

National Mission for Clean Ganga

(Reg. Society)

Ministry of Jal Shakti

Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation
Government of India

GNAMAMI
GANGE

Documentation of Ganga from Gaumukh to Gangasagar

Prayagraj (Allahabad) District

Intangible Cultural Heritage



Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage

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for Art and
Cultural Heritage

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***Cover Photo: Prayagraj during Kumbh 2019**

***Back Cover: Inside view of Khusrau Tomb with intricate details**



Idol of Prayagraj

श्रुतिःप्रमाणं स्मृतयः प्रमाणं पुराणमप्यत्र परं प्रमाणम्।

यत्रास्ति गंगा यमुना प्रमाणं स तीर्थराजो जयति प्रयागः॥२

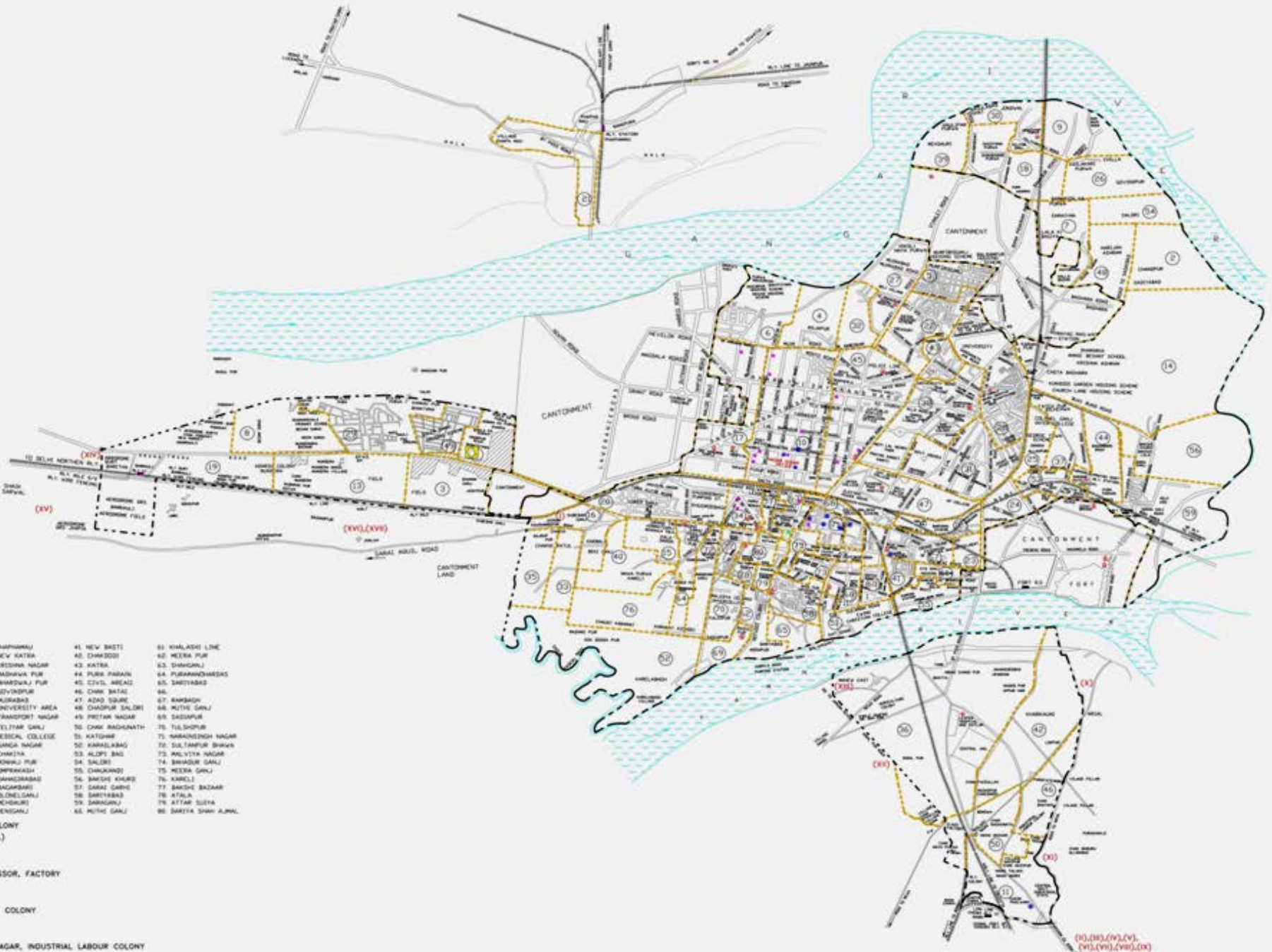
पद्म पुराण

Shruti, Smriti and Puranas also prove the belief that Prayag is the main and sacred among all the pilgrimages,

where the Ganga and Yamuna rivers themselves are present in evidence,

So hail to King Prayaga of such Pilgrimage.

- Padma Purana



(I) (ALLAHABAD M.CORP.):-

- NAME OF WARDS**
- | | | | |
|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. SULTAN SARAI | 21. PUNJABWALI | 41. NEW BASTI | 61. KHALADI LINE |
| 2. SADABAD | 22. NEW KATRA | 42. DHAKDOI | 62. MEERA PUR |
| 3. JHANTPUR | 23. KRISHNA NAGAR | 43. KATRA | 63. SHAMGARJ |
| 4. BALUPUR | 24. RAJSHYA PUR | 44. PLEK PABAIN | 64. PURNANDHARAS |
| 5. MANJRI GANJ | 25. BHARDWAJ PUR | 45. CIVIL AREA 2 | 65. SHANTINAGAR |
| 6. ASHOK NAGAR | 26. GZVINDPUR | 46. CHAK BATAI | 66. |
| 7. ISHWAR SARAI | 27. MURABAD | 47. ADAD SQUARE | 67. BAMBADI |
| 8. NEEL SARAI | 28. UNIVERSITY AREA | 48. CHADPUR SALONI | 68. RUTHI GANJ |
| 9. SHEHRUTI | 29. TRANSPORT NAGAR | 49. PRETAR NAGAR | 69. DADUPUR |
| 10. CIVIL AREA 1 | 30. TELTAR GANJ | 50. CHAK RAJANATH | 70. TULSHIPUR |
| 11. QAZIPUR | 31. MEDICAL COLLEGE | 51. KATOHRI | 71. NARANANDEH NAGAR |
| 12. MALANAJ | 32. GANGA NAGAR | 52. KARALABAD | 72. SULTANPUR BHAVIN |
| 13. HARVANDI | 33. CHHITIA | 53. ALDPI BAG | 73. WALVIYA NAGAR |
| 14. ALEXANDRI | 34. HOWAL PUR | 54. SALONI | 74. BHADUR GANJ |
| 15. HANMANGALI | 35. DHPANASH | 55. CHAKRANGI | 75. MEERA GIRJ |
| 16. CHANDRATI | 36. JAHANABAD | 56. BANSI KHURD | 76. KAROLI |
| 17. NYAYMARG | 37. BAGHIBARI | 57. SARAI GANHI | 77. SHICHI BAZAR |
| 18. CHANDRANAGAR | 38. COLONELGANJ | 58. BAREILAH | 78. ATALA |
| 19. KUNDESI | 39. MENDHURI | 59. SARAGANJ | 79. ATTAR SUYA |
| 20. JALAL NAGAR | 40. BENGALI | 60. RUTHI GANJ | 80. BARTHA SHIV AJRUL |

- (II) SUBDARGANJ RAILWAY COLONY
 (III) TRIVENI NAGAR (N.E.C.S.W.)
 (IV) T.S.L. FACTORY
 (V) MUKTA VIHAR
 (VI) BHARAT PUMP & COMPRESSOR, FACTORY
 (VII) A.D.A. COLONY
 (VIII) DOORBANI NAGAR
 (IX) TI FACTORY & RESIDENCE COLONY
 (X) SHIV NAGAR
 (XI) DURUNAMAK NAGAR
 (XII) GANDHI NAGAR, MANAS NAGAR, INDUSTRIAL LABOUR COLONY
 (XIII) GANGOTRI NAGAR
 (XIV) MAHEWA WEST
 (XV) BEGUM BAZAAR
 (XVI) BHAGAL PURWA
 (XVII) KOORA
 (XVIII) OC COLONY, DEOGHAT, ADA COLONY & JHALWAGAHN

LEGEND:-

- | | | | |
|----------------------|--|----------|--|
| ROAD | | TEMPLE | |
| RAILWAY LINE | | HOSPITAL | |
| SEWER | | HOTEL | |
| NALA | | MASJID | |
| WARD BOUNDARY | | CINEMA | |
| NAGAR NIGAM BOUNDARY | | | |

TETRA TECH
 PLOT NO. 140, WILSON GREEN, SHAKT, NEW DELHI-110048
 CLIENT: NAGAR NIGAM ALLAHABAD
 PROJECT: PRESENTATION WORK MANAGEMENT PLAN (PMP) FOR ALLAHABAD CITY
 TITLE: CITY MAP OF ALLAHABAD SHOWING NAGAR NIGAM & WARD BOUNDARIES
 DATE: 01/01/2018
 SCALE: 1:5000
 DRAWN BY: [Name]
 CHECKED BY: [Name]
 APPROVED BY: [Name]
 DATE: 01/01/2018



View of Triveni Sangam from Ulta Quila Jhansi

A City of Three Rivers

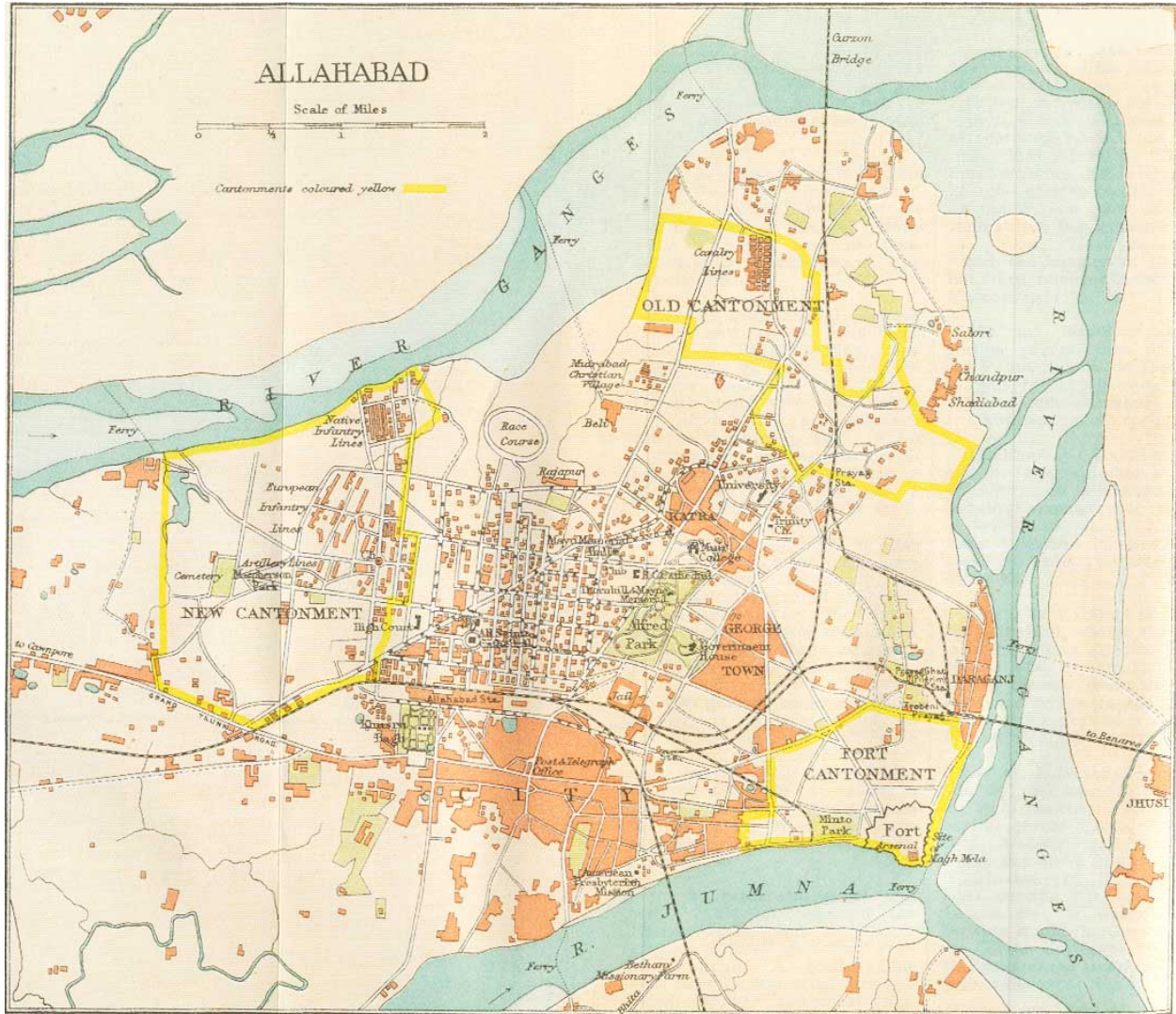


Figure 1. An old map of Allahabad

Almost all the major world civilisations have developed along rivers or other water bodies, which have been a source of life and sustenance. The remarkable ability of a river to enable human settlement and the flourishing of great civilisations along rivers underscores humankind's close relationship to the natural environment. It, therefore, comes as no surprise that sentiments of love, affection and reverence towards nature continue even today. The association of certain rivers, seas, landscapes, mountains, trees and animals with divinity is a characteristic of all major religions of the world, in one form or the other.

Throughout history, certain resources of nature have been regarded as sacred sites—places of pilgrimage to be visited and worshipped by devotees for the well-being of their communities. A visit to these pilgrimage spots urges us to dwell on the course taken by human civilisation, makes us ruminate on how and why we are here today, and involves us in a feeling of oneness and togetherness with all those other people who share with us a common sense of history and belonging. Places like Jerusalem, Mecca, Mount Kailash, Bodh Gaya, Banaras, amongst so many others, elicit relatability to human civilization across the world. Something similar is reflected in Prayagraj or Allahabad, especially during the Kumbh Mela. At Prayag, along with the confluence of rivers, we also see a spiritual confluence of countless people as a singular, incredible mass of humanity, congregated at the same place by virtue of that feeling of oneness and unity.



Figure 2. A Sadhu sleeps near the Triveni Sangam

Prayagraj (Allahabad): Mythology and Historical Overview

The city of Allahabad, situated at the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati has been known by many names over a period of more than two millennia—Prayag, Jhansi, Iahabas, Allahabad, and now Prayagraj. The city is not only steeped in mythology and history with numerous mentions in ancient texts (Vedas, Puranas, Shrutis and Smritis, *Mahabharat*, Balmiki *Ramayan*, *Sri Ram Charit Manas* of Tulsi Das among others) but its antiquity goes back to pre-historic times. The evolution of the city from a mystical confluence of three mighty rivers, to an important military and political post during the time of the Mughals—a period which also saw the flourishing of Mughal era architecture, Indo-Islamic culture, and Urdu literature—and further to emerging as an important base for India’s independence struggle in modern times and of progressive Hindi literature reflects the amalgamation of varied cultures and traditions, which have withstood the test of times.



Figure 3. Aerial view of the Sangam

Mythology: In ancient times, this habitation, which was not a city of prominence yet, was simply known as Prayag or a place where two or more rivers meet. However, its importance as a supremely sacred site has its origin in mythology and ancient ‘Hindu’ texts, some of which mention the place by the name Prayag and others as Triveni Sangam or the confluence of three rivers. In her book, *India, A Sacred Geography* (2012), Diana L. Eck writes about the various stories and different meanings related to the two names. According to her, the mica-laden water of Ganga is seen as the ‘white’ river, while the Yamuna with its clear water is the ‘blue’ or dark river. The mysterious Saraswati has been mentioned around 50 times in Vedic hymns making it one of the great rivers of Vedic India. Saraswati, who was initially identified as the Goddess of river waters, eventually became associated with the arts and learning. Hence, when the river ‘disappeared’, it left behind a ‘powerful legacy’.

The sacred nature of the confluence site can be gauged from the following mentions in the *Rigveda* and the *Padma Purana*: *Rigveda*: “.... those who bathe at the place where the two rivers, white and dark,

flow together, rise up to heaven.” *Padma Purana*: “...one who bathes and drinks there where the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati join, enjoys liberation.”

In a story from the *Padma Purana*, Brahma wondered which was the holiest place on Earth and after intense meditation, chose Prayag, which is, hence, also known as Tirtharaj (king of all pilgrimages). Immediately upon hearing this, Vishnu, who wanted to experience the holiest place, arrived in Prayag in the form of Veni Madhava (who is also considered the ruling deity of Triveni). Consequently, Brahma performed ten sacrifices or Ashvamedha yajnas in Prayag giving it its name—*Pra* or superlative and *yag* from yajna or sacrifice; or the ‘sacrificial grounds’ of Brahma. Shiva then arrived from Kashi to have a darshan of Vishnu and set himself up where the Shooltankeshwara Mandir is now located, a vantage place from where he could have constant darshan of Vishnu.



Figure 4. Triveni Sangam

According to a story in the *Matsya Purana*, when Yudhisthir was grief-stricken after killing so many of his kin and kings, the sage Markandeya asked him to undertake a pilgrimage to Prayag, as bathing in or just the sight of the Ganga at Prayag or even thinking of Prayag from a distance was said to dissolve one’s sins.

The name Triveni has various symbolical references: In keeping with the story of the visit by the three important Gods of the Hindu pantheon, Triveni represents Shiva’s Gauri (Ganga), Krishna or Vishnu’s

wife, the dark Yamuna or Kalindi, and Saraswati, who is the consort of Brahma; Triveni also symbolises Ganga as a triple river, flowing in the three realms of heaven, earth, and the netherworld. She is also associated with the three gods, flowing from Vishnu's foot in heaven, falling upon Shiva's hair as his liquid Shakti, and carried in Brahma's water pot as his beloved; Triveni also represents the two vertical channels of energy running up the spine (Kundalini Shakti)—Ida and Pingala with the third Sushumna which is subtle.

The only ancient literature exclusively focusing on Prayag, however, is the *Prayag Mahatmya* or the 'greatness of Prayag'. It is written in Sanskrit and extolls the virtues gained during a pilgrimage to Prayag. This literature is a part of *Matsya Purana* and is still referred to by pilgrims.

Pre-history: Geologically, the Vindhya mountain range (running southwest-northeast) is composed of sandstone, and the natural wear and tear of these soft rocks has resulted in many natural cave formations. These caves provided ready shelters for early human settlers and the pebbles and rocks found in the river basins of the numerous tributaries of Ganga that drain the northern slopes of the Vindhyas provided them with the resources for making early tools and artefacts. One of the river basins in the region is the Belan Valley (near Allahabad), a tributary of Tons river, which is rich in prehistoric sites. Archaeologists from Allahabad University have found nearly 400 hundred stone-age sites in this area (Lower Palaeolithic—44, Middle Palaeolithic—87, Upper Palaeolithic—79, Epi-Palaeolithic—6, Non-Geometric Mesolithic—115, Geometric Mesolithic—17, and Neolithic—9). Koldihwa and Mahagara (in Allahabad district) are two important Neolithic sites, with Koldihwa showing cultural continuity from the Neolithic to the Iron Age.

Ancient and Medieval History: Ancient remains dating back to the Buddhist period and the Gupta dynasty (approximately 500 BCE to 400 CE) have been found in the Allahabad region in Kausambi, Bhita, Jhansi, Deoria, Sringeripur, etc. These findings are reflective of the fact that a high degree of civilizational evolution took place in the region of ancient Prayag during this period, if not earlier. Not much is recorded about Prayag specifically. The only structure that relates Prayag to the above period is the Asokan pillar that is now housed in the Allahabad Fort. It is, however, debated that the pillar was probably originally erected in Kausambi (by Asoka in 3rd C BCE and later shifted to the fort during the time of Firoz Shah Tughlaq in 16th C CE). The other mention of Prayag is by Hiuen Tsang (Xuanzang), a Chinese scholar and traveller, who was invited by Harshavardhan in 644 CE to travel with him to Prayag during Magh Mela. Hiuen Tsang describes how Harshavardhan distributed his wealth to the poor, needy and the religious people every five years at Prayag. It was an event where respect and worship were offered to Buddha, Shiva and the Sun as well, and charity was given to all including the Jains, despite religious differences.

The region, which is now the flourishing city of Allahabad/Prayagraj, became a part of various dynasties—from the Kosala kingdom (600 BCE) to the Palas of Gaur (9th C CE) and further onwards to those that ruled the Gangetic basin from time to time, witnessing periods of both chaos and stability.

It was during the reign of the Mughals that Prayag began gaining importance strategically. Abd al-Qadir Badauni, a historian at the court of Akbar, states that Akbar visited Prayag in 1575 CE and laid the

foundation of an imperial city which he called Illahi vasa or Illhabas (a place where divinity resides). Nizam ud-din Ahmed, who wrote *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, mentions that in 1584 Akbar already commanded a city and a fort at Prayag. The city gained importance rapidly soon after and by the end of Akbar's reign had evolved into a hub of political, military and economic activities. Tavernier (a French merchant and traveller during the 17th C CE) stated that the province of Allahabad was so significant that governance was conferred only on a son or an uncle of the Emperor.¹ Akbar converted Allahabad into a Subah or a province, whose key industry became boat-building. Large sea-going vessels were built here and transferred to the coast on the river Ganga.

During the time of Jahangir, Allahabad gradually lost its political importance and by the end of Shah Jahan's reign (17th C CE), the area was affected by civil strife. In the following centuries, the city passed from the hands of the Mughals to the Marathas and the Nawab of Awadh (both in the later half of 18th C CE) and then on to the East India Company in 1765, who introduced cotton farming in the region around the city due to its favourable climate.

This period also saw the advancement of Indo-Islamic culture, as reflected in the architecture, language and literature of the city. Apart from Delhi and Agra, Allahabad was another important city where these thrived. Some of the buildings and structures that embody the Indo-Islamic style are the Allahabad Fort and Khusrau Bagh. Arabic and Persian poets such as Shah Muhibbullah Ilahabadi (1587- 1648 CE) who wrote on complex Sufi subjects, Sheikh Muhammad Afzal (17th C CE), and Shah Muhammad Yahya (also known as Shah Khubullah) who has the Yahyaganj neighbourhood in Allahabad named after him, set the stage for the development of Urdu literature in Allahabad in the 18th C. Some of the well-known Urdu poets of the city were Abul Hasan Amrullah Ilahabadi (18th C CE), Shah Ghulam Qutbuddin Musib (1726-1773 CE), Shah Muhammad Ajmal (1747- 1820 CE), Shah Ghulam Yahya Insaf and Shah Muhammad Alim Betab (18th C CE).

Imam Bakhsh Nasikh (1776-1838 CE), another well-known Lucknawi master of Urdu poetry used to frequent the khanqah of Shah Muhammad Ajmal, where he is said to have composed his famous verse:

“Three flowing at Tribeni,

two from my eyes;

Now Ilahabad too is Panjab [=‘five-waters’]!”²

British Period: The Treaty of Allahabad (1765 CE) signed between Shah Alam II and the East India Company (EIC) is said to have established and strengthened colonial rule in India. The treaty allowed the Company access to 40,000 sq km of taxable and the most fertile land in north India. In 1801, the city was ceded to the EIC by the Nawab of Awadh.

¹ Allahabad, where the rivers meet (2009)—edited by Neelum Saran Gour (pages 11-14)

² Urdu and Persian Literature in Allahabad—Shamsur Rahman Faruqi

After the British subdued the mutiny of 1857 in which Allahabad played an active role, the British converted Allahabad into an administrative capital (1877) of the new state of United Provinces. During India's freedom struggle, many pro-independence groups including the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League held their meetings in the city, making it an important centre for the rise of nationalism in India.



Figure 5. An archival image of Khusrau Bagh

Shringverpur: Mythology, History and Science



Figure 6. Statue of Nishad Raja Guha at Shringverpur

Shringverpur, another important historical site, is located 40 km north-west of Allahabad on the banks of the Ganga. Excavations carried out in Shringverpur have revealed a temple dedicated to Shringi Rishi. It is widely believed that the place derived its name from the sage who once had his ashram here. The city finds mention in the *Ramayana*, as the capital of the famous kingdom of Nishadraj or the 'King of Fishermen'. It is here that Ram, Sita and Lakshman stayed for a night before going to the forest during exile. According to the story, when a boatman refused to take them across, Nishadraj offered to help if Ram agreed to let him wash his feet. The place where Nishadraj washed Ram's feet has been marked by a platform known as 'Ramchura'. A small temple has been built near the site; though this temple does not embody any historical or cultural significance, the location is very serene.

The following couplets from the Adhyatma Ramayana, *Ayodhya Kand* (5.60) mentions Lord Ram's arrival at the banks of the Ganga at Shringverpur:

सीता सचिव सहित दोउ भाई संगबेरपुर पहुँचे जाई॥

उतरे राम देवसरि देखी। कीन्ह दंडवत हगषु बिसेषी॥

“Both brothers including Sita and the minister reached Shringverpur. Seeing Ganga there, Lord Ramji got down from the chariot and worshipped Ganga with great pleasure.”



Figure 7. Sh. Arun Khanna, Ex-Superintendent, ASI Delhi Circle

Historically, thermoluminescence dating assigns settlements in the area to the end of the 2nd millennium BC. According to Arun Khanna, Ex-Superintendent, ASI Delhi Circle, excavations at Shringverpur have recovered Northern Black Ware Pottery (NBWP) and one of the largest water management systems in India with three de-siltation tanks which channelised water from the Ganga to its main tank. Three kinds of bricks have been used in the construction of these tanks which has been dated at the end of 1st C BCE or during the Kushana

period. The continuity of some traditions over



Figure 8. Prof. B.B. Lal, Archaeologist

thousands of years is still seen in the making and use of the water pitcher or ghada, the technique of which has not changed in the past 5000 years.

Shringverpur was excavated by the noted archaeologist Prof. B.B. Lal and his team under the Ramayana Project. The water tank, its most important discovery, is a remarkable example of hydraulic engineering and Lal mentions in his report on what makes these tanks so significant:



Figure 9. Circular ritual tank, Shringverpur

1. The water of the Ganga was fed into the tanks without building any dams on the river;
2. The system included all necessary components such as a long feeding channel which brought the water all the way from the river, a silting chamber, a preliminary (silting) tank, a very long main tank, a circular ritual tank, and spill channels;
3. Wells were also constructed which went deep into the earth. During summer months, when the tank water began to dry up, the same could be supplemented by underground water from the wells.
4. Finally, there was an exit channel which drained the excess water back into the river.

Pratishthanpur and Jhunsi

Jhunsi is an ancient site on the other side of the Ganga in Prayagraj. This settlement adjoins the 'sea well' mound. The rows of dunes in the area can be seen from afar. The place was ruled by the Chandra dynasty and was also known as Pratishthanpur. The name of this city changed to Jhunsi in the medieval period. It is believed that in the past, Raja Harbeng Singh used to rule this area, which is why some people call the area Harbeng Singh. Harbeng was reportedly an eccentric and tyrannical ruler. On his orders, in his state, everything would be sold taka ser. That is why a popular local saying goes: "Andher nagari, Anugnha (chaupat) Raja, Taka ser Bhaji, Taka ser Khaja."



Figure 10. Information Bulletin at Jhunsi

It is said that once, at the Triveni Sangam, sage Avadhoot Matsyendra Nath and Guru Gorakhnath had come to perform Snan. The eccentric and arrogant king insulted both these saints. Both Siddha Yogis became angry after being insulted and Guru Gorakhnath cursed the king that his place would be overturned and destroyed. Hence, the name 'Ulta Quila' was given to this place. V.N. Pandey, too, mentions in his work³ that such a name for Jhunsi has a legend associated with it, as it was ruled by Harbeng, the imbecile king, in whose reign chaos prevailed everywhere. When his 'cup of iniquity' was full, there was upheaval on earth and the capital Pratishthana was turned upside down, henceforth known as 'Ulta Quila'.

About fifty-eight km northwest is the medieval site of Kara with its impressive ruins of Jaychand's fort. It once belonged to the rulers of Mauryan, Shunga, Kushana and Gupta periods; the ancient Pratisthana has lost its identity to modern Jhunsi.

The historical evidence is still visible in the form of high mounds in Jhunsi. These mounds have further added to the significance of the city, as the excavations and material remains discovered therein belong to the sixth century BC. Pratishthanpur was the most important locality of Prayag and was said to have been founded by king Ila. It was the capital of the Pururavas and other kings of the lunar dynasty.

³ Prayag: The Site of Kumbh Mela,—Dr. D.P. Dubey and Dr. V.N. Pandey



Figure 11. Screenshot from Google Maps showing proximity of Ganga to Shringverpur, an archaeological site
Kalidasa also mentions Pratishthanapur in his drama *Vikramor-Vasiyam*.⁴ He gives an imaginary account of this palace of the Pururavas, which was said to be magnificent. Various myths are also associated with



Figure 12. Historical remains of Shringverpur

this site. An inscription of Trilochanapala, the Pratihara king, was discovered from the site in 1830.

A great fire completed the destruction of the city and the ruins went by the name of Jhusi, a burnt town, from the Hindi root 'Jhulasna'. It is also said that the town was destroyed in an earthquake in 1359 CE as a result of the invocations of Saint Maqdoom Shah Taquiuddin, whose tomb lies on one side of the fortress. The stories relating to

the scattering of Brahman and Kshatriya clans after abandoning their homes in Jhusi and immigrating to distant places during the medieval period lend colour to this theory. The historical and sacred Samudra Koop is also located here, with its own story. It is known as Samudrakoop as it belongs to the Samudragupta period. In fact, five such wells are found in Ujjain, Mathura, Prayag (Allahabad), Varanasi and Patalpur.

⁴ *Vikramorvasiyam*: One of Kalidasa's finest plays, *Vikramorvasiyam*, has for its theme the love, separations, and final reunion of King Pururavas...and the nymph Urvashi. The apsaras, on her way to heaven, is abducted by the demon Kesi, from whose clutches the mortal king rescues her.

Bharadwaj Muni Ashram



Figure 13. Bharadwaj Muni Ashram

भरद्वाज मुनि बसहिं प्रयागा। तिन्हहि राम पद अति अनुरागा॥
तापस सम दम दया निधाना। परमारथ पथ परम सुजाना॥

Bhardwaj Muni settled in Prayag; he has great love at the feet of Rama.

An ascetic, ascetic mind, jitendriya, rich in compassion and path of charity.

Every year, an annual fair known as Bharat-Milaap is held nearby to commemorate the reunion between Ram and his brother Bharat.

Historically, the Ashram is believed to harbour the archaeological remains of the past which are still to be unearthed. Noted archaeologist B.B. Lal has mentioned this in his work:

“Meanwhile, it is proposed to take up Bharadvaja Asrama for the second volume in the series because of the unusual significance of the site. A flat piece of land, opposite Anand Bhavan (the ancestral home of the Nehru family) in Allahabad, is locally known as Bharadvaja Asrama. It carries on it a municipal garden, and there is little to indicate that there could be something really ancient about it. Thus, while

working on the project, I asked myself: 'If there is any truth in the local tradition; the place ought to yield archaeological remains as early as those of Ayodhya'.⁵



Figure 14. Sh. Kumbhnath Goswami, Priest, Bharadwaj Muni Ashram

⁵ Excavations at Shrinverpur, Memoirs of Archeological Survey of India , 1978—B.B. Lal

Prayag: Identity Restored



Figure 15. Idol of Prayagraj at Patalpuri temple

Allahabad was officially renamed Prayagraj on 16 October 2018. An official statement released by the government said, “The board researched documents and found that there were 14 Prayags in the country but only the one here, also known as King of all Prayags (hence, Prayagraj) was changed to Allahabad.” “There was a delusion that the place was always called Allahabad and so the Revenue Board suggested that in order to correct this delusion, it would be reasonably legal to change the name to the original name.”⁶

Mythological references mention the existence of a city called Prayag. The following lines:

*श्रुतिः प्रमाणं स्मृतयः प्रमाणं पुराणमप्यत्र परं प्रमाणम् ।
यत्रास्ति गङ्गा यमुना प्रमाणं स तीर्थराजो जयति प्रयागः ॥ २॥*

~ Padma Purana

proclaim that Prayag is the main and best pilgrimage among all pilgrimages, where the Ganga and the Yamuna rivers themselves are present as proof, so the king of such pilgrimages, Prayag, should always be hailed.

According to Dr R.N. Tripathi, Director, Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, Prayag, “There are fourteen Prayags (confluences) and out of those fourteen Prayags, the Prayag here attained a reputation as Tirtharaj or the King of Pilgrimage...Prayag and the Sapta Puris were weighed on the scales separately. It turned out

⁶ <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/allahabad-officially-named-as-prayagraj-allahabad-university-hc-5404894/>

that where the Tirtha raj was, that pan was heavy and so all the people, all the gods, gave the highest importance to the pilgrimage of Prayag. Therefore, it was decided by the Gods to perform the Yajna here. The trinity, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, reside here in Prayag.”

The Ganga flows near Prayag and its significance was penned down by the great poet Goswami Tulsidas in *Ramcharitmanas* (1.2.87), composed at Prayag in 1631 AD:

गंग सकल मुद मंगल मुला ।
सब सुख करनि हरनि सब सुला ॥

In this shloka, he says that all Ram-bhakts are in Prayag. In the later part of this shloka, Tulsidas talks about the Northward journey that the Sun makes in the month of Magh. And since Prayag is higher by the length of two fingers than the rest of the world, the first rays of the sun during this northward journey fall on Prayag.



Figure 16. Dr.R.N. Tripathi, Director, Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, Allahabad

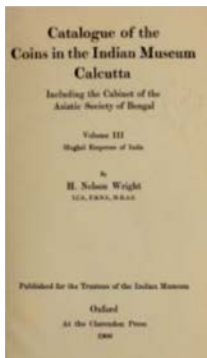
London in 1884.

The Akshay Vat is a banyan tree which the pilgrims still believe to be ‘immortal’. Before the area was cordoned off, pilgrims often committed suicide from this tree in a bid to achieve moksha. The tree and the shrine, an important site for Hindu pilgrims, predate the fort, and Akbar built the fort in such a way that the tree would be within its premises. One of Akbar’s purported reasons for including the tree within the premises of the fort was the prevention of pilgrim suicides. G.F. Gordon Cumming, a British traveller during the British Raj in India, arrived at the Allahabad Fort and saw the Akshay Vat and shrine. She was, for some reason, perturbed when she saw the tree. “How the Mohammedans came to tolerate its existence within the fort is a

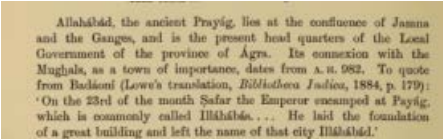
marvel quite beyond comprehension," she wrote in her travelogue, *In the Himalayas and on the Indian Plains*, which was published in

Kama Maclean writes, “Cumming’s question of how Muslim rulers and Hindu worshippers shared the space is pertinent, as the British themselves looked to and were frequently bound by precedent. Contrary to Cumming’s assumption, the relationship between the Muslim ruler and Hindu worshipper was not always antagonistic; indeed, it was not until the nineteenth century that communal identities solidified.”⁷

⁷ Pg no. 68, Pilgrimage and Power: Kumbh Mela in Allahabad, 1765-1954



The name Allahabad, which means ‘abode of God’, was purportedly given by Jahangir, the Mughal ruler, because he recognised the place as a Hindu holy site. Maclean cites several sources to say that Jahangir tried to destroy the Akshayavat but failed after several attempts. James Forbes, the author of *Oriental Memoirs* published in 1813, says that this convinced Jahangir of the sanctity of the place and he named Prayag Allahabad. The name ‘Allahabad’, however, predates Jahangir, says Maclean, and writes, “...the names Ilhabas and Ilhabad were written on coins minted in the city from the time of Akbar (the terms are interchangeable, but the latter became dominant by the Great Mughal's death).”



The coins minted at Prayag during the reign of Mughal emperors including Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb, Farrukhsiyar, Muhammad Shah, Ahmad Shah, Alamgir Sani, and Shah Alam throw light on the city's name. On all the coins from the period of Jahangir's rule to Shah Alam there are not much confusion as 'Allahabad' is inscribed on all of them. Regarding the coins from Akbar's time, Badaun has written that when the fort was built here in 661 as per Hijri calendar and it was decided that this place should be made the capital, Akbar minted coins here. Sharif Sarmadi wrote for Akbar's coin:

"Ever may current be like the Gold of Sun and Moon/ From East to West of the world the Illahabad coin!"



To summarize, during the time of Akbar, the new name of the city was both 'Ilhabas' and 'Illahabad' and between these two, the name 'Ilhabas' was more popular at that time because the same name is found in the *Ain-e-Akbari*. The issue of the town's name has been contested in recent years. Some maintain that the town was named not after Allah but after ilaha (the gods), and this is reflected in contemporary Hindi usage, in which the town's name is spelt and pronounced as Ilhabad. Shaligram Shrivastav, the author of *Prayag Pradip*, contends that Akbar purposefully gave the town a name that might be construed as both Hindu (Ilaha) and Muslim (Allah); the trend

in recent years, however, has been to see it purely as the latter.

According to the historian, Prof. Pushpesh Pant, “Allahabad’s Sangam or Triveni—these traditions date back 1500 years and are continuing...The meaning of the word ‘triveni’ means plait made from three-way parted hair. So, in reality, three rivers merge here hence the term Triveni Sangam. The confluence here is different from others. Here the river Saraswati is invisible and flows under the surface. Saraswati is believed to be one of the oldest rivers which finds mention in the Vedas and was revered like the Ganga and was considered equivalent to the Ganga.”

A City in Antiquity



Figure 17. An old painting depicting Allahabad fort

Carbon dating of charcoal and the presence of Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW) indicate the continued occupation of Kosambi, 30 km from Allahabad, from 390 BCE to 600 CE. It is assumed that the region that is now Allahabad had earlier been part of Kosambi, and ruled by the Kuru rulers of Hastinapur, who developed it as their capital. When the Aryans first settled in what is termed the Aryavarta or Madhyadesha, Kosambi was an important part of their territory.

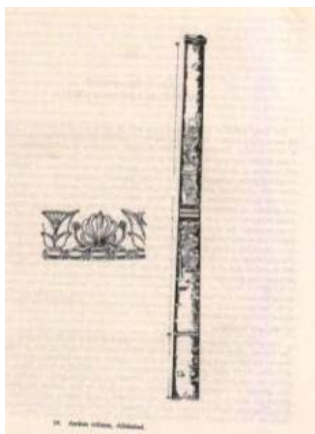


Figure 18. Asokan Pillar

The Ashokan pillar, currently located in Allahabad, was originally erected in Kosambi and contains extant inscriptions of not only Asoka but also Samudragupta (4th C CE) and later of the Mughal Emperor Jahangir (17th C CE). The pillar provides important information which has helped scholars to piece together the history of this region. The pillar contains an edict of Asoka for the propagation of the Buddhist faith, three principal inscriptions besides some minor records of travellers and pilgrims from various periods. The inscription begins with eight verses, followed by prose which mentions composer Harisena, son of Dhruvabhuti the Mahadandanayaka. The inscription ends with the following statement: “Executed by Tilabhattaka the mahadandanayaka who always meditates on the feet of the emperor prambhattaraka.”

The Allahabad fort, which now houses the Asokan pillar, also has a banyan tree revered by Hindu devotees as it is believed to be the indestructible Akshaya Vat. The tree is located within the Patalpuri

temple complex in the fort. There are many legends and stories surrounding this sacred fig tree. According to one legend, sage Markandeya once asked Lord Narayana to show him an example of divine power. Narayana flooded the entire world for a moment during which only the Akshay Vat could be seen above the water level. The authenticity of this particular tree in the Patalpuri temple has been contended. In fact, it may not even be the same tree mentioned in the sacred texts and by travellers like Xuanzang. The temple itself was originally a shrine near the centre of the fort and was moved to the outskirts by the British as part of security measures. Nevertheless, an abiding faith in the tree and its sacredness makes it culturally significant for Hindu pilgrims from across the country.

“Allahabad’s Sangam or Triveni — those traditions date back to 1500 years and are continuing...The meaning of the word Triveni means plait made from three parted hair. So, in reality, three rivers merge here hence the term Triveni Sangam. The confluence here is different from others. Here the river Saraswati is invisible and flows under the surface. Saraswati is believed to be one of the oldest rivers which finds mention in Vedas and was revered like Ganga and was considered equivalent to the Ganga.”

~ Prof. Pushpesh Pant, Historian



The Catch and Release of Colonialism

The last 'ruler' of the city was the British Empire, which along with political control, expanded the cultural milieu of the city and left a footprint that can be seen even today. The first significant impact was in the change of the city's name from Illahabad to Allahabad, an anglicised version, for ease of pronunciation by the British.



Figure 19. Prof. Yogeshwar Tewari, HoD, History Dept, University of Allahabad

With victory in the battle of Buxar, which took place between the combined forces of Shah Alam II and the Nawabs of Awadh and Bengal on one side and the British East India Company on the other in 1764, British rule over the region began. The famous battle of Buxar led to the Treaty of Allahabad (1765) which gave complete Diwani rights (revenue collection) of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to the British, marking a significant turn in the course of the country's history. This was the first stint of direct administration and influence by the British on Indian soil. Eventually, the entire city was ceded to the East India Company in 1801, resulting in an inflow of British values, culture and political influence over the city.

In subsequent years, a number of policies and measures introduced by the East India Company regime led to opposition from the local people. However, local protests were usually overlooked. A clear mark of contempt towards local traditions was seen in 1806, when the government decided to tax the pilgrims visiting the Kumbh Mela. There was outrage due to the high rate tax that was levied. Set at one rupee, this amount was equivalent to a month's expenditure for an average family during that period. The British continued interfering with the festival, bringing in more constraints on the Mela trade. In 1815, for instance, they introduced a new system of policing at the fair which led to resentment, especially among the priestly class.

It was in Allahabad, at a location within what is now known as Minto Park (later renamed as Madan Mohan Malaviya Park), that Queen Victoria's Proclamation was read out in 1858. Professor Yogeshwar Tewari, HoD, Medieval History, University of Allahabad says, "Queen Victoria's Proclamation was read out loud, and it said that the rule of the East India Company was coming to an end, and England's rule in India will now be in effect." This change in power was not accepted readily by the people of Allahabad and hostility towards the British saw an upsurge. The resentment grew as various policies were introduced by the foreign government.

During the rebellion of 1857, over 1500 Prayagwal families participated and viciously attacked symbols of British power and its institutions. The city saw many leaders emerge, to significantly shape the war. One such leader was Maulvi Liaquat Ali who took over Khusrau Bagh and declared it as the headquarters of a liberated Allahabad. Professor Tiwari says, “A Maulvi from Mehgawa, Liaquat Ali, declared himself as a subedar of the Mughal Sultanate. He waved the green flag of the Mughal Sultanate and dug up a moat (morcha) to fight against the Britishers.” The anti-British sentiment grew and was evident in the various symbols and emblems in the city.

In the years post the revolt of 1857, the city became a centre for India’s independence struggle. Swaraj Bhavan acted as the venue for all activities and meetings of the Indian National Congress and was also witness to one of the biggest combined efforts during the Satyagrah movement, led by Purshottam Das Tandon, Bishambhar Nath Pande and Narayan Dutt Tiwari. The freedom struggle saw a pivotal point with the martyrdom of freedom fighter Chandra Shekhar Azad in Allahabad’s Alfred Park in 1931. Another revolutionary who was active in the non- cooperation movement was Shaheed Roshan Singh. Allahabad also witnessed wide participation in the Quit India Movement of 1942, which was led by a student leader Padamadhar Singh.



Figure 20. All Saints Cathedral, also known as Patthar Girja, is an Anglican Cathedral

Parallely during this period, the city presented a dynamic amalgamation of the new culture brought by the Britishers into the pre-existing Indo-Islamic one. It became an Anglo-Indian settlement with a diverse cultural canvas. The large number of Britishers in the city could be credited to the North Central Railways which employed the largest number of Anglo-Indians. Other reasons for emigration of the

English population were the status of Allahabad as a capital of the new United Provinces and the growing prosperity due to the introduction of cotton farming in the region. It was believed that the United Provinces was the best place to be in for a safe and stable lifestyle with many good job opportunities. To meet their needs, a large number of English medium schools and the University of Allahabad (1887) were set up. Along with the British came the Christian missionaries who added to the religious diversity and vibrancy of the city and became a part of the famous Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb.

A cross-section of missions and branches of Christianity like the American Presbyterian Mission, Pentecostal Church Mission, Anglicans, Roman Catholics, and Evangelicals came to Allahabad. The prominence of Christianity was cemented in 1871 when the All Saints Cathedral was built in the city. The All Saints Cathedral is one of the most magnificent constructions of the colonial period. Built in Gothic revival style, the church boasts exquisite glass and marble work. The church also aids in documenting British history in Allahabad and has various plaques that display the names of English officers to commemorate their death.

In addition to the political and cultural influence of the British, this period also saw the development of a new architectural style in the city. It involved a mix of western style with that of the previously existing regional style. This was more a consequence of a political choice to display the legitimacy of the British rule rather than a move in favour of evolving aesthetics. It was an introduction to British culture as a complement to the Indian culture rather than as a substitute. This architectural style can be seen in the buildings of the University of Allahabad and the Allahabad High Court. Another addition to the landscape of the city was the emergence of *bungalows* which gained countrywide popularity.



Figure 21. An old photograph of martyr Chandrashekhar Azad, freedom fighter of India's independence at History Department, University of Allahabad

Foreign Travellers on Kumbh and Allahabad



Figure 23. Hieun Tsang, Chinese traveller

Megasthenes was the first recorded westerner, who mentions the Ganga. More than two thousand years ago, he gave the definition of rivers in India in his book *Indika*. His words are still valuable in terms of the significance of the Ganga. An excerpt from the book:

“India again owns many rivers both large and navigable, which, having their sources in the mountains which stretch along the northern frontier, cross the level country, and not a few of these, after uniting with each other, fall into the river called the Ganga. Now this river which at its source is 30 stadia broad, flows from north to south, and drains its waters into the ocean forming the eastern boundary of the Gangaridai, a nation which possesses a vast force of the largest-sized elephants.”

One of the earliest written accounts of Prayag comes from the Chinese traveller and monk, Hieun Tsang, who visited Prayag in the seventh century, during the reign of

emperor Harshavardhan. He was the first to mention the Kumbh Mela in his diary, and he includes an eyewitness report that states that half a million people had gathered on the banks of the Ganga at Allahabad during the month of Magha to observe a ten week-long celebration. According to him, the pilgrims assembled along with their King, his ministers, scholars, philosophers and sages. He also reports that the King distributed enormous quantities of gold, silver and jewels in charity for the purpose of acquiring good merit, and thus assuring a place in heaven.



Figure 22. Jean d Thevenot, French traveller

The French traveller Jean de Thevenot reports his encounter with the spiritual festival held in the mid- seventeenth century, about a thousand years after Hieun Tsang. He narrates it as a large bathing festival, in which monks engaged in various forms of self-abnegation and austerity and were highly regarded by the lay population for their virtue.

Mark Twain was, in the nineteenth century, an eyewitness to the Kumbh at Allahabad. Although he was himself an atheist, his remarks present an interesting insight into the Kumbh festival:

“It is wonderful, the power of a faith like that, that can make multitudes upon multitudes of the old and weak and the young and frail enter without hesitation or complaint upon such incredible journeys and

endure the resultant miseries without repining. It is done in love, or it is done in fear; I do not know which it is. No matter what the impulse is, the act born of it is beyond imagination, marvellous to our kind of people, the cold whites.”



Figure 24. A lady watching a feature film on Kumbh history on an LED panel installed by Prayagraj Kumbh Authority

Indo-Islamic Grandeur



Figure 26. Khusrau Bagh

Abd al-Qadir Badauni, a chronicler at the court of Akbar who also translated the *Mahabharata* into Persian (called *Razmnama*), and Khwaja Nizam al-Din Ahmad, a historian of late medieval India, mention that Akbar laid the foundations of an imperial city at Prayag which was called Ilahi vasa or Ilahabas. This was done at the time when Akbar was reorganising his empire into subas or provinces and Allahabad was made a provincial capital of the Mughal Empire under Jahangir. The settlement of Prayag is originally believed to have been located at present day Jhansi on the other side of the Ganga. Akbar was drawn by the strategic advantages afforded by the region since it



Figure 25. Intricate details inside tomb of Khusrau

was at the confluence of two major rivers which would provide accessibility to lands further away. There have been arguments which claim that the reason behind building the massive fort in Allahabad was to collect taxes from the large number of pilgrims who gathered at Prayag every year. However, this is unlikely because Akbar had abolished the pilgrimage tax in 1563 and the fort had started to be built by 1583. From 1599 to 1604, Allahabad was also the headquarters of the rebellious prince Salim (later the emperor Jahangir).

As Akbar set about establishing this city, he raised several monuments to add to its grandeur. The Akbar Fort, Khusrau Bagh, Shahi Masjid are some of the well-known structures erected in the newly founded imperial city.

Khusrau Bagh was built in remembrance of Jahangir's son Khusrau. Khusrau was captured by Jahangir's army and later blinded and imprisoned. He was then transferred to the custody of Asaf Khan, who was the father-in-law of Prince Khurram, the third son of Jahangir. He was finally killed by Prince Khurram (later known as Shah Jahan). His mortal remains were sent from Burhanpur to Allahabad, where his sister, Nisar Begum, built a grand tomb for him, which today is the one of the three tombs in Khusrau Bagh. In *Tuzk-e-Jahangiri*, Jahangir says of his son Khusrau Mirza, who had rebelled against him: "Who thought that this boy of few years/ would behave so badly to his sire."

The beauty of the tombs is enriched by elaborate arches, floral designs and some wall paintings. Khusrau's mausoleum exhibits elaborate plasterwork in the underground burial chamber. Originally, a wooden canopy covered Khusrau's tomb. The prince's personal copy of the *Koran* was kept beside him. His sister's tomb (though empty) is the most elaborate architecturally, with Persian cypresses (a symbol of mourning), wine vessels, flowers and plants, and must have been beautiful when it was constructed. Although the paintings in the niches have been lost over time, there are some remnants of a splendour long gone. Beautiful stone jaalis or latticework is testimony to the fact that light (nur) was an important aspect of Islam and it was essential to allow natural light to fall on a grave. The Persian verses inscribed on the doorways reflect the tragedy of



Figure 28. Jahangir, Mughal ruler

Khusrau Mirza's life.

"Who thought that this boy of few years
Would behave so badly to his sire?
At the first taste of the cup he brings up the lees.
He melts away my glory and his own modesty.
He sets on fire¹ the throne of Khūrshīd,
He longs for the place of Jamshīd."

Figure 27. An excerpt from *Tuzuk e Jahangiri*

During the First War of Independence or the Revolt of 1857, when several battalions revolted against the British, Maulvi Liyaqat Ali took charge as the Governor of independent Allahabad and made

Khusrau Bagh his headquarters. The Bagh, however, was recaptured within two weeks.

Once the city of Allahabad was established, people from all walk of life—mystics, scholars, traders—were drawn to it. Gradually, a number of Khanqahs/Daire (spiritual retreats) was also established here by the different Sufi Silsilahs (orders). Some of the famous Sufi saints, who have an association with Allahabad, are Khwaja Kalan Jhonsvi , Shah Abdul Jalil (born 1504- 05 CE), Sheikh Tajuddin Jhunsvi (died

1620-21 CE), Sheikh Muhibullah Allahabadi (born 1587 CE), Syed Muhammad Afzal (born 1628 CE), and Sheikh Mohammad Yahya (born 1680 CE).



Figure 29. Medieval History Department, University of Allahabad

Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb

The Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb, that poetic Awadhi phrase for a distinctive, syncretic Hindu-Muslim culture, is also reflected in the many crafts and weaves of the region—in their form, symbolism, aesthetics and spiritual connotations. The poet-weaver Kabir’s dohas often speak of the chadariya or cloth he wove and are awash with the bhakti or ras of Ram naam: “Chadariya bheeni re bheeni, re Ram naam ras bheeni.” Kabir spoke of Hindus and Muslims as being the warp and weft of that chadariya. These dohas are still

sung in various parts of Allahabad.

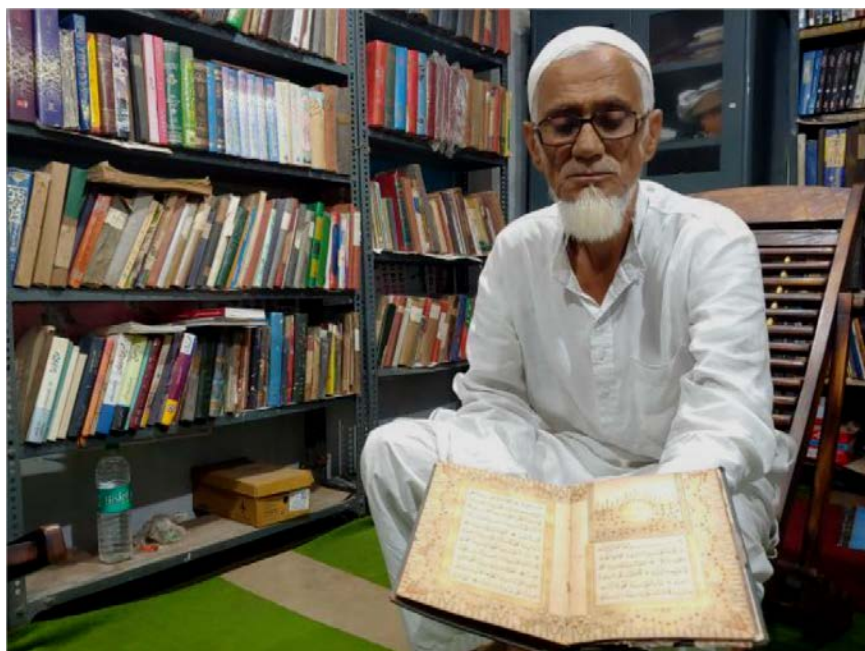


Figure 30. Holy scripture of Islam written in gold ink



Figure 31. Sh. Ijaz Khan, Principal (Retd.) Handia Polytechnic College, Allahabad

According to Sh. Ijaz Hassan Khan a retired Principal of Handia Polytechnic College – “It is in our behaviour. Ganga Jamuni Tehzeeb is not a different institution kind of thing. There is no centre as such where the Ganga Jamuni Tehzeeb and tariqa is explained. It is about the behavior between me and you, about brotherhood. That is what is called Ganga Jamuni Tehzeeb. It is not about who is a Hindu and

who is a Muslim or who is a Brahman and who is a Harijan. Things like ‘we will not let them sit around us or eat with them’. It is not like that anymore. In every field, area of work, meeting, function, all kinds of people are there. Since the development of education, all the old modes of discrimination are gradually dying.”

According to Prof. Shabnam Hamid, HoD, University of Allahabad, “Allahabad is famous because of Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati. These rivers are a marker of its identity.

Allahabad is not just a sangam of these rivers, but a sangam of people. People come here from various places around the world; the Kumbh which is currently underway is an example that showcases the coming together of people from so many different places. This is a sangam of the people, a sangam of their various different lives, a sangam of Allahabad’s voices

and a sangam of Tehzeeb. When we talk about the sangam of sangams, why not talk about the Urdu language which is in itself a sangam of languages.”



Figure 32. Sh. Rajesh Sharma (Namami Gange coordinator, Prayagraj with Sh. Ali Miyan, Scholar

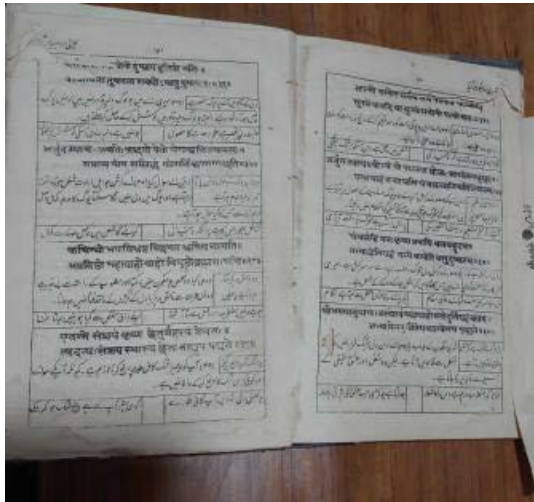


Figure 33. Holy Islamic scripture with translated Sanskrit verses



Figure 34 Yamuna river at Allahabad



Figure 35. Congregation offering prayers at Zohar (afternoon), Sheikh Mohibulla Mosque

Allahabad Ke Sufi Daire

In India, Sufism reached its zenith during the 8th Century CE. Sheikh Saifuddin Wajni was the first Sufi saint in India, while Alhujwari was the first saint to establish a Sufi order. Sufi saints like Khwaja Mohinuddin Chishti helped in promoting the philosophy of Sufism in the sub-continent.

The presence of a large number of Sufi saints and several khanqahs in Allahabad towards the latter part of the Mughal rule shows us how their contributions and writing made the city an intellectual hub of scholars and litterateurs, and reflects their achievement in promoting Hindu-Muslim harmony in the



Figure 36. A Muslim man reciting holy verses

region—the very essence of the Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb that Allahabad is known for. Initially, khanqahs or buildings denoting a spiritual tradition were marked by the state. However, it was the Daira or the philosophy of the tradition that spread beyond the boundaries of the khanqahs. Soon, a khanqah became a part of a Daira. There exist differing views among scholars about the number of Sufi Daire in Allahabad. Some writers mention 12 such Daire, while others contend that this number pertains to the city alone and the actual number is higher. Some of these extant Daire are:

Daira Shah Ajmal, Daira Shah Rafi Ujma, Daira Shah Mohibullah, Daira Shah Abdu Jalil, Daira Shah Sikandar Ali, Daira Shah Muhammad Shafi, Daira Shah Muhammad Alim.

According to Kabir's Beejak, the Sufi saint, Sheikh Taki, used to reside in the area of Jhunsi of Allahabad where one can still find his Daira. Though one does not find mention of this Sufi saint in many historical sources, the Daira still organises religious programmes twice a year.



Figure 37. Daira Shah Ajmal

The Daira Shah Ajmal holds special significance in Allahabad's cultural identity. It is situated in a colony near GT Road which is known by the same name—Daira Shah Ajmal. The Daira was founded by Sheikh Muhammad Afzal Allahabadi in 1669 but gained popularity in 1831 under Shah Muhammad Azmal who wrote several poems about Allahabad, one of which goes:

महतेदर शहर हाए जुमला जहाँ खुशावाहवा इलाहाबाद दर
तमामें फैजाए हिन्दोस्तां-मसकने औलिया इलाहाबाद मरकदे
शाह अफजल अस्त आंजां ऐ खुशाए खुशा इलाहाबाद बा
हुसूले मुरादा हा अजमल व नूमायद खुदा इलाहाबाद
Or

*Allahabad is among the large towns of the world.
Whose climate is pleasant round the year
Among several pilgrimages and holy sites in India;
Allahabad is the abode of many Sufi Saints and here resides the grave of Shah Afzal.
All this makes the residents of Allahabad feel proud.*



Figure 38. Sheikh Mohibulla Mosque

Sheikh Mohibullah Allahabadi, a great personality of the Sufi order Chishtiyah Sabriyah was born in 1587 CE in Sadrapur town near Khairabad in Sitapur district. According to his own description, Sheikh studied under the guidance of his father, a Sufi scholar who not only instructed him in traditional sciences but also taught him basic mystical techniques. Sheikh was a master of Arabic and Persian who had received the title of Wilayat or 'spiritual sovereign of the east'. Several other disciples of

the same order had expressed discontentment over how they had been toiling and meditating for years yet never received the honour of spiritual sovereignty.

Dara Shikoh once asked the Sheikh whether, in administrative affairs of the state, any discrimination is permissible between Hindus and Muslims. The



Figure 40. Panel inside Sheikh Mohibulla mosque with intricate details

Sheikh had replied, "A Faqir is not in position to give exhortation, but the truth is this that the thought of well-being of people must always remain in the heart of the rulers without any discrimination because all human beings

are creatures of God; and the prophet, who is the leader of this world, hereafter

shows mercy to everyone without making a distinction among the pious, sinner, believer and nonbeliever. As it is described in the Quran, we have not sent thee, save as a mercy unto all beings."



Figure 39. A list of twelve Sufi Daire in Allahabad

“Sheikh Mohibullah returned to Allahabad, where he started preaching about the teachings of Islam. Shah Jahan’s younger son, Dara Shikoh, used to visit him every now and then, to learn more about the faith and about Islam. Their philosophical discussions made them good friends. When Sheikh Mohibullah passed away, Dara Shikoh urged for a mosque to be built here in Allahabad where Mohibullah used to stay. He also built a few Dargahs and monasteries in Keedganj for holy men to stay and preach about Islam.”

~ Sh. Ali Miyan, Imam, Sheikh Mohibullah Mosque



Indian Coffee House



Figure 41. Indian Coffee House, Civil Lines, Allahabad

The first Indian Coffee House was established in India in 1935, for people to converse about anything under the imperial sun over a cup of coffee and snacks. The first outlet was opened in 1936 in Churchgate, Bombay, and since then other outlets have sprung up all over India. However, after independence the Coffee Board fell on hard times and it was on the verge of being shut down when A.K. Gopalan, a Communist Party leader from Kerala, met Pandit Nehru to avoid the retrenchment of about 850 workers. Thus, a Coffee Worker's Co-operative Society was born, which took over the business from the Coffee Board.



Figure 42. Indian Coffee House (Inside view)

Over the decades, the Coffee House at Allahabad was the origin of many vibrant political, literary, artistic and progressive movements in India. The building is from the Raj era, with an impressive and magnificent façade. Over the course of its existence, the Indian Coffee House has attracted important

public figures, artists, literary minds, journalists, workers and students to its portals. It has provided an environment where free debates and discussions on various aspects of socio-political life have thrived.

The Coffee House is a place which still attracts people from different walks of life—professors, doctors, engineers, lawyers, and politicians. They have been coming here for open discourses which inspire them to grow and enrich themselves with new ideas, knowledge, and information. In the days when Allahabad was bereft of any Coffee House, all such gatherings used to take place at street corners or cross-roads.

“It was out of curiosity that I first visited the Coffee House,” says Sh. Avdhesh Dwivedi, who has been visiting the Coffee house for 45 years. The Coffee House also served as a place where eminent personalities who were patrons of art, literature, politics, and people involved in social work, delivered talks on the areas of their expertise, and young entrants like Dwivedi would listen to them speak like “obedient disciples.” “Poets like Mahadevi Verma, Harivansh Rai Bachchan and Firaq Gorakhpuri were regular visitors to the Allahabad Coffee House.”



Figure 43. South Indian cuisine served at Indian Coffee House

“It has, ever since its establishment, been a great attraction for those seeking intellectual debates and discussions. Individuals who used to come here in the past now belong to a different era, who had their own style and aura, and have left lasting impressions,” adds Dwivedi, as he remembers the days of the

past.

According to Sh. Rustom Ghandhi, “Talking about my favorite spots in Allahabad, I remember how as kids we used to go for moonlight picnics along the river, which used to be an amazing experience. You cannot think about it now because you will be mobbed. Near the Alfred Park there used to be a bandstand which used to have regular performances by different bands every weekend. A lot of activities were also conducted by the different clubs at the University. All this is gone now. The only place that has not changed in all these years is the Coffee House; it is still one of the cleanest places that you could go to and eat at a reasonable price.”



Figure 44. A waiter in his typical attire which hasn't changed since independence, Indian Coffee House

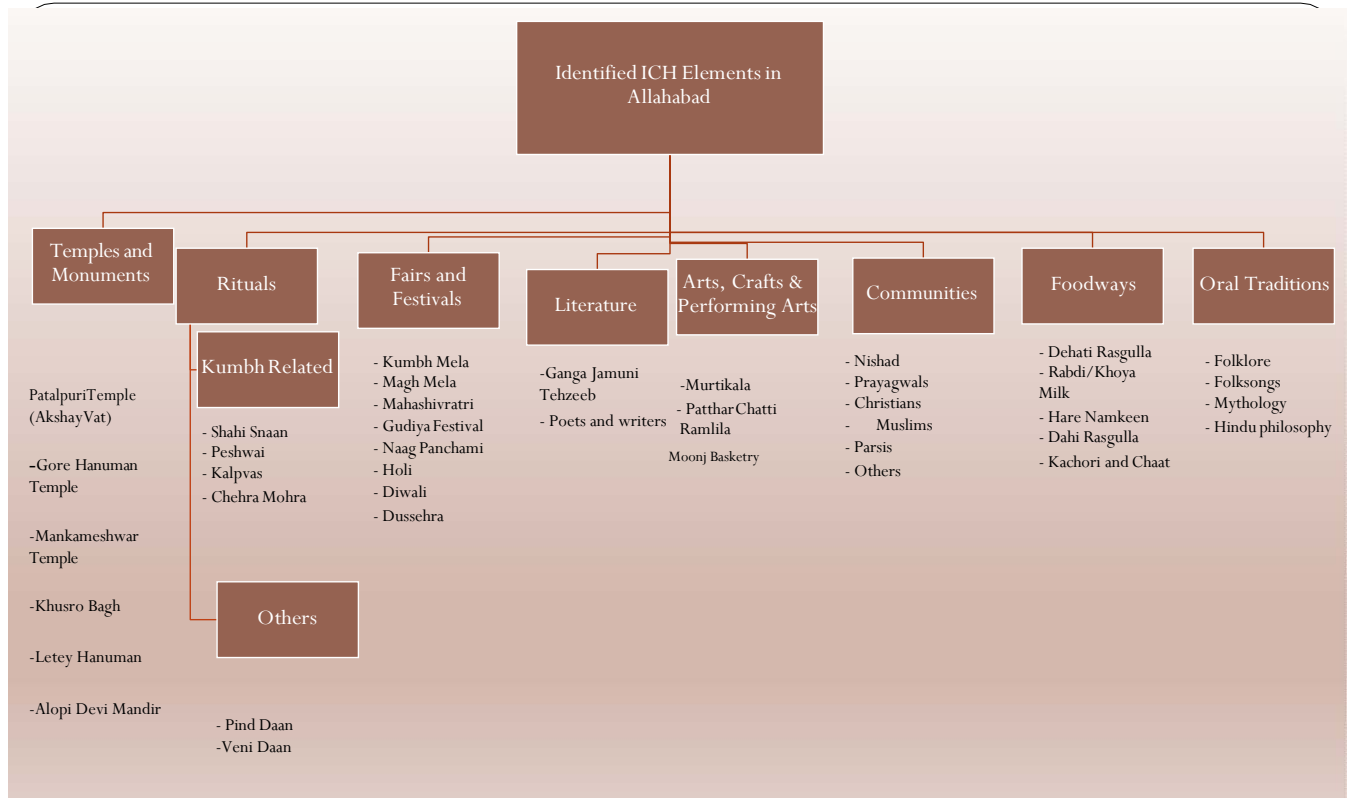
"यहाँ (कॉफ़ी हाउस) लोगों में मतभेद हो सकता है, मन भेद नहीं"

~ Sh. Avdhesh Dwivedi

"People here (at Coffee House) can have a difference of opinion, but this does not transform into ego hassles which could sour their relationship."



Identified ICH Elements in Prayagraj



Sacred Complexes

Patalpuri Mandir



Figure 45. Line of Devotees at Patalpuri temple

In *Markandeya* and *Shiv Puran*, the Patalpuri temple and the Akshay Vat tree find reference. These scriptures talk about their significance. In Treta Yug, when Lord Rama was given exile, it is believed he stayed here for three days and took rest beneath the Akshay Vat tree, performed holy rituals and embarked on his journey to Chitrakoot. After completing his exile, Lord Rama again visited Prayag and performed his father Dashrath's Pind Daan. At that time the Ganga flowed close to the Akshay Vat and people used to perform Pind Daan at this location.



Figure 46. Sh. Mukesh Nath Goswami, Head Priest, Patalpuri Temple

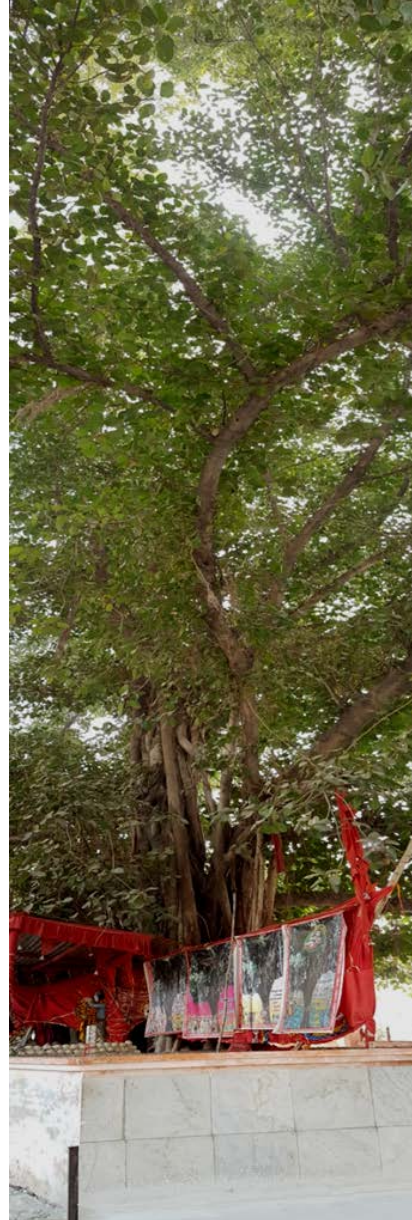


Figure 47. Stone panel with engraved idols of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana (Left to Right)

Akshay Vat

The Allahabad fort also has a banyan tree which is revered by Hindu devotees and is believed to be very old. The indestructible banyan tree (Akshay Vat) is found within the Patalpuri Temple Complex. There are many legends and stories surrounding this sacred fig tree. According to one legend, once the sage Markandey asked Lord Narayan to show him a manifestation of the divine power. So, Narayan flooded the entire world for a moment, during which only the Akshay Vat could be seen above the water level. Controversy surrounds the authenticity of this particular tree in the Patalpuri Temple. In fact, it may not even be the tree mentioned in the sacred texts and by travellers like Hieun Tsang. The temple itself was originally a shrine near the centre of the fort and was moved to the outskirts by the British as a security measure. Nevertheless, faith in the tree and in its sacredness makes it an important pilgrimage site for Hindu pilgrims from across the country.

*स चाक्षयवटः स्यातः कल्पानान्तेपि च
दृश्यते. शेते विष्णुर्यस्य पत्रे अतोस्यामवयः
स्मृतः
~ Padma Purana*



Mankameshwar Mandir



Figure 48. Crowd of Devotees at Mankameshwar temple

The Mankameshwar temple of Lord Shiva situated on the banks of the Yamuna also finds reference in Hindu holy texts. According to the *Skanda Puran* and *Prayag Mahatmya*, the shrine of Lord Kameshwara on the banks of the Yamuna near the Pisachmochan Temple, west of the Akshay Vat, is considered synonymous with Shiva. Where Shiva is, Kameshwari (Parvati) also resides. That is why Bhairav, Yaksha and Kinnar are also believed to reside here. This place is also important from the point of view of the tantric practice of Srividya. Apart from Mankameshwar, there are also Shiva lingams of Debmukteshwar and Siddheshwar Mahadev in the complex. There is also a south-facing idol of Hanuman. During Sawan, a large crowd of devotees throng here every day, and especially so on Mondays.



Figure 49. Swami Dharanand ji Maharaj, Mankameshwar temple

According to legend, after bathing in the Sangam, Sita wished to pray to Lord Shiva, but there was no Lord Shiva temple nearby. So, Ram built a new temple for Devi Sita, fulfilling her wish and hence the

name of this temple became Mankameshwar. It is believed that honest wishes made at this temple are fulfilled. This temple is much visited during the Maha Kumbh Mela.

“This temple was taken under the consideration and control of Shankracharya in 1986. In Treta Yug, when Rama was going towards the Chitrakoot he took rest at Kalpa Vriksha/Akshay Vat. He also meditated here at this spot.”

- Brahmachari Shri Dharanand Ji Maharaj

Durvasa Rishi Ashram

This ancient ashram is located to the east of Prayag on the banks of the Ganga at Kakra Kotwa. It lies about 5 km south of Hanuman Bazaar. The site has a grand statue of Rishi (sage) Durvasa and a fair is held in the month of Saavan at this location. The Ganga bifurcates into two streams. The larger stream leads to Manupur. There is a puranic legend about Maharishi Durvasa according to which Sati Anusuiya had three sons—Moon, Dattatreya and Durvasa. In addition to Durvasa Rishi, a shivling and idols of Parvati and Ganesh are installed in the temple here. A large number of tourists visit the ashram and the temple.



Figure 50. Durvasa Rishi Ashram



Figure 51. A traditional Sun Dial at Durvasa Rishi Ashram complex

Samudra Koop



Figure 52. Samudra Koop entrance

The Samudra Koop is situated on a large, high mound on the banks of the Ganga. This ancient well is about 15 feet in diameter and is built from big stones. The well is surrounded by a stone wall. It is said that it was built by King Samudragupta, hence its name. Another story goes that the water level in the well is equal to the sea level, hence the name.



Shiv Kuti Mandir



Figure 53. Shiv Kutir Mandir

The royal family of Nepal has an old connection with the Shiva Kuti temple. The King of Nepal along with his family used to visit this temple every year to offer prayers after bathing in the Ganga during the Magh fair. The king of Nepal still has a kothi next to the temple. The family of the King of Nepal built a huge ashram in 1865 next to the Kuti Shiva temple. Rana Padmajang Bahadur built and established Shiv Kachehari at the same place. Mythologically, it is believed to be the place where Rama worshiped Shiva after crossing the Ganga, on his way to exile from Ayodhya. Currently there are 285 shivalings in Shiv Kachehari, which is still under the care of the King of Nepal. It is said that here everyone's sorrows and troubles are heard; sitting in this court, Lord Shankar gives justice to all. Notably, the family which has been in the service of this temple for the last 400 years is still looking after the temple.



Figure 54. Rana Padmajang Bahadur, King of Nepal



Figure 55. A police personnel keeps vigil during Kumbh 2019

Fairs and Festivals

Kumbh Mela



Figure 56. Flags of Akhadas near Triveni Sangam during Kumbh 2019

The 'Kumbh' symbolizes the pitcher of nectar from the mythological story of Sagar Manthan or the 'great churning of the ocean'. The 'kumbh' is defined in *Atharveda*, "The Vase-of-plenty is laid on time. We behold it manifesting in diverse forms." Source: Encyclopedia of Hinduism; Volume IV). In present times, a pitcher full of water has come to symbolize auspiciousness and welfare. In the Hindu community, the use of 'kumbh' during a sacred event or for ritualistic practices and offerings is widespread. The Kumbh Mela of Allahabad is an occasion of immense religious significance for Hindus. It occurs when the Sun, Moon and Jupiter move into a particular position as per the zodiac (rashis), and is held once every 12 years. The Prayag Kumbh is also known as the 'Mahakumbh'. The entire duration of the Kumbh Mela is spread out over three parvakals (auspicious



Figure 57. Ferris Wheel during Kumbh 2019

times)—Makar Sankranti, Maghi (or Mouni) Amavasya and Vasant Panchami of which the Maghi Amavasya is the principal Parva and is referred to as 'Purnakumbha'. A holy dip in the Ganga has special significance on the days of all the Parvas. An 'Ardha Kumbh' Mela is held every 6 years.



Figure 58. Clay Pots placed near an akhada. Kumbh also means pot



Figure 59. A young newspaper vendor during Kumbh 2019

Sanatan Dharma, Kumbh and the Continuum

India is home to a variety of natural landscapes from mountains to flowing rivers, to undulating plains, to deserts and marshes. To all these bounties of nature, the ancients attached a sense of divinity and tended to respect and worship them in the form of gods and goddesses.

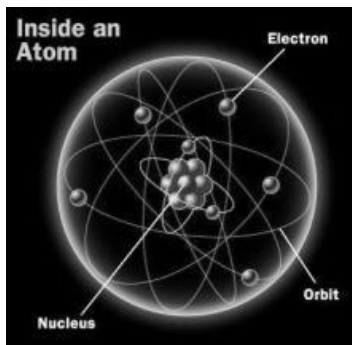


Figure 60. Graphical representation of Atom

The development of Sanatan philosophy over centuries has seen many changes from nature-worship to idol-worship, to the eventual formation of religious institutions. One of the important institutions of Sanatan Dharma is the Akhada.

The origin and development of the Akhada is a result of the efforts of the various Hindu communities or sects to promote and safeguard their belief systems. Sanatan is a way of life which allows humans to think beyond the material world and realise the power and strength of the Universe by awakening their inner thoughts. The Sanatan philosophy consists of processes from rituals to divinity, yoga to sadhana, and sadhana to sanyas. It is through these processes that one can travel on the path to get enlightenment. From ancient times, people (yogis, sadhaks, rishis, munis, tapasvis) were involved in this ancient Vedic practice to attain enlightenment. It is said that Hinduism is not just a religion; it is a philosophy, a way of life, a Dharma—to be just in thoughts and action; it is beyond a narrow approach towards dictum and ritualistic practices. It derives from a root word which means to hold together; it is the innermost constitution of a thing, the law code, righteousness, and the whole range of man's duties and responsibilities. The birth of this Sanatan Dharma can be traced back to the oral traditions of the ancient era in India. Sanatan Dharma talks at length about the creation of life and the universe. Interestingly, Sanatan Dharma is considered not just a philosophy but a scientific principle as well. The Sanatan philosophy believes in the existence of Brahma (Creator), Vishnu (Nurturer) and Mahesh (Destroyer) in the miniscule form of life, which is similar, if not equivalent, to the theory of Electron, Proton and Neutron in science.

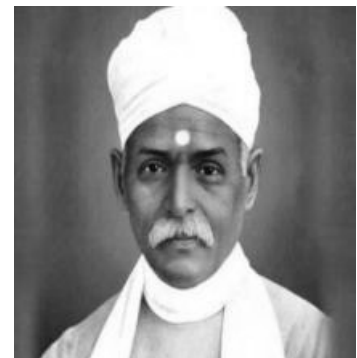


Figure 61. Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya

शिवाय विष्णु रूपाय शिव रूपाय विष्णवे।
शिवस्य हृदयं विष्णुं विष्णोश्च हृदयं शिवः॥
यथा शिवमयो विष्णुरेवं विष्णुमयः शिवः।
यथाऽन्तरम् न पश्यामि तथा मे स्वस्तिरायुषि
यथाऽन्तरं न भेदाः स्युः शिवराघवयोस्तथा॥

सर्कंदपुराण २३ / ४१

"If you find Shiva, you have found Vishnu. They are one and the same. If a person does not find any difference between these two, he will be safe and will live long."

It is interesting to compare the existence of the guardians of all matter—Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh—to the tripartite basic building blocks of all existence—atoms; it compels one to think about the relationship between Sanatan Dharma and scientific theory. As Mahamana Pt. Madan Mohan Malviya said, "If you keep this in your mind that God is present in all living creatures, you would always be truly in the company of God in your other fellow brethren."

"Sanatan Dharma, meaning the ancient religion, could be applied to any of the ancient Indian faiths (including Buddhism and Jainism), but the expression has been more or less monopolized today by some orthodox sections among Hindus who claims to follow the ancient faiths."

~ Jawahar Lal Nehru, Discovery of India

As we articulate the idea of Dharma, it brings out several other elements which need to be identified and addressed in a more systematic manner. All societies, since their inception, have been dependent on being organised around certain religions, and once a religion has a large enough following, its protection, development, transmission and conservation are important to preserve its core belief systems. One of the important institutions of Sanatan Dharma is the Akhada. The development and origin of Akhada is the result of the efforts of the various personalities.

The closeness to nature is a common characteristic amongst all archaic religions, and it is quite natural for people to be so attached to and dependent on nature, for without natural resources there is no means for us to exist. Many rishis, munis, and sanyasis chose to explore the divinity of nature by immersing themselves in deep and intense meditation in the pursuit of spiritual power and enlightenment. As a result, even to this day we have associated great sanctity and blessedness with the various places where great saints are said to have meditated and acquired enlightenment.

The questions surrounding self-realization, existence, and enlightenment cannot be realized and experienced by normal persons who are not spiritually motivated, and therefore there have been, throughout the course of history, certain illuminated individuals who chose to follow the path to enlightenment, and in this pursuit, spent considerable time immersing themselves in their natural surroundings and connecting with the 'energy' that gives us all life. For such spiritual journeys, these saints used to travel all across the country to find peaceful locations where they could effectively meditate and engage in tapasya in their effort to dissociate themselves from the material world. It is known today that these sages used to sit under the Kalpvrikshas (banyan trees), banks of the river, forests, mountains and other sacred places, where we now believe that supreme power resides. With their meditation, the various divine energies are believed to have congregated in many places around the subcontinent. Such places are revered in the Sanatan philosophy as sacred locations blessed by the meditation of the maharishis. This further amplifies the belief that divinity/shakti resides in nature.



Figure 62. A Sadhu stands near a billboard of Kumbh 2019

History of Kumbh and its relevance

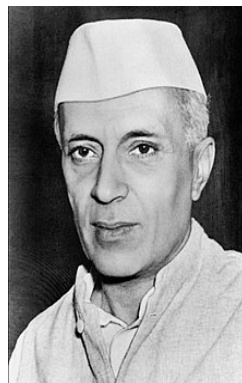


Figure 63. A foreigner interacting with a Naga Sadhu

The textual and historical basis of the Kumbh Mela is briefly summed up by Kama Maclean, Professor of South Asian and World History at UNSW, Sydney. Maclean says, “The Sagar Manthan (ocean churning) story, which appears in a number of Sanskrit texts including the *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, and several puranas (old Hindu sacred texts) (Badekar 1976, 8), is popularly believed to provide the textual basis of the Mela’s origins. It tells of the battle between the gods and the demons for the nectar of life (amrit), which was produced from the churning of the ocean and was placed in a pot (kumbh). The coveted kumbh was carried over India by Dhanvantari, the Physician of the gods, who, en route to paradise, stopped in Prayag, Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nasik to rest, giving the Mela its four venues.” Today, it is widely believed that the Kumbh Mela is an ancient religious festival with its origins deep in the formative stages of Sanatana Dharma. However, this may not necessarily be verified by historical accounts.

It was routine for early Aryan communities to organise yearly fairs at specific times at different locations. One such fair is called the Magh Mela which is still held in Prayagraj every year in January.

“In my own city of Allahabad or in Haridwar I would go to the great bathing festivals, the Kumbh Mela, and see hundreds of thousands of people come, as their forebears had come for thousands of years from all over India, to bathe in Ganga. I would remember descriptions of these festivals written thirteen hundred years ago by Chinese pilgrims and others, and even then these Melas were ancient and lost in an unknown antiquity.”



Jawaharlal Nehru, *Discovery of India*

Maclean argues that in the 1860s, the Prayagwals, a community of Brahmins in the city, gave the epithet 'Kumbh' to the Magh Mela that happens in Prayagraj every year. She further states that this may have been done as part of the Prayagwals' efforts towards mobilizing the Hindu communities against the oppressive colonial rule. Thus, the Kumbh Mela in its present form is actually the result of a reaction to colonial processes and the growth of the modern state and could be a relatively recent phenomenon in the Hindu religio-cultural milieu. Regardless of this debate over the historicity and antiquity of the Kumbh, one cannot deny that it is an absolutely spectacular phenomenon seen nowhere else in the world. It is literally the largest gathering of people in the world, which makes it quite remarkable and a subject of great interest globally.



Figure 64. A Naga Sadhu

Fig. 2.4. Kumbha Mela sites in India

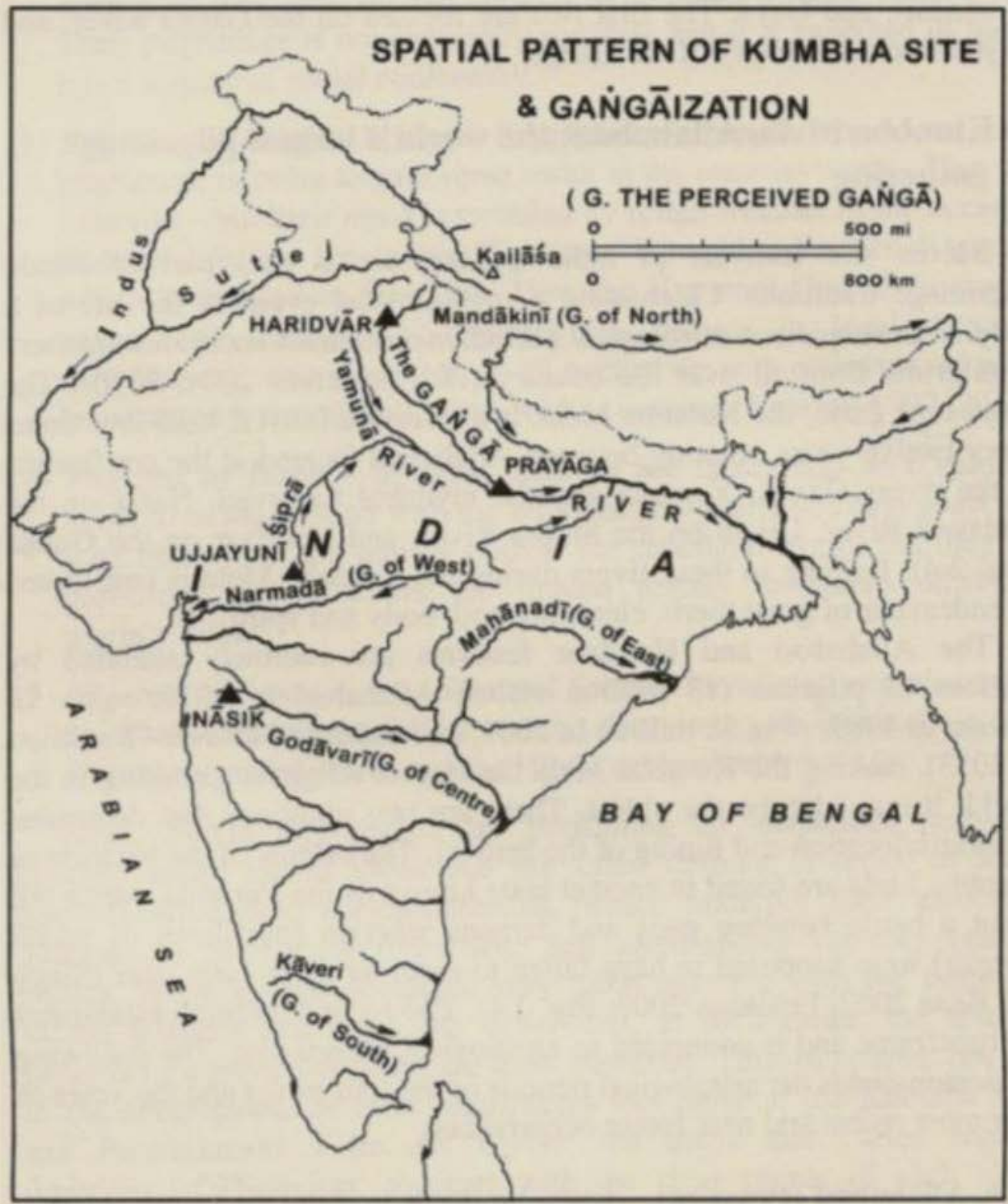


Figure 65. Map showing the places at which Kumbh is held

Rituals and Folk Traditions during the Kumbh

Adi Shankaracharya, Mutths and the establishment of Akhadas

Adi Shankaracharya, a religious philosopher in the 8th C CE who propounded the doctrine of Advaita Vedanta, established four Mutths at different locations in India: Badrinath/Uttarakhand as Jyotipeeth; Mysore/Karnataka as Shringeri Peeth; Puri/Odisha as Goverdhanpeeth; and Dwarka/Gujarat as Dwarkapeeth. Adi Shankaracharya not only preserved the Hindu religious traditions and philosophy but also encouraged spiritual discourse and meditation. The saints were also known by different names: Giri, Puri, Bharti, Tirth, Aranya, Parvat, Ashram, Sagar, and Saraswati.



Figure 66. Shankracharya with his disciples

One of the important institutions of Sanatan Dharma is the Akhada. Akhada means akhand or wholeness or integrity. It developed as part of a Mutth. The evolution of the akhadas was the result of the efforts of various Hindu communities to promote and safeguard their belief systems against foreign influence. All societies, since their inception, have been dependent on being organised around certain spiritual traditions and/or religions, and once a religion has a large enough following, its protection, development, transmission and conservation becomes important for the continuation of its core belief systems.

The akhadas were meant to be a military force comprising of Naga Sadhus who safeguarded the Sanatan Dharma against other religious and foreign influences that started around the 12th C CE. Historically, it was during the reigns of Akbar to Aurangzeb when these akhadas materialized and developed an organizational framework aimed at protecting the Hindu faith. There are numerous still-extant akhadas, founded by the disciples of the Mutths, and loosely or directly aligned under one of the existing akhada lineage. The Akhil Bharatiya Akhada Parishad (ABAP), founded in 1954, is the apex organization of 13 akhadas of Hindu sants and sadhus representing the largest followership in India. These akhadas are entitled to the special privilege of the Shahi Snan at the Kumbh and Ujjain Simhastha Melas in a pre-determined sequence.

As mentioned by Shambhu Giri Naga Baba, Haridwar, "Ganga Maa is immortal and the infinite truth. Ganga descended from heaven to earth or the mrityulok with the blessings of god and rishis. So this Kumbh is for the saints, rishis as well as the common man. A Guru is a door to heaven, s/he is the medium for salvation. Without Ganga and Guru, it is impossible to attain Moksha. Everyone on this earth is living in a kind of illusion and wants a guiding light to solve their life's dilemma. Our tradition says to follow the path of Dharma and truth. Protect Dharma and follow the path and guidance of the Guru. This is all the knowledge I have."

Though similar in resemblance to the Aghori sadhus, who also smear their bodies with ash, have long dreadlocks and are followers of Shiva, the way of life of Naga Sadhus and their philosophy differs vastly. The Naga Sadhus are said to have been organised as a militant group by Adi Shankaracharya to protect



Figure 67. A Naga Sadhu during Kumbh 2019

Sanatan Dharma and are hence also known as the 'warrior ascetics'. People who want to follow this order have to go through a tough initiation process and follow an ascetic way of life under the guidance of a Guru from an akhada to become a Naga Sadhu, usually after a gruelling 12 years. This process involves giving up all worldly possessions including clothes, taking vows of celibacy and immersing oneself in penance and deep meditation.

After becoming a Sadhu, the person starts a life away from cities or the associated akhadas and lives in the caves of the Himalayas. The Naga Sadhus mostly come down to the plains during the Kumbh Melas where due to their rigorous and harsh way of life, they have the privilege of taking the first dip at the confluence. The scene of hundreds of ash-smearing, naked Naga Sadhus charging down the banks, some with tridents or swords, is a sight that attracts photographers from across the world to the Kumbh. Kumbh is also an important event for this group as many common people are first initiated into the order during this time.



Figure 68. Congregation of spiritual leaders at one of the Akhadas

A blessing from these sadhus during Kumbh is much sought after, and they are revered across the country.

The main Akhadas are:

1. **Niranjani Akhada:** It is believed that this Akhada was established in 904 (as per Vikram Samvat) at Mandavi in Gujarat. They worship lord Kartikeya, who is their 'commander'.
2. **Nirvani Akhada:** The centre of Nirvani Akhada is in Kankhal. Other than Prayagraj, the branches of Nirvani Akhada are in Omkareshwar, Kashi, Triyambak, Kurukshetra, Ujjain and Udaipur.
3. **Aawahan Akhada:** Established in 547 (as per Vikram Samvat), its centre is in Kashi at Dashwashwamedh Ghat. This akhada has now merged with the Juna Akhada.
4. **Juna Akhada:** This akhada was known as Bhairav Akhada in earlier days when Bhairav was their main lord. Presently, Dattareya is considered as their main deity. After merging with Aawahan Akhada, this akhada has become the largest one in the country.
5. **Atal Akhada:** Established in the Gondwana region in 647 (as per Vikrat Samvat), its centres are in Haridwar, Triyambak, Ujjain, Kashi and Baroda. Lord Ganpati is considered their main diety.
6. **Ananad Akhada:** Their main deity is Sun/Surya and it was established in 912 (as per Vikram Samvat). Apart from a few sadhus living in Kashi, affiliation with this akhada has mostly ended.
7. **Agni Akhada:** It is believed that this Akhada was established in 1957 at Girnar Mountain.
8. **Shri Panchagni Akhada:** This was established in 1192 and has its centers in Rajghat and Kashi. The main deities of this akhada are Gayatri Mata and Agni.
9. **Nirmal Akhada:** This akhada was established by Guru Govindsingh. Its followers wear white clothes and believe in the philosophy of purifying the soul. Their flag is yellow or orange in colour with a depiction of the chakra in the middle.
10. **Udaseen Akadha:** There are three classes of sevak. They usually keep long jatas/hair.



Figure 69. Entrance to Panchayati Akhada

Chehra Mohra: A Peshwai Gathering for Shahi Snan

During the Kumbh Mela, a number of eye-catching ceremonies and cultural activities such as the rituals of the Naga Sadhus during the Shahi Snan, traditional procession of Akhadas on elephants, horse-drawn chariots, etc. called 'Peshwai' are held and are a major attraction for the millions of pilgrims attending the gathering. These events also attract wide TV viewership globally.



Figure 70. Chehra—Mohra ritual in progress

All the mahapurush and mahatmas meet at a particular location to signify that the Akhada Collective has reached one spot and are ready to proceed with the Shahi Snan. Those who are associated with a particular camp stay with their camp members under the guidance of the akhada heads and also the Sri Mahantas from all 13 Akhadas, who are responsible for taking care of their respective shishyas and sevaks.

To follow necessary rules and regulations at the Kumbh and maintain law and order, the proxy court of 'Chehra Mohra' gets functional. The system of 'Chehra Mohra' is such that the holiest of saints, even the Peethadishwars of all akhadas have to follow the rules of this court. For the sake of continuing tradition, this court of Chehra Mohra is built within the cantonment campus; on this stage all decisions pertaining to law, policing and regulations of



Figure 71. Flagbearers of Akhadas

the Kumbh Mela are taken. Although, with the establishment of 'Dharmadhvaja', the rights of the Akhadas, Mahants, Sri Mahants, Shanpatias, Kotwals etc. were dissolved, but this disciplinary system continues in the same manner as earlier.

With the hoisting of the sacred flag, 'Dhvajarohan', the external arrangements dissolve, and all the rights go to 'Chehra Mohra'. A stage is put up in the center of the camp. Two heads are appointed for the



Figure 72. Kotwal in his traditional attire

court with four sub-heads under them, to be present at the court at all times. The rules of the court are stringent and have to be followed by all. A

heavy penalty is imposed if any rule is broken, which could include even basic infringements like the wrong placement of stairs upon the platform.



Figure 73. Shiv Linga near Mankameshwar temple, Allahabad

Shahi Snan



Figure 74. Movement of Akhadas on pontoon, Kumbh 2019

Snan does not refer only to a simple bathing in the river. It is an auspicious act which is believed to remove all negative or sanchit karmas that people collect over different lifetimes. During the month of Magh (January-February), the planetary positions are such that taking a bath at the confluence during this period is said to cleanse a person of all sins and has the potential to grant enlightenment to the soul. The Shahi Snan (Royal Bath) is the holy bath that is taken by the sadhus of different akhadas at the confluence before it is opened to the other pilgrims.

Breakdown of the main Snans:

1. Makar Sankranti: This day is marked by the transit of the Sun from the southern hemisphere to the north with the days growing longer and nights shorter. The belief is that the veils to the doors of heaven open during this time and by taking a bath at the sangam, the soul gets liberated easily.



Figure 75. A Naga Sadhu blowing conch during Shahi Snan, Kumbh 2019

2. Paush Purnima: It is believed that taking a holy dip on the day of Paush Purnima (full moon during December-January) in Ganga and Yamuna can purify the souls, cleanse all sins and help in attaining moksha (salvation) after death. Many devotees believe that their wishes will also be granted on this day.
3. Mauni Amavasya: Mauni Amavasya (new moon) is believed to be the day when the universe was created; an auspicious day when the water of the Ganga turns into 'nectar', and the Gods come to reside here. People usually keep maun vrat or vow of silence on this day.
4. Basant Panchami: Basant Panchami marks the beginning of the spring season and is celebrated on the fifth day of this (spring) month. It is celebrated by worshipping the goddess of knowledge and wisdom, Saraswati. Hundreds of thousands of devout Hindus bathe in the holy river to pay their respect to her.
5. Maghi Purnima: It is believed that taking a holy dip on Maghi Purnima (the full moon in January-February) can cure diseases and solve all problems.
6. Mahashivratri: The Kumbh Mela ends on the day of Mahashivratri, which according to the Hindu religious tradition is celebrated to mark Shiva's marriage to Parvati. A special ritual known as the 'Shiv Baraat' is performed on the streets of Allahabad on this day to mark the occasion.



Figure 76. Procession of Mahaniranjani Akhada going for Shahi Snan

“Shahi Snaan in the erstwhile period meant Rajashree Snaan, and during that time the Raj Gurus were also the Kul Gurus. The tradition of taking Shahi Snaan was famous during that period...Shahi Snaan mainly means that the Raja Maharaja used to give the Taam Patra (Copper Scroll) to the guru who used to certify that they are the Rajguru or the Spirtual head of their clan or family. Thus, this tradition of taking the Shahi Snaan is being followed by the Akhadas.”

~ Mahamandaleshwar Swami Shyam Chaitanya Ji,

Mahanirvani Akahada



Satsang and Kirtans



Figure 77. Veterans of Akhadas at a religious discourse

During the period of the Kumbh Mela, people participate in gatherings for satsangs (spiritual discourses) and kirtans (devotional songs and prayers) across the Mela ground. Such community singing and prayer gatherings are an important means to express their devotion and faith to the various gods and goddesses. Another sacred and vibrant element of the Kumbh are the gatherings of communities to perform havan (offerings to the gods) and godaan (cow offerings).



Figure 78. Sadhu performing Kirtan

Kalpvās

Kalpvās refers to the practice of spending an entire month on the banks of the Ganga and engaging in daily rituals with the aim to attain spiritual peace. Kalpvās is derived from the concept of ‘Kalpa’ or an immense period of time, reckoned as 4,320 million years, which is considered to be the length of a single cycle of the cosmos (or ‘a day of Brahma’)—from creation to dissolution. Kalpvās in Prayag is said to hold special significance.



Figure 79. Kalpvās near their make-shift tent

The scriptures state that the benefits accrued from undertaking Kalpvās in Prayag are never-ending, and Kalpvās should sleep on the ground, fast, bathe thrice a day, renounce worldly pleasures, control their senses, and worship Shri Vishnu during this time. The Kalpvās perform the ritual of tonsuring during the Kumbha Parva with the bhav (spiritual emotion) of surrendering the intellect and mind to God. The residents of Allahabad donate their tents to the Kalpvās while returning home after the Magh month.



Figure 80. A Kalpvās in her tent

From Paush Shukla Ekadashi to Magha Shukla Purnima devotees (Kalpvās) spend a whole month at the banks of the river Ganga to gain the merits accumulated by Brahma during his lifetime. The Puranas proclaim, “Kalpvās is holy since it satisfies our ancestors, destroys sins and liberates us from the bondage of life and death.” Patience, non-violence and reverence are the basic pillars of kalpvās.

The scriptures state that the benefits accrued from undertaking Kalpvās in Prayag are never-ending, and Kalpvās should sleep on the ground, fast, bathe thrice a day, renounce worldly pleasures, control their senses, and worship Shri Vishnu during this time. The Kalpvās perform the ritual of tonsuring during the Kumbha Parva with the bhav (spiritual emotion) of surrendering the intellect and mind to God. The residents of Allahabad donate their tents to the Kalpvās while returning home after the Magh month. The Kalpvās, usually old couples, live an ascetic and minimalistic life. Their objective is to get away from the daily routine and absorb the real meaning of life by learning from spiritual gurus, interacting with other Kalpvās, and experiencing the cultures, traditions and heritage from every part of India at one place.

Legislation of Kalpvas: Any person who wants to observe Kalpvas is expected to take a resolution for a month of Kalpvas and to come to the banks of Sangam and camp in a tent; he/she has to leave all other work and fulfill this resolve first. The resolution is such that during this period the Kalpvasi cannot accept grains outside the fair area. He has to consume the Ganga water and have food in his camp itself. During this period, apart from his kitchen, he cannot eat in the kitchen of any neighboring Kalpvasi. He has to sleep on the ground. This sequence begins with Pausha Purnima and ends with Maghi Purnima. Any devotee who started Kalpvas once, then he has to stay on the Sangam coast every year for 12 years in the month of continuous Magh. However, this practice can be continued even longer.



Figure 81. Tents of Kalpvasis

Establishment of Tulsi Shaligram: Tulsi and Shaligram are established on the first day of the beginning of Kalpvas. The Kalpvasi plants barley seeds outside his tent. He takes this plant with him at the end of Kalpvas. While the Tulsi is offered to Ganga, it is also worshiped throughout the sacred month.



Figure 82. A Kalpvasi with sacred plants outside her tent



Figure 83. A Kalpvasi leaves for early morning sacred bath in the Ganga

Importance of Surya Aradhana and Daan during Kumbh Mela

According to the *Padma Purana*, the Sun is auspicious and daan (giving alms) after praying to the Sun od



holds special significance. Therefore, in the month of Magh, people recite the Surya mantra and give Arghya (offering of water) to the Sun God in order to get salvation from all sins and obtain the grace of Lord Jagadishwar. In this month, giving of sesame, jaggery and blankets to the needy has a special significance. The donations of woolen garments, quilts, shoes and other items during the winter months are known as 'Madhava Prehyam'. It has been said in the *Matsya Purana* that a person who performs daan in the month of Magh attains Brahma Lok.

Figure 84. A lady offering obeisance to Sun



Figure 85. A devotee fetch water from Ganga

Ganga Aarti

Many elements of nature, manifested in the form of rivers, mountains and trees, have been personified as divine entities in Indian culture. One of the popular ways to pay respect and homage to these entities



Figure 86. Ganga Aarti at Ram Ghat

is in the form of aarti. During the Kumbh, the Ganga Aarti is an elaborate affair along the banks of the river. The priests line up and perform the Aarti in the morning and evening, chanting and reciting hymns with piety and emotion. The Ganga Aarti at the Kumbh Mela attracts a record number of people. The fragrance of incense and hundreds of flowers, and the echoing songs and prayers, permeate the air. This Aarti is not just a ritual; it is a display of complete devotion to the River Ganga.

Pandit Nehru, in his will and testament mentioned the Kumbh, "Of course, I have abandoned the old-fashioned traditions, and I want to break the chains which constrain India and oppress innumerable people, and which prevent the development of their minds and bodies. But even though I want all of these things, I cannot completely separate myself from these old traditions."

Swami Swaroopanand Saraswati

“It is unfortunate that for selfish reasons the water of the Ganga has been harnessed for generating electricity in our country. The hills are being tortured to the hilt by piercing them, breaking them. By inserting cement inside them we have left no stone unturned to inflict pain to the hills...the waterfalls are either vanishing or depleting. We all know the property of water; it remains fresh till the rays of the sun keep falling over it and it is flowing. The quality degrades the moment its flow is curbed (with dams), and



is channelized through metal pipes. The pollution of water starts from this phase itself because not only does water get stored but pollutants from cities and factories are dumped in it, hence poisoning it and the life dependent on

Figure 87. Swami Swaroopanand the rivers.

Ganga loses its healing power...but one fact that remains intact are its existence for mankind...she is sacred and will remain so. We firmly believe we should not pollute the river...it is a crime.”

He further quotes a shloka:

सर्वत्रसुलभागंगात्रिषुस्थानेषुदुर्लभा।

गंगाद्वारेप्रयागेचगंगासागरसंगमे।

तत्रस्नात्वादिवयान्तियेमृतास्तेऽपुनर्भवाः।

(Matsya Purana)

He declares that the Kumbh is a festival for everybody, not just the akhadas. The saints from the akhadas meditate and promote Indian culture as they travel across the country and also protect the philosophy of Sanatan Dharma. Adi Shankaracharya founded the order of the Nagas. On this occasion, the 10 systems of Nagas, namely Giri, Puri, Bharati, Ban, Aranya, Sagar, Aashram, Saraswati, Tirtha, and Parwat, take out their processions, which is a treat to watch. Some of the Nagas remain naked no matter how harsh the weather by applying a coat of ash on their bodies.

According to him, the Kumbh allows people/devotees to take the holy bath, and meet sadhus and wisdom-holders to get their blessings and learn from them.



Figure 88. Naga Sadhu sharing his experience of the Kumbhs he has attended

Magh Mela

The Magh Mela⁸ bathing begins with Paush Purnima and ends on the day of Magh Purnima, a period of one month in January. During this month, the banks of the rivers Ganga and Yamuna are transformed into a small socially cohesive metropolis which attracts thousands of pilgrims every year. Arrangements of special tents/pandals for the pilgrims, sadhus and Kalpvasis are made to accommodate diverse cultural sects for a month at the riverbank. This annual Mela brings together myriad communities from different parts of the world, with the aim of taking part in various events like sacred and spiritual



Figure 89. Devotees leaving for a religious programme

discourses, and other cultural activities. According to the *Naradpurana*, after bathing during Brahma-mahurat (time of Brahma) in this month, all sins can be removed and the fruits of Prajapati-Yajna can also be obtained. At this time, Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh, Aditya, Murudgang and all other gods and goddesses are believed to gather together. Other than bathing, the main attractions of this fair are the Kalpvasis, sadhus from distinctive akhadas, temporarily arranged shopping options for pilgrims and the local cultural activities for entertainment.

The Magh Mela is supposed to enhance the existing order of life and then transcend it instead of merely traversing it. This is a celebration of the structure of life itself with all its hierarchies, disparities and distinctions, which are allowed to coexist on the same level.

⁸ <https://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/en/publications/being-together-at-the-magh-mela-the-social-psychology-of-crowds-a>

Pind Daan

Pind Daan or revering one's ancestors and seeking their blessings form an important aspect of Hindu philosophy. A number of customs and rituals exist to pay respect to ancestors. One such ritual followed by the Hindu families after the death of a family member is Pind Daan. Pind Daan or offerings made to ancestors is aimed at helping the departed soul find release from material or samsaric existence on to a path that allows the soul to immerse itself in a state of complete peace. It is believed that



Figure 90. Pind Daan near Quila Ghat

if the ritual isn't carried out properly, the soul goes through many difficulties. Ganga, being the most sacred of rivers, enables the soul on this path to a higher plane.



Figure 91. Pind Daan performers on a boat

Veni Daan



Veni (Braid) Daan is an interesting ritual performed at Triveni Sangam where women offer a part of their hair to the river as a prayer for the long life of their husbands and peace and prosperity for their families.

The ritual requires the husband to comb and braid

Figure 93. Priest instructing couples performing Veni Daan

the wife's hair, decorate it with flowers, put vermilion (mark of a married woman) on her forehead, and cut the tip of the plait as offering. The hair is then smeared with turmeric and placed on the prayer plate. This ritual is performed by married Hindu couples, predominantly from Maharashtra and a few other places. It is a unique ritual where couples reenact their marriage by dressing in their marriage attire, performing pooja together and garlanding each other. During the offering, the woman is required to sit on the lap of her husband when he combs and decorates her hair. During a Hindu marriage, a couple promises to spend seven lifetimes together. This promise is believed to get further strengthened by performing Veni Daan.



Figure 92. Veni Daan ritual

Nag Panchami and Gudiya Festival



Figure 94. Children celebrating Gudiya festival

Interesting and unique, the Gudiya festival is held during the celebrations of Nag Panchmi in Allahabad. During this festival, women gather and make dolls out of clothes. Many tales related to women are told, post which the dolls are beaten with sticks by children. However, this tradition has recently seen transformation due to the involment of civil society groups, which were apprehensive that these tales beating of dolls could inculcate violence in children and also promote gender injustice. The dolls are now placed on a swing and people play with the same. Women gather around and sing songs.



Figure 96. Snake Charmer with snake at Nag Vasuki



Figure 95. Nag Vasuki temple

“The Gudiya festival is celebrated here during Nag Panchami. After taking a holy dip in the Ganga, the holy water of the river is offered to the Shivlinga at Nag Vasuki temple. We make traditional food like Poori, matar and chana (peas), and distribute it amongst our relatives. We only consume pure vegetarian food on this occasion.”

~ Sh. Bimlesh Nishad,

Boatman at Saraswati Ghat

Stories related to the origin of this tradition:

Story One:

Raja Parikshit died due to the bite of Daksh, the king of snakes. This aspect was kept as a secret for four generations. Once, when a marriage alliance was being sought between these two kingdoms, the daughter from the lineage of King Parikshit revealed this secret to another woman from the family of her betrothed. Soon, the secret spread from this woman to the next till it spread across the whole city. When the secret was exposed, the then king of Takshak gathered all the girls in the city at the intersection and beat them with ropes and killed them. He was enraged by the fact that women could not retain any secret. Since then, the tradition of beating dolls on Nag Panchami has continued.

Story Two:

A king's daughter, named Gudiya fell in love with the son of another king. The prince was a devotee of Shiva. One day, a serpent coiled itself around the prince's neck which frightened Gudiya. She killed the snake but before dying, he cursed her that from henceforth, women will be beaten like he was on the day of Nag Panchami. Since that day, this tradition continues.

Sawan and Kanwar Mela

Sawan (the fifth month of the Hindi Tithi calendar corresponding to the months of July and August) heralds the onset of the monsoon in Northern India and brings with it a renewed energy as the Kharif crop season starts. It is also considered the month of Shiva. It is believed that praying to Ganga (as a river) and Shiva during this month is auspicious. Devotees, known as Kanwariyas, undertake the annual



Figure 97. Kanwariyas with their Kanwar

Varanasi, from where the Kanwariyas collect Ganga Jal to bring back to their local Shiva temple.

pilgrimage or Kanwar Yatra to and from the banks of the Ganga, paying homage to the river and Shiva. Some of the important places or cities that are a part of this pilgrimage are Gangotri (the source of the Ganga), Haridwar, Garhmukteshwar, Prayag and



Figure 98. Baijnath ji at Patalpuri temple

should be undertaken at least once in one's lifetime.

Kanwar Yatra is also known as Bol-Bam Mela as the pilgrims chant Bol-Bam (invoking Shiva) during their journey. The yatra, undertaken by men and women of all age-groups, is difficult and requires a lot of patience to walk hundreds of kilometers barefoot with a kanwar on one shoulder. According to the *Skanda Purana*, the virtues received after completing the yatra are equivalent to performing an Ashvamedha Yagya.

In Uttar Pradesh, it is believed that this pilgrimage



Figure 99. A wholesale seller of Kanwar

Types of Kanwars and their significance

The preparation of the kanwar follows an old tradition where the Kanwariyas gather at the local Shiva temple to build their kanwars. These are largely structures made of bamboo and decorated with an



Figure 100. Khadi Kanwar

pilgrims to rest and re-start their journey.

Dandi Kanwar: This is one of the toughest yatras where the devotees cover the distance from the river Ganga to their local Shiva temple by prostrating on the ground and measuring each step.

Khadi Kanwar: Some devotees walk with an upright (khadi) kanwar which is carried on their shoulders.

ornamental trishul (Shiva's trident), flowers, bells, idols of Shiva and his bull Nandi. The kanwar is made in such a way that the pot to be used for collecting Ganga Jal is tightly secured so that the sacred water from the river would not spill on the way back. The pot as well as the kanwar, hence, cannot be kept on the ground till the pilgrimage ends. There is a wide variety of kanwars available in shops nowadays.

Jhoola Kanwar: A Jhoola kanwariya can stop and rest wherever they want during the yatra.

Pandals are erected along the routes for the



Figure 101. The long way home during Kanwar Yatra

Observations during Kanwar documentation

The Kanwar Yatra has been witnessing changes in recent times with a sharp decline in the number of on-foot pilgrims. These changes are a result of new experiments that amalgamate devotion, religious zeal, and use of modern technology. One recent development has been the use of mechanical transport by the Kanwariyas. Groups of youth prefer trucks as a mode of conveyance with loudspeakers playing Bol-Bam chants. Though enjoyable for the pilgrims, this has caused an upsurge in environmental pollution, traffic snarls and traffic rule violations.



Figure 102. Kanwariyas enroute to Varanasi

Mahashivratri



Figure 103. Idol of Mankameshwar

Shivaratri, also known as Mahashivratri ('The Great night of Shiva'), is one of the most popular festivals celebrated in Prayagraj. Shivaratri is celebrated every year with religious fervor and devotion. Devotees observe fast and make offerings at Shivalayas. People also perform a puja called Rudrabhishek⁹ to please Shiva on this auspicious occasion. There are different versions outlining Mahashivratri's significance. These include a celebration of Shiva and Parvati's marriage; to mark the night when Shiva performed the heavenly dance of creation,

preservation and destruction; and to mark the day Shiva saved the world from the pot of poison that emerged from the ocean during Samudra Manthan by drinking the poison.



Figure 104. *Mandaar ke Phool*, a variety of hibiscus is offered to Shiva

⁹ *Rudrabhishek* is a religious rite done in which devotees offer water, milk, sugarcane juice and Panchamitra to Shivalinga and priests usually chant the *Rudhrashtayi* mantra from Shukla Yajurveda Granth

Gehrebazi: Traditional Horsecart Racing

The tradition of Gehrebazi reflects the Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb. People from both communities, Hindu and Muslim, participate in the event. There are different stories about the origin of this unique tradition, which, as per the local people, is more than a hundred years old. There is, however, ambiguity regarding the period when it actually started and who initiated it. According to Sh.Ranjan Sharma, a priest from Prayagwal community, the tradition of Gehrebazi was begun by Vishnu Maharaj. It is said that Vishnu Maharaj would always



Figure 105. Gehrebazi in progress



Figure 106. Screenshot of Google Maps showing the trail of Gehrebazi

travel by horse and he, along with other horsemen, used to exhibit the breed of the horses to the masses. The other belief is that this tradition of exhibiting horses and horsemen is more ancient and was started by King Harshavardhan. The foundation of this tradition was to donate horses to the priestly class, and it took place once every week during the month of Sawan.

According to Sh. Vishnu Proha, another Prayagwal priest, “this tradition was started by his maternal grandfather Pt. Mahavir Prasad Sharma who started this tradition to revive the Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb of then

Allahabad. “Earlier, it used to start from the Shiv Kuti Mandir, Teliarganj to the Commissioner’s bungalow where the exhibition of horses would take place along with various acrobatic events. Since there were no motor cars, horsecart was the preferred mode of transport. It was initially known as Ekka Daud or ‘One-Horse-Race’ but in the course of time, there has been a modification with the addition of a cart.” The race now takes place near K.P. Inter-College.



Figure 107. Gehrebazi, also known as Ekka Daud

Before every race/event, a horse has to be rubbed down for several hours. Trained horses demonstrate different styles of walking. Dulki for instance is the style in which the police horses walk. It is similar to the style in which the horses of the Indian

Cavalry walk during the Republic Day Parade. A soft-padded step-by-step movement by horses is called the *Sindhi chaal*. The *Madari chaal* is a style seen in horses used during weddings and festivals. Though



Figure 108. Sh. Vishnu Bharadwaj, Prayagwal Priest

such horses are disqualified, they earn huge rounds of applause by demonstrating the alaf position (standing on rear feet) and by beating their trinkets-laden front feet.

The name Gehrebazi comes from the natural pattern of walking of horses born in deserts that rarely got a chance to walk on regular streets. According to Sh. Vishnu Proha, “There are rules for Gehrebazi and especially for the movement of horses, as each step should be in sync and not in a jittery style.”

According to Sh. Rajeev Bharadwaj ‘Babban’, President, Prayag Gehrebaazi Sangh, “In Tirtharaj Prayag the tradition of Gehrebazi is very old. During the month of Sravan or rainy season the priestly community of Prayagwals and others organise this event from Saraswati Ghat to Shiv Kuti. It is believed that this tradition started during the period of King Harshavardhan. Besides riders from the Prayagwal community, the Muslim community also joins this event, and contestants like Marhoom Ustad, Haseen Ustaad and Ustad Chandar have been participating in the event with their beautifully decorated horse carts.”

This tradition may seem archaic and against animals’ rights to some but for the Gehrebazi supporters it represents a living tradition and they believe that the participants take good care of the horses. As Sh. Vishnu Proha says, “This event is well-coordinated, and no cruelty of any sort is wrought upon the animal. We feed the horses well and take care of them and ensure that they remain fit not only for the event but in general, too.”

Crafts



Figure 109. A half-complete idol of Ganga

Prayagraj is known for a variety of crafts including cane furniture, moonj basketry, craft items made from date palm, papier mache, terracotta and pottery. During the Kumbh Mela, many local artists and craftspersons put up small kiosks and shops for tourists and locals alike.

Cane, Bamboo and Moonj crafts



Figure 110. Moonj Basketry

The Moonj basketry of Prayagraj is largely produced in a village called Naini, also termed “Balla” by the local people. Moonj is a type of wild grass that grows along river banks. The outer layer of 'Sarpat' grass is peeled and knotted to create moonj work. The eco-friendly products created from this coiled grass are ideal for daily use, such as containers for storing food and other items, and as decoration items. Apart from these traditional uses, innovative and experimental products like earrings, bookmarks, bags and purses are being created to cater to a wider audience. Traditionally, these products were given to women during wedding functions as well. Apart from Moonj,



Figure 111. A seller selling fans

cane and bamboo products are also made in the city. Bamboo products are found in most parts of Uttar Pradesh to make a variety of baskets, furniture items, trays and wall decorations.

Sculpture Making



Figure 112. Sculptor at Johnstonganj

Sculpture, especially the making of idols, is an integral part of a city that celebrates faith and religion in the form of large congregations of saints, devotees and tourists during many of its festivals and religious events.

Sh. Taposh Pal specializes in making Durga idols for Durga Puja. He talks about his craft and its demand in the city, "We make our Durga idols using the soil from the banks of the river Ganga. This clay is good and auspicious since we get it directly from Ganga. The sculptors come from Kolkata to make the idols. Before making a Durga idol, we perform a puja in her name. Then the structure and the sculpture of the goddess are prepared."

The items required to make these sculptures are: Baans (Bamboo), Khila, Sutli, Dhaan ka Bhoonsa (rice husk) and three types of mud/clay. For the finishing, water colours and other small decoration items (Sajawat ka Samaan) that they bring from Kolkata are used. Once the sculpture is ready, the customers can take these idols for their pujas. As for demand, he says that when his father came to Allahabad in 1971 to make sculptures, there was comparatively less demand for these idols. Durga Puja was not held on a big scale back then. Gradually, as the popularity of Durga Puja increased, the sculpture-making activity grew as well.



Figure 113 Sh. Taposh Pal, Sculptor

“We make our Durga idols using the soil from river Ganga's banks. This clay is good and auspicious since we get it from Ganga ji. The sculptors come from Kolkata and make these Durga idols. Before making the Durga idol, we begin by doing a Puja in her name. Then the structure of the goddess is prepared. After this puja, we start making the sculpture.”

~ Sh.Taposh Pal



Figure 114. Tools of an idol-maker



Figure 115. Idol of Durga in the workshop of Sh. Taposh Pal

Paintings



Figure 116. Artists displaying their work during Kumbh 2019

Prayagraj, being a historically important city, has been depicted in paintings by many European travellers and Indian artists. From the likes of William Hodges, Thomas Daniell, Robert Montgomery Martin to Indian painters like Sita Ram, Allahabad Fort and nearby areas have been depicted in paintings multiple times. During the Kumbh of 2019, Allahabad was turned into an open art gallery with large-scale murals and wall paintings covering the city, especially along the route from the railway station to the sangam area. The paintings derive largely from Hindu mythology, ranging from the Samudra Manthan tale to episodes from the *Ramayana*. Scenes from daily city life and flora and fauna are also depicted. Some are also abstract in nature. The four major art spots in the city, which were part of the 'Paint My City' campaign, are the Civil Lines area, Railway Station, Mela Area and Arail Road. Residents, pilgrims and tourists undertook the street art projects to cover more than 20 lakh sq. ft area in the city.



Figure 117. Artist drawing on wall



Figure 118. Street art on display near Triveni Sangam



"My village is situated near one of the tributaries of the Ganga. I started sketching beginning from the Magh Mela in Allahabad. I had come here to the Magh Mela in 2006 when I met a saint who inspired me to draw. I have been to all four Kumbhs."

~ Sh.Vinod Kumar Verma, Ascetic

Performing Arts

Pattharchatti Ramlila

One of the well-known performing art events of Prayagraj is the Pattharchatti Ramlila. Sh. Lallu Lal Gupt Saurabh, the Media Secretary and spokesperson of the Pattharchatti Ramlila Committee, Rambagh, was interviewed by the team about the Ramlila and its significance. Sh. Mukesh Kumar Pathak, President of the committee and Sh. Dharmendra Kumar 'Bhaiyyaji', the vice-president of the committee, were also present during the interview. Saurabh references the *Ramcharitmanas* and says that Goswami Tulsidas mentions two spiritual places in *Ramcharitmanas*—Varanasi and Prayag. And, between the two,



Figure 120. A performance of Pattharchatti on display

as well, who happened to be visiting Prayag at the same time and hence witnessed the episode of Ramlila in which Sita was bid adieu after her wedding ceremony. Akbar is said to have become emotional during the scene and it is believed that he was so impressed by the story of the *Ramayana* that he got the text translated into Persian.

On 10th October 1962, the Pattharchatti Ramlila Committee celebrated the 125th year of its foundation. Today, the Pattharchatti Ramlila Committee has completed 182 years of existence. Earlier, people would sit in a barricaded enclosure watching the local artists perform on stage.



Figure 119. Sh. Lallu Lal Gupt, Pattharchatti Ramlila Committee

Elaborating on the history and significance of the word 'Pattharchatti', Saurabh informs that during British rule, a large piece of land near Kamauri Nath Mahadev Mandir where Ramlila was usually held was allotted to the railways. However, the popularity of the Ramlila at this spot was such that the

according to his belief, Prayag was the supreme destination among all pilgrimages as it possessed the power to clear all sins. Tulsidas organized the first Ramlila in Kashi and it is believed that he then came to Prayag, where he organised the Lila near Kamauri Nath Mahadev Mandir, marking the beginning of Ramlila in Prayagraj. It was organised during the reign of Akbar

government decided to withdraw its plans for construction of railway quarters in order to avoid unrest. The barren land had slates (Chatti) of stones (Patthar) on the ground which led to the name Pattharchatti. This location, where a new stadium has also been constructed, is called Rambagh now but the old name continues to be used by the Committee because of its popularity and traditional usage.

The Pattharchatti Ramlila is a 10-day event. There is no concept of a narrator or Sutradhaar; instead, the only Sutradhaar in this performance is the character of Lord Shiva who narrates to Parvati the series of



Figure 121. Performance of Pattharchatti Ramlila

events, before the start of the Ramlila. Talking about how this old tradition, while maintaining its continuity, has also evolved over the years, Saurabh says that the enactment of Ravana being beheaded is performed using technology in such a manner that the severed head reappears like magic. The committee believes in this infusion of technology in the performances to engage a wider audience. Some other similar 'magic moments' include the scene where Tadika makes her entry from the sky as well as when Hanuman is flying off to get the Sanjeevni booti. The Committee, he says, auditions for the characters of the play before every event, and many of the actors are seasoned artists who have been performing such roles for four to five years. For conducting an event of such scale, a team of around 100-130 people comprising of artists and technicians is required. Some artists play multiple characters. For example, one of their seasoned actors plays the role of both Soorpanakha and Sabri. The artistic finesse required to convincingly fit into both roles is commendable. The key characters of Ramayana—Rama, Sita, Ravana, and Hanuman—are mostly performed by senior artists who have been associated with the Ramlila for a long time.

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moments' include the scene where



Figure 122. Roshni Ki Chowki

He adds that this Ramlila has gained immense popularity and is being showcased through live telecast not only in Prayagraj but in other cities as well. The *Roshni Ki Chowki* or beautiful lamps arrangement with its intricate details is particular to this event and is much admired by spectators.

Prayag Sangeet Samiti



Figure 123. Artists performing traditional Awadhi songs here; competitions and concerts were once a regular scene. That vibrant atmosphere and the interest it generated has somewhat dwindled now.

Prayag Sangeet Samiti was an attempt to re-establish the relevance and stature of Indian classical music after a period of disrepute from 15th to 17th century. All through its span of nine decades of existence, the Samiti has been playing the role of a torch-bearer in the world of classical music and it can legitimately pride itself on having achieved a good reputation for consistently upholding the highest and the richest traditions of this sublime art. According to Sh. Rustom Ghandhi,

Established on the day of Maha Shivratri in 1926 by Deshraj Major (Dr.) Ranjit Singh, Late Baijnath Sahai and Late Satyanand Joshi, the Prayag Sangeet Samiti remains one of the premier institutions for the practice and propagation of music in India. The Samiti is an organization registered under the Indian Societies Registration Act of 1860 and was founded with the sole aim of popularizing and re-establishing the relevance and stature of Hindustani Classical music in the country. Many great exponents of the genre have performed



Figure 124. Prayag Sangeet Samiti

“We used to witness artists from all over the world who used to come and perform here at the Prayag Sangeet Samiti. Competitions and concerts were once a regular scene over here.”

Literature and Languages



Figure 125. Harivansh Rai Bachchan, Poet

Prayagraj as a city has been widely recognized for its religious significance. The name is synonymous with Triveni Sangam, the confluence of Ganga, Jamuna and the mythical Saraswati rivers, where the Kumbh Mela is organised. However, what is little known is that the city has also been enriched by the confluence of various languages, cultures and people. The city has been a host to varied cultures and religions ever since one can trace its history. From being an important centre of Hindu pilgrimage to the reign of Mughal emperors like Akbar, to being one of the hubs of India's freedom struggle, this city has absorbed the nuances of all its experiences.

जहां पे गीत गज़ल साथ में सब को सुनाई दे

"इलाहाबाद" मज़हब से परे मुझको दिखाई दे

-Siddharth Dadich Manas

The exposure to different cultures led to the evolution of an Allahbadi or Illhabadi culture. This composite culture has been described as the 'Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb', a popular idiom coined to describe the harmonious and flourishing co-existence of the Hindu and Muslim communities and the intermingling of their cultures. Besides communal harmony, a beautiful by-product was 'Hindustani' which later gave us the Hindi and Urdu languages.

The Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb deeply impacted the literary culture of the city. One of the most prominent languages of the city is the embellished language of Urdu, a prime example of the Tehzeeb that exists in the subcontinent. Urdu, in its own identity, has been formed by picking up etiquettes from various languages like Hindi, Punjabi, and Braj Bhasha. A key factor in the success of Urdu as a language of the city can be attributed to the University of Allahabad which set up the first department of Urdu in India in the year 1924. Many prominent writers like Firaq Gorakhpuri and Harivansh Rai Bachchan served as professors at the University.

Prayagraj boasts of many renowned poets and shayars like Akbar Allahabadi, Harivansh Rai Bachchan and Firaq Gorakhpuri. These literary laureates are known worldwide for their contribution to the world of Urdu poetry and prose.



Figure 126. Akbar Allahabadi, Poet

Akbar Allahabadi is renowned for seamlessly adding satire to serious subjects like politics and love. He used the power of his poetry with a humorous touch to comment on a society which seemed to be blindly adopting western culture. *Hungama Hai Kyun Barpa* is one of the most prominent works of Allahabadi. He was awarded the title of 'Lisan-ul-Asr' for his literary excellence. His famous works include *Gandhinama*, *Tahqeeqi-o-Tanqeedi Mutala*, *Ek Samaji wa Siyasi Mutal*.

लश्करे गाँधी को हथियारों की कुछ हाजत नहीं

हॉ मगर बे इन्तिहा सब्रो कनाअत चाहिए

(The army of Gandhi doesn't need arms;

With the weapon of patience and laws they will win)

When talking about the literary gems of Allahabad, one can never cease to admire the work of the genius, Firaq Gorakhpuri. He began his journey as a poet during his free time while he worked as a Professor of English at the University of Allahabad. A star of pre-modern Urdu poetry, Gorakhpuri is credited with bringing in ruman or romanticism to Urdu in a fashion that was previously unknown. His career as a poet spread over a long expanse of over 60 years during which he wrote more than 40,000 couplets. In recognition of his immense contribution to Urdu literature, Firaq was honoured with the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award and the Bhartiya Jnanpith Award.

Besides such eminent Urdu writers, the city of Prayag has been deeply associated with towering figures of the Hindi literary world and was once even referred to as the 'Heartland of Hindi Literature'. Writers like Premchand, Mahadevi Verma, Sumitra Nandan Pant and Harivansh Rai Bachchan found their oeuvre of writing in the time they spent at Allahabad. The city was also witness to a number of literary movements that took place in India. One of the key ones was the 'Nayi Kavita' movement started by the poet, Harivansh Rai Bachchan. These poems were experimental and progressive in nature, in contrast to the earlier poetry that centred on traditional and age-old values. Bachchan was one of the few writers who wrote both in Hindi and Urdu. His works have had universal appeal and have been used in many films over the years.

Another feather in Prayagraj's cap is the close association of Munshi Premchand (Dhanpat Rai, 1880-1936), one of the most acclaimed writers of modern India and one of the leading lights of the Progressive Writers' Movement in the city. Premchand wrote his popular as well as critically acclaimed works in a mix of Hindi and Urdu, reflecting the growth of a syncretic culture and literary tradition in the

region. Premchand was also deeply patriotic and devoted to the cause of India's independence. This aspect is reflected in many of his creations such as *Duniya Ka Sabse Anmol Ratan*. He also wrote novels and short stories underlining socio-political issues such as caste and gender inequality, poverty and the dowry system.

Apart from Hindustani writers, eminent authors like Mahadevi Verma (1907-1987), Sumitranandan Pant (1900-1977) and Suryakant Tripathi 'Nirala' (1896-1961) added to the jewelled treasure that was Prayagraj's literary culture. These writers brought another literary movement, 'Chhayavaad' (1914-1938), to the city; it introduced notions of neo-romanticism to Hindi literature. This led to the content being more personal and expressive of the writer. The humanistic approach to writing was a revolutionary aspect of the movement. Mahadevi Verma's *Nihar* is a popular example of this genre of writing. Increasingly in his later works, Suryakant Tripathi Nirala chose to transcend the Chhayavaad genre and addressed serious themes like social injustice and exploitation in society.

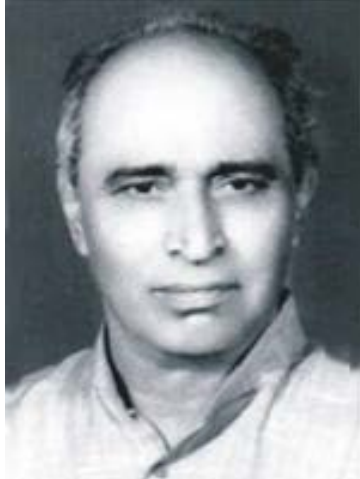


Figure 127. Kailash Gautam, Poet

In later times, Kailash Gautam (1944-2006), a noted poet from

Prayagraj, who also worked with the regional radio channel, wrote a satirical poem about the condition of the river Ganga:

दिन उगते ही ग्रहण लग गया
उग्रह होते शाम हो गयी
जब से मरा भगीरथ गंगा
घडियालों के नाम हो गयी.

Gautam also composed humorous pieces on the Kumbh and Magh Melas. With such remarkable writers, the stature of Prayagraj as a literary epicentre grew rapidly, resulting in the establishment of a number of printing presses like the Indian Press, Pioneer Press, and Belvedere Press, which went on to cement the city's unique culture. A Doha by Kabir Das mentions the Ganga:

“कबीर मन निर्मल भया, जायस गंगा नीर, पाछे पाछे हर फिरे, कहत संत कबीर”

The literature of Prayag is also intricately linked to its Ghats and the banks of the river Ganga. The Ghats provide an easily accessible and secure space for people, both local and visitors, to sit quietly and contemplate, some say even share thoughts with the river as also with the other people. Since ages, sadhaks/yogis/sages have sought the banks of the river to meditate, practice Yoga, do Sadhana and perform rituals. A few lines from a poem by Harivansh Rai Bachchan are illustrative of this influence:

उसके नयनों का जल खारा

है गंगा की निर्मल धारा

पावन कर देगी तन मन को क्षण भर साथ बहो!

दुखी मन से कुछ भी न कहो !

~ Harivansh Rai Bacchan, Poet

“Allahabad is not just a Sangam (confluence) of rivers, but a Sangam of people. This is a Sangam of their various different lives, a Sangam of Allahabad’s voices and a Sangam of Tehzeeb. Just like in the Sangam of Allahabad’s rivers, in Urdu, all the etiquettes from the cultures of many diverse peoples have come together and amalgamated to become one.”

- Prof. Shabnam Hamid Ansari, HoD, Urdu Dept. University of Allahabad



Languages

श्रद्धा
अवधी

The common dialects of the people residing in the Prayagraj region emerge from a combination of the Awadhi Dialect of Eastern Hindi, merging with Bagheli in the south and southwest, and Bhojpuri of the Varanasi region in the east. These adjoining languages merge into one another so imperceptibly that the determination of their geographical limits is impossible. In the city and in the Doab area, which contains a large Muslim population, Urdu is extensively spoken, especially among the educated classes. A majority of the population speaks Eastern Hindi (Purabiya), while

the others speak Urdu, Bengali and English.

Figure 128. Awadhi written in Kaithi (top) and Devanagari (bottom) scripts.

16

AWADHĪ SKELETON GRAMMAR.

I.—NOUNS.

Three forms.	Short.	Long.	Redundant.
	<i>ghōr</i> , a horse, <i>nārī</i> , a woman,	<i>ghār</i> , a house, <i>ghār</i> , <i>ghārāki</i> , <i>ghārāi</i> , <i>ghārē</i> .	<i>ghōrāwā</i> , <i>nārīwā</i> .

Declension.

Sing.	Nom.	Obl.	Plur.	Nom.	Obl.
	<i>ghōr^{wā}</i> , a horse, <i>ghār</i> , a house.	<i>ghōr^{wā}</i>	<i>ghōr^{wā}</i> , <i>ghōr^{wānē}</i> , <i>ghōr^{wān}</i> .	<i>ghār^{ānē}</i> , <i>ghārān</i> .	<i>nārī</i> , a woman. <i>nārī</i> , <i>nārīki</i> .
		<i>ghār^{ānē}</i> , <i>ghārān</i> .			

An instrumental singular is formed in *an*, as *bhāḷkhan*, by hunger.

Postpositions.
kā, *kā*, *ka*, to, also denotes accusative;
barē, for.
sē, *sēnī*, *sen*, from, by.
kār, *kar*, *ke*, of; obl. *kē*; fem. *kāi*.
mā, *ma*, in.
par, on.

Adjectives change for gender. Thus *āpan*, own, fem. *āpanī*; *ais*, such, *aisī*; *ākar*, his, *ākarī*. The change is, however, frequently neglected.

II.—PRONOUNS.

	I.	Thou.	Your honour.	This.	That.	Who	That.	Who ?
Sing.								
Nom.	<i>mā</i> .	<i>taī</i> , <i>tā</i> .	<i>āpu</i> .	<i>ī</i> , <i>yā</i> .	<i>ū</i> , <i>vai</i> .	{ <i>jē</i> , <i>javān</i> . <i>javān</i> . <i>jē</i> .	<i>sē</i> , <i>taṅwān</i> . <i>taṅwān</i> . <i>tē</i> .	<i>kē</i> , <i>kawān</i> . <i>kawān</i> . <i>kē</i> .
Obl.	<i>mō</i> .	<i>tō</i> .	<i>āpu</i> .	<i>ē</i> , <i>eh</i> , <i>ehī</i> .	<i>ō</i> , <i>oh</i> , <i>ohī</i> .			
Gen.	<i>mār</i> .	<i>tār</i>	<i>ākar</i> (obl. <i>ek^{rē}</i>)	<i>ōkar</i> (obl. <i>ok^{rē}</i>)	<i>jēkar</i> (obl. <i>je-k^{rē}</i>)	<i>tēkar</i> (obl. <i>te-k^{rē}</i>)	<i>kēkar</i> (obl. <i>ke-k^{rē}</i>)
Plur.								
Nom.	<i>ham</i> .	<i>tum</i> .	<i>āp</i> .	<i>in</i> , <i>ē</i> .	<i>on</i> , <i>un</i> , <i>ō</i> .	<i>jē</i> .	<i>tē</i> .	<i>kē</i> .
Obl.	{ <i>ham</i> . <i>ham^{rē}</i> .	<i>tum</i> . <i>tum^{rē}</i> .	{ <i>āp</i> . <i>āp</i> .	<i>in</i> .	<i>on</i> , <i>un</i> .	{ <i>jen</i> . <i>jenh</i> .	<i>ten</i> . <i>tenh</i> .	<i>ken</i> . <i>kenh</i> .
Gen.	<i>hamār</i> (obl. <i>ham^{rē}</i>)	<i>tumār</i> (obl. <i>tum^{rē}</i>) <i>tohār</i> (obl. <i>toh^{rē}</i>)	<i>āp-kār</i> .	<i>in-kār</i> (obl. <i>in-k^{rē}</i>)	<i>on-kār</i> , (obl. <i>on-k^{rē}</i>)	<i>jen-kār</i> (obl. <i>jen-k^{rē}</i>)	<i>ten-kār</i> (obl. <i>ten-k^{rē}</i>)	<i>ken-kār</i> (obl. <i>ken-k^{rē}</i>)

(*Ehī* is often spelt *gahī*, and *ohī wahi*.)
 What ? is *kā*, *kāw*; obl. *kāi*, *kāi*, *kāhe*.
 Any-one, some one, is *kēk*, *kēū*, *kēū*, *kawānō*, *kawānaw*; obl. *kēū* or *kēūū*.
 Anything, something, is *kuchh*. *Apu* is 'self'; 'own' is *āpan*, obl. *ap^{wā}*.

Figure 129. Linguistic Survey of India, 1906, Vol. 6

Ghats of Prayagraj: Testimonies to Time

The stories of the Ghats along the river are interesting and varied. These Ghats serve the city as spaces to sit and contemplate, reflect and debate, do yoga and sadhna, perform rituals, and participate in festivals. There are several Ghats in Prayagraj.

Ram Ghat



The Ganga Aarti at Ram Ghat is a spectacular, spiritually enriching ritual, performed to pay homage to the river Goddess Ganga. Lamps and Diyas are lit near the Ghat and a group of five to seven priests performs Aarti. Aarti symbolizes the five elements, i.e. Ether (Akash), Air (Vayu), Fire (Agni), Water (Jal) and Earth (Prithvi). People offer Anjali (a handful of flowers) to the Ganga and seek her blessings.

Quila Ghat /Sangam Ghat



The Quila/Sangam Ghat is near the confluence of the rivers Ganga and Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati. The devotees and pilgrims hire boats to reach the Sangam point, to take a holy dip and to perform rituals.

Saraswati Ghat



The Saraswati Ghat is located on the banks of the river Yamuna and falls in the Army Cantonment area of the city. At this Ghat, the Allahabad Boat Club offers a range of water sports. Pedal boats, kayaks and speed boats are available for hire. This Boat Club was started in December 1997 by the U.P. Tourism Department.

Daraganj Ghat



Daraganj is a prominent area and a landmark in the city of Prayagraj. This is the last bathing Ghat on the Ganga before it is joined by the river Yamuna. The name Daraganj is derived from the word 'Dharaganj' meaning the place with a strong flow (Dhara) of water.

तव चेन्मातः स्रोतः स्नातः पुनरपि जठरे सोपि न जातः ।

नरकनिवारिणि जाह्नवि गङ्गे कलुषविनाशिनि महिमोत्तुङ्गे ॥ 7 ॥

O Mother! Those who bathe in your waters do not have to take birth again. O Jahnavi! Ganga you are held in the highest esteem. You destroy your devotee's sins and save them from hell.

Balua Ghat



Balua Ghat lies on the banks of the river Yamuna. From the river, a flight of steps leads to the dome or the Baradari which further leads to the street that connects to the old city. The street is flanked by temples on both sides. The street as well as the ghat comes alive with various activities during festivals, with stalls set up by the locals.

Communities

According to the 2011 census, Prayagraj district had a population of 59, 54,390 with a population density of 1,086 inhabitants per square kilometre. Its population growth rate over the last measured census decade 2001-2011 was 20.6%. Prayagraj has an adverse sex ratio of 901 females for every 1000 males, and a literacy rate of 72.3%.¹⁰ People in the district speak Awadhi, a language in the Hindi band spoken by over 38 million people, mainly in the Awadh region; and Bagheli, which has a lexical similarity of 72-91% with Hindi (compared to 60% for German and English) and is spoken by about 7,800,000 people in Bagelkhand.

Hinduism is the majority predominant religion in the district with 85.69% followers. Islam is the second most popular religion with around 13.38% adherents. Around 0.93% stated 'Other Religion'; and approximately 0.90% stated 'No Particular Religion'. There are a number of communities living in Prayagraj but as the objective of this project is to document intangible culture within a radius of 5 kms from the Ganga, three prominent communities have been documented, namely the Prayagwal, the Nishad and the fast-dwindling local Parsi community.



Figure 130. Children trying to sell small items to a Sadhu near Sangam

¹⁰ <https://prayagraj.nic.in/demography/>

Prayagwal

The Prayagwal, also known as Pragwal, are the Brahmin priests who provide religious services to the pilgrims visiting Prayagraj; their primary function is to guide the pilgrims through the rituals associated with a visit to Prayag. The Prayagwal established their exclusive rights to serve pilgrims at the Triveni Sangam as a result of a Farman (decree) issued by Akbar in 1593.



Figure 131. A flag with pictorial depiction is identification mark of Prayagwal pandas

The allotment of this land is done on the recommendation of the Prayagwal Sabha and these members decide the order and the area of places to be allotted. There have been no complaints regarding the Prayagwal roaming around to conduct rites at any place except the designated one. Some of them also hold a special license to conduct Veni Daan.

Flag staves with symbols are used at the Melas for pilgrims to locate the particular Prayagwal lineage that keeps their family records. Each Prayagwal has a distinctive symbol of his own. Colourful flags with pictures of silver coconut, image of fish, katori, lauki, Bajrangbali, and different types of patterns can be seen dotting the Melas. Some of

the flags are hoisted at a height of 25-30 metres so that the pilgrims, who wish to take help of the panda (priest) of their clan, can identify their respective camp in the Mela area easily, even from a distance. The Prayagwal are, therefore, determined to retain the symbols on their flag (parcham) to attract their clients (jajman) from across the country during Magh, Kumbh and Ardh Kumbh Melas and on other occasions throughout the year.

There are two sects of Prayagwal—Pidhiya or ‘permanent’ who are considered the original residents of Prayag, and Pardeshi or ‘foreigners’ who are descendants of relatives who came to Prayag and settled here. The Prayagwal are given land on a token lease for providing shelter to the pilgrims and for putting the planks and cots required for conducting religious rites near Sangam, Ganga Patti and Yamuna Patti.



Figure 132. A Prayagwal Panda at Keedganj



Figure 133. A hoarding explaining the role of Prayagwal community in performing sacred rituals

The origin of the community



Figure 134. Prayagwal Panda instructing the performers on the sacred rituals at Daraganj

Prayagwal is a Brahmin sub caste, which includes members of both Saryupari and Kanyakubj branches. It is believed that after his victory over Lanka in the Treta Yuga, Lord Ram chose the Tirth Purohit of his Raghukul, descendants of who continue to live in Kavirapur, in Battapur district of Ayodhya. Believed to be descendent of his generation, the Tirth Purohit of Mishrakul, who are the teachers of Kshatriyas, are still living here. Tirth teacher Prayagwals and the Panda caste are synonyms for the same caste.

It is believed that during the ancient period, the Prayag area was covered by dense forests, except for the dotted spread of huts of Rishi-Munis (hermit priests.) Since those times, the huts of these holy

priests have also served as the resting place for travellers and pilgrims alike. The holy offerings received from these pilgrims and travellers have been the source of livelihood for them.

Ancient Period (King Harsha)

According to customs and practices, all rights for offerings of religious nature were given to the Prayagwal community, and not to any other caste or sub caste. The Tirth Purohit received respect at the time of Emperor Harsha through offerings in the Triveni area. Famous Chinese traveller Hieun Tsang has written that following in the footsteps of his ancestors, Maharaja Harsha gave away the total wealth accumulated in 5 years within a few days. First, he offered his precious gems by making a statue of Lord Buddha after which he gave away the rest of the money to the holy priests who were living there. He then gave away the remaining money to the priests who came from outside.

Medieval Period (King Akbar)

According to a story, when Emperor Akbar laid the foundation of the Fort of Prayag, its southern walls started collapsing due to the waves of the Yamuna River. At this time he was asked to sacrifice a Brahman. The Brahman who showed his desire to be sacrificed asked as a vardan (boon) that his family acquire the rights to receive offerings in the Triveni area. Emperor Akbar accepted this. At the time of

Akbar, there were two sects of Prayagwal—Pidhiya and Pardeshi. The person who was to be sacrificed was of the Pardeshi sect. After this sacrifice, the Pardeshi sect became dominant. But as time passed, the Pikshayis sect started to reassert themselves and soon there came about an understanding between both the groups. Even today, a figure of a man



and an elephant can be seen on the southern wall of the fort, where they were supposedly sacrificed. From the Prayagwals, a man named Chaudhari was elected to organize the Mela.

Figure 135. Allahabad Triveni Sangam is always bustling with pilgrims from different states of India

Emperor Akbar had given 250 bighas of land free to Tirth Purohit of Prayag, Chandrabhan Kishanram, the son of Jayaram, for setting up the Prayag Mela. The pronouncement in this regard is still kept at Panch Bhaiya Prayagwal. In this document, Prayagwal is addressed as 'Jujha rada ran', meaning the wearer of the sacred thread or janeyu. The land was tax-free and the Mela began to be held there. After the sacrifice of a Brahmin at this spot, Akbar tried to donate a human statue made of gold, and also a replica of an elephant in gold. However, the then priests refused to accept the donations because of religious reasons. Upon this, Akbar was unhappy and it is said, in anger, he issued a royal decree expelling these residents of Prayag. These men were deported to the other side of the Yamuna.

After some time, Raja Man Singh came to Prayag after conquering Bengal. He amended the royal decree and brought back the Tirth Purohits to Prayag and inhabited them there. The earlier royal decree for giving away free land for the Mela was accepted by the later emperors, Jahangir and Shahjahan.

During the period of Emperor Aurangzeb in 1666 AD, the Maratha ruler Shivaji escaped from Agra prison to Prayag and stayed in the house of a Tirth Purohit at Daraganj. The house where Shivaji stayed belonged to the family of Mathuranath or Ranagnath Panchbhaiya. Shivaji then went to Kashi and left Sambhaji with the purohit. Later, during his reign, Sambhaji took his host to Maharashtra and made him a minister in his government. Even during the time of Aurangzeb, the dignity of the Prayagwals remained intact in Prayag. The Sikh Gurus, Ram Singh and Gobind Singh had also acknowledged the institution of Tirth Purohit and had given donations to them.

In the *District Jatariya*, Key Nabil writes that the Prayagwal organizes the Mela. Without local priests the Mela cannot be organized. Only Prayagwal organizes Kalpvas, no other group does it.

Skinner, an English traveller, wrote about the Prayagwal community and the Mela in 1826 AD:

"This was a religious fair that congregated at the confluence of two rivers. I did not find anything being sold there. Only bathing, prayers and meditation were the main activities there. Several rectangular wooden planks, about 8-9 feet in size and standing on tall pillars, were kept on the river bank. There were large umbrellas on them and people rested under them. The Purohits and pandas appeared to be typical and exclusive teachers of the pilgrims and had their seats in the middle. They did not budge from their places and with beads in their hands, they prayed for the fulfillment of the celestial desires of the pilgrims. It was a very interesting sight."

There is a specific Tirth Purohit for all pilgrims of Prayag. The relationship of a pilgrim with a Tirth Purohit is that of a teacher and disciple. These Purohits are religious teachers for the pilgrims and possess exclusive rights to accept donations in the Triveni area.

Neville writes in the *District Gazetteer*:

"All religious rites of pilgrims coming to Prayag are conducted by the Prayagwals. First there is obeisance at Beni Madhav, followed by Sankalp, the shaving of hair, a holy dip, Pind daan, Shaiya daan, Godan, Bhumi daan and thus in the end, the Prayagwal gives his blessings to the pilgrims.

All the daan and up-daan related rituals are conducted by the Prayagwals. The descriptions and family history of the pilgrims are in the scrolls carried by the Tirth Purohit. The accommodation and shelter for



Figure 136. A family performing ritualistic activity

the signatures of their ancestors on those thick, ancient scrolls preserved by the Prayagwals who immediately search out the family tree and family history as soon as the pilgrims approach them.”

hundreds of thousands of pilgrims and Kalpvasis coming to Prayag are arranged by the Prayagwals. The Prayagwal gets the land on lease from the administration, arranges for a hut or tent on this land, accommodates the pilgrims in them and accepts whatever is given as donation. The Prayagwal manages his livelihood with these donations only.

The pilgrims are dedicated to the Prayagwals on the basis of region and the rituals. The Prayagwals also preserve the descriptions of their pilgrims. The pilgrims derive immense pleasure upon seeing

Critical Note:

An unpublished article by Lakshmidhar Malaviya claims that the earliest reference of the word Triveni was found in the six-volume Sanskrit work, written in 1873, by Abhidhan Vachaspatya of Taranath Tarkvachaspati, who was associated with the Government Sanskrit College, Calcutta (now Kolkata). The word Triveni, according to its etymology, means triple-braided. No Sanskrit poet, (not even Valmiki or Kalidasa) has used the word Triveni to denote the confluence of rivers at Prayag (Prayagraj). It was always referred to as a confluence of two rivers, Ganga and Yamuna. The Prayagwal Pandas created the legend about Triveni and the Kumbh Mela at Prayag in the latter part of the 19th century—after 1860 to be exact. As Malaviya comments sarcastically, these Pandas “dug a 500-miles-long tunnel to take Saraswati to Prayag.”

The Last Bungalow includes an article by Kama Maclean, who had conducted research on the Kumbh Mela. She opines that the name ‘Kumbh Mela’ was “applied to Prayagraj’s existing Magh Mela in the 1860s by Prayagwals—river pandas of Prayag—working upon and within the limits imposed by the colonial state and its discourses. This process was inadvertently aided by the British, and the resulting Mela was affirmed by sadhus and pilgrims.”

However, such arguments about the Prayagraj Kumbh as merely being another example of an ‘invented tradition’ have not been substantiated; indeed, had it been suspected that it was ‘invented’ in any sense, it would not have been accommodated by the British to the extent it was.

M. Krasa in his work *Kumbh Mela: The Greatest Pilgrimage in the World* mentions that “while scholars have been suggesting that the Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj is no older than the seventeenth or eighteenth century, there has been no further attempt to pinpoint a precise date and manner in which the festival began.”

The Prayagwal community plays an important role not only during the Kumbh and Magh Melas and during the various ritualistic activities performed by their jajmans, but also in keeping their traditional values intact. However, in the course of time the community is facing challenges of various kinds.

According to Sh. Rajesh Sharma, Coordinator, Namami Gange, Prayag, "In addition to making arrangements during the Kumbh, Ardh Kumbh, Magh Mela, the people of Prayagwal Samaj makes arrangements for Kalpvasi pilgrims as well; which includes free arrangement of tents for the pilgrims to stay in till Kalpvas concludes, and from the donation offered by the Kalpvasis in the form of Grain and Dakshina etc., the Prayagwals make a living."



Figure 137. Sh. Rajesh Sharma, Prayagwal priest and Regional Coordinator, Namami Ganga, Prayagraj

The other challenge the Prayagwals feel today is what they consider the unaccommodative attitude of the government. At present, the land which is designated for them is 3 to 4 kilometers away from the Sangam Ganga during Kumbh, Ardh Kumbh and Magh Mela, due to which the old Kalpvasis have to suffer and find it difficult to bathe and reach Lete Hanuman temple or the Sangam area.



Figure 138. Prayagwal pandas seated on wooden plank instructing the devotees near Triveni Sangam

Nishad Community

'Nishad' is an ancient word which can be traced to the Vedic period. The root meaning of Nishad is 'someone who ushers.' In local parlance the community is usually referred to as Kevat or Mallah (boatmen). The Nishad community in Prayagraj has been traditionally associated with the profession of rowing boats and transporting people and goods along and across waterways. The community is believed to be one of the oldest communities in India that mostly dwelled in the forests earlier. It is believed that after coming into contact with various other communities there were cultural exchanges. The community is known for its boat-building skills and has also been engaged in fishing-related activities, which has been one of their principal means of livelihood.



Figure 139. Sh. Ram Narayan Nishad, Boatman near Saraswati Ghat

The community in Prayagraj is deeply religious in its outlook and considers Rama and Krishna as their gods. They practice the custom of animal sacrifice during some festivals when they sacrifice animals like goat, sheep and ducks. They revere literature such as the *Ramcharitmanas*, *Mahabharata*, and *Sukhsagar*. They also revere Kul Devi or Devtas (Family Deities) and conduct a number of religious ceremonies in a calendar year in their honour. The names of the family deities include Masurian Devi, Mansha Devi, Nareeshsemi Devi, Jaar Baba, and Koylabeer Baba.



Figure 140. A local deity of Nishad community near Balua Ghat

They also perform a religious ceremony centred around the Triloki Nath Katha instead of the popular Satyanarayan Katha because the latter is more expensive. This ceremony is exclusive to the Nishad community and it is believed that this tradition originated in Bengal.

Some members of the community still believe in occult practices and exorcism. A significant section believes in astrology and planetary positions (how it affects their destiny) which are accorded particular importance at the time of a person's birth. They also observe Pitrapaksha and perform Pind Daan for their deceased ancestors. During Pind Daan there is a ritual where a portion of the offering is dispersed in the river, underlining their deep connection with the river.

The Nishad community observes all the 16 rituals mentioned in Hindu religious texts, which are mostly conducted by Brahmin priests. These include rituals and ceremonies related to birth, mundan, marriage and death. The death rituals observed by the Nishad community are similar to those in other Hindu communities. For instance, if a man dies at an old age, his funeral or last journey is celebrated with much pomp and show.

For the community, the festival of Nag Panchami holds special significance. Earlier, the Nishad community used to engage in various commercial activities using waterways. They traded with distant lands, traveling down the Ganga to Kolkata and even Rangoon. During these long absences of the male members, the spouses would pray to the family deity for their safe return which would happen around

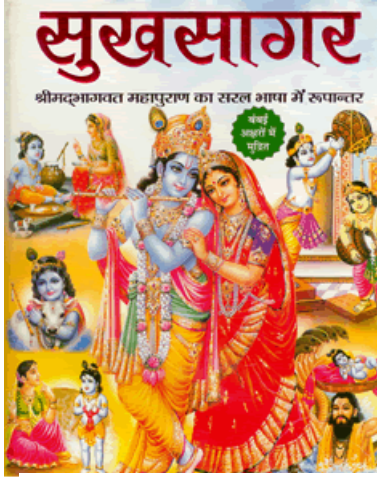


Figure 141. Sukhsagar holy text revered by the Nishad

Nag Panchami. The river Ganga plays a central role in the life of the community, acting as their lifeline and revered as a nurturing mother. Ganga Pujan is, therefore, an integral part of the community's traditions and when a new child is born, the women of the family do not eat until they perform a sacred ritual near the Ganga.

It is believed that Nishad Raj Guha, a powerful king who ruled over the dynasty of Shringverpur, was a dear friend of Lord Rama. He is said to have commanded a very strong army.

Sh. Ram Narayan Nishad, a boatman near Saraswati Ghat sings about the interaction between a Nishad boatman and Rama.

मेरी काठ की है नांव - तेरे जादू भरे पाँव

मोहे डर लागे राम - कैसे बिठाऊ तुझे नांव में

(Said the Kevat to Lord Rama, "Oh God! You are such a mighty and known Figure,

but today you have approached a Kevat for assistance")

मेरी बिनती सुने तो जानूं

मेरी बिनती सुने तो जानूं

मानूं तुझे मैं राम

राम नहीं तो कर दूंगा

सारे जग में तुझे बदनाम

(Lakshmana was angry hearing this. He felt the Kevat was insulting his elder brother, but Rama pacified him saying, "This is their moment to speak out and we need to listen.")



Figure 142. Nishad boatmen waiting for passengers



Figure 143. A Nishad boatman decorating his boat with graffiti

Parsi Community

The Parsis are now a very small community in Prayagraj. Since India's independence, the number of Parsis in Prayagraj has steeply declined. It is believed that there are only a few Parsi families left in Prayagraj.

This reflects the demographic decline of the community across India, which played a crucial role in strengthening the economy of the country. The number of Parsis has been declining for several decades: the highest census count was of 1,14,890 individuals in 1940-41 which was in united India. According to the 2011 census, the community's total population in India is just around 40,000.

Even as the head count of the Parsi community has been diminishing, both in the Sangam city as well as across the country, the community in Prayagraj has been struggling to find a 'Mobed' (Priest) to perform various rituals spanning from birth to death of an individual.

The Atash Behram or the Holy fire at the Fire Temple in Prayag is, however, kept alive by the concerted efforts of community members, who either place the wooden logs in the fire themselves or arrange for a 'Para-Mobed' (a 'temporary' priest who performs holy rituals along with handling the daily routine at the temple). As there is just one Parsi priest in the entire state, that too very elderly, technological enablers in the form of audio cassettes, or Parsi people conducting the rituals on their own, have come to fill the vacuum.



Figure 145. Dar-e-Mehr fire temple, Allahabad. Image: Manmeet Sahini



Figure 144 Sh. Rustom Gandhi

Foodways



Figure 146. Rishu Kesharwani Rabri Faluda shop Ram and Sons. Sh. Shriram Purwar from this shop at the Hari Namkeen Chowk, Prayagraj, shared information about his shop and the kinds of snacks and food items prepared by them. The shop was founded in 1890, and is named after his grandfather Hari Ram, who is known to have experimented and come up with, over a period of time, their trademark recipes and flavours. He developed new recipes for different kinds of namkeens and samosas which were different from the traditional samosa stuffed with a potato-based filling. Instead, he stuffed the samosas with a combination of fried lentils and spices.

Prayagraj is known as a popular Hindu pilgrimage centre and for the largest spiritual gathering in the world, the Kumbh Mela. With thousands of pilgrims and tourists flocking to the city all year round, there is a wide range of food that is available in the city to suit varied tastes. In addition to the street food stalls and vendors selling a variety of chaats, Lassi, Kachori-sabzi, Chhole-Bhature, Samosa, Jalebi, murmure, chai, now also popcorn and much more, there are well-established shops that have been around for years.

In Prayagraj, the ubiquitous Samosa is acknowledged as one of the best at the 126-year-old shop, Hari



Figure 147. Dahi Jalebi is popular among foodies in Prayagraj

As the food items gained popularity, the demand grew and today their items are exported



Figure 148. Dehati Rasgulle is another popular dessert in Prayagraj

internationally as well. According to him, several great leaders and celebrities of independent India, like Jawahar Lal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Vijay Lakshmi Pandit, Amitabh Bachchan and many more, savoured these samosas. Another well-known shop in the city is Netram Mulchand and Sons, at Katra Chouraha. Netram is known for its delicious Kachori-Subzi.

Chai in several shops/kiosks in Prayagraj is served in Kulhads (Purwas) or clay pots that are roasted in clay ovens at high temperatures. As a result, the piping hot tea acquires a distinct earthy flavor. As compared to plastic and paper cups, this old practice is eco-friendly too.



Figure 149. Hare Ram Namkeens

that give it an earthy taste. Raja Ram Lassi Waala is supposedly the best place to try this creamy delicacy, with or without a layer of cream on top. The foamy, frothy Daulat ki Chaat, made from milk, is also served in this city as Makkhan Malai during winters.



Figure 150. Sh. Shri Ram Purwar, owner of Hari Ram & Sons, Left: Samosa

A number of sweetshops sell Jalebi with Rabri as is common in many parts of Uttar Pradesh. A unique combination that is served as breakfast in Allahabad is Dahi-Jalebi. Bhagwan Das Sweet shop, Nirala Mithan and a few other shops in Loknath area of Allahabad are known for this treat. Doodh Rabri is another popular item sold in shops like Badriprasad Kesharwani near the Prayagraj junction.

The owner of one of the oldest milk shops in the city, Sh. Rishu Kesharwani, from the Badri Prasad Keshwarwani Milk, near the railway station in Prayagraj, talked about the variety of food products sold at his shop. Initially it was a sweet shop, which was known for its Gajar ka Halwa, but over time they expanded the product list to include Rabri, cheese, milk, buttermilk and other dairy products. Rabri with milk costs Rs 50/- and Rabri is sold at Rs 40/- per 100g or Rs 400/- per kg. They sell Rabri with milk in the morning. The buffalo milk and other raw material are sourced from a village called Manuri, which is around 70 km from Prayagraj.

Dehati Rasgulla is another very famous sweet shop which opens for just a few hours in afternoon. It is situated near KP Inter-College. The khurchan, another speciality, comes in large rectangles. Thick sheets

of condensed milk set with layers of castor sugar and nuts are served in long rectangular pieces. What people like the most, however, is the fruit cream. It is sweeter than the rabri and khurchan and also carries the beautiful earthy scent of the clay bowl it is served in.

Ram Kandmool is another kind of fruit that is unique to the city of Prayagraj and can be sampled at various nooks and corners in the city during the Kumbh Mela. It is believed that Rama, Sita and Lakshmana consumed this drum-shaped fruit during Rama's exile. The



Figure 151. Churmura is another popular snacks of Prayagraj
flesh of this brown fruit is somewhat similar to coconut sap.



Figure 153. Chat shop near Loknath Gali

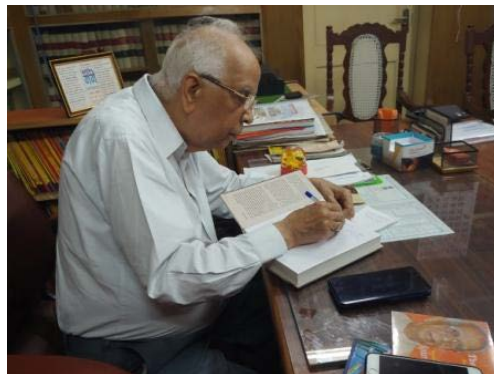


Figure 152. Ram Kandamool



Figure 154. Dehati Rasgulle Shop opens for a few hours in the afternoon everyday and witness a huge rush

“The streets and roads have much to say about Prayagraj; Loknath’s Kachori is very famous in Prayag and during early days people used to sit around Loknath’s shop and participate in political discussions and discourses. These discourses were based on moral beliefs, political consciousness and educational motives.”



Sh. K.C. Tripathi

Ex-Governor, West Bengal

Allahabadi Surkha (Red Guava)



Figure 155. Allahabadi Surkha

Allahabadi Surkha is a variety of guava having a deep pink color inside instead of the typical white color, and an apple-like exterior skin. This fruit is sweet, and strongly flavoured with few seeds and is slightly depressed at both ends. The plants are vigorous, dome-shaped and compact. Allahabadi Surkha is cultivated today on almost 1000 hectares of land mainly in Kaushambi and Kaurihar districts of Allahabad region. Besides its distinct flavour and look, the fruit is known for its medicinal properties.

According to Sh. Ijaz Khan, *“The red guavas of Khusro Bagh used*




to be very famous. These were even exported abroad. When we used to go and meet some official, we used to take 5kg of guava with us. It’s not like we were offering a bribe, its like when you go to Kashmir you get apples from there...like if you go to Lucknow...the rabdi is famous there. I once went to Kashmir and I got walnuts and almonds from there. I got walnuts for 4 rupees a kilo and almonds for 10 rupees a kilo, back in 1979.”




*‘कुछ इलाहाबाद में सामां नहीं बहबूद के,
यां धरा क्या है ब-जुज़ अकबर के और अमरूद के’
~ Akbar Allahabadi, Poet*

HINDI TITHI CALENDAR – PRAYAGRAJ

2019-20

<p>JANUARY</p> <p>15th Jan -Makar Sankranti</p> 	<p>Numerous rituals are followed during Sankranti. These rituals vary from state to state and within a state region to region. Following rituals are celebrated all over the country:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ritualistic bonfire a day before Makar Sankranti • worshipping of rising Surya Deva, the Sun God • holy dip in sacred water bodies • making Pongal and distributing it as Prasad in Tamil Nadu • performing charity by giving alms to the needy • flying kites especially in Gujarat • worshipping live stocks • preparing sweets with sesame and jaggery • taking oil bath, mostly in South India
<p>21st Jan – Paush Purnima</p> 	<p>Paush Purnima is a significant day in Hindu calendar. The full moon is the lunar phase when the moon appears fully illuminated from Earth's perspective. In lunar calendar, Magha month starts from the next day of Paush Purnima. During Magha Mahina people takes holy dip at Triveni Sangam at Prayag; this is considered highly auspicious and important on Paush Purnima day. It is believed that the holy dip on the auspicious day of Paush Purnima liberates the soul from the continuous cycle of e birth and death.</p>
<p>FEBRUARY</p> <p>4th Feb – Mauni Amavasya</p> 	<p>It is believed that the water of the most sacred and holy river in Hinduism, the Ganga, turns into the nectar on Mauni Amavasya day. Due to this belief Mauni Amavasya day is the most important day in Hindu calendar to take holy dip in the Ganga. According to the beliefs, Mauni Amavasya falls in the middle of Magha month and is also known as Maghi Amavasya.</p>
<p>9th February -Basant Panchami</p> 	<p>Vasant Panchami day is dedicated to Saraswati, the Goddess of knowledge, music, arts, science and technology. Goddess Saraswati is worshipped on this day. This ritual of initiating education to children is known as <i>Akshar-Abhyasam</i> or <i>Vidya-Arambham/Praasana</i> which is one of the famous rituals of Vasant Panchami.</p>

<p>19th Feb -Magh Purnima</p> 	<p>Magha Purnima is an important day in Hindu calendar. Religious texts describe the glory of holy bath and austerity observed during Magha Purnima. It is believed that every single day in month of Magha is special for doing charity.</p>
<p>MARCH 4th March –Mahashivratri</p> 	<p>Shivaratri is a great festival of convergence of Shiva and Shakti. Chaturdashi Tithi during Krishna Paksha in month of Magha is known as Maha Shivaratri.</p>
<p>20th March - Holika Dahan</p> 	<p>Holika was a demoness in Hindu Vedic scriptures, who was burnt to death with the help of God Vishnu. She was the sister of King Hiranyakashipu and aunt of Prahlad. The story of Holika Dahan (Holika's death) signifies the triumph of good over evil. It is believed that all sorts of fears can be conquered by doing Holika Puja on Holi. Holika Puja bestows power, prosperity and wealth.</p>

<p>21st March –Holi</p> 	<p>Holi is a religious festival celebrated by Hindus all over the world. Holi is considered the second biggest festival in the Hindu calendar after Diwali. Holi is also known as festival of Colors. The second day is known as Rangwali Holi - the day when people play with colored powder and colored water. Rangwali Holi which is main Holi day is also known as Dhulandi or Dhulendi</p>
<p>28th March -Sheetala Ashtami</p> 	<p>Basoda Puja is dedicated to Goddess Sheetala and is celebrated on Krishna Paksha Ashtami after Holi. Basoda is also known as Sheetala Ashtami. Usually it falls after eight days of Holi but many people observe it on first Monday or Friday after Holi. Sheetala Ashtami is more popular in North Indian states like Gujarat, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. According to Basoda customs families don't light a fire for cooking. Hence most families cook one day before and consume stale food on Sheetala Ashtami day. It is believed that Goddess Sheetala controls smallpox, chickenpox, measles, etc. and people worship her to ward off any outbreak of those diseases.</p>
<p>APRIL 19th April – Hanuman Jayanti</p> 	<p>Chaitra month. Hanuman, who is also known as Vanara God, was born on this day and Hanuman Jayanti is celebrated to commemorate the birth of Hanuman. Celebrations at Lete Hanuman and Gore Hanuman temple at Prayag are very famous. Rituals during Hanuman Jayanti:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shodashopachara Hanuman Puja • visiting Hanuman temple • offering Sindoor i.e. red vermilion to Lord Hanuman

MAY

11th May – Ganga Jayanti



Ganga Saptami day is dedicated to *Goddess Ganga*. This day is also known as *Ganga Pujan* and *Ganga Jayanti* as Ganga was reborn on this day.

According to Hindu Mythology Ganga descended to the Earth on Ganga Dussehra day. Lord Shiva took her in His hairs to break Ganga's descent. Later Lord Shiva released Ganga.

JUNE

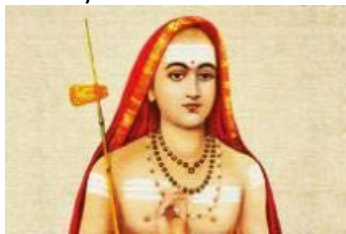
12th June -Ganga Dusshera



Ganga Dussehra falls during Dashami Tithi of Jyeshtha Shukla Paksha and currently falls in month of May or June. Ganga Dussehra is also known as Gangavataran which means the descent of the Ganga. This festival is dedicated to Goddess Ganga and this day is commemorated as the day, when Ganga descended to the Earth to accomplish her mission to purge the cursed souls of Bhagiratha's ancestors. Before coming to the Earth, the Goddess Ganga was residing in Kamandal of Lord Brahma and along with her the Goddess Ganga brought the purity of heaven to the Earth. On Ganga Dussehra devotees worship Goddess Ganga and take bath in the Ganga. Taking bath in the Ganga and offering charity or Daan-Punya on Ganga Dussehra day is considered highly auspicious. It is believed that holy dip in Ganga on Ganga Dussehra day can purge all type of sins.




JULY




16th July – Guru Purnima



During the Ashadha month, Full moon day is celebrated as Guru Purnima or Vyasa Purnima. Traditionally this day is reserved for Guru Puja or Guru Worship. On this day disciples offer Puja or pay respect to their Gurus. Guru refers to spiritual guide who enlightens disciples by his knowledge and teachings.

This day is commemorated as birth anniversary of Veda Vyasa. Veda Vyasa was the author as well as a character in the Hindu epic Mahabharata. Prayag being a Hindu Pilgrimage, observes Guru Purnima as one of the main festivals.

<p>AUGUST 3rd August - Hariyali Teej</p> 	<p>Teej festivity is celebrated by women in the states, especially in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand. Hariyali Teej is celebrated by women during Sawan month. Hartalika Teej Vrat is observed during Shukla Paksha Tritiya of Bhadrapada month. On this day, makeshift statues of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati are made with the sand and worshipped for marital bliss and progeny.</p> <p>Hartalika Teej is known by this name due to the legend associated with it.</p>
<p>5th August -Nag Panchami</p> 	<p>Nag Panchami is a significant days and it observed on Shukla Paksha Panchami during Shravana month. Nag Panchami falls in month of July and August and women worship Nag Devta and offer milk to snakes on this day. Women also pray for the wellness of their brothers and family. Nag Panchami is a traditional worship of serpent Gods observed by Hindus throughout India.</p>
<p>15th August -Shrawan Purnima / Rakshabanadhan</p> 	<p>Rakhi, which is also known as Raksha Bandhan, is a Hindu festival which is celebrated across India. Raksha Bandhan is recognized and celebrated among Hindus for its symbolic significance. Raksha Bandhan draws its significance from a sacred thread which is known as Rakhi. It is believed that the thread protects the one who wears it, especially during the auspicious time of Shravana Purnima.</p>

<p>24th August –Janamshtami</p> 	<p>Devotees, who observe fast on Janmashtami, should have the only a single meal a day before Janmashtami. On fasting day, devotees take Sankalpa to observe a day-long fast and to break it on the next day when both Rohini Nakshatra and Ashtami Tithi are over. Rituals performed during Janamashtmi:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a day long fast • worshipping Bal Krishna at midnight • visiting Krishna temple • cooking sweet dishes specially made of milk product
<p>SEPTEMBER 3rd September – Rishi Panchami</p> 	<p>Rishi Panchami is not a festival but a fasting day observed by women to pay homage to the Sapta Rishis which means seven sages and to get purified from Rajaswala Dosha. Hinduism gives highest priority to purity and there are strict guidelines to maintain purity of the body and the soul. In Hinduism women are believed to be contaminated during their menstrual cycle. During menstrual cycle women are not allowed to enter in the kitchen for cooking, to participate in any religious activities and to touch any family members. Avoiding these guidelines creates Rajaswala Dosha. Rishi Panchami fasting is advised to get rid of Rajaswala Dosha.</p>
<p>OCTOBER 8th October –Dussehra</p> 	<p>Vijayadashami is celebrated as victory of Lord Rama over demon Ravana and also victory of Goddess Durga over the buffalo Demon Mahishasura. Vijayadashami is also known as Dussehra and the Prayagraj Dussehra is famous across the country. Apart from Magh Mela, Dussehra is very famous in Prayag. The streets of Alop Devi and Lailta Devi temple observe huge crowds that gather, to pay obeisance to these goddesses.</p>

21st October -Ahoi –Ashtami



Traditionally, on Ahoi Ashtami mothers used to keep fast from dawn to dusk for the wellbeing of their sons. Fast is broken during twilight after sighting stars in the sky.

That lore goes: Once upon a time, there lived a kind and devoted woman in a village situated near to a dense forest. She had seven sons. One day in the month of Kartik, just few days before Diwali festivities, the woman decided to repair and decorate her house for Diwali celebrations. To renovate her house, she decided to go to the forest to fetch some soil. While digging the soil in the forest, she accidentally killed a lion cub with the spade with which she was digging the soil. She felt sad, guilty and responsible for what had happened to the innocent cub.

Within a year of this incident, all the seven sons of the woman disappeared and they were considered dead by the villagers. The villagers assumed that her sons might have been killed by some wild animals of the forest. The woman was very depressed and correlated all the misfortune with the accidental death of the cub by her. One day, she narrated her woes to one the old ladies of the village.

She discussed the incident, of how she had committed the sin of killing the cub mistakenly. The old lady advised the woman that as atonement for her sin, she should offer her prayers to the Goddess Ahoi Bhagawati, an incarnation of Goddess Parvati by sketching the face of the cub. She was suggested to observe fast and perform puja for the Goddess Ahoi as She is believed to be the protector of offspring of all living beings.

27th October –Deepawali



Diwali is the most significant religious festival among Hindus. The festival spiritually signifies the victory of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, good over evil and hope over despair. At Prayag, Diwali is celebrated for five days.

Being Amavasya day, people also perform Shradha for their ancestors at Sangam. Traditionally, most Puja are performed after keeping a day long fast. Hence, the devotees observe a day long fast on the day of Lakshmi Puja. The fast is broken after Lakshmi Puja in the evening.

NOVEMBER

2nd November -Chhatt Puja



The Sun God, Surya, the god of energy and of the life-force, is worshipped during the *Chhath Puja* to promote well-being, prosperity and progress.

Chhath Puja is also known as *Surya*

Shashti, Chhath, Chhathi, Chhath Parv, Dala Puja and Dala Chhath.

9th November – Tulsi Vivah



Prabodhini Ekadashi also known as Devotthan Ekadashi, is the 11th lunar day (ekadashi) in the bright fortnight of the Hindu month of Kartik. It marks the end of the four-month period of Chaturmas, when god Vishnu is believed to sleep. It is believed that Vishnu sleeps on Shayani Ekadashi and wakes on Prabodhini Ekadashi, thus giving this day the name "*Prabodhini Ekadashi*". The end of Chaturmas, when marriages are prohibited, signifies the beginning of the Hindu wedding season. It is also known as Kartiki Ekadashi, Kartik Shukla ekadashi and Kartiki. Prabodhini Ekadashi is followed by Kartik Purnima, which day is celebrated as Dev Diwali or Diwali of gods.

॥ प्रयागाष्टकम् ॥

श्रीगणेशाय नमः ।

मुनय ऊचुः

सुरमुनिदितिजेन्द्रैः सेव्यते योऽस्ततन्द्रैर्गुरुतरदुरितानां का कथा मानवानाम् ।
स भुवि सुकृतकर्तुर्वाञ्छितावाप्तिहेतुर्जयति विजितयागस्तीर्थराजः प्रयागः ॥ १॥

श्रुतिः प्रमाणं स्मृतयः प्रमाणं पुराणमप्यत्र परं प्रमाणम् ।
यत्रास्ति गङ्गा यमुना प्रमाणं स तीर्थराजो जयति प्रयागः ॥ २॥

न यत्र योगाचरणप्रतीक्षा न यत्र यज्ञेष्टिविशिष्टदीक्षा ।
न तारकज्ञानगुरोरपेक्षा स तीर्थराजो जयति प्रयागः ॥ ३॥

चिरं निवासं न समीक्षते यो ह्युदारचित्तः प्रददाति च क्रमात् ।
यः कल्पिताथांश्च ददाति पुंसः स तीर्थराजो जयति प्रयागः ॥ ४॥

यत्राप्लुतानां न यमो नियन्ता यत्रास्थितानां सुगतिप्रदाता ।
यत्राश्रितानाममृतप्रदाता स तीर्थराजो जयति प्रयागः ॥ ५॥

पुर्यः सप्त प्रसिद्धाःप्रतिवचनकरीस्तीर्थराजस्य नार्यो
नैकयान्मुक्तिदाने प्रभवति सुगुणा काश्यते ब्रह्म यस्याम् ।
सेयं राज्ञी प्रधाना प्रियवचनकरी मुक्तिदानेन युक्ता
येन ब्रह्माण्डमध्ये स जयति सुतरां तीर्थराजः प्रयागः ॥ ६॥
तीर्थावली यस्य तु कण्ठभागे दानावली वल्गति पादमूले ।
व्रतावली दक्षिणपादमूले स तीर्थराजो जयति प्रयागः ॥ ७॥
आज्ञापि यज्ञाः प्रभवोपि यज्ञाः सप्तर्षिसिद्धाः सुकृतानभिज्ञाः ।
विज्ञापयन्तः सततं हि काले स तीर्थराजो जयति प्रयागः ॥ ८॥
सितासिते यत्र तरङ्गचामरे नद्यौ विभाते मुनिभानुकन्यके ।
लीलातपत्रं वट एक साक्षात्स तीर्थराजो जयति प्रयागः ॥ ९॥
तीर्थराजप्रयागस्य माहात्म्यं कथयिष्यति ।

शृण्वतः सततं भक्त्या वाञ्छितं फलमाप्नुयात् ॥ १०॥
इति श्रीमत्स्यपुराणे प्रयागराजमाहात्म्याष्टकं समाप्तम् ॥

Figure 156. Verses from Prayagashtakam

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