

Kumbh Mela - Short Cut To Nirvana

According to astrologers, the 'Kumbh Fair' takes place when the planet Jupiter enters Aquarius and the Sun enters Aries.

Kumbha (Kumbha means pot) **Mela** (means fair) is a sacred Hindu pilgrimage that takes place at the following four locations of India:

Prayag, Allahabad (in the state of Uttar Pradesh) at the confluence of three holy rivers - Ganga (Ganges), Yamuna and Saraswati. It is attended by millions of people, making it the largest pilgrimage gathering around the world.

Haridwar (in the state of Uttar Pradesh) where the river Ganga enters the plains from Himalayas.

Ujjain (in Madhya Pradesh), on the banks of shipra river, and...

Nasik (in Maharashtra) on the banks of Godavari river.

<http://www.kumbhamela.net/>

According to legends, once the gods and demons fought for a long time, but neither could vanquish the other. In the meantime, they came to know a pot (Kumbha) of nectar which was lying at the bed of the ocean that could make the drinker immortal. For getting the nectar (Amrit), they put the fabled Mandara Mountain as a churning rod and the great serpent Vasuki as the churning string. They eventually found the pot of nectar but the battle among the gods and the demons continued and during the struggle, a few drops of the nectar fell at Prayag, Hardwar, Nasik and Ujjain. The war ultimately resulted in victory for the gods and since then Kumbha Mela is held in these places every twelve years. Religious discourses, non-stop recitations of the Vedas, epics and the Puranas are held in the camps, specially set up for the Kumbha Mela.

<http://www.kamat.com/kalranga/festive/kumbmela.htm>

The Kumbh Mela is the biggest gathering of people in the history of humanity – although few in the West have ever heard of it. More than 70 million pilgrims attend this extraordinary spiritual festival, which has been held every 12 years near Allahabad, India, for over two millennia. A vast tent city is established to accommodate the masses, and many of India's greatest gurus and spiritual leaders set up camp to give discourses to their devotees. On certain auspicious days everyone takes a holy dip at the confluence of two actual rivers - the Ganges and Yamuna - and a mythical river, the Saraswati. On the main bathing day, more than 25 million people bathe in the sacred waters. This single act of faith is believed to cleanse the sins of a thousand lifetimes and secure release from the endless cycle of rebirth – literally a short cut to the state of purest bliss...nirvana.

SHORT CUT TO NIRVANA takes a voyage of discovery through this vivid and vibrant world, accompanied by an irrepressible young Hindu monk, Swami Krishnanand, and several Westerners, each on their own spiritual quest. We encounter some of the Kumbh Mela's wisest and most fascinating characters, including an ascetic sadhu who has held his arm in the air for over 20 years, another who sits on a throne of nails, a Japanese devotee who is buried in a pit for three days, and a guru who proposes that Americans would do well to start meditating for three hours each day. We also spend moments in the company of an honored guest, the Dalai Lama, as senior leaders of Hinduism and Buddhism join together in an historic moment of unity.

More than a simple account of the Kumbh Mela, this film is a sensory experience of an ancient, grand occasion, a swirl of color and motion, song and cacophony, the sacred and the surreal -- spiritual India exactly as anyone would hope to find it. And from this ancient tradition comes a powerful and uplifting message of harmony, unity, and peace for all humanity.

<http://www.shortcuttonirvana.com/>

From the World's Greatest Festival – A Message of Peace

Dalai Lama, "Conversion I think is outdated. Now, the reason, my main effort is to promote religious harmony."

Pilgrims - One who embarks on a quest for something conceived of as sacred. A religious devotee who journeys to a shrine or sacred place.

Gurus – spiritual teacher - from root 'gru' = heavy; also, 'gu' shadow, darkness and 'ru' dispeller (dispelling darkness, bringing light)

Sadhus – holy men

Yogis – spiritual masters

Vedas – four primary texts of Hinduism (Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda).

Epics - Mahabharata (includes Bhagavad-Gita) and Ramayana.

Puranas – 18 major books of Hindu mythology

Upanishads - continuation of the Vedic philosophy elaborating on how the soul (*Atman*) can be united with the ultimate truth (*Brahman*) through contemplation and mediation, as well as the doctrine of *Karma*-- the cumulative effects of a persons' actions.

India:

Population - 1,080,264,388

Religion - Hindu 80.5%, Muslim 13.4%, Christian 2.3%, Sikh 1.9%, other 1.8%, unspecified 0.1% (2001 census)
