditional procession of Akharas called 'Peshwai' on elephant backs, horses and chariots, the shining swords and rituals of Naga Sadhus during 'Shahi Snaan', and many other cultural activities that attract millions of pilgrims to attend the Kumbh Mela.

Rooted in ancient tradition and mythology, the Mahakumbh is an embodiment of India's deep connection with its spiritual past and its ability to preserve age-old customs amidst rapid modernization. Kumbh Mela is a stop on the cultural journey that has been going on for centuries, which includes rivers, stories, myths, rituals, sanskars, concerns and our countless spiritual and social consciousness, on the basis of which we have been maintaining our traditions

well and have been creating and beautifying ourselves. This tirelessly flowing journey also includes the voices of the rivers, which Kumbh itself comes to hear and so do millions of people who dream of joining Kumbh.

This amazing, incomparable, supernatural journey includes the wait of 12 years, the holy banks of the holy rivers, the special position of the stars, the thunder of special bathing festivals, the gathering of saints and sages, all the stars of the religious sky and their splendor, the aspirations of the Kalpavasis and the establishment of the world's largest temporary city in no time.

This journey turns into a folk festival at every stop after 12 years, in which Indian culture, while jumping and frolicking, shows its power to absorb the whole world into itself. The truth is that the Indian concept of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' is easily realized in this folk festival.



Origin and Mythological Significance

In fact, collectivism is inherent in the concept of Indian culture. From the very beginning, we have presented ourselves by considering the world as one family. In all our cultural consciousness, the group comes first, then the individual. This is the reason why events like Kumbh have the ability to absorb not only the country but the entire world within themselves. This is the reason why in any Kumbh Mela, cultures are found shining in their full glory at every step. The origins of the Kumbh Mela are intertwined with Hindu mythology, specifically the story of the Samudra Manthan (churning of the ocean). According to legend, the gods and demons

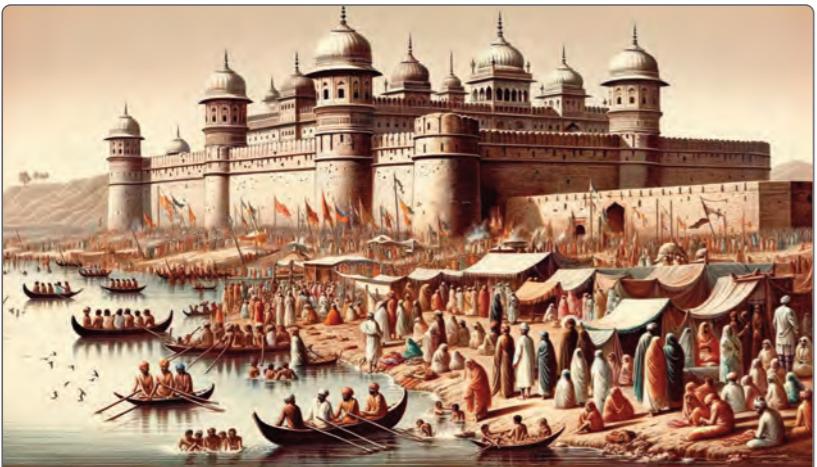
churned the ocean to obtain Amrit, the nectar of immortality. During the churning, the pot of nectar was carried by the celestial bird Garuda, and drops of it fell at four locations—Prayagraj, Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nashik. These sites are believed to hold divine energy, and the Kumbh Mela is celebrated to commemorate this celestial event.

The Mahakumbh Mela, which occurs every 144 years (after 12 Purna Kumbhs), is considered the most significant among all Kumbh celebrations. The alignment of celestial bodies during this period is believed to amplify spiritual benefits, making it an auspicious time for purification and salvation.

Cultural and Religious Importance

The Mahakumbh transcends religious boundaries, representing a confluence of cultures and spiritual ideologies. For Hindus, bathing in the sacred rivers during the Mela is believed to cleanse sins and pave the way for Moksha (liberation). The event is also a platform for spiritual discourse, where sages and scholars gather to exchange philosophies.

Beyond its spiritual significance, the Mahakumbh is a celebration of India's cultural diversity. The vibrant fairs, folk performances, and traditional art exhibitions reflect the richness of Indian heritage. The event also serves as a unifying force, bringing together people from various walks of life to celebrate their shared beliefs.



Mahakumbh during the British Era

During British colonial rule, the Mahakumbh faced significant challenges. The British authorities, initially unaware of the event's magnitude, were often unprepared for the influx of millions of pilgrims. The 19th-century cholera epidemic during the Kumbh Mela in Haridwar highlighted the need for organized management of such mass gatherings.

Recognizing the importance of the event for Indian society, the British eventually began implementing measures to ensure safety and order. They introduced basic infrastructure like sanitation facilities, medical camps, and water supply systems. However, these efforts were often limited and lacked the comprehensive planning seen in modern times. The colonial administration viewed the Kumbh primarily as a law-and-order challenge rather than a cultural phenomenon to be nurtured.



A Testament to India's Spiritual and Managerial Excellence

The Mahakumbh, an iconic Hindu religious event held every twelve years, stands as a testament to India's spiritual heritage and cultural grandeur. Considered the largest human gathering on Earth, it transcends religious boundaries to attract millions, including global scholars, journalists, and curious onlookers eager to witness the scale and spirit of this mega-event.



The Mahakumbh holds profound significance in Hinduism, symbolizing spiritual cleansing, renewal, and salvation. Devotees believe that taking a dip in the sacred rivers during the Kumbh's auspicious period washes away sins and paves the path to moksha (liberation). This unparalleled faith drives millions to converge in Prayagraj, where the Ganga, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati meet, making it the epicenter of devotion and logistical wonder.

The 2025 Mahakumbh in Prayagraj has not only reaffirmed its religious importance but has also showcased India's capabilities in managing a global mega-event. The government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and UP CM Yogi Adityanath has left no stone unturned in ensuring the seamless execution of this monumental gathering. With a confluence of tradition and technology, the administration has set a benchmark for event management, drawing attention from global universities and media keen to understand the intricacies of such meticulous planning.

Infrastructure Development and Crowd Management



One of the primary challenges of the Mahakumbh is accommodating the massive influx of devotees. To address this, the government has invested heavily in upgrading infrastructure in and around Prayagraj. Temporary tent cities with state-of-the-art facilities have been erected to house millions of pilgrims. These tents are equipped with clean drinking water, proper sanitation, and round-the-clock electricity, ensuring a comfortable stay for the attendees.

The city's transport network has also been revamped. Special trains and buses have been deployed to cater to the heavy rush, and dedicated lanes have been introduced for smooth traffic movement. The Prayagraj airport has been upgraded to handle increased domestic and international arrivals, reflecting the global interest in the event. To manage the massive crowds, advanced crowd control measures, including artificial intelligence-driven monitoring systems, drones, and facial recognition technology, have been employed, ensuring safety and preventing untoward incidents.

Digital Integration and Smart Solutions

The 2025 Mahakumbh has embraced digital solutions to enhance the pilgrim experience. A dedicated Mahakumbh mobile application provides real-time information about schedules, bathing dates, routes, and emergency contacts. The app also includes features for virtual darshan, allowing devotees who cannot attend in person to participate spiritually.

Digital payment options have been made available across stalls and services, reducing the dependency on cash transactions and promoting India's digital economy. Wi-Fi hotspots across the venue ensure connectivity for pilgrims and international visitors, allowing them to share their experiences instantaneously with the world.

Healthcare and Sanitation

Health and hygiene have been prioritized to prevent any outbreaks during the Mahakumbh. Over 1,000 temporary healthcare centers have been set up, equipped with modern medical facilities and staffed by skilled professionals. Ambulances are stationed at key locations, and emergency response teams are on standby. Clean drinking water kiosks and bio-toilets have been strategically placed across the grounds, promoting sustainability and hygiene.

Waste management is another area where the government has excelled. A robust system has been implemented to ensure cleanliness, with waste being segregated at source and recycled wherever possible. This eco-conscious approach has drawn praise from environmentalists worldwide.

Security Measures

Ensuring the safety of millions is a monumental task, and the government has deployed over 30,000 security personnel, including paramilitary forces, to maintain order. Surveillance drones and CCTVs monitor the entire area, while command centers provide real-time updates to officials. Special focus has been given to women's safety, with dedicated help desks and patrol teams stationed throughout the venue.

Cultural Extravaganza

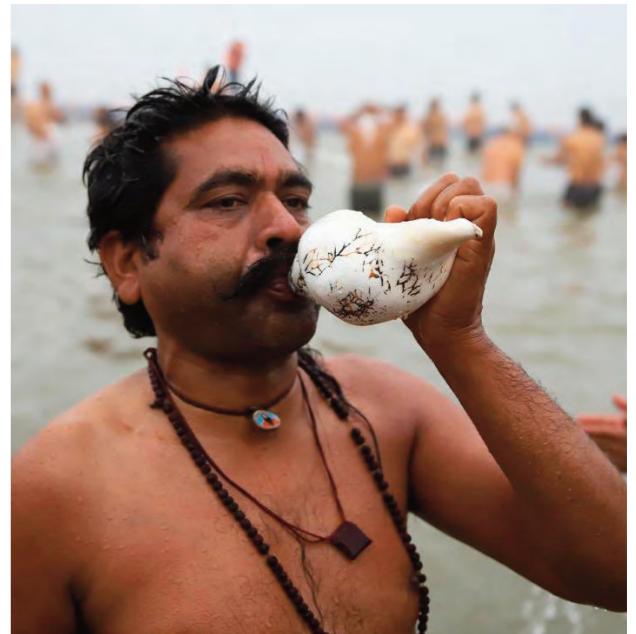
The Mahakumbh is not just a religious event but also a celebration of India's rich cultural heritage. Cultural pavilions showcasing traditional music, dance, and crafts have been set up, offering visitors a glimpse into India's diverse traditions. Workshops, spiritual discourses, and yoga sessions are being conducted, attracting enthusiasts from around the globe.

Global Impact and Takeaways

The 2025 Mahakumbh has positioned itself as a model for large-scale event management. Universities and media from Western countries have marveled at how India's government, blending ancient wisdom with modern technology, has managed such an enormous gathering. The Mahakumbh not only reaffirms the country's cultural ethos but also showcases its administrative prowess and technological advancements.

Economic Impact

Millions of pilgrims, tourists, and spiritual seekers attend this festival, which has been recognised by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage. Mahakumbh's size and magnificence make it a world-renowned spectacle that showcases India's skill in spiritual tourism. In addition to being a religious occasion, the Mahakumbh Mela is a significant economic force



in the area. The increase in tourists has a huge positive impact on local companies, craftspeople, and service providers. The local economy is impacted by the spike in demand for lodging, transportation, and dining establishments.

The budget for this year's Mahakumbh Mela has been set at 6,382 crore rupees, with 5,600 crore already set aside for infrastructure development and event management. The previous Kumbh in 2019 had a budget of 3,700 crore rupees, demonstrating the Mela's growing scale and financial importance. Historically, the Kumbh Mela has had an economic impact; records from the 1882 Kumbh showed a profit of 29,612 rupees, setting a precedent for the potential of future gatherings.

According to economists, the Mahakumbh Mela will bring in significantly more money than anticipated. It is estimated that Uttar Pradesh might make at least 2 lakh crore rupees from the event, which is expected to draw 45 crore pilgrims. Overall, the impact on local economies will be significant, even if the majority of transactions—such as small-scale activities like food, transportation, and boat rides—would be informal and challenging to measure. Experts also point out that more foot traffic and new job prospects will help nearby cities like Varanasi, Ayodhya, Mathura, and Vindhayasini Dham.

In addition to providing spiritual enrichment, the Mahakumbh Mela 2025 has the potential to stimulate sustained economic growth in Uttar Pradesh. The event aims to leave a lasting legacy by transforming the state into a worldwide economic hub due to its enormous scope and the jobs it will create. In addition to its immediate effects, the event will have a long-term positive economic impact on the area, supporting infrastructure, employment, and tourism.

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A Green Maha Kumbh

Uttar Pradesh's Commitment to Environmental Sustainability

Embracing Eco-Friendly Alternatives: Single-use plastics have been categorically banned. Instead, the government has actively promoted the use of biodegradable alternatives such as leaf plates (sal leaves), cups made from natural materials like clay and bamboo, and eco-friendly packaging made from jute, cloth, and recycled paper.



VIRAL DESAI

The Maha Kumbh Mela, a colossal congregation of faith and devotion, stands as a testament to India's rich spiritual heritage. This grand spectacle, attracting millions of pilgrims from across the globe, presents a unique challenge and opportunity: to balance the profound spiritual experience with environmental responsibility. This year, the Uttar Pradesh government has taken significant strides to ensure that the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 not only upholds its spiritual significance but also serves as a beacon of environmental sustainability.

The Challenge of Harmonizing Faith and Ecology

As an ardent environmentalist, I have always viewed large-scale gatherings with a degree of concern. The sheer volume of people, coupled with the logistical demands of such events, can inevitably exert pressure on the environment. The Maha Kumbh Mela, with its millions of attendees, presents a unique set of challenges: managing waste, conserving water resources, and minimizing the impact on the fragile ecosystem of the Ganges River. However, the proactive measures undertaken by the Yogi Adityanath government have been truly impressive.

Uttar Pradesh Government's Pioneering Initiatives

The Uttar Pradesh government has embarked on a comprehensive and ambitious plan to make the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 a model of environmental stewardship. Key initiatives include:

- **Embracing Eco-Friendly Alternatives:** Single-use plastics have been categorically banned. Instead, the government has actively promoted the use of biodegradable alternatives such as leaf plates (sal leaves), cups made from natural materials like clay and bamboo, and eco-friendly packaging made from jute, cloth, and recycled paper.
- **Empowering Local Artisans:** Recognizing the socio-economic benefits, the government has engaged local artisans and women's self-help groups in the production of these eco-friendly alternatives. This initiative not only promotes sustainable practices but also empowers local communities and generates employment opportunities.
- **Ganga Sewaduts: Guardians of the Ganges:** Over 1800 dedicated volunteers, aptly named "Ganga Sewaduts," have been rigorously trained to act as custodians of the environment. These volunteers play a crucial role in maintaining cleanliness, ensuring proper waste disposal, and spreading awareness among pilgrims about the importance of environmental responsibility.
- **State-of-the-Art Sanitation Infrastructure:** The government has invested heavily in modern sanitation facilities, including the construction of millions of toilets and the deployment of a robust waste management system. This includes a fleet of vehicles equipped with GPS for efficient waste collection and transportation to designated treatment centers.
- **Prioritizing the Well-being of Sanitation Workers:** Recognizing the invaluable contributions of sanitation workers, the government has implemented various welfare measures. These include providing health insurance coverage under the Ayushman Bharat scheme, ensuring decent living conditions with the construction of dedicated sanitation worker colonies, and implementing direct bank transfers for daily wages.
- **Comprehensive Public Awareness Campaigns:** Extensive public awareness campaigns, including street plays, colorful posters, and engaging school programs, are being conducted to educate the public about the importance of environmental conservation and responsible behavior during the Mela.



A Model for the World: Inspiring Global Action

The Uttar Pradesh government's commitment to a green and sustainable Maha Kumbh Mela sets a powerful precedent for event organizers worldwide. It demonstrates that it is indeed possible to harmonize spiritual pursuits with environmental responsibility. By showcasing its commitment to sustainable practices and successfully implementing innovative solutions, India has not only silenced critics who often accuse the country of neglecting environmental concerns but also presented a compelling model for other nations.

This initiative serves as a beacon of hope, inspiring other countries to adopt similar measures for their own large-scale events, be they religious gatherings, cultural festivals, or sporting events. By prioritizing eco-friendly alternatives, engaging local communities, and raising public awareness, nations can ensure that their events leave a minimal environmental footprint while enriching the lives of their citizens and promoting a more sustainable future for all.

The Maha Kumbh Mela 2025, with its focus on environmental sustainability, is not merely a religious congregation; it is a powerful statement of India's commitment to a greener, cleaner, and more sustainable future for all.

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MahaKumbh Spiritual, Scientific, Economic Significance

There is a narrative behind every Hindu festive and ritual. They are honored with zeal and excitement, as well as a solid scientific, historical, and philosophical foundation. All of these characteristics combine to provide a reason to celebrate a festival or perform a ritual. These rituals are intended to guide a person down a spiritual road where they can achieve perfect psychological equilibrium, renewal, and relaxation.

■ PANKAJ JAGANNATH JAYSWAL

In a world characterized by the frenetic pace of modernity, few events possess the capacity to unite millions in the quest for a purpose greater than themselves. The Maha Kumbh Mela, a revered pilgrimage occurring four times over a span of 12 years, exemplifies this phenomenon. Kumbh Mela, the largest peaceful assembly globally, attracts millions of pilgrims who immerse themselves in sacred rivers to purify their sins and achieve spiritual liberation. As pilgrims prepare for their journey to Prayagraj from January 13 to February 26, they will partake in a series of spiritual rituals and embark on a journey that transcends physical, cultural, and spiritual boundaries.

There is a narrative behind every Hindu festive and ritual. They are honored with zeal and excitement, as well as a solid scientific, historical, and philosophical foundation.

All of these characteristics combine to provide a reason to celebrate a festival or perform a ritual. These rituals are intended to guide a person down a spiritual road where they can achieve perfect psychological equilibrium, renewal, and relaxation.

Here are some scientific elements of the Mahakumbh Mela: The Maha Kumbh Mela is a festival that incorporates science, astrology, and spirituality. The dates of the Maha Kumbha are calculated using scientific techniques, the majority of which utilize planetary placements. When the planet Brihaspati (Jupiter) enters the astrological sign Vrishabha (Taurus), it corresponds with Surya (Sun) and Chandra (Moon) entering Makara (Capricorn). These changes affect the water and air, resulting in a completely positive atmosphere in the holy city of Prayagraj. Simply

being there at that sacred site and taking a holy dip in the Ganges can spiritually enlighten a soul, reducing physical and mental stress.

Astrology: The celebration takes place when the sun, moon, and Jupiter are in certain positions. River confluences: The event takes place at river confluences where unique forces are thought to act at specific periods in the solar cycle. **Water:** The event is thought to benefit the body (72% water) by connecting with the energy churning of the waterways. The Maha Kumbh Mela is a massive gathering of people from all across India who come to wash in the sacred Ganges River. The event is filled with information and features numerous rituals and cultural activities.

The Kumbh Mela is not only the world's largest human gathering, but also one of the most spiritually profound, attracting millions of devotees, saints, and seekers from all over the world. The next Kumbh Mela 2025 in Prayagraj is a one-of-a-kind opportunity for people to reconnect with their spiritual essence, cleanse their soul, and embark on a sacred journey that has been practiced for millennia.

To summarize, the positions of many planets have an effect on our planet's water and air. At certain planetary positions, the positive energy levels of a specific location during a specific time rise to a high, creating an ideal environment for spiritual growth and awakening.

Economic importance of Kumbh Mela : The Prime Minister recently unveiled 167 development projects totaling ₹5,500 crore in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, to prepare for the Maha Kumbh 2025. Sah'Al'yak, a multilingual AI-powered chatbot, was introduced to help devotees in 11 Indian languages. The Mahakumbh, which covers around 4,000 hectares, is expected to attract 40-45 crore pilgrims, making it the world's largest religious gathering. KV Raju, economic advisor to the Uttar Pradesh government, claims that with a projected 45 crore pilgrims, the Mahakumbh might produce at least Rs 2 lakh crore.

Former IAS official Avnish Awasthi, who advises the Chief Minister, projected that if each pilgrim spends 8,000 rupees, overall economic activity might exceed 3.2 lakh crore rupees, highlighting the event's colossal financial significance. Senior tourism experts feel that the Mela's infrastructure and global exposure will benefit tourism for many years to come. The upgraded amenities and connectivity will make a lasting impact on the region.

According to an earlier CII report, the last such Maha Kumbh in 2013 earned total revenues of Rs 12,000 crore, which included infrastructure improvements to airports and hotels, while the Kumbh Mela in 2019 garnered total revenues of Rs 1.2 lakh crore. Although the Kumbh Mela is spiritual and religious in nature, the economic activities related with it employed over six lakh people in 2019 across a variety of sectors, according to the CII.

The Yogi government is making substantial efforts to improve the state's tourism economy, with the approaching Maha Kumbh playing an important role in this initiative. It is expected that approximately 45,000 families will benefit from direct or indirect job possibilities related to this magnificent

event and lakhs of people across a variety of sectors.

Tracing History: A Journey across Time : The Kumbh Mela, a Hindu pilgrimage, is held four times every twelve years in four separate locations: Prayagraj, Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nashik. The Kumbh Mela 2025 will take place at Prayagraj, where the sacred rivers Ganges, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati meet at the Sangam. The Kumbh Mela has thousands of years of history, with early allusions dating back to the Maurya and Gupta periods (4th century BCE to 6th century CE). The early meetings, albeit not as huge as the present Kumbh Mela, attracted pilgrims from all around the Indian subcontinent. The Mela's importance expanded with the emergence of Hindutva, with emperors such as the Guptas elevating it to the status of a venerated religious gathering.

The Kumbh Mela was supported by a number of royal dynasties during the medieval period, notably the Chola and Vijayanagar Empires. In the nineteenth century, figures such as British colonial administrator James Prinsep documented the Kumbh Mela, noting its ritualistic rituals, massive congregations, and socio-religious dynamics at play. These testimonies provided vital insights into the Kumbh's evolution and durability over time. The Maha Kumbh Mela took on even greater significance after independence, representing national unity and India's rich cultural legacy. The Kumbh Mela, recognized by UNESCO in 2017 as an intangible cultural property of mankind, is a witness to the survival and adaptation of traditional traditions in the face of modernism.

Unity in Diversity: The Maha Kumbh brings together millions of people from many castes, creeds, and walks of life, fostering social harmony and cultural exchange. The Maha Kumbh Mela in 2025 is more than just a gathering; it is a journey towards oneself. Beyond rituals and symbolic deeds, it allows pilgrims to engage in inner thought and deepen their connection with the holy. In a world dominated by the demands of modern life, the Maha Kumbh Mela stands out as a symbol of togetherness, purity, and enlightenment. This eternal trip serves as a strong reminder that, despite humanity's diverse pathways, we are fundamentally united—a common quest for peace, self-realization, and an unwavering regard for the sacred.

Conclusion : Every spiritual or religious activity in Sanatan dharma has a strong connection to human and societal upliftment, which promotes social harmony while also reminding us that Sanatan dharma does not believe in caste discrimination, thereby boosting millions economically. The Mahakumbh Mela 2025 has the potential to not only enrich spiritual lives, but also to accelerate long-term economic growth in Uttar Pradesh. With its vast size and the jobs it will generate, the event aims to leave a lasting legacy, transforming the state into a global economic hub. The event's economic impact is not just immediate, but it will continue to stimulate tourism, infrastructure, and job creation in the region for many years.

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Mahakumbh : Awakening the Soul of a Nation

The present government at centre and at U.P have taken a big leap of faith in transforming Kumbh into an event which reflects the spirit of Bharat, to exploit the opportunity at the bottom of the pyramid.



RAKESH KUMAR

I did not visit the first kumbh of my life as a kid. My thinking was that it is a waste of time and money; the death of hundreds of pilgrims in 1954 kumbh led to many movies taking it as a plot to separate family members in their storyline. However destiny had other plans. I was posted at Jabalpur and Swami Shyamdevacharya ji of Narsingh Peeth introduced me to kumbh taking place at

Prayag Raj in 1989. The enormity of the event, the devotion of the pilgrims and the humility of the saints drowned all my arguments of criticism in Triveni of the Name, beauty and the efficacy of the Divine power (Nam, Roop and Prabhav). Then onwards I attended most of the Magh Mela, Ardh Kumbh and Puran Kumbh. It is the power of this event that I am writing this article while sitting in a tent as a

devotee. I always wondered why independent India has failed to use this event to develop civic awareness among citizens and promote the good work of the government? I am amazed to see that our forefathers used it to promote knowledge, culture and harmony.

Apathy, indifference and suffering

With such a great background Kumbh should have been promoted better than the Olympics in independent India. To the contrary the event was getting neglected and pilgrims were suffering. Even though these sufferings were no match to the one inflicted by Aurangzeb or the restriction imposed by the British rulers. Yet the struggles survived by the Kumbh mela are much more and longer than that of the country. Freedom of India in 1947 did not reflect as a relief or support to Kumbh mela. It was the sheer willpower and never say die spirit of Hindus which kept it going. Great people from all walks of life have taken the benefit of mass gathering taking place at Kumbh and created this never say die spirit. Rulers like Harshvardhan saints like Adi Shankaracharya, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Tulasi Das, Daya Nand and politicians like Lokmanya Tilak, Madan Mohan Malviya could use the event to promote the cause of gaining freedom. It is folklore that the first freedom fight of 1857 was conceived in the preceding Kumbh.

Key Aspects of the Prayag Kumbh in the past:

1. Mass Mobilization: these great Leaders have recognized the Kumbh Mela's ability to bring together millions of people from diverse backgrounds. They distributed pamphlets, made speeches, and held discussions to educate attendees about the independence struggle.
2. Public Awareness: The gathering served as a medium to highlight issues affecting the public, for example oppressive British policies, including the partition of Bengal (1905–1911), which had deeply angered Indians. Nationalist literature was widely disseminated during kumbh held in 1911.
3. Unity Among Diverse Communities: The Kumbh's inclusive nature provided a platform to unite Indians from different castes, regions, and languages, emphasizing the idea of one nation under foreign rule.

Legacy

Kumbh does not bring a single-day event but is part of a broader strategy to engage with the Indian masses. While specific major political declarations may not be possible, the event can be instrumental in embedding nationalist ideas into the consciousness of ordinary Indians, especially in rural areas. The present Maha Kumbh Mela provides an opportunity to influence, the largest and most significant religious gathering in the world.

A Spiritual and Cultural Event which can awaken the nation.

As discussed above Mahakumbh serves as a platform for spirituality, social gatherings, and cultural exchange. Pilgrims, saints, religious leaders, and philosophers come together to discuss spirituality and human existence, creating a cultural tapestry that includes devotional music, classical performances, discourses, and other religious activities. As



mentioned above, great leaders in the past have used this platform to uplift the social and national cause. Till 2014 governments were managing the event as a ritual and did little to educate people about important social, national issues using this platform. As per projections being made 40 crore people may attend the Maha Kumbh 2025. Let's examine what has been done and what is to be done henceforth.

Marketing of the event.

The present government at centre and at U.P have taken a big leap of faith in transforming Kumbh into an event which reflects the spirit of Bharat, to exploit the opportunity at the bottom of the pyramid. The great management guru C.K Prahalad might not have thought that his idea can be so gigantic that it can change the future of a BIMARU state called U.P. The past Ardh kumbh, Magh melas and present Kumbh have created new business themes like spiritual tourism by engaging industry and knowledge institutions to innovate and invent profitable solutions for providing medical care, food, water, shelter, and other services like sanitation and waste management, and making money as well. The developed metroes can learn a few lessons in providing clean water through R.O water stations and free public toilets. Despite providing huge infrastructure support and other facilities, the state has earned huge revenues from these events by engaging the public, private and public sector(PPP). I was present at the Shahi Snan event and despite 40 million pilgrims being there I was not able to feel the chaos, Panic and helplessness associated with past memories of such events. Wide roads and safe bathing places with measured depth of the river may delight the pilgrims but it has taken a great persua-



sion to shift Akhadas, sadhu and kalp vasi staying arrangements away from the river to create space for pilgrims. My friends from the U.S Europe and other countries are trying hard to get an air ticket, or reservation in the world class facilities created. The ones who have attended are feeling blessed. Can one believe it that scientists, CEOs, and top businessmen are rescheduling their time tables to experience it firsthand. Wife of Apple founder late Steve Job could make the headlines but many opted to remain anonymous.

Time to recreate the harmony between sukh, dharma, artha, rajya and indriya Vijay (delight, economics, state power and developing strong character by mastering self control).

The success in managing Kumbh with financial surplus is just a beginning. We have become the fifth largest economy and will be third in a few decades.

- The real challenge is to distribute this wealth to the last man and that too, not by offering freebies but by empowering him to earn it.
- Eliminating divisive forces ready to exploit caste, lan-

guage, religion or regionalism.

- Building capacities to protect this wealth from invaders and anti-social elements.
- Eliminating corruption and other social evils like dowry, halala etc.

The arthashastra written by Chankya has defined that peace and happiness comes from practising dharma (performing duties diligently), dharma can be performed if one is financially independent and one can be financially independent if the good governance is available to him and that is only possible if the people governing has developed self control. Developing a nation which has citizens empowered with self control is the mission to be pursued. This is where we have to focus. 400 million people visiting Maha kumbh are the resources to share the vision of empowered india.

Task ahead.

- **Engaging youth:** The whole management of Kumbh is with police and government employees. Time to think about whether youth enrolled with NSS, NCC and other similar institutions can be engaged to manage less sensitive services. It

will reduce the workload on government services and train the Gen Next. A structured programme is to be developed as done for the Republic Day parade every year.

- **Preparing pilgrims to be part of the solution:** The government has created QR codes and apps to provide information and awareness about the facilities and help available. To take it to the next level one has to provide detailed information about Dos and don'ts before a pilgrim leaves his home. Not bringing single-use plastic material, not throwing garbage, avoiding paper/plastic cups, glasses, plates, spoons etc can reduce waste to a great extent. Incentivising taking back plastic material as being done by agencies managing national forests will help.

- Fly by night operators have mushroomed. I have seen people not getting assured facilities despite paying online. High time to regulate service providers in private domain by educating pilgrims much ahead of the event. These vendors can be forced to register with the government and ratings can be assigned as per the standard of facilities being provided. The hospitality and travel agencies have a lot to improve.

Can we take a leaf from the origin of Kumbhmela?

The Kumbh has its origin in sagar Manthan and emerging of Nectar from the churning. There was a big war to have control over it.

द्रादा वषषिं समं प्रहारं सुरासुराः।
अगृतार्थे महाघारं कृतवन्तो महीतले॥

As per the shloka this big war continued for 12 long years. Is there some correlation to the present state, our nation is going through? The next shloka reveals more information.

युद्धं चक्रिरे घोरं देवासुरबलैर्युतम्।
अगृतं लभ्यते यस्मिन् तस्मिन्नाव नहीत्यतः॥

As per the above shloka, the ferocious War was to grab the nectar at any price and getting it was the greatest celebration. India has taken a big leap of faith in becoming the number one economy on account of growth rate. Deep states in different countries are not happy with it (can we call these as asura) and are trying very hard to derail it. Canada, Britain and the outgoing government in the United States did not hide their intentions. There have been utterances to remove the democratically elected government in India. If we take the anti NDA government drive of these forces then the fight is in 11 th year now. The government has done reasonably well in thwarting the threat despite the stage managed revolt in Bangladesh which led to ouster of the elected government. Our forefather fought the war for survival with asura. Lord Vishnu skillfully executed Mohini roop and distributed the nectar to his praja (citizen). The learning there is, it was a joint mission where young and old, strong and weak everybody participated. The mighty Garuda, the weak Jayant and all gods played their part.

Today infiltrators, misguided jihadis, people under the influence of the deep state have created a situation where every pragmatic move is being opposed in courts, parliament and on the roads. Despite being isolated in numbers these forces are able to put spanner in the fast moving wheel of growth. Major infrastructure projects, laws and initiatives are challenged in the courts. A great public movement is needed to defeat these forces, which may cost heavens to create but Kumbh provides this opportunity at a very low cost.

One viceroy asked Madan Mohan Malviya that calling such a big crowd might involve huge expenses. The reply given by Malviya stunned him, " it cost a panchang worth 2 Paisa which tells the proposed dates of The Kumbh and whole India knows when to reach Prayag Raj. Can a nation blessed with such opportunity remain idle?

If the Chief Minister at the state and Prime minister at centre can engage people to play their active role in this war to protect India's right to grow, prosper and preserve its gain as done in the war between gods and asura. Then only the purpose of celebrating Maha Kumbh will lead to ultimate victory.

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The Grand Mahakumbh 2025 A Testament to India's Spiritual and Managerial Excellence

The 2025 Mahakumbh has positioned itself as a model for large-scale event management. Universities and media from Western countries have marveled at how India's government, blending ancient wisdom with modern technology, has managed such an enormous gathering. The Mahakumbh not only reaffirms the country's cultural ethos but also showcases its administrative prowess and technological advancements.

■ UDAY INDIA BUREAU

The Mahakumbh, an iconic Hindu religious event held every twelve years, stands as a testament to India's spiritual heritage and cultural grandeur. Considered the largest human gathering on Earth, it transcends religious boundaries to attract millions, including global scholars, journalists, and curious onlookers eager to witness the scale and spirit of this mega-event. The Mahakumbh holds profound significance in Hinduism, symbolizing spiritual cleansing, renewal, and salvation. Devotees believe that taking a dip in the sacred rivers during the Kumbh's auspicious period washes away sins and paves the path to moksha (liberation). This unparalleled faith drives millions to converge in Prayagraj, where the Ganga, Yamuna, and the mythical

Saraswati meet, making it the epicenter of devotion and logistical wonder.

The 2025 Mahakumbh in Prayagraj has not only reaffirmed its religious importance but has also showcased India's capabilities in managing a global mega-event. The government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and UP CM Yogi Adityanath has left no stone unturned in ensuring the seamless execution of this monumental gathering. With a confluence of tradition and technology, the administration has set a benchmark for event management, drawing attention from global universities and media keen to understand the intricacies of such meticulous planning.

Infrastructure Development and Crowd Management

One of the primary challenges of the Mahakumbh is accommodating the massive influx of devotees. To address this, the government has invested heavily in upgrading infrastructure in and around Prayagraj. Temporary tent cities with state-of-the-art facilities have been erected to house millions of pilgrims. These tents are equipped with clean drinking water, proper sanitation, and round-the-clock electricity, ensuring a comfortable stay for the attendees.

The city's transport network has also been revamped. Special trains and buses have been deployed to cater to the heavy rush, and dedicated lanes have been introduced for smooth traffic movement. The Prayagraj airport has been upgraded to handle increased domestic and international arrivals, reflecting the global interest in the event. To manage the massive crowds, advanced crowd control measures, including artificial intelligence-driven monitoring systems, drones, and facial recognition technology, have been employed, ensuring safety and preventing untoward incidents.

Digital Integration and Smart Solutions

The 2025 Mahakumbh has embraced digital solutions to enhance the pilgrim experience. A dedicated Mahakumbh mobile application provides real-time information about schedules, bathing dates, routes, and emergency contacts. The app also includes features for virtual darshan, allowing devotees who cannot attend in person to participate spiritually.

Digital payment options have been made available across stalls and services, reducing the dependency on cash transactions and promoting India's digital economy.

Wi-Fi hotspots across the venue ensure connectivity for pilgrims and international visitors, allowing them to share their experiences instantaneously with the world.



Security Measures

Ensuring the safety of millions is a monumental task, and the government has deployed over 30,000 security personnel, including para-military forces, to maintain order. Surveillance drones and CCTVs monitor the entire area, while command centers provide real-time updates to officials. Special focus has been given to women's safety, with dedicated help desks and patrol teams stationed throughout the venue.

Cultural Extravaganza

The Mahakumbh is not just a religious event but also a celebration of India's rich cultural heritage. Cultural pavilions showcasing traditional music, dance, and crafts have been set up, offering visitors a glimpse into India's diverse traditions. Workshops, spiritual discourses, and yoga sessions are being conducted, attracting enthusiasts from around the globe.

Global Impact and Takeaways

The 2025 Mahakumbh has positioned itself as a model for large-scale event management. Universities and media from Western countries have marveled at how India's government, blending ancient wisdom with modern technology, has managed such an enormous gathering.

The Mahakumbh not only reaffirms the country's cultural ethos but also showcases its administrative prowess and technological advancements. In conclusion, the Mahakumbh in Prayagraj is a reflection of

India's spiritual depth and organizational strength. By effectively addressing challenges of scale, safety, and sustainability, the government has ensured that this sacred event continues to inspire awe and admiration globally. As millions take the holy dip in the Triveni Sangam, the Mahakumbh stands as a beacon of faith, unity, and unparalleled management excellence.



Gig Economy or Modern Slavery!

CCI MOVES SC AGAINST MNCs

NITI Aayog estimates that the gig workforce in India, contributing 1.5 percent of the GDP, would expand to 23.5 to 30 million workers by 2029-30, over 200 percent jump from 7.7 million in 2020-21. It throws open a system that is anti-worker and is ordained to thrive as it reduces liabilities of the companies. The Ayog recognises that gig work is the worst form of jobs and still promotes it knowing that it lacks paid sick leave, health and accident insurance, old age support and pension as well as support to workers in a situation of irregularity of work.

■ SHIVAJI SARKAR

In an economy struggling to regain momentum, a new threat looms—an exploited class of “slave” workers, lauded by NITI Aayog as gig workers. These low-paid labourers, the fastest-growing segment in India, are trapped in a precarious cycle. Raising their voices against exploitation means risking their livelihoods and pushing their families into starvation.

Ironically, the country’s think tank celebrates this shift to a gig economy—marked by short-term contracts and freelance work over stable, permanent jobs. But for workers, it brings relentless stress, unpredictable schedules, and a lack of basic social security. While companies benefit from a cost-free, unregulated labour force, the human cost is staggering.

Lessons from Bangladesh’s collapse point to the perils of such an economic model, as rising anger among the jobless youth contributed to its downfall.

There are downsides for the gig-people and for society, but for companies and their shareholders, this is pure gravy. The term “gig” is a slang word for a job that lasts a specified period of time. Traditionally, the term was used by musicians to define a performance engagement. And who does not know the exploitation of musicians since ages the world over. They are not offered a wage or royalty. There are reportedly instances of multiple abortions to sustain in the rat race.

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NITI Aayog estimates that the gig workforce in India, contributing 1.5 percent of the GDP, would expand to 23.5 to 30 million workers by 2029-30, over 200 percent jump from 7.7 million in 2020-21. It throws open a system that is anti-worker and is ordained to thrive as it reduces liabilities of the companies. The Ayog recognises that gig work is the worst form of jobs and still promotes it knowing that it lacks paid sick leave, health and accident insurance, old age support and pension as well as support to workers in a situation of irregularity of work.

The Niti Ayog projects gig economy as a 'free' (not exploitative) market system in which temporary positions are common and organizations hire independent workers for short-term commitments. The Ayog says it is marked by "erosion of traditional economic relationships, lack of job security, irregularity of wages and uncertain employment status for workers". Prior to it, the Ayog led the Labour Ministry to severely compromise with labour laws and replace 44 laws into four labour codes, that only acerbates workers' woes and redressals difficult.

Amazon, Flipkart, Blinkit, Uber, Ola-type organisations are worst perpetrators leading the agony globally, a system US president-elect Donald Trump and CEO of Tesla Elon Musk promote by cutting work visas.

As India rides this wave, the real challenge lies in striking a balance. As the world MNCs navigate new terrain, the future of work in India is being rewritten now - one gig or casualisation at a time by the corporate and the government remains a spectator.

As per the latest available Annual Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) Report, the estimated unemployment rate (UR) on usual status for youth of age 15-29 years was 12.9 percent, 12.4 percent, and 10 percent during 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23, respectively. The total unemployed in 2016 were 44.85 million or 4.48 crore, supposedly a little less than 48.26 million or 4.82 crore in 2014.

The gig economy, according to official statistics gives an income of around Rs 15000 a month to a worker in most cases as biggies like Amazon or Blinkit have cut rates for per piece of delivery. A chaos prevails in the society with rising inflation to around 6 to 9 percent and GDP growth falling to 5.4 percent. Overall employment in agriculture has fallen and marginally risen in the construction sector.

On July 9, 2024, credit markets rating agency India Ratings says that 63 lakh informal sector enterprises shut down in the country resulting in a loss of 1.6 crore jobs between 2015-16 and 2022-23. The report blamed the downturn on the shocks to India's economy due to demonetisation, the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax and the Covid-19 pandemic.

The IT sector is in a thaw and perhaps after Trump takes over there could be serious crunch for Indians as the US could shell out fewer projects.

The UPA-I and II started a process of jobless growth. There is no uptick in manufacturing or purchasing power but more in IT sector are now losing jobs. Many with experience of a decade or more becoming gig workers at their early 40s.

The PLFS showed that between 2017-18 and 2022-23, there has been a decline in the share of Indians employed in



salaried jobs, and a corresponding rise in self-employment, that as per ILO now includes "unpaid helpers in household enterprises".

For the gig economy, a November 2024, Georgia, US, verdict underscores that Amazon digital control – whether by an app, platform, or algorithm – may now bring significant liability. In yet another case, a California court imposes \$ 5.9 million penalty for not informing workers 60,000 times in writing of the tasks they have to perform continuously.

In India, Madurai district consumer commission told Amazon, Samsung and Divine India to pay Rs 2.1 lakh compensation for causing mental agony to buyers of phone. The Competition Commission of India (CCI) on Dec 9, 2024, moved the Supreme Court to expedite the resolution of 24 court cases pending against Amazon and Flipkart.

The very public rise of Zomato-owned Blinkit in particular has caught the attention of the industry, and Zepto's eye-catching \$1 billion has underscored that ecommerce in India is booming with Swiggy, Instamart, Uber or Ola taking a high cut of 40 percent or more per assignment, adding to the stress of the workers.

There is no robust legislation to address concerns about unfair trade practices and data privacy. The Indian Code on Social Security, 2020 recognizes gig workers as a separate category, but it has been criticized for lacking legal mandates, universal coverage, and accountability mechanisms.

The U.S. has the highest global market for gig workers, but India, Indonesia, Australia, and Brazil are rapidly growing, strong markets.

International experts feel illegal immigrants to the US fall into a trap of forced labour that gives a boom to the US economy. The agricultural industry is one of the most troubling industries where forced labour is rampant in the US. It assumes the gig is being deliberately promoted for cheap labour.

India must move the ILO and other fora for strong global job codes for fair wages in new employment scenario.

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Canada's new government will forge better relations with India!

■ AJAY KUMAR

After the resignation of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, there is hope in India that the new Canadian government will take a more flexible stance towards India. The Trudeau government had been supporting Khalistani elements, and this might be curtailed now. Additionally, if the new Canadian Prime Minister is of Indian origin, it could also benefit India. However, even after Trudeau's resignation, the problems of the Canadian citizens remain unresolved. The biggest issue now is deciding who should be the new Prime Minister of Canada, someone who can maintain good relations with both the Trump-era U.S. government and a devel-

oping country like India. Several names are being discussed as potential future Prime Ministers, including two of Indian origin. Among these, Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre is the leading contender. The former Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister had recently resigned from the Cabinet but was one of Trudeau's strongest allies. While handling foreign affairs, he helped the country renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with the U.S. and Mexico. He was also in charge of Canada's financial response to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to reports, after Justin Trudeau's resignation, Indian-origin

MPs Chandra Arya and Anita Anand are also strong contenders for the position of Prime Minister. Anita Anand is known as a scholar, lawyer, and researcher. She was a professor of law at the University of Toronto, where she held the J.R. Kimber Chair in Investment Protection and Corporate Governance. Currently, she is the Minister for Transport and Internal Trade in Trudeau's government. Anita Anand has earned a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Political Studies from Queen's University, a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Law from Oxford University, a Bachelor of Laws from Dalhousie University, and a Master of Laws from the University of Toronto. According to Canadian media reports, the race for leadership has now intensified with prominent names like Anita Anand, Pierre Poilievre, Chrystia Freeland, and Mark Carney. Indian-origin Anita Anand is considered one of the strongest contenders due to her impressive governance and public service record. Regarding Canadian MP Chandra Arya of Indian origin, he has also thrown his hat into the ring for the Prime Ministerial election. In a video clip, Arya stated that if the Canadian people elect him, he would lead an efficient and small government that ensures the nation's reconstruction and prosperity for future generations.

Chandra Arya emphasized that bold decisions must be made for the benefit of future generations. He has announced that he will run for the leadership of the Liberal Party. He also promised to make Canada a sovereign republic, raise the retirement age, implement a citizenship-based tax system, and recognize the State of Palestine.

He added that he has always worked for the best interests of the Canadian people.

He emphasized that bold decisions must be made for the benefit of future generations. Chandra Arya has announced that he will run for the leadership of the Liberal Party. He also promised to make Canada a sovereign republic, raise the retirement age, implement a citizenship-based tax system, and recognize the State of Palestine. Discussing the future relationship between Canada's new government and India, scholars in India are optimistic. Professor Harsh V. Pant, Vice President of the Studies and Foreign Policy Department at Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi, stated that Trudeau had damaged relations with India due to personal reasons, and he did not show the necessary seriousness to improve ties with India. This lack of effort resulted in significant damage to the bilateral relationship. Notably, Justin Trudeau had been making anti-India statements recently. Meanwhile, Canada had made a decision related to student visas that caused difficulties for Indian students. This has contributed to the growing tension between India and Canada. Pant believes that it was clear for some time that as long as Trudeau remained Prime Minister, there would be no new developments in India-Canada relations that were needed. On the other hand, Michael Kugelman, Director of the South Asia Institute at the Wilson Center think tank in Washington, D.C., shares the same view about the deteriorating India-Canada relations. He wrote on X that Trudeau's resignation could provide an opportunity to stabilize the deteriorating relations between India and Canada. Wilson also stated that New Delhi has directly blamed Trudeau for the deeply rooted problems in the bilateral relationship. In recent years, Canada has been the only Western country where relations with India have consistently worsened.

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The Pig Butchering Scam

How It Operates and Ways to Protect Yourself

Another critical aspect of safeguarding oneself is maintaining strict privacy standards online. Avoid sharing personal information, financial details, or sensitive data with individuals or platforms that you cannot independently verify. Be cautious of relationships that escalate quickly or individuals who pressure you into making financial decisions. Scammers often use urgency as a tactic to cloud judgment and compel victims to act impulsively.

■ UDAY INDIA BUREAU

The Pig Butchering scam, a term coined by its perpetrators, is one of the most insidious forms of financial fraud plaguing the digital age. Originating from the concept of "fattening up the pig before slaughter," this scam involves meticulous grooming of victims over a prolonged period to extract maximum financial gain. While it initially gained prominence in Southeast Asia, the scam has now transcended borders, exploiting the vulnerabilities of individuals worldwide. Understanding how this scam operates and taking proactive measures to avoid it is crucial in today's interconnected world.

At its core, the Pig Butchering scam relies on emotional manipulation and trust-building. Typically, scammers target individuals through social media platforms, dating apps, or even text messages sent out at random. The initial contact often appears innocuous—a casual greeting, a request for friendship, or a message claiming a mistaken identity. Once the victim engages, the scammer begins cultivating a relationship, which may span weeks or even months. During this time, the scammer presents themselves as a caring, trustworthy individual, often adopting false personas such as a successful entrepreneur, investor, or expatriate.

The endgame of the scam is to lure the victim into fraudulent investment schemes, often involv-

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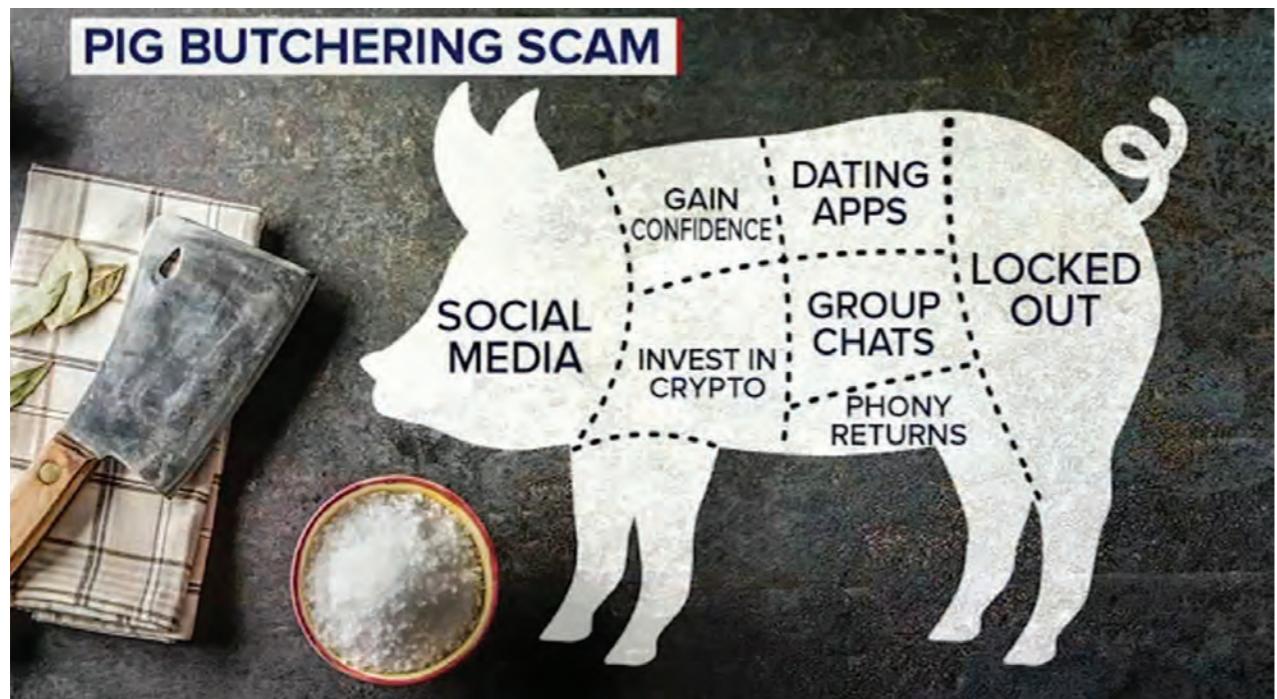


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ing cryptocurrencies. As the relationship deepens, the scammer introduces the victim to a "lucrative investment opportunity." This is typically portrayed as an exclusive, high-yield platform with supposed guarantees of significant returns. Victims are often provided with access to professionally designed websites or apps that simulate legitimate trading platforms, complete with fake dashboards displaying impressive gains. The initial investments made by victims often yield "profits," further reinforcing their trust and encouraging them to invest larger sums. However, when victims attempt to withdraw their funds, they are met with delays, additional fees, or outright denial, as the scammers vanish with the money.

Several factors contribute to the effectiveness of the Pig Butchering scam. The extended grooming period establishes emotional bonds, making victims more susceptible to manipulation. The use of sophisticated technology, such as cloned websites and fake investment platforms, adds an illusion of credibility. Furthermore, the integration of cryptocurrencies—an area many individuals are unfamiliar with—exploits the lack of regulatory oversight and understanding surrounding digital assets.

Avoiding the Pig Butchering scam requires vigilance and awareness. The first step is recognizing unsolicited contacts as potential red flags. Legitimate professionals or investment advisors rarely approach individuals through casual messages on social media or dating platforms. Any investment opportunity that promises unusually high returns with little to no risk should be approached with skepticism, as such guarantees are hallmarks of fraudulent schemes.

Conducting thorough research is essential before committing to any financial investment. This includes verifying the credentials of the individual or company offering the

opportunity, cross-referencing information with reputable sources, and seeking independent advice from financial experts. When dealing with online investment platforms, look for signs of legitimacy, such as proper registration, regulatory compliance, and transparent operations. It is also advisable to rely on well-established investment avenues rather than obscure platforms that lack a proven track record.

Another critical aspect of safeguarding oneself is maintaining strict privacy standards online. Avoid sharing personal information, financial details, or sensitive data with individuals or platforms that you cannot independently verify. Be cautious of relationships that escalate quickly or individuals who pressure you into making financial decisions. Scammers often use urgency as a tactic to cloud judgment and compel victims to act impulsively.

For those who suspect they have been targeted or fallen victim to the Pig Butchering scam, prompt action can mitigate losses. Reporting the incident to law enforcement and relevant regulatory bodies is crucial for initiating investigations and possibly recovering funds. Additionally, victims should immediately cease all communication with the scammer, secure their online accounts, and seek legal or financial counsel to address the fallout.

The rise of the Pig Butchering scam underscores the need for digital literacy and proactive measures in combating cybercrime. By staying informed, exercising caution, and fostering a culture of skepticism toward unsolicited offers, individuals can shield themselves from falling prey to such schemes. While technology has empowered societies in numerous ways, it has also equipped malicious actors with new tools for exploitation. Vigilance, therefore, remains the strongest defense in navigating this complex landscape.



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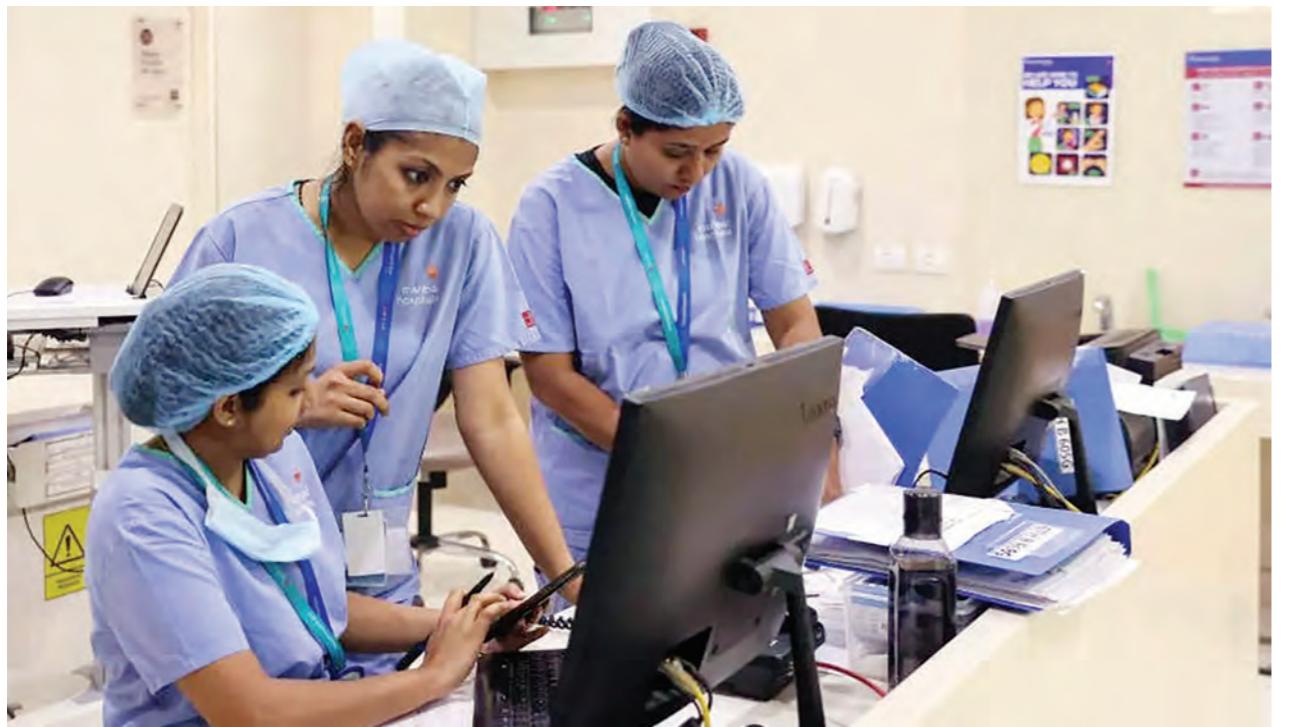
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Sourcing Healthcare Workers from India A Global Solution to a Growing Crisis



SARAT C. DAS

The global healthcare sector faces an acute and growing shortage of qualified professionals, a challenge exacerbated by aging populations, pandemic disruptions, and the increasing complexity of healthcare needs. In this context, India has emerged as a critical source of healthcare workers for countries worldwide, supplying doctors, nurses, and allied health professionals to meet the growing demand. This feature story explores the dynamics of sourcing healthcare workers from India, the factors driving this trend, its benefits and challenges, and the impact on healthcare systems globally.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there will be a projected global shortfall of 10 million healthcare workers by 2030, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Developed nations, such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia, are also grappling with shortages due to aging populations and increased demand for healthcare services.

Aging Populations in Developed Nations is the bane of their existence. In the United States, nearly 20 percent of the population will be over 65 by 2030, increasing the demand for healthcare services. In

Europe, healthcare systems are similarly strained, with countries like Germany facing a shortage of 400,000 nurses by 2030, as per the European Commission.

The post-pandemic challenges have further exacerbated this. The COVID-19 pandemic placed unprecedented strain on healthcare systems, leading to burnout and an exodus of healthcare professionals in many countries. This has further intensified the need for qualified workers from abroad.

Why India is a key source for healthcare workers? India has become a leading supplier of healthcare professionals for several reasons.

First, the strong educational infrastructure. India has over 600 medical colleges and 1,000 nursing institutions, producing approximately 90,000 doctors and 200,000 nurses annually. Many Indian institutions follow rigorous curricula aligned with global standards, making graduates highly competent and employable abroad.

Second, the English proficiency is a big plus. As English is the primary language of instruction in Indian medical schools, graduates are well-prepared to work in English-speaking countries like the US, UK, Canada, and Australia.

The cost-effectiveness is certainly add to the value. Hiring Indian healthcare professionals is cost-efficient for foreign employers, as wages in India are significantly lower than in developed countries.

Further, the candidates' willingness to relocate to distant countries seem to be an advantage to source from India. Economic opportunities, better working conditions, and career growth prospects motivate many Indian healthcare workers to seek employment abroad.

Among the popular destinations for Indian healthcare workers, USA, UK and Australia sit on the top. United States' H-1B and Green Card programs are the big draw. Indian doctors and nurses benefit from visa programs designed for highly skilled professionals. There are well over 100000 Indian-origin physicians accounting for some 10 percent of the total physician population. It is noteworthy that India provides the largest number of International Medical Graduates to the US in absolute numbers. As of June 2024, there were approximately 32,000 Indian nurses working in the United States. This number represents about 6percent of all immigrant registered nurses in the country. India is the second most common country of origin for immigrant registered nurses in the United States. The top states for immigrant nurses are California, Nevada, and New Jersey. The United States has a massive shortage of healthcare professionals, especially registered nurses.

The UK's National Health Service (NHS) relies heavily on Indian healthcare workers. In 2022, more than 30,000 Indian nurses were registered with the NHS. The UK introduced expedited visa processing for healthcare workers, benefiting Indian professionals significantly. India is now the largest international provider of nurses to the UK nursing register. According to recent data from the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), there are currently around 67,576 Indian nurses registered to work in the UK, representing a significant portion of the total nursing workforce there. A

The UK is currently experiencing a significant "care worker crisis", characterized by a major shortage of available care workers, primarily due to low pay, high staff turnover, and a growing demand for care services from an aging population, leading to high vacancy rates and difficulties in providing quality care to those who need it. This situation puts immense pressure on existing care workers and can limit access to care for many people.

score of British social care agencies have been accused of exploiting foreign workers, leaving people living on the breadline as they struggle to pay off debts run up while trying to secure jobs that fail to materialise.

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In order to obtain a visa to work in a care facility or as a carer in someone's home, many care worker residents paid immigration officials and, in certain situations, the care provider themselves, thousands of pounds (often as much as 40,000 pounds) in fees. The majority said that the brokers assured them that the funds would pay for their visa, airfare, and a month's lodging, and that they would be assured full-time employment with an annual salary of more than £20,000. Many claim they were informed that the remuneration would swiftly pay off any debt acquired to cover the initial expenses. However, employees say they were informed shortly before they arrived in the UK that they would be responsible for covering their own airfare and lodging. They were promised jobs, but they did not receive them when they got there. Most of the time, there was either no employment

at all or far less money and hours than had been promised. According to other employees, their employers urged them to look for part-time employment elsewhere, as permitted by their visa. One company's employees said they were pressured to work as cleaners or drivers for the corporation instead. Some claimed to have been sharing rooms and even beds with other immigrants in order to make ends meet, while others claimed to have been using food banks.

Workers who have expressed dissatisfaction with the conditions in multiple instances claim they were informed that their sponsorship would be revoked and they would be sent back to India if they did not keep quiet. Some said that immigration officers stationed in India had also intimidated their relatives if they attempted to speak out. According to solicitors, UK care providers may have violated the law if they give exploitative or low-paying jobs upon arrival after promising regular full-time employment. Many people feel imprisoned since the sponsorship system ties a person's immigration status to a specific employer.

Care workers are paid hundreds of pounds each by agencies in the UK, India, and other nations to arrange care positions and handle their paperwork. The UK government refers to these fees as "modern slavery" because they frequently leave the care workers heavily indebted and obligated to their contracts. Some organisations defraud applicants by making false promises about services that never come to pass. Others have questionable credentials or unclear identities and were hastily established within the last year and a half.

Lot of these are masqueraded as both training and placement agencies, such as Envoy International founded by Jaimin Naresh Shah, an individual who had an earlier dubious history as a provider in the space of higher education in the UK. There is a ground swell of reports, corroborating evidence and disgruntled clients suggesting that Envoy International received huge sum from clients and sourcing agents towards training and placement without delivering on its promises. "We paid him 42000 pound for training and placement of our clients and it is nearly a year the company has reneged its promises," says Dr S A Basha, who owns multiple skill development and manpower consultants in Europe, Asia and Africa.

There are several other skill development and manpower consultants such as H Raval have claimed to be on the receiving end from these fraudulent organisations. "We lost 29000 pound to a reprobate consultant Arvind (who goes by alibi Sunny) in the Seven Kings/ Ilford area of Essex who promised to deliver the training and placement for our healthcare candidates," despairs Raval.

In recent years, the care sector has relied on hundreds of thousands of foreign workers to fill labour shortages brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and Brexit. 350,000 health and care visas, or 75percent of all skilled worker visas, were issued by the government to employees and their dependents in 2023. However, it seems that system abuse has increased along with the numbers.

From March 11, 2024 the health workers were restricted from bringing family to the UK and care providers must reg-



ister with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) if they are sponsoring migrant workers in the UK. But there are concerns about suspected fake companies sponsoring visas after hundreds of licences were reportedly granted to firms that are just a few months old and have no history of providing care. More than 250 businesses who have never been inspected by the CQC are also believed to have been granted licences to sponsor workers from abroad.

The problems facing social care are deep-rooted. Some stem from the decade of austerity that began in 2010, which cut council budgets to the bone and left them unable to fully respond to rising demands for support. The challenges of the job – stressful and sometimes exploitative conditions, a lack of career progression and high turnover – have been cited in reports as far back as 2015. There were also warnings of staff shortages ahead of Brexit, when the care sector relied on EU nationals. "Shutting off the 'relief valve' of EU migration," the Nuffield Trust said, "put additional pressure" on a system that didn't have an effective way to train and keep British care workers.

Migrant workers have been part of the UK's social care sector for decades. Overseas workers plug vital labour gaps across almost every healthcare profession, while one in four care workers and home carers was born outside of the UK, according to the Office for National Statistics. These carers are most likely to be from Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Numbers have grown, especially since the government recognised the lingering impact of the pandemic on care worker recruitment and turnover. In February 2022 the Home Office added care workers to its shortage occupations list, a list of the jobs where the government considers there is a shortage of workers. For the first time, any care worker could apply for a health and care worker visa, whereas before only senior professionals were eligible. The hope was that these additional carers would address the challenges that the pan-

demic had compounded. Since then, international recruitment has grown significantly, according to Skills for Care, the body in charge of planning paths into care work across the UK.

The demand for care workers in Gulf Nations has never waned. Countries like the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar employ thousands of Indian nurses and doctors to support their rapidly growing healthcare infrastructure. Dubai's Healthcare City employs a large number of Indian expatriates in various specialties.

Further, both Australia and Canada are large employers of Indian care workers. Both countries offer permanent residency pathways for healthcare professionals. In 2021, 25 percent of new nurses registered in Canada were of Indian origin. Recent political crisis in Canada and its deteriorating relationship with India seems to have affected this.

Indian healthcare workers help fill critical gaps in healthcare systems, ensuring continuity of care in understaffed facilities. Indian healthcare professionals often excel in diverse environments due to their experience in treating a wide range of conditions and their ability to adapt to different cultures. It is always found that the host countries benefit from the economic activity generated by skilled migrants. Indian healthcare workers remit billions of dollars annually, contributing to India's economy. In 2021, India received \$87 billion in remittances, a significant portion from healthcare professionals abroad.

There is also a downside to this. The migration of healthcare workers exacerbates shortages in India, particularly in rural areas. WHO reports that India needs an additional 1.8 million doctors and nurses to meet its population's needs.

The credentialing and recognition of Indian healthcare qualifications seem to be a problem sometimes. Indian qualifications are not always immediately recognized abroad, requiring workers to pass additional licensing exams or train-

The sourcing of healthcare workers from India is a testament to the global interconnectedness of healthcare. Indian professionals are addressing critical shortages in countries worldwide while advancing their own careers and contributing to both host and home economies. However, this trend also highlights the need for a balanced approach to ensure ethical recruitment, recognition of qualifications, and support for India's domestic healthcare system.

ing programs. Nurses moving to the US must pass the NCLEX-RN exam, while doctors often face extensive residency requirements.

The cultural and social adjustments too can be demanding. Relocating healthcare workers often experience cultural shock and challenges integrating into foreign societies. Reports of underpayment, long hours, and poor working conditions have surfaced in some countries, particularly for nurses in the Middle East.

India need to balance migration with domestic needs. India should invest in healthcare infrastructure and incentives to retain talent, particularly in underserved regions. Host countries can collaborate with India to establish exchange programs that benefit both sides. The streamlining credentialing processes need to be put in place. Harmonizing licensing requirements can facilitate smoother transitions for Indian professionals. For example, the bilateral agreements, such as the UK's recognition of Indian nursing degrees, simplify the migration process.

Most importantly, the ethical recruitment practices certainly need to be place. Adopting ethical recruitment standards ensures that healthcare workers are not exploited and that their rights are protected. Expanding the training programs also must get attention. Collaborative efforts between India and host nations can expand training programs to prepare workers for international roles.

The sourcing of healthcare workers from India is a testament to the global interconnectedness of healthcare. Indian professionals are addressing critical shortages in countries worldwide while advancing their own careers and contributing to both host and home economies. However, this trend also highlights the need for a balanced approach to ensure ethical recruitment, recognition of qualifications, and support for India's domestic healthcare system.

With the right policies and collaborations, the migration of healthcare workers from India can continue to be a win-win solution, addressing global healthcare challenges while fostering international cooperation and development.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Mahakumbh: A Timeless Celebration of India's Faith, Culture, and Organisational Excellence



DEEPAK KUMAR RATH

The Mahakumbh, held every 12 years, is more than just a religious gathering; it is a grand celebration of India's enduring faith, cultural vibrancy, and extraordinary organisational capabilities. Rooted deeply in mythology and enriched by centuries of tradition, the Mahakumbh embodies the spirit of India—a land where spirituality and modernity coalesce seamlessly. The origins of the Mahakumbh can be traced back to ancient Hindu scriptures, particularly the Puranas. According to legend, during the churning of the ocean (Samudra Manthan) by the gods and demons, a pot (kumbh) containing the nectar of immortality emerged. Drops of this elixir fell at four locations—Prayagraj, Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nashik—which now serve as the sites for the Kumbh Mela. These gatherings are deeply rooted in the belief that taking a dip in the sacred rivers during the Mahakumbh cleanses one of sins and paves the way to salvation. The Mahakumbh is a microcosm of India's diverse cultural heritage. Pilgrims, saints, seers, and curious visitors from across the globe come together to witness the confluence of spirituality, art, and tradition. Vibrant processions, devotional music, and discourses by spiritual leaders create an atmosphere of divine energy and unity. What makes the Mahakumbh remarkable is its ability to transcend religious boundaries. It serves as a cultural melting pot, welcoming people from all walks of life and fostering a sense of collective devotion and humanity.

Under the leadership of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the Mahakumbh has reached unprecedented heights of excellence. The 2025 Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj is a monu-

mental success, setting new benchmarks in crowd management, infrastructure, and sustainability. With state-of-the-art facilities, meticulous planning, and an emphasis on cleanliness and safety, the event is showcasing India's ability to handle colossal gatherings with finesse. Innovative measures such as the use of drones for crowd monitoring, smart city solutions, and eco-friendly initiatives underscores the event's progressive outlook. The government's commitment to preserving the sanctity of the festival while embracing modern advancements has earned widespread acclaim. Against this backdrop, it is apt to mention here that the Mahakumbh is not just a festival; it is a master-class in unity, resilience, and devotion. It offers valuable lessons to the world in managing large-scale events, fostering inclusivity, and upholding traditions in a rapidly changing world. As nations grapple with challenges of diversity and coexistence, the Mahakumbh stands as a shining example of how faith and culture can serve as powerful unifying forces. In an era of rapid globalisation, the Mahakumbh continues to inspire generations and uphold the essence of India's spiritual and cultural identity. It is a testament to the nation's ability to preserve its heritage while embracing progress, demonstrating that tradition and modernity can coexist harmoniously. In conclusion, as the world looks to India for inspiration, the Mahakumbh remains a timeless tradition—a celebration of the human spirit, an enduring faith in the divine, and a deep-rooted respect for cultural richness. It is not merely an event; it is the soul of India manifest in its purest and most vibrant form.

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