

A DIP IN ETERNITY

MAHAKUMBH 2025

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***To The Essence of My Being, My linspiration,
The Source of My Breath, TARA MAA.***

Foreword

The sacred call of the Mahakumbh, a confluence of faith and humanity on an unparalleled scale, has echoed through millennia. To witness it is to be swept into a current of devotion so profound it feels like a dip in eternity. This book, "A Dip in Eternity – Mahakumbh 2025," is an invitation to immerse yourself in that very experience, even if you cannot physically stand on the holy banks where millions gather.

Within these pages, I have attempted to capture the vibrant tapestry of my journey to the the Mahakumbh via Varanasi – the kaleidoscope of multiple faith, vibrancy of the saffron-clad sadhus, the fervent chants that resonate through the air, the unwavering belief etched on the faces of pilgrims who have journeyed from every corner of the earth. It is a chronicle of faith in its most potent and visible form, a testament to the enduring human quest for spiritual connection and liberation.

More than just a description of rituals and crowds, this book seeks to delve into the heart of the Mahakumbh, the main ritual of penance, that has been our journey to reach this confluence. It explores the ancient city of Varanasi and the deeply personal journeys of those who undertake this pilgrimage. It is an attempt to understand the magnetic pull that draws humanity together in such overwhelming numbers, seeking solace, blessings, and a glimpse of the eternal.

The Mahakumbh is a spectacle that defies easy description. It is a sensory overload, a spiritual awakening, and a profound reminder of our shared humanity. Through the lens of my own experiences at the 2025 gathering, I hope to offer you a window into this extraordinary event, allowing you to feel the pulse of this ancient ritual and perhaps, in some small way, take your own dip in eternity.

Finally, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to the pillars of my life. Thank you, my mother, Chaitali Nath, for instilling in me the values that guide my journey. To my wife, Sumita, your

unwavering support has been my constant strength. And to my beloved children, Sumedha and Swyambhu, your constant encouragement has been the light that illuminated this path.

Aditya Bandopadhyay, an old friend of mine, took some of the pictures included here. He supported my unreasonable request to take pictures of sights and locations which I had missed because he was in Mahakumbh after us. For this, I am grateful.

Bangalore

15th March 2025

Kaustav Nath

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Part 1:
A Dip in Eternity: Varanasi and the Maha
Kumbh Mela 2025 -
A Memoir The Journey:



Lao Tzu said, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

The Call of the Mahakumbh came suddenly out of the blues. But while going through the various dates of Maha Snan (The Holy Bath) the call of Varanasi, the ancient city of light, became a

PC: Aditya Bandopadhyay



determined to answer it, along with my wife Sumita and one frail elderly lady who was ready to take on this journey on such short notice. **Mahakumbh Snan (Bath)** adding a potent urgency to our pilgrimage. But fate, had other plans. Our train tickets, remained stubbornly on the waiting list.

We left home on the 27th of January and headed to our nearest Metro Station and Railways was



Sumita In Front of Vande Bharath Express
that took us to Secunderabad

kind enough to let me know that our PNR is cancelled and refund being processed. Now at this point we had only 2 choices, either we go with whatever lies ahead or turn back home. We chose to do the first.

We huddled over, frantically searching for alternatives. Every train to

Prayagraj/Varanasi was either fully booked or had a waiting list longer than the Ganges itself. Airfares were astronomical. Time was slipping away like sand through our fingers.

Then, we stumbled upon a possible, albeit convoluted, route. A train to Secunderabad, a city in Telengana State, and from there, a bus to Rewa in Madhya Pradesh, followed by another bus to Mirzapur, and finally, the last leg to Varanasi. It was a marathon journey, a cross-country odyssey, but it was our only option. A simple 30 hour Journey became 96 hours and a journey of a life time.

The train to Secunderabad, though a blur, was comfortable. It is pertinent to mention here about the Vande Bharat Express. The Vande



Bharat Express represents a significant leap forward in Indian Railways. It's commendable to see a domestically designed and built train achieving higher speeds and offering a more comfortable travel experience. The focus on modern amenities, improved hygiene, and reduced travel times is a welcome change for passengers. While there's always room for improvement and expansion of the network, the Vande Bharat Express is a positive step towards modernizing India's railway infrastructure and a testament to the country's growing capabilities in indigenous manufacturing. It's an encouraging sign for the future of Indian Railways.

We were a mix of anxiety and excitement, unsure of what awaited us. Secunderabad was a whirlwind of unfamiliar sights and sounds. We navigated the bustling bus station, a cacophony of engines, boarded an auto to our hotel prebooked by my dearest friend and ex-colleague Prashanth V. We checked in just before midnight of Day 1.

Our Bus to Rewa in Madhya Pradesh was to leave at 1930 on 28th so we had enough time in hand to explore Hyderabad. We Dumped our luggage at the Bus Operator's office and straight away headed for The Charminar.



Sumita and Dr. Mridula Chauhan in front of Charminar

The Charminar is an iconic monument with a rich history and architectural significance. The Charminar was built in 1591 by Sultan Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, the fifth ruler of the Qutb Shahi dynasty, to commemorate the founding of Hyderabad. It was also built to commemorate the victory of the Qutb Shahi army over the Golconda Sultanate. The Charminar served as a mosque, a watchtower, and a royal palace. The Charminar was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1984,

recognizing its cultural and historical significance.

Architectural Wonders:

Four minarets: The most striking feature of the Charminar are its four minarets, rising majestically from a square base. These minarets are intricately carved with floral patterns and calligraphy, and offer panoramic views of the city from their top.

Grand archway: A grand archway, known as the "Fateh Darwaza," serves as the main entrance to the Charminar. It is adorned with intricate carvings and inscriptions, and is a symbol of victory and triumph.

Prayer hall: The Charminar also houses a mosque on the second floor, accessible through a flight of steps. The mosque features a large prayer hall with a beautiful mihrab (a niche indicating the direction of prayer) and a minbar (a pulpit used for sermons).

The bus to Rewa was an experience in itself. It was delayed by 2 hours and left around 2130 hours from Hyderabad. It was a rickety vehicle,

packed to the brim with people and their belongings. The journey was long and arduous, the roads till Telengana Border was smooth but as soon as we entered Maharashtra it was bumpy and dusty. We shared stories with fellow passengers, sipped chai from roadside stalls, and watched the landscape change from the urban sprawl of Hyderabad to the rustic charm of rural India. Even at Night the roads from Hyderabad to Nagpur was magnificent. I was able to seat next to the driver during our entry to Maharashtra during the early morning of 29th January 2024. It was a beautiful winding road through the forest. Nagpur was our next Major Stop other than some small not so known stops in the journey.

Nagpur, Maharashtra's winter capital, is a vibrant city blending tradition and modernity. Known as the "Orange City" for its abundant citrus production, Nagpur is also a major commercial and educational hub. It's historically significant, having been a part of the Gond kingdom and later under the Bhonsle dynasty. The city is a



Nagpur—The Winter Capital of Maharashtra

crucial railway junction and a growing IT center. Nagpur's cultural landscape is rich, with influences from various communities. Key attractions include the Deekshabhoomi, a significant Buddhist pilgrimage site, the Sitabuldi Fort, and the serene Ambazari Lake. The city offers a mix of historical landmarks, religious sites, and natural beauty, making it a compelling destination. We reached Nagpur very late in the afternoon and had to wait for almost an hour for some clearances for the transporter. Our next destination and change of vehicle was to be at Rewa In Madhya Pradesh.



Our Rewa Bus Stand at Night

Rewa was a small town, a world away from the chaos of the cities. We reached around 0230 hours in the morning of

30th January 2025. There was no place to stay and was quite cold so 12 passengers waiting to board the Varanasi Bus huddled together and made our small bon fire to keep ourself warm before the next leg of our journey.

The bus to Mirzapur was another adventure. The roads were even worse, and the bus swayed precariously as it navigated the winding paths. But the scenery was breathtaking. We passed through lush green fields,



The Bonfire that kept us warm at Rewa

crossed rivers, and witnessed the simple beauty of rural life.

We reached around Midday leaving Rewa at 0630 hours on 30th January 2025. Mirzapur, a historic city on the banks of the Ganges, was a welcome sight. We had finally reached the river, the lifeline that connected us to Varanasi. From Mirzapur, it was a relatively short bus ride to our final destination. As we approached Varanasi, the anticipation was palpable. We could feel the energy of the city even before we arrived.

Finally, we reached Varanasi. The city was a sensory overload – the vibrant colours, the aroma of incense and spices, the chanting of priests, the throng of pilgrims. It was everything we had imagined and more. Despite the long and arduous journey, we felt a sense of accomplishment. We had overcome the obstacles, navigated the challenges, and finally reached our destination. The journey, though unexpected, had become an integral part of our pilgrimage. It had tested our resilience, strengthened our bond, and made our arrival in Varanasi even more meaningful. We had earned

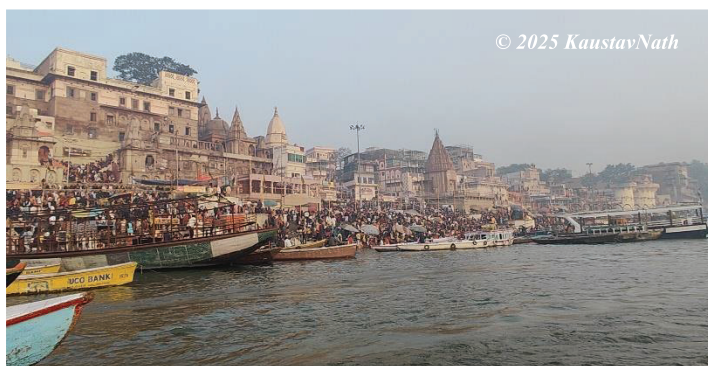
our dip in the Ganges, our darshan of Lord Shiva. The chaotic journey had somehow purified our intentions, making our pilgrimage all the more sacred. The unplanned detour had become part of the divine plan, a reminder that sometimes, the most rewarding journeys are the ones that take us off the beaten path.

You never really learn much from doing things the easy way. You learn when you're out of your comfort zone. And we did learn a lot from this journey.

Varanasi – City of Light and Shadows

Landing in Varanasi was like stepping back in time, or perhaps, outside of time altogether. The air hummed with a palpable energy, a chaotic symphony of honking rickshaws, chanting priests, the rhythmic clang of temple bells, and the murmur of a million prayers. The narrow, winding lanes, barely wide enough for a single rickshaw, were a labyrinth of sensory overload – the scent of incense and marigolds mingling with the aroma of street food, the vibrant colours of silks and spices, the press of humanity, all swirling together in a heady mix.

We stayed at Bharat Sevashram Sangha. Before dawn, the ghats, the riverfront steps, came alive. Pilgrims, wrapped in colourful shawls, descended to the water's edge, their silhouettes etched against the pre-dawn sky. The air was filled with the soft murmur of prayers, the splash of water as devotees took their holy dip, and the distant chanting of priests.



A Glimpse of Morning Activities at the Varanasi Ghats from our boat.

The ghats were the heart and soul of Varanasi. Dashashwamedh Ghat, where the evening Ganga Aarti ceremony takes place, throbbed with energy. Manikarnika Ghat and Harishchandra Ghat, the cremation grounds, offered a stark reminder of the ephemeral nature of life. The sight of funeral pyres burning, the smoke curling into the sky, was both



*A Narrow Deserted Lane on our way to
Manikarnika Ghat*

unsettling and strangely beautiful. It was a visceral encounter with death, a reality that most of us try to shield ourselves from. Here, death was not hidden, but acknowledged, integrated into the cycle of life.

We got up at 0430 hours and left for Manikarnika Ghat. Due to the heavy crowd the administration had restricted the movement autorickshaws and electric rickshaws to 2 kms away from the ghats.

We took a rickshaw and went to Manikarnika Ghat.

Manikarnika Ghat: Varanasi's Ghat of Liberation

Manikarnika Ghat, nestled along the sacred Ganges River in Varanasi, is more than just a

cremation ground; it's a profound testament to the Hindu beliefs surrounding life, death, and liberation. Often referred to as the "Burning Ghat," it holds a unique place in the spiritual landscape of India.

A Gateway to Moksha:

Hindus believe that cremation at Manikarnika Ghat breaks the cycle of rebirth and grants 'moksha' – liberation from the endless cycle of life and death. This belief stems from the legend of Goddess Parvati's earring (Manikarnika) falling here, sanctifying the ground. The eternal flames that flicker day and night symbolize the continuous cycle of life and the pursuit of moksha.

Observing the Cycle of Life:

Visiting Manikarnika Ghat is a powerful, often unsettling experience. Witnessing the cremation ceremonies, the rituals performed by the 'Doms' (the traditional cremation workers), and the acceptance of death as a natural part of life can be deeply moving. It offers a unique perspective on mortality and the impermanence of life.

A Place of Pilgrimage:

Beyond its role as a cremation ground, Manikarnika Ghat is a significant pilgrimage site. Devotees come to bathe in the Ganges, perform rituals for their ancestors, and reflect on the spiritual significance of life and death. The ghat's atmosphere is thick with a mix of solemnity, reverence, and a sense of acceptance.

Respectful Observation:



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A Doma at work at Manikarnika Ghat

It's crucial to approach Manikarnika Ghat with respect and sensitivity. Photography is generally discouraged, and it's important to be mindful of the grieving families and the solemnity of the ceremonies. Observing from a respectful distance can offer a profound insight into Hindu beliefs and the acceptance of death as an integral part of life.



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A Photo of another boat ferrying tourists.

Manikarnika Ghat is not just a place of cremation; it's a powerful reminder of the cyclical nature of existence and the human quest for liberation. It's an experience that stays with you, prompting reflection on life, death, and the spiritual journey.

The pre-dawn air in Varanasi was a cool caress against my skin as we boarded the small wooden boat. The Ganges, a ribbon of silver in the dim light, stretched before me, its surface rippled by the gentle current. A thin mist hung over the water, softening the edges of the ghats



The Siberian Gulls over the Holy Ganges

that lined the riverbanks, transforming them into a dreamlike tableau.

As our boatman, Rinku Singh, a young man with already weathered hands, pushed us away from the shore, the city began to awaken. The soft murmur of prayers drifted across the water, mingling with the splash of oars and the distant clang of temple bells. Silhouettes of pilgrims descended the ghats, their movements graceful and reverent. The first rays of the sun painted the sky with hues of orange and pink, slowly revealing the vibrant colours of the city.

The boat glided silently past the ghats, each one a stage for the unfolding drama of life and death.

We passed Dashashwamedh Ghat, where the evening Ganga Aarti would later ignite the night, and Manikarnika Ghat, from where we started our ride, where the smoke from cremation pyres curled into the morning air, a stark reminder of the ephemeral nature of existence. The juxtaposition of these scenes, the celebration of life alongside the acceptance of death, was both unsettling and profoundly moving.

The Ganges itself held a palpable energy. It felt ancient, sacred, a living entity that had witnessed centuries of devotion. Pilgrims waded into the water, their faces illuminated by the rising sun, taking their holy dip, washing away their sins. The air was thick with faith, a tangible sense of spiritual yearning.

The boat ride was a meditation, a moment of quiet contemplation amidst the vibrant chaos of Varanasi. The gentle rocking of the boat, the soft murmur of the river, the unfolding panorama of the ghats – all these combined to create a sense of peace, a connection to something larger than myself. As the sun climbed higher in the sky, casting its golden light upon the city, I felt a

sense of gratitude for this moment, this glimpse into the heart of India, this immersion in the sacred flow of the Ganges.

As the boat gently glides on the sacred Ganges, a sight of hundreds of Siberian Gulls performing a captivating aerial dance, is illuminated by the gentle golden rays of the winter sun. A living, breathing ballet against the historic backdrop of Varanasi's ghats, their immaculate white wings catch the light as they glide and swoop. In sharp contrast to the deep religiosity of this city, I experience a sense of youthful amazement. It seems as though the deep, ancient essence of Kashi has been beautifully and playfully counterbalanced by nature itself. Each click of my camera feels inadequate to capture this fleeting magic, this unexpected harmony between the earthly and the ethereal. A warmth spreads through me, a joyful appreciation for this moment of serene beauty amidst the vibrant chaos of life along the Ganges.

I spent the day wandering the ghats, observing the rituals, talking to the pilgrims, trying to understand the deep faith that permeated every

aspect of life in Varanasi. I met a sadhu with a flowing beard and piercing eyes who spoke of renunciation and the search for enlightenment. I talked to a family who had come to Varanasi to perform the last rites for their deceased father. I listened to a young boy explain the significance of the different deities. Each encounter was a lesson, a glimpse into a world so different from my own.

The evenings in Varanasi was magical. We were looking forward to the flickering lamps of the Ganga Aarti. The ceremony, a spectacular display of choreographed movements by young priests, accompanied by chanting and the rhythmic ringing of bells, was cancelled for 5 days till 5th of February 2025 due to the sudden surge of crowd at Varanasi. The Day we were there, there was at least 20Lakh pilgrims on Varanasi Road. The Administration had no other option but to cancel the Aarti in order to control the crowd.

Beyond the ghats, Varanasi offered a wealth of experiences. I explored the narrow lanes, discovering hidden temples and bustling

markets. I tasted the local delicacies, from the spicy kachori sabzi to the sweet and creamy lassi. I visited the Banaras Hindu University, a sprawling campus that showcased the intellectual heart of the city.

But Varanasi was not without its challenges. The crowds could be overwhelming. The constant noise and activity could be exhausting. Yet, amidst the chaos, there was a sense of peace, a deep connection to something ancient and timeless. Varanasi was a city of contrasts, a place where life and death, joy and sorrow, the sacred and the profane, coexisted in a delicate balance.



The Throbbing Crowd at Varanasi

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*A Century old Temple Near
Manikarnika Ghat*



© 2025 KaustavNath

*A Sadhu with his snake. Had an
Interesting Conversation with him on
my way to Manikarnika Ghat*



© 2025 KaustavNath

Sunrise On The Ganges at Varanasi



© 2025 KaustavNath

Burning Pyres at Manikarnika Ghat



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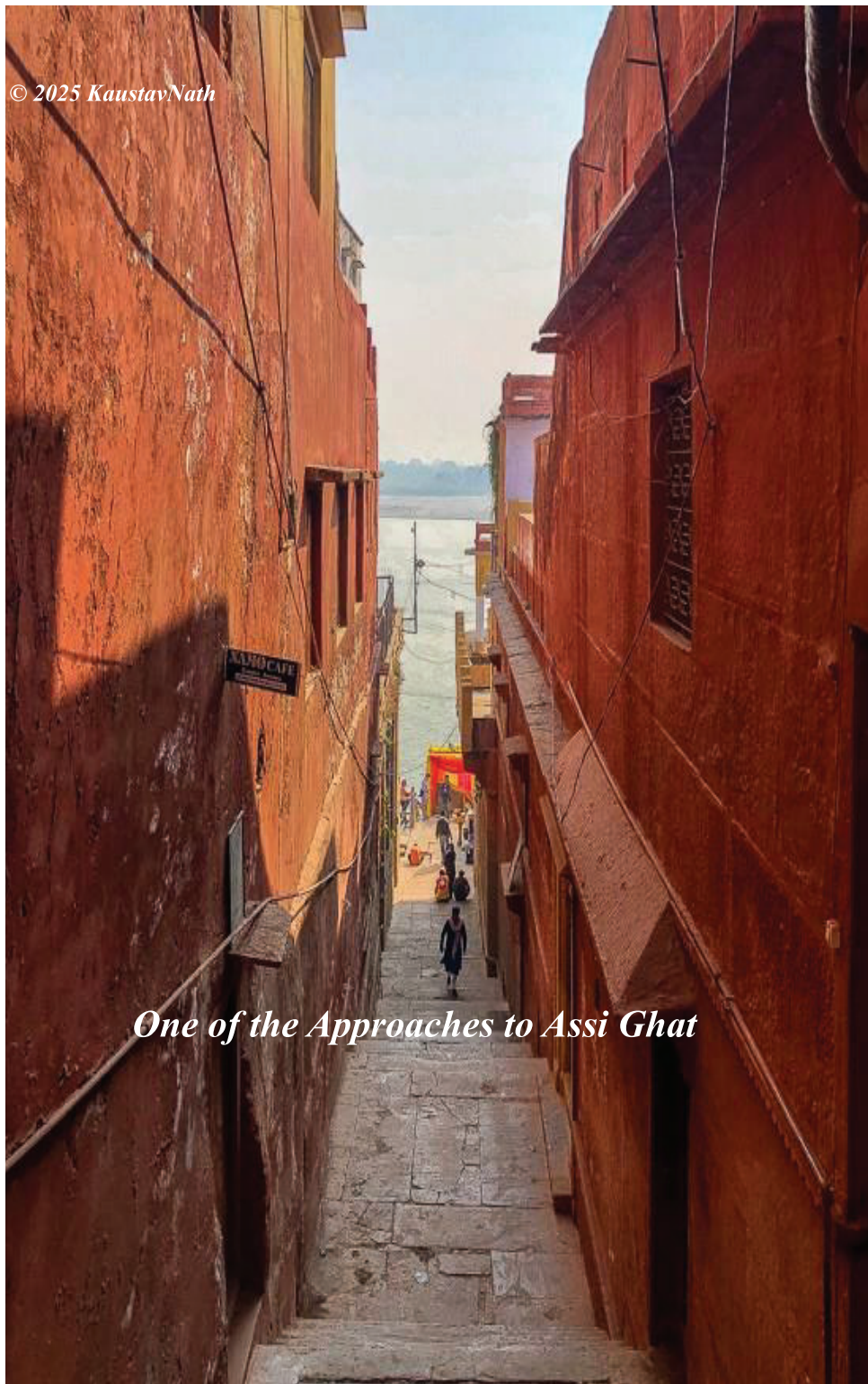


The Famous lanes and Bye-Lanes of Varanasi



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One of the Approaches to Assi Ghat

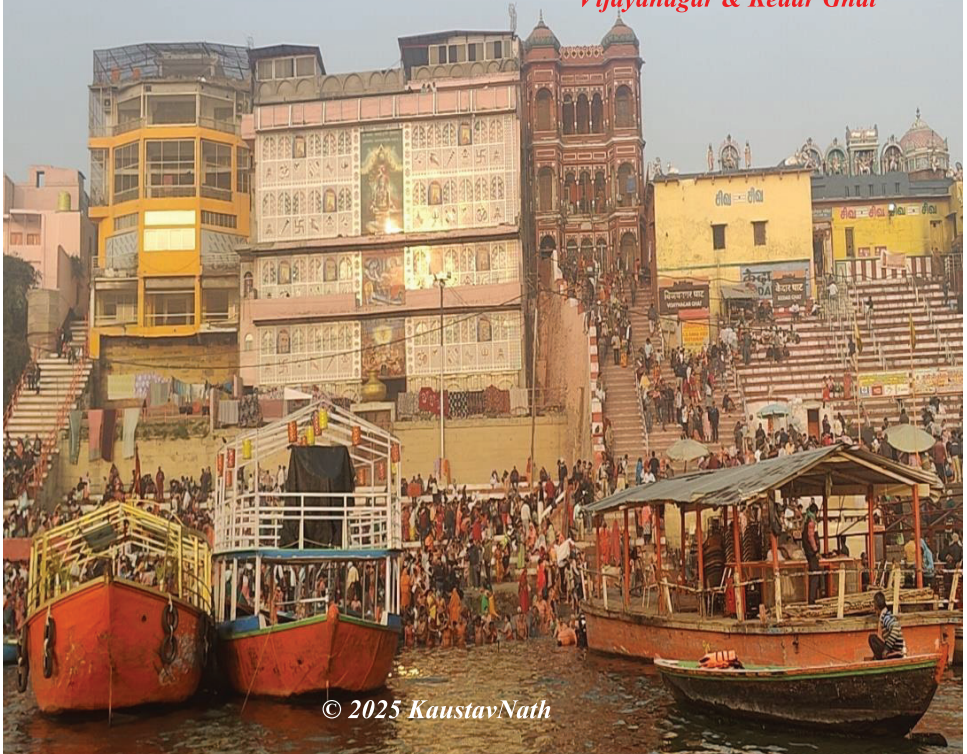


A Litti Chokha Vendor on the streets of Varanasi

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Vijayanagar & Kedar Ghat



© 2025 KaustavNath

Chet Singh Ghat



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*A Winter Trip to Varunasi Can Never Be
Complete without the famous MALAIYO*



Part 2:
The Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 -
A Sea of Faith



The journey to Prayagraj for the Maha Kumbh Mela was an adventure in itself. The trains were packed, the roads were congested, and the atmosphere was buzzing with anticipation. Millions of pilgrims were converging on the Sangam, the confluence of the Ganges, the Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati rivers. We were lucky to get seats at the last moment on Vande Bharat to Prayagraj.

The Kumbh Mela was unlike anything I had ever experienced. It was a sea of humanity, a vast tent city that stretched for miles along the riverbanks. Millions of pilgrims, from all walks of life, had come to Prayagraj to take a holy dip in the



Condition at The Varanasi Railway Station. Pilgrims awaiting Special Trains to Carry them to Maha Kumbh or their other personal destinations

Sangam, to wash away their sins and attain moksha, liberation from the cycle of birth and death.

The sheer scale of the event was mind-boggling. The tent city was a world unto itself, with its own roads, markets, hospitals, and even police stations. There were hundreds of camps, each belonging to different religious sects and organizations. The air was thick with the scent of incense, the sound of chanting, and the murmur of a million conversations.

The Sangam itself was the focal point of the Mela. Pilgrims, dressed in their finest clothes, waded into the water, their faces radiant with devotion.

They took a dip, offered prayers, and then emerged from the water, their sins supposedly washed away. The atmosphere was electric, charged with a collective faith that was both palpable and awe-inspiring.

We were exploring the Mela, observing the rituals,



talking to the pilgrims, and trying to understand the significance of the event. I met a Naga Sadhu, a

A Naga Sadhu at Maha Kumbh 2025 naked ascetic covered in ash, who spoke of the power of renunciation. I talked to a group of women who had traveled for days to take a dip in the Sangam. I listened to a guru explain the complex cosmology of the Hindu scriptures.

The Kumbh Mela was a microcosm of India, a place where all the different strands of Indian culture and spirituality came together. It was a celebration of faith, a testament to the enduring power of tradition, and a reminder of the deep



Naga Sadhus During the Maha Snan at Maha Kumbh 2025

spiritual yearning that lies at the heart of human existence.

The experience was overwhelming, both physically and emotionally. The crowds were immense, the noise was constant, and the sheer scale of the event was difficult to grasp. Yet, amidst the chaos, there was a sense of community, a shared purpose that transcended all differences. The Kumbh Mela was a reminder that we are all connected, that we are all part of something larger than ourselves.

While the spiritual significance of the Maha Kumbh is paramount, the sheer scale of this gathering presents a monumental logistical



The “SANGAM DWAR”

challenge. This remarkable efforts of the administration in ensuring a smooth and spiritually enriching experience for the vast multitude of pilgrims.

Unprecedented Planning and Preparedness

The success of the Maha Kumbh 2025 was rooted in meticulous planning and proactive measures undertaken by the administration. Recognizing the immense scale of the event, authorities began preparations well in advance, leaving no stone unturned to ensure the comfort and safety of the pilgrims.

Infrastructure Marvels

One of the most impressive aspects of the Maha Kumbh 2025 was the sheer scale of the infrastructure development. The administration transformed Prayagraj into a well-equipped temporary city, capable of accommodating millions.

Accommodation: The sprawling Maha Kumbh Nagar was meticulously planned and executed, providing a range of accommodation options, from basic tent cities to more comfortable lodgings. The sheer number of dwelling units constructed was a testament to the administration's commitment to ensuring shelter for all.

Sanitation: Maintaining hygiene and sanitation for such a massive gathering is a herculean task. The administration deployed thousands of sanitation workers and installed a vast network of toilets and washing facilities. The cleanliness of the Mela grounds, despite the massive footfall, was commendable.

Ghats and Bathing Areas: The sacred act of bathing at the Sangam is central to the Maha Kumbh experience. The administration constructed extensive ghats and bathing areas to accommodate the massive crowds. Special arrangements were made for the Shahi Snan (royal bath), ensuring the smooth and safe conduct of this significant ritual.

Safety and Security

The safety and security of pilgrims were of paramount importance. The administration implemented a comprehensive security plan, deploying a large contingent of police personnel and installing CCTV cameras across the Mela grounds. Crowd management was a key focus, with strategies in place to prevent stampedes and ensure the orderly flow of pilgrims. The multi-disaster response vehicle deployed at the Mela was a testament to the administration's preparedness for any eventuality. Multiple Police Posts were created by the administration to counter malicious and scrupulous incidents. Two Police Stations were created one of which was specifically for Women.

Technological Integration

The administration leveraged technology to enhance the pilgrim experience and streamline operations. A dedicated mobile app provided pilgrims with essential information about the Mela, including maps, schedules, and emergency contacts. Social media was effectively used to disseminate information and address queries. The integration of technology facilitated better communication and coordination, contributing to the smooth conduct of the event.



Sadhus Singing Bhajans at Mahakumbh Mela 2025

The Crowd at Sangam



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Sadhus at Mahakumbh



PC: Aditya Bundopadhyay

*A Naga Sadhu who has taken the oath (Vrat) of
Never to Sit or Lie Down at Kumbh*



PC: Aditya Bandopadhyay

Every Sector Had Medical Camps like this





Bhandaras Like Sita Rasoi Fed Millions of Pilgrims Every Day for Free.

We had a Sumptuous Khichdi Lunch from Sita Rasoi



A Sea Of People taking Bath at MahaKumbh 2025



PC: Aditya Bandopadhyay



PC: Aditya Bandopadhyay



Confluence of All Faith at Maha Kumbh 2025.



PC: Aditya Bandopadhyay

Aditya In front of The Famous Kinnar Akhara



PC: Aditya Bandopadhyay

Dr. Mridula Chauhan, A young Woman of 68 years, took this arduous journey with us.



Part 3:

Reflections – A Journey Inward

The journey to Varanasi and the Maha Kumbh Mela was more than just a trip; it was a transformative experience. It was a journey into the heart of India, a glimpse into a world so different from my own. It was a journey into the depths of faith, a reminder of the enduring power of spirituality. And most importantly, it was a journey inward, a quest for self-discovery. Varanasi challenged me, confronted me with the realities of life and death, forced me to question my own assumptions and beliefs. The Maha Kumbh Mela overwhelmed me, showed me the immensity of human faith, reminded me of the interconnectedness of all beings.

The three of us and the crowd of almost 8 million people surrounded us. Everyone is looking for that unfamiliar, nectar, which is right out of our reach. The position of the symbolic Amrit in the confluence was not clear at first. But soon I realized – I want to make this search successful, and if not, then I want to have a strong will. The journey was difficult, fatigue swallowed the mind and soul, but as we had learnt during our training, perseverance is the key to success. Every step,

however small it may be towards your calling , will make you reach your goal.

I met people across India, Rural India to be specific, a 60—year veteran old who had lost a leg during one of the battles during his time in the Army, came from Borao Village in Rajasthan. Changing 5/6 busses and walking on his crutches for the last 12 kms. Met one destitute lady, who has travelled from Chelapur village in UP reached Prayagraj after changing 4 busses. They all have completed this journey, not for any treasure, but in the unstoppable power of faith.

Coming here - mixing with people, listening to their numerous stories - I realized that the true "Armrit Kumbh" is not limited to any external container. It lies in the human sea around me. The thirst for thousands of years of liberation, the desire of infinity is alive here. These people, these companions, defined the spiritual heart rate of this land. Sometimes clear, sometimes hiding, but this search never ends. Here this desire is engraved in the air.

Many have already warned - it's a game of rich, designed for the rich. But in reality my experience

is different. Majority of the people around me were not rich. Rather, they had deep faith and intense respect – which was clearly visible.

Here, I must recount an incident. A philosophy I heard that from one of the sadhus. All three of us were worn out. I was carrying almost 30 kgs on me and my wife Sumita around 15. These were our belongings for the entire trip. We had already walked for almost 18 kilometers for the day and still had to go a further 7– 10 to reach a point from where transport was available to the Railway Station. We were hungry. We stopped at the “Sita Ma Ka Rasoi” Bhandara for Lunch. The que was long and I told the ladies to take shelter under a shade while I went to get the food. One of the volunteers came and handed me over a plate. A flimsy leaf plate, crafted from delicate, dried foliage, offers a rustic, eco-friendly way to serve food. But the quality of the plate was such that it had no rigidity. While I was being served the Khichdi, I complained to the Sadhu regarding the quality of the plate. His answer simply mesmerized me. He Said, ***“Beta Jaan Bujhke Humne Aise Mangwaye Hai. Thora Shakt Hota***

to Ek Haat Mein Phone Leke Selfie Khichte Humre Saath Aur Ek Haath Se Prasad Lete. Abhi Kum Se Kum Dono Haath Jod ke Prasad To Lenge.”

I left Prayagraj with more questions than answers, but that was okay. The journey was not about finding answers, but about asking the right questions. It was about opening my heart and mind to new possibilities, about embracing the unknown.

The Ganges still calls to me, its siren song echoing in my soul. I know that I will return to Varanasi and Prayagraj someday, to explore its ancient mysteries, to delve deeper into its spiritual heart. The journey continues, the quest for meaning goes on. But now, I have a deeper understanding, a greater appreciation for the richness and complexity of Indian culture, and a renewed sense of my own place in the universe. The dip in the Sangam, the encounter with Varanasi, the echoes of the chants, the vibrant colours, the scent of incense, the faces of the pilgrims – all these are etched in my memory, a reminder of the transformative power of travel,

the enduring strength of faith, and the eternal quest for meaning. The journey to Mahakumbh was not just a trip; it was a pilgrimage, ***A Dip In Eternity.***



The Author With His Wife after the Holy Dip