

VAICHARIK KUMBH  
KUMBH OF IDEAS  
PRAYAGRAJ KUMBH 2019

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**VAICHARIK KUMBH 2018-19**

# **KUMBH OF IDEAS**

**KASHI, MATHURA, AYODHYA, LUCKNOW AND PRAYAGRAJ**





“Kumbh Mela (festival of the sacred pitcher) is the largest peaceful congregation of pilgrims on earth, during which participants bathe or take a dip in a sacred river. Devotees believe that by bathing in the holy Ganges one is freed from sins liberating him/her from the cycle of birth and death. Millions of people reach the place without any invitation. The congregation includes ascetics, saints, sadhus, aspirants-kalpavasis and visitors. The festival is held at Allahabad (Prayagraj), Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nasik every four years by rotation and is attended by millions of people irrespective of caste, creed or gender. Its primary bearers, however, belong to akhadas and ashrams, religious organisations, or are individuals living on alms. Kumbh Mela plays a central spiritual role in the country, exerting a mesmeric influence on ordinary Indians. The event encapsulates the science of astronomy, astrology, spirituality, ritualistic traditions, and social and cultural customs and practices, making it extremely rich in knowledge. As it is held in four different cities in India, it involves different social and cultural activities, making this a culturally diverse festival. Knowledge and skills related to the tradition are transmitted through ancient religious manuscripts, oral traditions, historical travelogues and texts produced by eminent historians. However, the teacher-student relationship of the sadhus in the ashrams and akhadas remains the most important method of imparting and safeguarding knowledge and skills relating to Kumbh Mela.”

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**Editor-in-Chief**  
Shri Awanish Kumar Awasthi, IAS  
DG Tourism,  
Government of Uttar Pradesh

**Editors**  
Shri Vijay Kiran Anand, IAS, Mela Officer  
Shri Dinesh Kumar, Deputy Director, Tourism, Prayagraj  
Shri Anupam Srivastava, Regional Tourist Officer, Prayagraj

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**Author**  
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NARENDRA MODI

Prime Minister, India







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At the Sarvasamavesi Kumbh, spiritual leaders gathered to discuss how the grand festival, as well as the Indian culture's historical philosophy was inclusive





## KUMBH: A PITCHER OF HARMONY

**K**UMBH Mela is the largest gathering of humanity on Earth. This congregation represents the spiritual and cultural heritage of India, where there is no discrimination against any person — neither on the basis of caste, nor language, gender, sect, or religion. This largest spiritual and cultural event is a perfect confluence of samarasta (harmony). This event paves the way for the welfare of humanity. And the way for paving the welfare of humanity in the world has and will always come out of India. I think Ayodhya can be its base, because Ayodhya has given that leadership.

Kumbh is among the holy traditions of India where I have never seen any discrimination. After the Kumbh was organised in Nashik in 2015, I did read some reports in western media which labelled it as anti-environment, anti-Dalit and anti-women. I was disappointed as this isn't the truth. Then the next year, in 2016, the Simhastha Kumbh was organised. And there was no discrimination of any form. Both the festivals were grand events, celebrating harmony and our cultural heritage. And this is the reason why UNESCO has recognised it as a heritage event.

In the case of Sabarimala Temple, see the public faith and the decision of the court. There should be no discrimination to go to God's home, only faith and belief should be there. Those who went to the Supreme Court have nothing to do with India's eternal traditions. Those who have never gone to a temple want that everyone should get admission to Sabarimala.

One of the best works of God in the world is man. If we discriminate against humans on the basis of caste, region, language and then hope that our prayers will be heard, how is it possible? We should create an environment in which our society rejects all discrimination. We have to shed off the toxicity and mental slavery to everything that prevents us from

coming together on a spiritual platform.

Cutting out the barriers of region, caste or religion, throwing out discrimination in any form, I am proud to say that this country is not a slave. When we don't pay attention to negative influences, we are on the path to a Vedic way of life. We will then not lose our sense of well-being. The Vedas are the light of life in our country.

Lord Ram shows us the way to salvation. But who brought us closer to Lord Ram? Who introduced us to Lord Ram? The great Maharishi Valmiki but we forget his tradition. Equality in thought and behaviour is the road to success.

Today, we rely on Google for truth and our decisions are based on that truth. We accept the truth that Google is showing, There is no brainstorming or contemplation and we do not take time to think deeply about all that we have read on Google. This will have to change. This needs to change, Therefore, the message of Samarasta Kumbh should reach the world. And the land of Ayodhya is where the change begins — Kumbh is not anti-environment, it is environment friendly. Organising Kumbh is a celebration of shakti or women power. There is no discrimination against anyone at the Mela.

**Yogi Adityanath,**

**Hon'ble Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh**

Speech at Ayodhya on 15 December, 2018





(From Right to Left): The trio performs the Ganga puja — Shri Ram Nath Kovind, President of India; Shri Ram Naik, Governor, UP; and Yogi Adityanath, Chief Minister, UP





CHAPTER 1

KASHI / 1-2 DECEMBER 2018

PARYAVARAN KUMBH

Benares, Varanasi, or Kashi is home to famous temples, exquisite banks, ghats, and River Ganges. With the government's resolve to clean Indian rivers, cities, and villages, Kashi hosted Prayavaran Kumbh, Kumbh of Environment





During Kumbh, and even during the annual Magh Mela, the gulls flock to the holy Sangam, along with the millions of pilgrims



In interesting and insightful ways, the legend of ages-old Kumbh Mela is closely connected with environment and nature. In fact, the narrative of the churning of the primordial ocean includes events that are integral to natural elements, be it the water that was churned, mountain used for the churning, and animals (serpent and tortoise) that provided the base and rope. Some of the things that emerged out of the churning, before Dhanvantri appeared with the nectar of immortality, were also related to environment — animals such as a cow, an elephant, and a horse, and plants like the Parijat tree. One can even stretch the links further. In the beginning, the ocean spewed poison, which was drunk by Lord Shiva; only in the end did Dhanvantri emerge with the pot of amrit. The former was a killer, akin to the pollution and waste that's destroying our planet today, and the latter an immortal life-giver, which is akin to the global practices that will help humans to be in sync with nature, and enable the planet to last for several million years more.

At the first Vaicharik Kumbh -- Paryavaran Kumbh in the holy city of Kashi -- climate change, which is being hotly discussed today, was the key topic. Speakers, who ranged from politicians, social activists, climate change experts to spiritual gurus debated the challenges and dangers of the present times, the past knowledge about nature that's embedded in traditional Indian knowledge and philosophy, and the urgent need to find solutions to preserve the future. The fact is that experts believe that human life, as well as that of Earth, is at the precipice of extinction. Several years ago, the renowned and late scientist, Stephen Hawking, predicted that life as we know it will last for not more than 1,000 years. Just before his death in March 2018, he drastically reduced it to just 100 years.



**Dr. Dinesh Sharma**, Deputy Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh, (Right) lights the lamp at the inaugural session, along with Sant Rameshwar Puri Ji (Third From Right)



**Shri T.N. Singh**, Vice Chancellor, Kashi Vidyapeet, (Right) arrives at the first Vaicharik Kumbh on environment

At the Kashi Vaicharik Kumbh, Shri Suresh Soni, an environmental specialist, reiterated this warning, and emphasised that time was not on our side. The human race had to act now to reduce pollution, carbon emissions, and mitigate the hugely negative impact of climate change.

When the US withdrew from the multilateral and global Paris Agreement on climate change, Hawking told the BBC, “We are close to the tipping point where global warming becomes irreversible. These actions could push the Earth over the brink to become like Venus (a planet closer to the Sun), with a temperature of 250 degrees (Centigrade), raining sulphuric acid. Climate change is one of the great dangers we face, and it's one we can prevent if we act now.”

However, this is easier said than done. Amitava Ghosh, a well-known writer, contends in his book, The Great Derangement, that there is a complete disconnect between individuals and their knowledge about the adverse impacts of climate change. Not that the people don't have the information. But a subconscious mix of culture and self-obsession, and a unique

**In ancient times, we knew the linkages between nature and lifestyles. We found that if we changed the course of a river, it would invariably return to its original path. It was illogical and irrational to play with the elements of environment**

**Dr. Dinesh Sharma**  
Deputy Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh





### SWACHH KUMBH

During the grand festival at Prayagraj in 2019, the Uttar Pradesh government installed a record-breaking 122,500 temporary eco-friendly toilets to ensure that it's "clean and open defecation free". These toilets were deployed with other safe and ecologically friendly toilets with zero discharge into rivers Ganga and Yamuna. Swachh Kumbh was one of the overriding priorities of the Government.





Shri Neelkanth Tiwari, Minister of State, Uttar Pradesh



Sant Rameshwar Puri Ji



Shri Dara Singh Chauhan,  
Minister of Forest Environment,  
Zoological Garden, Uttar Pradesh

**Not only India, but world over, environment has become an important issue of discussion. Everyone is talking of ways to protect it, and find solutions to the present problems. I am sure we will find some here at this event**

Shri Jayant Ji  
Environmental Activist

mindset enables them to distance themselves from the vagaries of nature. It is as if nature exists as a parallel reality, which affects the others. This is reflected in the lives of the people who live in coastal cities, and are highly vulnerable to tornadoes, tsunamis, cyclones, and other impacts due to the rising sea levels.

Despite these dangers, real estate in global coastal cities and beautiful islands tends to be more expensive nearer to the sea or ocean. In a bizarre manner, the houses that are most vulnerable are owned by the richest people on earth. It is the tribals or indigenous communities that maintain a safe distance from the waters. Similarly, when cyclones and tsunamis hit the cities in both the developed and developing world, the affected people seem to be oblivious of the warnings, sometimes because of political blunders, and sometimes because of an unchanging socio-economic mindset. It is as if the people sense the danger, but are paralysed and cannot act.

This was exactly the message that was drilled in by several social activists at the Kashi Vaicharik Kumbh. Shri Jayantji was the most vociferous when he said, “Not only in India, but the world over, environment has become an important issue of discussion. Everyone’s talking of different ways to protect it, and find solutions to the problem.” He was sure that the experts gathered at the event had their own set of solutions. But, according to him, there was little time, as the environment continued to deteriorate every day. For him, the biggest challenge wasn’t the solutions. It was what the United Nations discussed in 2010 — how can human progress be in complete harmony with environment. “We need to remember this crucial message while talking of solutions to save our planet from climate change.”



Future solutions, however, require a complete understanding of the past and present — how did we get to this stage, what wrongs did we commit and, more importantly, can current civilisation keep up with frenetic progress and prosperity, and yet save the planet. In fact, in the ancient past, several centuries ago, intellectual philosophers and spiritually-enlightened individuals understood the importance of living harmoniously with nature. They understood that so-called non-living entities, such as rivers, oceans, winds, and earthquakes, are filled with zest, energy and living qualities. Elements of nature had emotions, intelligence and life-energy to both create and destroy. No wonder, most civilisations revered them, and incorporated them in their religious and social practices.

In Indian philosophy and old sacred texts, non-human entities, including living ones like plants and animals, and non-living ones like water, fire, earth and air, were revered and respected. We offered prayers to them, not because of blind faith, but because society, through evolved individuals, realised that oneness with nature, as well as the universe, were crucial elements to live harmoniously. To artificially disturb and distort the elements of nature was to welcome a future of non-existence, a future that was wholly destructive. Similarly, when the saints wanted to find out the reality of the One Truth, One God, they went to mountains and deserts, to banks of rivers. They realised that being in sync with nature was the only way to delve inwards and discover the spiritual truth about the entire universe.

Uttar Pradesh's Deputy Chief Ministers, Dr. Dinesh Sharma Ji, reminded the audience that in ancient times, we knew linkages between lifestyle and nature, between knowledge

## SANITATION DRIVE

The main Kumbh area of 3,200 hectares was divided into 20 sectors. Six garbage tipper vans and two garbage compactors were employed in each sector to collect and dispose off the waste. According to the Mela Authority, the tipper vans were fitted with “GPS trackers so that we can keep a check on their movement”. When the need was there, the frequency was increased to keep the Kumbh area clean. An awareness campaign, through nukad natak, posters, and banners, educated the tourists and pilgrims. The Mela Authority felt that a clean Kumbh was not possible without the active participation of the masses







#### GARBAGE IN, NOTHING SPILLS OUT

Over 20,000 dustbins, equipped with liner bags, were used during Kumbh 2019 and were changed three times a day. According to an official in Mela Authority, “These conical-shaped dustbins are easier to handle and transport. Hence, the garbade doesn’t spill out and the bins are ready for reuse instantly.”

and environment. Indians knew that it was irrational and illogical to play with environmental elements. For example, as he explained, we found out early that if we changed a river’s course, it invariably returned to its original path. Hence, human communities had to move as the rivers moved, which was beneficial because new stretches of Earth became more fertile, and allowed time non-fertile areas to rejuvenate and become fertile again.

Centuries ago, we also knew the connections between environment and health. As Dr. Puneet Mishra elaborated, “The pollution in water and air leads to sickness. This is why our saints and intellectuals inculcated certain healthy practices in our lifestyles.” They became beliefs at later stages, but they were introduced with the urge to save environment and be in tune with it. Although modern science has proved it now, Indian civilisation was aware of the inherent biological clock in each individual. It was this clock that guided our lives, and we had to live according to this clock, which was enmeshed with nature, and rising and setting of the sun. Similarly, we knew about non-physical diseases such as depression and insomnia. Hence, saints and spiritual gurus insisted on regulated daily habits, which included when to eat, what to eat, and when to sleep. Dr. Sharma gave the example of the tulsi plant, which had multi-faceted benefits — it beautified the house environment, cured several ailments and led to better health.

When humans became agrarian societies, this connect with nature continued to exist; in fact, it became more entwined. Over centuries, it became a part of religion, only to ensure that such practices became a matter of faith and belief, and weren’t shunned by humans. The same happened in India too.





**NAMAMI GANGE**

The government's programme to clean Ganges, and the various banks of the rivers, was a giant step to keep the festival clean. The central and state governments took initiatives to achieve this objective. This is an artist representation of one of the banks



Ironically, it was climate change, albeit on a much lower scale, that led human civilisations to embark on the path to future natural disasters. Historian Philipp Blom, in his book, *Nature's Mutiny: How the Little Ice Age of the Long Seventeenth Century Transformed the West and Shaped the Present*, argued that the cooling of the planet in that era led to urbanisation, mercantalism, colonialism and, of course, the industrial revolution. Earth has cooled and grown warmer for hundreds of millions of years. It was covered with ice, from North Pole to South Pole, for 300 million years. Thirty four million years ago, it was much warmer, and experts contend that crocodiles swam in a “fresh water lake we know as the North Pole, and palm trees grew in Antarctica”.

However, in the roughly 5,000 years of recorded human history, climate change happened during the Little Ice Age, which began in the fourteenth century, lasted for several centuries, and during which overall temperatures dropped by two degree Centigrade. In many ways that we don't comprehend fully, it destroyed the existing communities, and forced dramatic changes on civilisations. In Europe, the colder weather disrupted, even destroyed, agriculture, especially grain harvest. The settled feudal order, with land-owning aristocrats at the top, and the bulk of poor peasants who worked for them, was “overturned”. Peasants moved into towns and cities, some of which became “thriving, economically dynamic” centres of “rapidly expanding commercial networks”. The birth of the idea of markets, commercialisation, colonial expansion, imperialism, and mercantilism followed soon. This combined with the industrial revolution, and the crass exploitation of people and natural resources — the beginnings of another, more drastic and



#### GOING FOR SWACHH KUMBH

It was the largest sanitation drive, and found its way into the Guinness Book of World Records. A large number of volunteers, dubbed Swachhagrahis, wore masks and held brooms in their hands, and descended on the streets at a given time to clean the city's streets. These and other sanitation workers were given special training to manage the various wastes, and ensure that Kumbh 2019 was 100% clean. The Safai Karamcharis successfully handled the leftovers of the pilgrims, and cleaned the makeshift eco-friendly toilets.



tumultuous climate change of this century.

As Shri Suresh Soni of RSS explained, the roots of the present climate crisis lay in the emergence of the materialistic world, ruled as it was with mass production, profits, and greed, with scant regard for nature. “The problems of today are, therefore, linked to the consumption-led societies of the recent past. To fulfill their materialistic desires, they entered into a blind race for growth, development and prosperity. This destroyed and diminished Earth’s natural resources. So, the past is important to understand the present.” In the end, we polluted land, water, and air in a manner that has led to warming of the planet, and rise of seas and oceans.

Despite this knowledge of the present, we initially debated whether climate change was for real or not. The proponents vehemently argued yes, and the critics presented their own studies of how the idea of a warmer planet was humbug. Finally, the debate was settled in favour of the climate change advocates, but then the countries fought to decide who will foot the future bill to correct the situation. The developed nations argued that every country was culpable and, hence, had to pay; developing ones like India and China were the worst culprits because their higher growths contributed more to waste, emissions, and pollution. The developing nations, which knew that development was the only tool to alleviate extreme poverty in their societies, put the blame on the developed world, which was responsible for the current situation because of its high growth in the previous three centuries. So, it had to pay the bulk of the bill, and couldn’t restrain the developing world.

An expert gave a pertinent example. Imagine a premium

### PATHWAY TO CLEAN KUMBH

**Volunteers and civic authorities** ensured that no efforts were spared to keep Kumbh 2019 clean and neat. Here is a part of the efforts to keep the rivers clean







The use of technology to keep the city's rivers clean

restaurant that was started by the developed world for its residents. People came for breakfast, lunch, and dinner; they ate, drank, danced and had loads of fun. As the place was about to close for the night, the residents of the developing world walked in. But instead of giving them food and drinks, the developed world owners asked them to wash the dishes. This was obviously unfair. The developing world should be allowed to partake the tasty food and drinks that the others enjoyed, and then both could clean up the place. The rich nations couldn't contend that yes, they had indulged in excess, but now that there was a huge crisis, everyone had to pay equally, and the developing world would not be allowed to enjoy as much.

Hence, the environment experts contend what is required is a collective effort, for the human race to get together and come up with solutions. They say that the Paris Agreement was a great start. Now with the US having walked out of it, there is another tension brewing on the horizon. If the other countries decide to stick to the Paris path, they claim, things can still

**In the beginning there were huge debates between pro- and anti-environmentalists. It was finally settled in favour of the climate change advocates. But then the developed and developing nations tussled over the terms of any multilateral agreement. Fortunately, this too was settled recently with the Paris Agreement**





**EYE ON TOURISTS**  
A wall painting in Civil Lines' Labour Court depicts how the pilgrims and tourists enjoy themselves during the festival



improve. Maybe the real solutions, according to them, will emerge from India and China, the two most populous countries with the drive, ambition, energy and desire to do well, and yet be environmentally-responsible.

**What is required is a collective effort, for the human race to come up with solutions. Despite the US withdrawal, Paris Agreement can still work. In the near future, India and China may need to provide new ways to tackle the problems of climate change and global warming**

Another example of the use of GPS equipped compactors and tippers to manage the city's garbage during Kumbh 2019







#### A POSTER CITY

During Kumbh 2019, the various state and city authorities took several groundbreaking initiatives to ensure that the festival remained environment friendly. This was evident from the manner in which the entire city, including its railway station, apart from the main Kumbh area, looked neat and clean.





## WATER OF LIFE

Although existing tap water was potable, 50 free ATMs were installed to supply RO water at various Kumbh locations so that the millions of people could access safe drinking water.







Swachh Bharat was an important theme under the Paint My City Project to beautify Prayagraj





Safety and security remained one of the top priorities during Kumbh 2019. Additional police forces were on full alert







Technology and modern vehicles  
were used o keep the city clean



MATHURA / 8-9, DECEMBER 2018

## NARI SHAKTI KUMBH

**F**OR thousands of years, Indian women were revered, respected and celebrated. They became icons, and positively influenced society in several ways: as individuals, family-makers, and social reformers. Each time certain communities tried to belittle women and disrespect them, women arose to prove them wrong, and forced them to mend their ways. The Second Vaicharik Kumbh on Nari Shakti at Mathura looked at the past and present -- today's challenges and future changes.

Speakers included central and state politicians, such as Shri Ram Naik Ji, Hon'ble Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Smt Sushma Swaraj, Minister of External Affairs, Government of India, Smt Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister of Defence, Government of India,

**UP is considered backward in terms of literacy. But in 2017, for the first time, the majority of the 1.5 million students, who won the scholarships, were women. This proves that women are progressing in the state. The proportion of women, who graduated from the state's colleges in 2018, was 56% for all the courses**

**Shri Ram Naik**  
Hon'ble Governor of Uttar Pradesh

**Mathura, where** Nari Shakti Kumbh was held, the message was clear. Women empowerment can transform this Nation, this society, and the world. India can become the leader in this endeavour





and Smt Rita Bahuguna Joshi, Minister of Tourism and Culture, Uttar Pradesh. There were serious academicians, activists and spiritual-philosophers such as Smt Geeta Tai Tunde and Sadhvi Rithambara. Awards were given to women young and old, who did pioneering work in the areas of science, art, sports, academics and social service.

Not only did speakers elaborate on the extensive and expansive roles that women had played in Indian society and culture for thousands of years, they highlighted the challenges that women face today. It wasn't only about the past and present, but also ways forward — how can the status of women be better, and how can women be more empowered in different ways, and still be rooted in strong Indian values and morals. As they debated and discussed, it was clear that it wasn't a question of this or that, nor about choices that women have to make, but about a harmonious co-existence of both the genders. Each has its strengths, each had its benefits, and a society that incorporated both, and balanced both, could contribute to the world. Man and woman, as they say, are two sides of the same coin. In many ways, women incorporate men, as is apparent from the two words.

To elaborate on the status of women, Shri Ram Naik, Hon'ble Governor, Uttar Pradesh, set the cat among pigeons by citing the example of his state. He said that Uttar Pradesh was considered backward in terms of education and literacy levels of the women. Then for the first time in 2017, more than 750,000 of the 1.5 million awards given to the students went to girls. "Of all the graduates, 51% were girls. This proves that women are progressing," he claimed. Another statistics he provided was related to the proportion of girls who graduated from colleges in UP 2018. The figure was 56% across all courses, and it indicated that educated women are more empowered. "Women are the

**Women should focus on achieving highest level of education to feel more confident, and also help each other to grow stronger. Padho, likho aur aisi baatein karo jiss se sabka atmavishwaas bade (read, write, and say things that will enhance everyone's self-confidence). The hunger for knowledge will enable women to bring new ideas on the table, and contribute to country's progress**

**Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman**  
Minister of Defence, Government of India

future leaders of India," Naik Ji said.

More than this, an educated and empowered woman is a larger influencer in society compared to a literate man. Decades ago, India's former President Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan said that when a son in a family gets an education, it is a case of another man who gets educated. But when this happens to a daughter she, in turn, shares and passes knowledge to two families, hers and her future husband's. In effect, the daughter may influence dozens of lives. This is why educated women are more important in a traditional-modern society like India, which believes in communication across generations in close-knit families.

Smt Nirmala Sitharaman, Union Defence Minister, emphasised



**Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman**, Union  
Defence Minister



the role of education in shaping a new future for women.

“Women should focus on achieving highest level of education to feel more confident, and also help each other to grow stronger,” she explained. Moreover, the focus on, and the hunger for, knowledge will enable them to bring fresher and newer ideas on the table, which will contribute to the country’s progress, prosperity, and development at multiple levels. She coined a slogan that needs to reverberate across the country — Padho, likho aur aisi battein karo jiss se sabka atmavishwas bade (Read, write, and say things that will enhance everyone’s self-confidence).

Several speakers highlighted the women’s achievements in the past, as well as the present. Smt Rita Bahuguna Joshi, Cabinet Minister in the UP government, reiterated that India was the country that worshipped her land as Mother Goddess (Bharat Mata), who gave us life and nurtured us until maturity. She delved into Hindu mythology to talk about Sita (Ramayana), the wife of Lord Rama, and Draupadi (Mahabharata), the wife of the five Pandava brothers. Both of them enjoyed a high stature within their respective societies and even later, and were considered as powerful as men (their husbands).

#### WOMEN ACROSS CENTURIES

Smt Joshi reminded the participants and audience about the silent, backroom, but important, roles played by the women during the freedom struggle. Many of them directly took part in civil disobedience, and were jailed. But others, a majority of them, supported their families amidst numerous crises, even as the male members were either imprisoned or killed. They stood erect, kept their heads high, and carried on the family burden with pride. They enabled their fathers, husbands, and sons

**Women should not be considered physically weak. We have proved our mantle in sports, defence, and legislature. To bring equality in the society, the mindset has to change, and all the women should be more confident of themselves. There is hypocrisy that needs to be condemned. There is female foeticide in various parts, and girls are worshipped**

**Smt. Sushma Swaraj**  
Minister of External Affairs, Government of India

**Smt. Sushma Swaraj**, Union  
External Affairs Minister (Left)







In Prayagraj, as in most Indian cities, towns, and villages, women empowerment has dramatically improved. This photograph of a wall painting at Lok Seva Aayog depicts it

to devote their time to agitate against the British Raj for the country's independence.

In 1857, during India's First War of Independence against colonial rule, Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi was a renowned martyr. Manikarnika (her name before marriage) became a legend, along with several men. Smt Baby Rani Mauryaji, Hon'ble Governor, Uttarakhand, reminded the crowd about the queen's role, and said that we should take inspiration from such history-makers. She added that we should pass this on to our children so that such achievements remain alive in public mindset among future generations. Over the next few decades, this will encourage modern women to realise their potential.

Smt Sushma Swaraj, then the country's External Affairs Minister, re-emphasised these views. She said, "Women shouldn't be considered physically weak. We have proved our mantle in sports, defence, legislature and many other areas. Who says women are physically weak?" In fact, the Vaicharik Kumbh at Mathura showcased the successes of several women in the recent and ancient past. On the first day of the two-day event, an initial hour-long discussion was followed by inauguration of the art gallery with painted portraits of dozens of women who have contributed to society and made the nation proud. They could become icons for present and future generations.

Smt Hema Malini, who is a member of the Lok Sabha from Mathura, and a renowned dancer, actor, director, and producer, elaborated on how these awards reflect the culture and values inherited by winners from their families at a micro level. But, at a larger level, they show that Indian women can achieve seemingly impossible tasks if they wish to do so. "We are not weak. We are powerful and capable of achieving anything." The onus was on women to further this inherent self-confidence and



## ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

*Awards were given to several women achievers in various fields at the second Vaicharik Kumbh. These included:*

**Dr Tessy Thomas**, who is dubbed India's 'Missile Woman' for her defence accomplishments;

**Shivangi Pathak**, who, at 16, became the youngest person to climb Mt Everest, the highest mountain peak in the world;

**Anuradha Advani**, who is called the 'Daughter of Desert', and has started several old-age homes;

**Tarsila N. Geelong** for excellence in academics in the north-eastern state of Nagaland;

**Dr Kiran Negi** for contribution in botanic and environmental sciences;

**Kamlesh Kumari**, who was responsible for educating the Dalit women in her village, Dharupur, and for contribution to the country's ongoing cleanliness initiative;

**Madhuri Sahesrabudhi**, who along with two others, runs Mothers on Wheels. She is a social activist, and involved in a range of activities to empower women;

**Deepa Malik**, a Padmashri, who won the silver medal in shot put at Rio Paralympics in 2016. She was the first Indian woman to win a medal at such games;

**Suhasini Mistry**, a widow who sold vegetables to run her family, and built a hospital where any individual can be treated for a Rs 10 fee;

**Avni Chaturvedi**, the first Indian woman fighter pilot; on February 21, 2018, she flew a MIG-21 alone.

**Women devotees** thronged at Kumbh 2019, especially because of concrete arrangements made for them by the key authorities







# THE AWARD WINNERS

## A WOMAN AT THE TOP

Shivangi Pathak (Left) became the youngest to climb the Mt Everest in May 2018, when she was only 16. Since then, she climbed Mt Kilminjaro in Africa, and Mt Elbrus in Europe. Her dream is to conquer the seven major peaks in the world before she turns 18. She feels that no daughter can ever achieve anything worthwhile unless she is completely supported by her parents. Hence, she gives credit to her father and mother for her successes. In one of the ‘Man Ki Baat’ talks, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi praised her immensely. Since then, she became an All-India icon, whose name reverberated across the world



## A MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

Anuradha Advani runs an old-people’s home, where the residents, who are between 60 and 90 years, live with self-respect and happiness. Instead of viewing the elderly as liabilities, she sometimes gives them support as a daughter, and sometimes love like a mother



## THE WOMEN WITH HONEY

In Uttarakhand, Kiran Negi has worked with the women to enable them to grow and market the local fruits and vegetables. She has helped to open laboratories for the purpose. In addition, she has enabled the improvement of bee hives to enhance honey production





**MADHURI SAHASRABUDHE**

In Itanagar, Madhuri Sahasrabudhe started a school for tribal children. Her NGO in Guwahati works with Self-Help Groups to empower local women by imparting hand-weaving skills. Her Foundation for Holistic Development in Academic Field in Jammu & Kashmir works with the local students. Her belief is that being in a state of motherhood is the power that will enable the future generations to be brave and valuable. Only mothers can prevent the dilution of traditional values



**INDIA'S MISSILE WOMAN**

At the age of 21, Dr. Tessy Thomas joined DRDO, and worked under the country's Missile Man, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. Later, she became the first woman scientist to head the India's missile programme. In between, she worked for the projects related to the advancement of Agni missile. Over the years, she won several awards, including those given by DRDO. At present, she heads the Aeronautical Systems Laboratory under the Indian defence organisation



**100% DALIT LITERACY**

Kamlesh Kumari (Right) is a Dalit from Hamirpur district. In her village Dharupur, which comprises Dalit families, she ensured that all the girls were literate. She personally motivated the families to educate the daughters. She made a neighbouring village open defaecation free



**AN EDUCATIONIST IN REMOTE AREA**

T.N. Zeelong was always associated with education and teaching in the north-eastern state of Nagaland. Her efforts led to higher literacy rate in the state, as well as dissemination of quality education. At present, she gives her expertise to Dibrugarh University



fight their own battles without seeking external help.

To highlight such empowerment, and to encourage others listening to her, she quoted a few lines from a famous poem — ‘I am the past, present, and future; I am a woman’. Later in her speech, Hemaji quoted another verse in Hindi – ‘Agar dekhna chahate hain hamari udaan ko, toh uncha kar do asmaan ko (If you wish to see our flight, then increase the height of the sky). Referring to Shivangi, who climbed Mt Everest, she said that in some metaphorical manner, the mountaineer had gone over the clouds, to the abode of our Gods. She had transcended the limits set by society or by men. She was as tall as anyone else, and perched at the highest of heights.

**GALLERY OF RENOWNED WOMEN**

We spoke to Dr Sadhna Singh, a retired Associate Professor from Baikunthi Devi Kanya University, who organised the gallery. She said that it took over a month to complete the 70 portraits that were on display. Over 60 artists were invited to a four-day-long art workshop to paint various women’s subjects. Portraits were divided into five periodic and achievement categories — Vedic, modern, technology, science and research, and society. Among them were:

- Vandana Shiva, an Indian scholar, environmental activist, food sovereignty advocate, and author. Over the years, she has told policy makers and other stakeholders about advantages of traditional Indian practices;
- Mata Amritanandamayi, better known as Amma (Mother), a Hindu spiritual leader and guru. Her followers look up to her as a saint. One of her senior disciples wrote, “The (spiritual) path inculcated by Amma is the same as the one presented in Vedas and yet recapitulated in subsequent traditional scriptures such

**‘We are not weak. We are powerful and capable of achieving anything. The onus is on us to further this self-confidence, and fight our battles without seeking external help. ‘I am the past, present, and future; I am a woman.’ Let me recite a few lines: ‘Agar dekhna chahte hain hamari udaan ko, toh uncha kar do asmaan ko (If you wish to see our flight, then increase the height of the sky)’**

**Smt. Hema Malini**  
Member of Parliament

as Bhagvad Gita”;

► Rani Laxmibai, one of the leading figures in the First War of Independence against the British in 1857. She later became the symbol of aggressive resistance for the future nationalists across the country;

► Savitribai Phule, a social reformer, educationist, and poet who hailed from the western state of Maharashtra. She is regarded as the country’s first female teacher in the 19th century, and played an important role to improve women rights in those times;

Lakshmibai Kelkar, a crusader for women emancipation in the early 20th century, “who was affectionately referred to as ‘Vandaneeva Mausiji’”. According to her, “It was the woman who would pass on these (human) values to their future generation, and so the future of society and nation depended

**Smt Hema Malini,**  
Member of Parliament





on nurturing Bharatiya values”;

► Sunita Williams, a US astronaut and navy officer of Indian-Slovenian descent. She held the record for total spacewalks by a woman (seven) and most spacewalk time for a woman (50 hours and 40 minutes)”;

► P.V. Sindhu, an ace shuttler who has won several global championships and defeated seeded global players. She was once ranked No. 1 in the world;

► Bula Choudhury, a long-distance swimmer who, in 2005, became the first woman to swim across several channels in five continents, including the Strait of Gibraltar and Cook Strait;

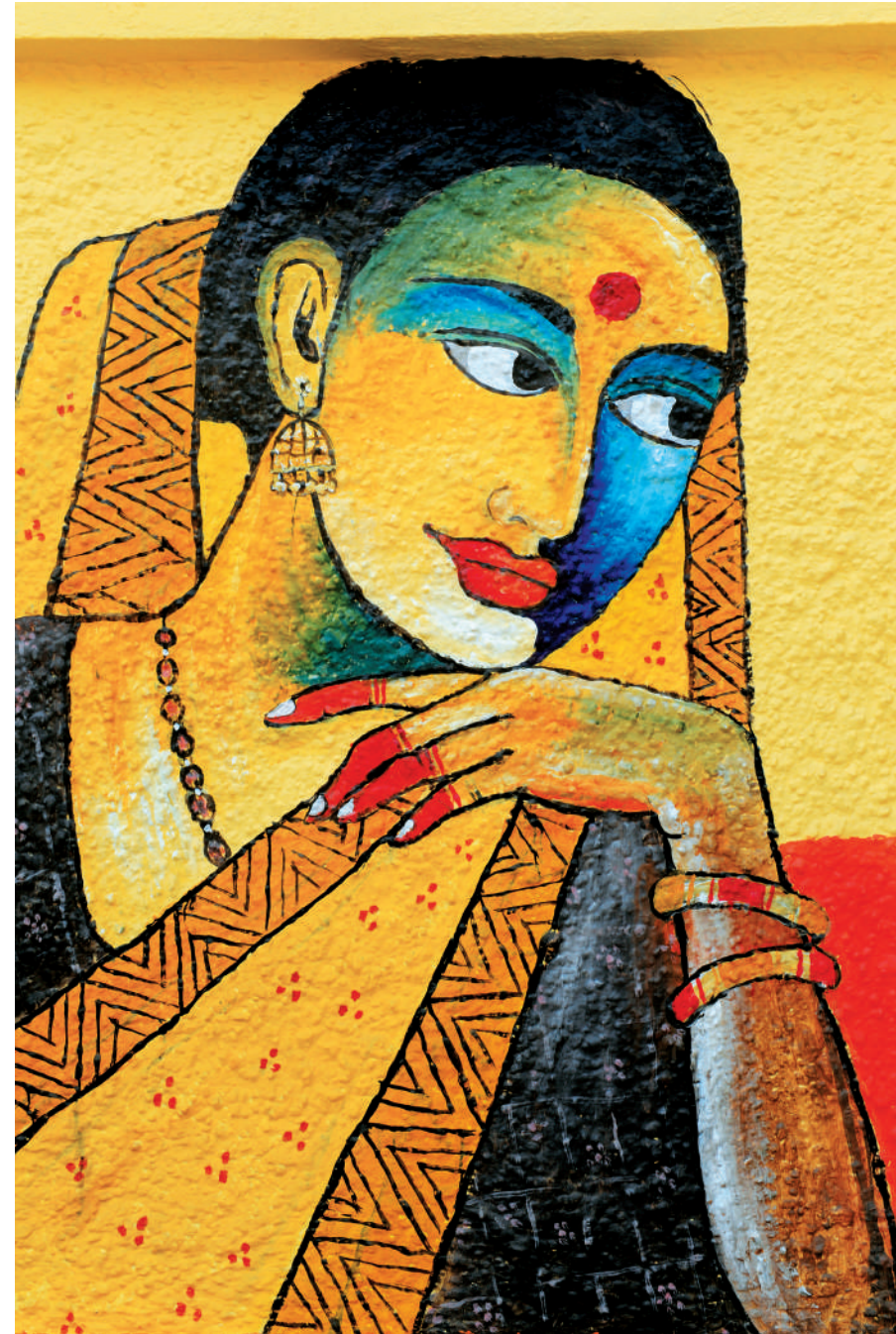
► Mithali Raj, the captain of the Indian cricket team who is considered to be greatest batswoman ever. She holds several world records, including highest runs in ODIs, number of consecutive half centuries and most half centuries in ODIs;

► Neerja Bhanot, an Indian model and purser for Pan American World Airways. She gave her life while saving passengers of Pan Am Flight 73, which was hijacked by terrorists in 1986;

Mary Kom, the only woman boxer to become World Amateur Boxing champion for six times, and to win a medal in each of seven world championships.

The celebration of such women was necessary for another reason. As Smt Sitharamanji puts it, “Women are never boastful about their achievements. Therefore, it is very important to acknowledge their efforts.” Feeling proud to honour the sixteen-year-old girl Shivangi Pathak, the Hon’ble Defence Minister said that ambitious women and girls should stay focused on their goals and keep working hard until they achieve their aims. But, as often happens, such women don’t talk about their goals, but silently and furiously pursue them.

“The thing that makes Indian women stand out from the rest



#### LOCAL WOMEN IN ACTION

Across the city, street and wall paintings showed the energy, commitment and enthusiasm of the women of Prayagraj, who are involved in several activities







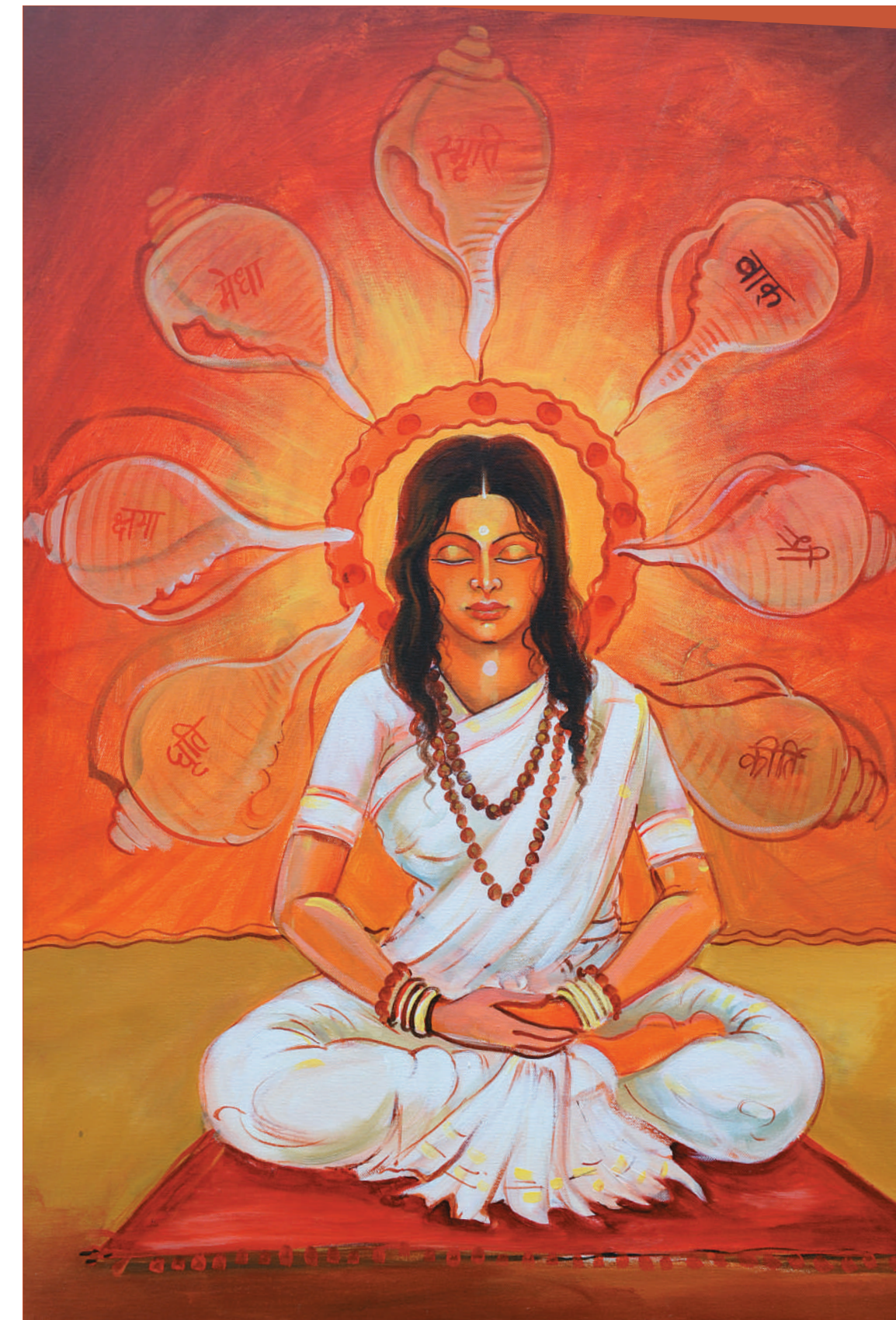
is that they're not boastful. They don't go on talking about their goals but attempt to achieve them. Once they've achieved their aims, they retract themselves from talking about their victories. The humbleness in Indian women is the only unique quality," said Smt Sitharaman. She added that their humbleness buries their victories and "gives a sense that not much is being done.... But this day is indeed a proof that women are capable of achieving anything."

In terms of achievements and feats, women can clearly match men in every respect. They don't need to seek equality in this respect; they are already equal, and their work, efforts and ideas prove it comprehensively. Still, some of the speakers focused on the uniqueness of women, and the fact that there was nothing wrong in acknowledging that women are different from men. In fact, in many ways, women are better than men. When it comes to emotional connect, intellectual maturity, societal values, and cultural issues, women are way ahead of their gender counterparts.

#### GENDER VERSUS GENDER

Hence, there is little need to look at women and men as competitors, or for a need to prove that women can do what men can. The fact is that men cannot do what women can, like giving birth to a child and raising her. Nivedita Bhide, a social worker, explained this emphatically. She said that it wasn't a question of supplementing a gender for another one. "We are complimenting each other. Men and women can co-exist," she said. There is no competition between the two sexes because they perform their own set of duties within society. Therefore, in the process of looking at the country's future (in reference to 'atmiya'), we shouldn't aim for equality

**Smt Rita Bahuguna Joshi**, Minister of Tourism and Culture, Uttar Pradesh (Centre), said that both men and women enjoyed equal stature in the Indian society for thousands of years





between men and women.

To make this point clearer, Bhide analysed what has happened in the western world in the context of various women liberation movements. In the end, the rebellion and the quest to ape men demanded that woman give up family, religion and cultural values. This, in turn, raised fresh obstacles that prevented her from achieving her real goals. The movements had negative impact and resulted in split families, rising loneliness and single parenting. Thus, there is no need to follow the same failed path, no need to reinvent the wheel.

In recent times, some western countries have gone back to their traditions and cultures. Tradition has to be wedded with modernity and not divorced from it. A culmination, a balance, a judicious mix is what is required for society's progress. The fact is that a society cannot discard its past, and live in modern and post-modern isolation. It needs a connect, a conduit for ideas to evolve and transform, a cycle of ideas for civilisations to thrive and grow. Any disconnect in any form can only disrupt society in due course.

Smt Mridula Sinha, Hon'ble Governor, Goa, said that men and women share several kinds of relationships in a lifetime — brother-sister, husband-wife, mother-father — and that we need to remember that one is incomplete without the partner. Hence, there was a need to create an adequate balance and equality between the two sexes. "No gender is lesser or greater than the other. No gender is ahead or behind in the walks of life. We all are equal."

**NO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

However, what needs to be abhorred and castigated out of any society is gender violence, either in sexual, physical or emotional



**SUMMIT OF GRACE**

Over 500 spiritual leaders and politicians, apart from students and sanitation workers from across the country took a pledge at this summit to ensure "safety and security of women and girls in the future, when they would not only survive but also thrive. Lok Sabha Speaker, Smt Sumitra Mahajan, said, "Our Shakti doesn't need empowerment from someone else; they need to recognise that they themselves are the power."



terms. Men cannot be aggressive with women in any way. Several speakers talked about the issue of women safety in contemporary society. One of the foremost voices was that of Sadhvi Rithambara, a political activist and religious preacher. She categorically said that this had to be cast out. But other speakers said that police alone couldn't assure safety. It has to come from within an individual, through families and percolate within society.

First, the men, especially the youth, have to learn to respect women. This can happen in several ways, one of them being that they recognise and become aware of women's contribution to society over thousands of years. Second is the role of women as wives, mothers and sisters. They can easily sensitise the men around them -- fathers, husbands and sons -- to treat women better. If such lessons can be inculcated at a young age within a family, boys will grow up to become sensitive, anti-violence men. Over a generation, society can change.

Goa's Hon'ble Governor said that new societal values lead to "un-called biases" and violence against women. She reminisced that as a child her mother urged her to light the lamp in the evening. It was to enlighten both the house and neighbourhood. The lamp was the symbol of the ray of hope that every woman carries in her heart. According to Sinha, Nari Shakti Kumbh was an opportunity for women from various parts of the country to get together and share their knowledge, culture, and values. They should then disseminate them within their respective families, communities, and societies.

#### KUMBH OF IDEAS

This, in fact, was one of the original purposes of Kumbh Mela. It was not, as is commonly believed, only a religious-spiritual festival for congregation of sadhus, saints and religious followers. It was meant to be a platform, a meeting ground for exchange of ideas between experts from various fields such as

Pleasure and pilgrimage were part of the foreigners daily schedules at Kumbh 2019







**“ Men and women share several relationships — brother-sister, husband-wife, mother-father — and we need to remember that one is incomplete without the other. There is a need to create balance and equality between the two sexes. No gender is lesser or greater than the other. No gender is ahead or behind in the various walks of life. We are all equal ”**

**Smt. Mridula Sinha**  
Hon'ble Governor, Goa



religion, philosophy, spiritual studies, science and math. It was also to spread these ideas to the rest of the country and the world. The desire was to transform society in manifest ways through knowledge and information, especially new ones.

Smt. Geeta Tai Gunde of RSS, and also part of the organising committee for the second Vaicharik Kumbh, explained this eloquently. She said that in ancient times, the purpose of Kumbh was to bring together the leaders of the nation, and hold productive and useful conversations, discussions and debates on relevant issues of those days. The carnival regularly invited economists, politicians and scholars to use the Kumbh platform for fruitful goals and objectives. The festival has invariably

served as a stage for exchange of ideas, traditions, values, cultures and knowledge. Vaicharik Kumbh has concretised this mindset, and made it more solid and constructive.

Thousands of people from different corners of the country attended the Mathura event. Apart from speeches by eminent personalities from different walks of life, it had relevant workshops, and presentation of research papers by scholars. These were held in the adjoining Iskcon Temple auditorium. One of them focused on research on women and society (Vartaman Chhunautiyaan evam Samadhaan; Current Challenges and Solutions). Other topics included Samarth Parivaar, Samarth Bharat (Strong Family, Strong India) and Samaj Parivartan mein Prayogsheel Mahilayen (Changes in Society and Progressive Women).



**“ Since the ancient times, the purpose of the Kumbh festival was to bring together the leaders of the nation, and hold productive conversations, discussions, and debates on the relevant issues of those times. The festival invited economists, politicians, and scholars to use the Kumbh platform for fruitful objectives. Such ideas were then spread in other regions ”**

**Smt. Geeta Tai Gunde,**  
RSS









**Famous Indian women:** From Previous Spread to This One (Left to Right): Boxer Mary Kom, shuttler Saina Nehwal, missile woman Tessy Thomas, spacewoman Sunita Williams, and batswomen Mithali Raj at walls of Prayagraj in Kumbh



#### ENTERTAINMENT GALORE

Such serious discussions and debates were punctuated by fun and entertainment. On the first night of the event, there were plays and musicals highlighting the roles of powerful women over centuries. Performances were therefore designed and scripted to emphasise the event's topic — women's empowerment and Kumbh. The participants had trained hard to make these shows as professional as possible. A student revealed that the teams had practised for over a month before the final performances. Various departments, as well as teachers of B.R. Ambedkar University were involved with the performances. The audience was delighted and enchanted.

A woman who hailed from South India maintained that she enjoyed the seriousness and entertainment parts of the event. She was happy with the boarding and food, and the rest of the organisation. She added that the entire atmosphere was quite vibrant, with so many women from different communities, cultures and values. Another woman from Vrindavan said it was a unique experience for her. She had never seen so many women present at a single venue. It was thrilling and enthralling.

Women empowerment was one of the top priorities of the central government. Various speakers and participants reiterated that the central government has initiated several steps for women. For example, one of the shining programmes is Ujjwala, which enabled rural women to shed the yoke of smoke and fire. Finally, with government help and subsidies, they were able to shift from wood and coal to LPG cylinders to cook food. It was a huge relief for them in terms of safety, health and convenience.

The campaign to clean India and construct millions of toilets in both rural and urban areas has energised the citizens. But the



**Painted tourists** too formed a part of the culture and beautification during the Kumbh festival





(Left to Right) Indian and foreign women devotees thronged to the holy rivers and places of faith across the city





### WOMEN POWER

Across the main Kumbh area, and nearer to the bathing locations, a large number of temporary changing rooms were installed. Many of them were specifically for women pilgrims, which ensured that they could take their dips with comfort, safety, and confidence. Over 1,100 changing rooms were established at 35 ghats

major benefits will accrue to women, who faced serious safety issues when they had to defecate in the open. Most girls had to leave school because of lack of toilets, which forced parents to keep them at home. This is changing fast as millions of toilets were built across the country. Hence, in several states, the girls' dropout rate from schools slumped. Now, girls not only complete their education but study harder and spend more hours in schools than they did before.



### SAFE & SECURE

Kumbh 2019 was the safest festival. From the viewpoint of the women visitors, it was also one of the most secure festival. Special women police officials and women police stations ensured that the people could confidently approach them to solve their problems. 46,000 LED street lights were specially installed



AYODHYA / 15-16, DECEMBER 2018  
**SAMRASTA KUMBH**

The followers of Lord Rama hail from different sections and communities. No wonder, the holy city of Ayodhya hosted Samrasta Kumbh, Kumbh of Harmony







**W**E often say proudly that Indian civilisation is among the oldest in the world. Sometimes we need to remind ourselves exactly how old. There are different expert estimates but we can say that human habitation on our subcontinent is definitely 7,500 years old. That is because archaeological remains of old settlements have been found that predate even the Harrapan era, Some have been assessed to be 9,500 years old.

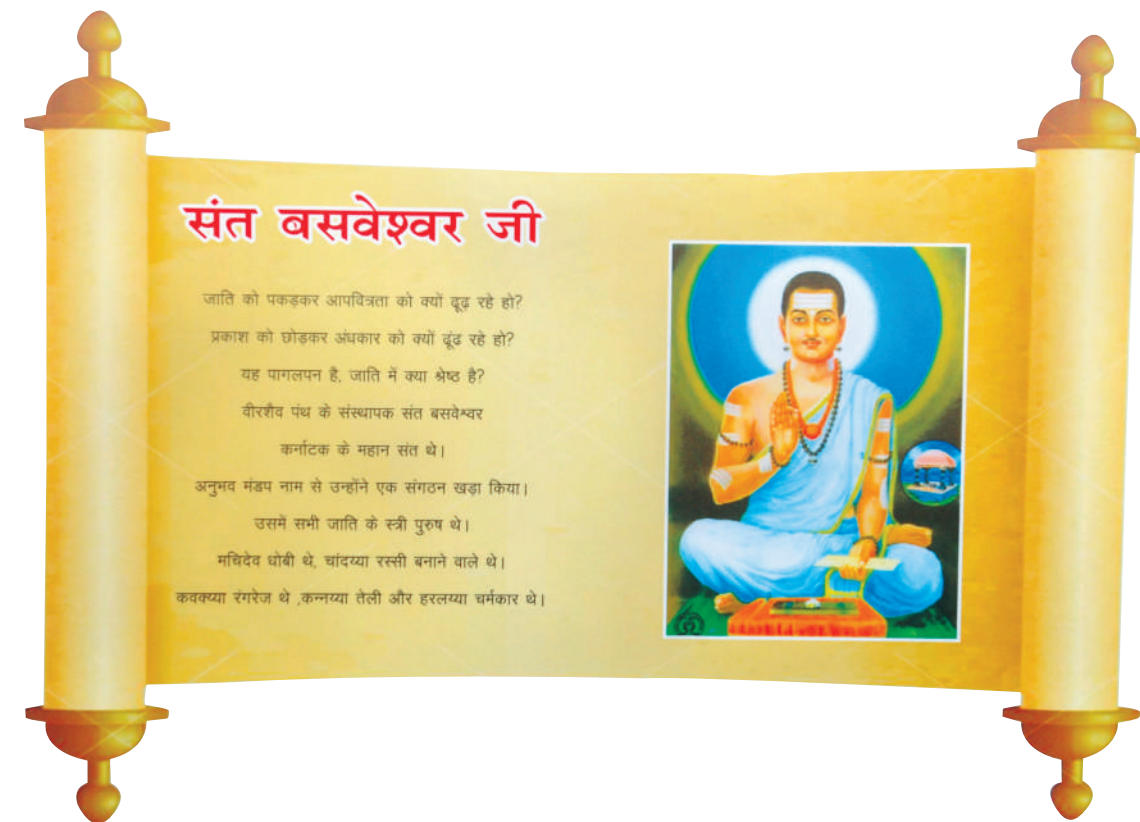
Archaeological Survey of India has excavated a site at Rakhigarhi in Haryana which has “the deepest time-scale, taking shape at 5,500 BC, and running four millennia. The nearby satellite site of Bhirrana... is even older; it offers the classic arc of evolution beginning from early Neolithic farming around 7,500 BC,” says an article in Outlook, an English weekly newsmagazine.

We should also be proud that ancient Indian society was essentially egalitarian. There were no ideas of

discrimination on the basis of caste and community, and untouchability was never a part of the earlier societies. Our Constitution has affirmed that the state will not discriminate on the basis of caste, colour or creed. This very essential social reform was a subject of intense discussion at the Samrasta Vaicharik Kumbh (Kumbh of Ideas), which was held in holy city Ayodhya.

The star speaker at this Kumbh of Ideas was Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Shri Yogi Adityanath. Eminent personalities who addressed the gathering were several central and state ministers, renowned academicians, spiritual and philosophical gurus from different castes, communities, and religions. Also given a chance to present their ideas were individuals who could give suggestions on how to enable India to emerge as an intellectual superpower in this century.

Several speakers dwelled on the divisions that continue to plague our society. One of them said it is like a



**Shri Thawar Chand Gehlot,**  
Minister of Social Justice &  
Empowerment, Government  
of India



disease within, sapping our energies and preventing us from progressing. Speaker after speaker impressed on the attentive audience the need for a radical change, a complete transformation. If India has to emerge as a 21st century superpower, it needed deep-rooted, sustained harmony within the society. There can't be bloodbath, violence or hatred in the name of class, caste, community and religion.

What emerged from the deliberations was a clear message that discrimination, in any form is not an integral part of Indian values and ethos -- and is unworthy of an ancient civilisation that has survived with its core values intact despite years of foreign rule. It was imposed by external elements, and it was a fairly recent concept in our long history. There is a need to recognise and understand this so that people realise that if we go back to our cultural roots, we can rediscover the complete harmony that was one of our civilisational values. This is the social equality we epitomised, that was inherent and did not need to be enforced by authorities. Hence, it is time to extract the best from our traditions and blend it with modern living. What was relevant thousands of years ago is even more important in today's world, where there are elements espousing divisiveness and separateness for their own selfish purposes.

**GENESIS OF SOCIETAL DIVISIVENESS**

A few speakers reminded the audience how it all started centuries ago. Shri Mahendra Singh, Minister for Rural Development, Uttar Pradesh, impressed upon the fact that foundations of our traditions are based in our inherent

The harmony and inclusiveness of Kumbh 2019 was amply highlighted by the the successful and colourful world record event for the highest number of hand prints in eight hours







The best way to gauge the harmony of Kumbh was along the banks of the rivers, where the Akhadas put up their tents



belief that the sun is our father, and moon is our uncle. “We light diyas for Tulsidas, we offer water to the neem plant, we tie threads around the peepal tree, and we call the cow our mother. This is our tradition, which reflects complete harmony with nature,” he added.

Shri Agaye Ji of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) explained that our ancient texts, Vedas and Upanishads, never mentioned untouchability. Shri Govind Giri Ji asked out aloud, “Where did the word Dalit come from? It is not mentioned in any Sanskrit texts.” As Shri Rohintham Ji of Kashi Vidyapeeth said, “Differences because of castes, superiority because of surnames, are these what our Vedas teach us? It is said that only three castes can read these texts, and only one can teach them. There are people

who know the Vedas by heart. But to understand them, you need to know their grammar. These people don’t understand them, they only memorise them. They make the reading of the sacred texts ritualistic.”

Every student of Indian history knows that modern Indian saints fought against discrimination. Shankaracharya Ji, Valabhacharya Ji, and others tried to banish these ideas from our society. But divisions persisted. They continue even in the 21st century. Decades ago, Shri Agaye Ji reminded the audience, Shri Babasaheb Ambedkar, renowned national and Dalit leader, said that there were only two kinds of people — those who believed in untouchability, and those who did not. There were no other distinctions.



Dr Krishna Gopal  
Sarkaryvah, RSS, addressing  
the gathering





### STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN

Pilgrims came from across the country, as also the world to Kumbh 2019. The city officials, volunteers, and other stakeholders showed absolutely no discrimination in dealing with individuals. Who hailed from various caste and creed





Rangarajan Chilkur ji, Priest  
from Hyderabad



Bharat Bhushan ji,  
Raidas Parampara

### HARMONY AND KUMBH

When UP Chief Minister Shri Yogi Adityanath came to the podium, there was an electric atmosphere. First, he impressed upon the audience the significance of Kumbh, which is enmeshed with the idea of social harmony. Detailing the objectives behind the five Vaicharik Kumbh events, he said, “Kumbh is an event without distinction of caste, creed, gender or economic status. It characterises social harmony and inclusiveness that eventually aid in developing a vision for the future.” He even questioned those who called Kumbh against the environment. “Some intellectuals have said that Kumbh is against the environment and women, but how could that be true in a country which worships Tulsi, Bargad and Peepal trees because they contribute in maintaining the environmental balance. In Kumbh, both men and women come to take holy dip in large numbers,” he said, adding, “the confluence of Samrastha (harmony) in Ayodhya represents the basic and original idea of

Kumbh and is the biggest living example of the idea of peaceful coexistence.”

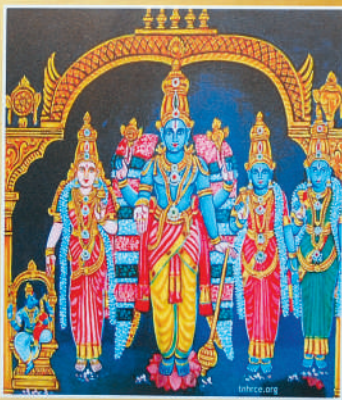
Other speakers fleshed out this idea. According to Dr Sunita Shastri, earlier devotees came to the Kumbh in Prayagraj for a bath at the Sangam -confluence of three rivers: Ganga, Yamuna, and the now invisible Saraswati. But the pilgrimage would be incomplete without Vaicharik Kumbh, or a Kumbh of Ideas. More importantly, as pilgrims and tourists congregate at Prayagraj, there is a feeling of oneness, and it is an example of harmony, as Hon’ble Chief Minister maintained.

She gave another example. Foreign academics like Camille Bulke have said that Valmiki’s Ramayana is ancient, and he was possibly the first poet in the world. The text is another ancient example of how harmony was ingrained in Indian society. And that is why we should be proud not only that ours is an ancient civilisation but that even in that prehistoric time, Indians believed in equality of all human beings.

### आलवार का समरस-भक्ति आंदोलन

तमिलनाडु के बारह वैष्णव भक्तगणों की एक मालिका ‘आलवार’ नाम से प्रसिद्ध है। छठी शताब्दी के पर्याप्त 600 वर्षों तक इन भक्त गणों ने अपने श्रेष्ठ भक्ति पूर्ण जीवन तथा कालजई साहित्य का सृजन करके भक्ति की ऐसी सुरसरिता प्रवाहित की जिसमें समस्त दक्षिण भारत और अवगाहनकर विलक्षण शक्ति का अनुभव करने लगा। आगे चलकर भक्ति की यही उलाल तरंग, उत्तर भारत की ओर बढ़ने लगी तथा शनैः शनैः संपूर्ण भारत भक्ति के महासागर के साथ आत्मसात हो गया।

वैष्णवभक्त आलवारों ने, वेद, उपनिषद् और गीता के गूढ़ तत्वज्ञान को भक्ति के सरलतम स्वरूप के साथ जनसामान्य के लिए प्रस्तुत किया। विलुप्त कर्मकांड के स्थान पर भजन, कीर्तन, नामस्मरण आदि को वैष्णव-भक्ति का आधार बना दिया गया जो, योगानुकूल था। आलवार भक्तों ने भक्ति मार्ग को सर्वोपरि स्वीकार किया। आलवार शब्द का अर्थ होता है मग्न। इन आलवारों का नाम है भक्त पोयेगी आलवार भक्त भूतातालवार भक्त पैयालवार, भक्त तिरुमलिसई आलवार, भक्त नन्मालवार, भक्त म्भुरकवि आलवार, भक्त पेरियालवार, भक्त आंडाव, भक्त तौंडरडीयो आलवार, भक्त तिरुप्पाय आलवार, भक्त तिरुमंगे आलवार। यह सभी हिंदू समाज की विविध जातियों से थे।







**INDIAN SPIRITUAL TRADITION**

Indian philosophy, and Indian religion has never been biased against any section of the society, or specific communities. The teachings urge harmony within the world, and Indian spiritual and religious gurus have preached such teachings for thousands of years





**Dr. Sunita Shastri**, a sadhvi, felt that although the main part of Kumbh was the bath in the holy waters, it was incomplete without Vaicharik Kumbh



**Shri Rohintham**, Professor, Kashi Vidyapeet, said that the Vedas don't talk about superiority because of our surnames

#### CONSTITUTION AND HARMONY

Article 17 of the Indian Constitution abolished untouchability, and its practice in any form was “forbidden”. It was made a punishable offence. Although Dalits today have a strong political voice, and their presence is growing in business and commerce, they are socially still not at an equal status.

There is a special law against atrocities against Dalits. If something has changed socially, and dramatically, it is the socio-political-economic lives of the backward castes. But the lives of Dalits have changed slightly slowly.

For decades, Indian intellectuals argued about the links between political reforms and social reforms. In 1892, W.C. Bonnerji, President, Indian National Congress, said, “I, for one, have no patience with those who say we shall not be fit for political reform until we reform the social

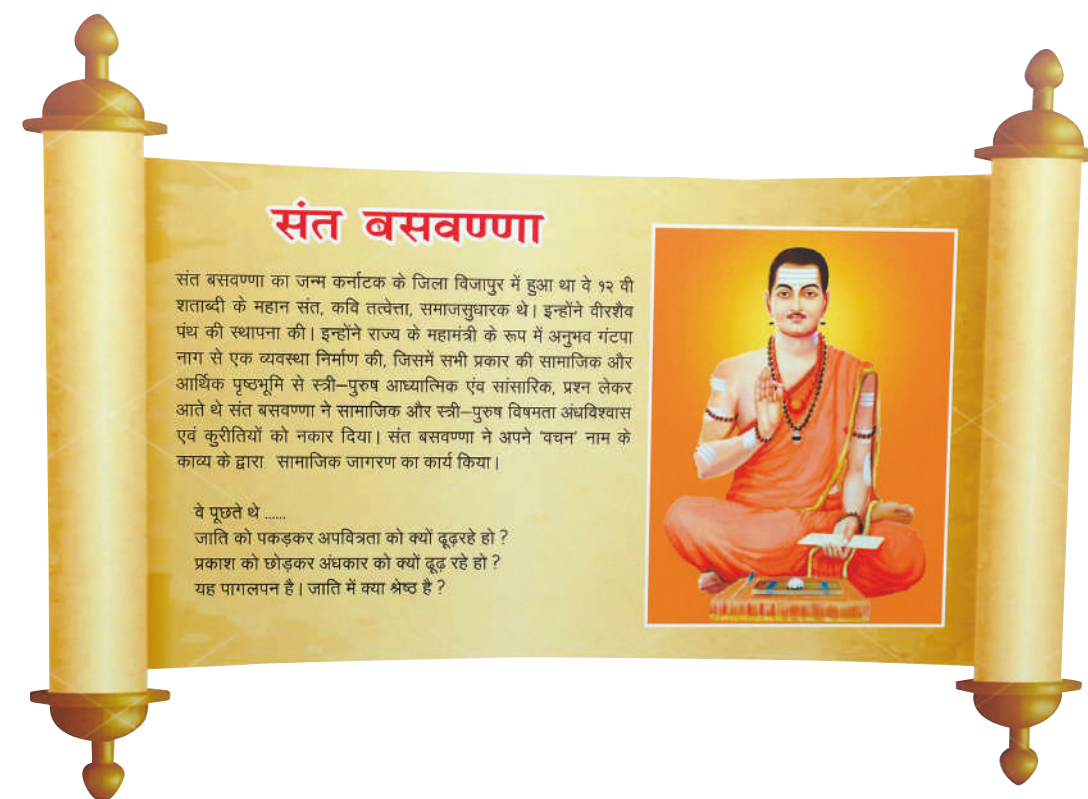
**In Kumbh there is no distinction of any kind among the people (be it pilgrims or tourists).**

**This confluence of samrasta in Ayodhya itself represents the basic and original idea of Kumbh.**

**The festival is the biggest and living example of the idea of living in peace. It is a gathering where there is no discrimination on the basis of caste, language, gender, and religion**

**Yogi Adityanath**

Hon'ble Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh







**Dr. Bhadant Rahul Bodhi,**  
Renowned Buddhist Monk, said  
that in this era of globalisation, we  
need to understand other cultures



**Shri V Bhagaiah ji,** RSS



**Under Paint My City**  
project, the holy cow finds a  
prominent place









system. I fail to see any connection between the two.... Are we not fit because our widows remain unmarried and our girls are given in marriage earlier than in other countries? Because our wives and daughters do not drive about with us visiting our friends? Because we do not send our daughters to Oxford and Cambridge?"

Arguing in a similar vein, Baba Saheb Ambedkar reached the opposite conclusion. In his undelivered speech, Annihilation of Caste, he stated the case for social reform. "In doing this, I will follow Mr Bonnerji as nearly as I can, and ask political-minded Hindus, 'Are you fit for political power even though you do not allow a large class of your own countrymen like the untouchables to use public schools? Are you fit for political power even though you do not allow them the use of public wells? ... Are you fit for political power even though you do not allow them to eat any food they like? I can ask a string of such questions. But these will suffice.'"

Hindu saints, as mentioned earlier, realised that the twain had to meet for the transformation of the society. As Rahul Bodhi, a Buddhist spiritual leader, said, "It is time to know and understand other people. In this era of globalisation, how can we move ahead and grow if we don't do this? We need to think of how we can spread brotherhood? How can we spread the ideas of peace and happiness? This is crucial today."

#### TRANSGENDER EQUALITY

In a grand ceremony at Kumbh 2019, the transgender Kinnar Akhara formally joined Juna Akhara. This showed how Kumbh was all-inclusive





#### HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIPS

In India, people from different religions, beliefs, and traditions have maintained peaceful and cordial relationships. As Indian philosophy travelled to the other countries, India too imbibed several teachings from abroad



### POLITICS AND HARMONY

As Ambedkar had claimed, politics was an important ingredient, although he wanted such reforms to follow social changes. Shri Sanjay Paswan, a Member of Bihar Legislative Assembly, pointed out the lacunae with the country's politics. First, he described what Samrasta actually meant. "The 'S' in it stands for affinity (samta), 'M' for mamta (maternal affection), 'R' for ramta, or one who is lost in Lord Rama, another 'S' for samanta (equality), and the final 'T' is for coordination (tartamyata). Hence, the word was a combination of these five elements." Harmony is impossible if one of them is absent.

### REAL SOCIAL HARMONY

Several experts argue that transformational and impactful social harmony can be achieved from within, not from the outside. It possibly cannot be imposed by others, even by the higher authorities. Each individual needs to accept the faults, and then attempt to change. The Constitution, laws, acts, and speeches will only work to an extent. There is political awareness and a sense of political power among such masses. They can exercise it once in five years.

For hundreds of years, ideologists said that economics can prove to be the path for social change. They contend that man is essentially an economic animal. Hence, if his economic situation improves, either through attainment of property, jobs, or commercial activity, his social and political conditions will automatically alter. In the Indian

### RELIGION AND SAINTS

Prayagraj was literally painted with colours; motifs included religion, faith, tradition, and historical legacy







The Peshwai ceremonies of the various Akhadas are one of the prominent events during Kumbh



context, apart from job quotas, leaders have instituted several schemes to encourage and expand Dalit entrepreneurship. But, as Ambedkar said, “One may contend that the economic motive is not the only motive by which man is actuated (motivated). That economic power is the only kind of power, no student of human society can accept.”

If neither politics nor economics, or social reforms are enough, can a combination work? Or is there another option to pursue. One of the binding factors for the society can be religion, which can then be used to institute internal transformation. However, the religion cannot be divisive; it needs to be harmonious with the society. It can then bring people together and encourage them to change from within, as all religions do. But in the 21st century, the religion needs to change to encourage brotherhood with other religions too. Only then can solutions emerge.

Over thousands of years, Indian philosophy has adopted a form of religious-philosophical-spiritual brotherhood, and its message is loud and clear — social harmony, peace among communities, and no discrimination of any sorts. As we mentioned earlier, the spirit of Kumbh represented these thoughts, where people from different cultures could mingle together, take a bath together, and freely exchange ideas in different areas. More importantly, they could go back home, and spread the ideas that they learnt. Hence, the world could grow intellectually, and together.

Indians need to remember that they are part of Vasudeva Kutumb ideology, i.e. the world is one family. Each one of us is a part of it.



Millions of tourists arrived every day at the Allahabad Railway Junction in special trains



A view of the tourists,  
who came from all over  
India; there was no  
distinction on how they  
were treated





## श्री राम जन्मभूमि मंदिर शिलान्यास

समरस हिंदू समाज निर्माण की और एक कदम...

श्री राम जन्मभूमि मंदिर के लिए जनवरी 1989 में प्रयागराज में कुंभ मेला के अवसर पर पूज्य देवरहा बाबा की उपस्थिति में गांव-गांव शिलापूजन कराने का निर्णय हुआ। पहला शिलापूजन बड़ीनाथ धाम में जगतगुरु शंकराचार्य ज्योतिषपीठाधीश्वर पूज्य स्वामी शान्तानंद जी महाराज की उपस्थिति में संपन्न हुआ। पूज्य देवरहा बाबा ने शिलाओं को आशीर्वाद दिया।

पौने तीन लाख शिलाएं पूजित करके भारत भेजीं। पूर्व निर्धारित दिनांक 9 नवंबर 1989 को सबकी सहमति से मंदिर का शिलान्यास तथा कथित पिछड़ी जाती के धर्माचार्य बिहार निवासी श्री कामेश्वर चौपाल के हाथों संपन्न हुआ। कोटी-कोटी हिंदू समाज के आराध्य प्रभु श्रीराम के जन्मभूमि पर निर्माण होने वाले भव्य मंदिर का शिलान्यास समरस हिंदू समाज के निर्माण की दिशा में एक महत्वपूर्ण चरण सिद्ध होगा।

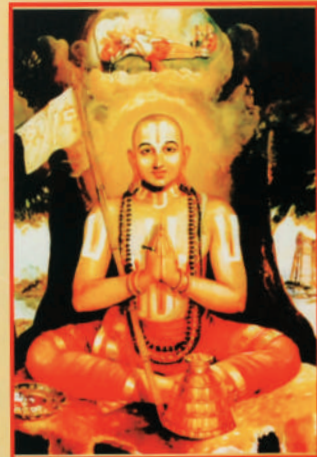


Glimpses of opinions on harmony expressed in the Indian philosophical texts and mythologies

## श्री रामानुजाचार्य जी

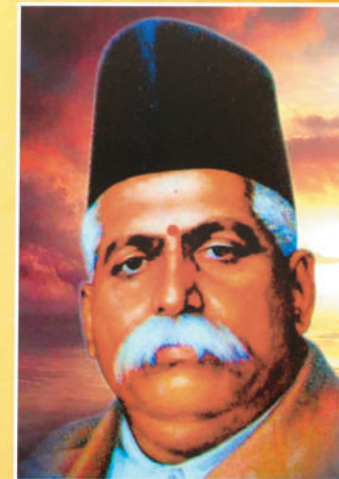
आज से लगभग एक हजार वर्ष पूर्व, तमिलनाडु के श्री पेरुम्बदुर नामक कस्बे में श्री रामानुजाचार्य का जन्म हुआ था। श्री रामानुजाचार्य, सामाजिक दृष्टि से वर्ण व्यवस्था के अंदर किसी भी प्रकार के भेदभाव को स्वीकार नहीं करते थे। स चंडाल के हाथ से भोजन करने में भी श्री रामानुज ने संकोच नहीं किया। श्री रामानुजाचार्य युद्धावस्था में स्नान करने जाते समय दो ब्राह्मणों के कंधे पर हाथ रख कर जाते थे और जब स्नान कर वापस आते थे तब 2 चर्मकारों के कंधे का सहारा लेकर आते थे। लोगों ने आपत्ति की तो उन्होंने कहा, 'अरे! अपने मन की कलुषता को समाप्त करो स' उनका मानना था कि 'न जाति: कारणं लोके गुणा: कल्याण हेतव: (श्री रामानुज चरित, पृ० २३२)

अर्थात्, 'जाति नहीं वरन गुण ही कल्याण का कारण है। जाति के अहंकार से बड़ा मनुष्य का कोई शत्रु नहीं।'



## पू० डॉ० केशव बलिराम हेडगेवार

राष्ट्रीय स्वयंसेवक संघ में प्रत्येक हिन्दू को प्रवेश है। संघ शास्त्र, अस्पृश्यता नहीं जानता है, ब्राम्हण हो या महार, गरीब हो या अमीर, यह भेद संगठन को मान्य नहीं है। ब्राम्हण-महार, अमीर-दरिद्र, विद्वान्-अविद्वान सभी को संघ में मुक्त प्रवेश है-



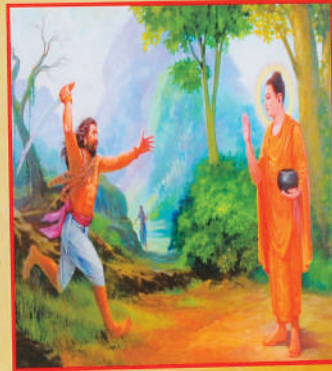
## भगवान बुद्ध और डाकू अंगुलिमाल

खूंखार डाकू अहिंसक भिक्षु बना

अंगुलिमाल खूंखार डाकू था। वह जिसे मारता उसकी चमड़ी काट एक माला बना लेता उसने 111 अहिंसियों को मार दिये थे। भगवान श्रीवस्ती में जैत वन में ठहरे थे। जब उन्हें पता चला कि अंगुलिमाल ने भयंकर आतंक मचा रखा है तो 1 दिन आनंद को साथ ले सुबह-सुबह ही वे जंगल की ओर चल दिये। अंगुलिमाल ने जंगल में एक गैरिक वस्त्र पहने आदमी को आते हुए देखा उसने सोचा कि कोई संन्यासी रास्ता भूल भटक कर आ गया है। मेरा एक सहचर निकार एक भिक्षु भी हो तो नहीं सही। गौरवमय वस्त्र, चेहरे पर तेज, एक निर्भीकता, उसने देखा आदमी कमी नहीं देखा था। भगवान तो बिना किसी भय के आगे आते ही रहे। अंगुलिमाल जोर से चिल्लाया, 'रुक जा आगे ना बढ़। भिक्षु है मुझे तुझ पर दया आ रही है। वापस जा मैं तुझे छोड़ दूंगा। भगवान ने कहा, मेरा चलना तो कब का रुक गया है, मैं तो ठहरा हूँ अपने में, चल तो तू रहा है। भगवान उसकी चिन्कल पास आ गए। भगवान के चेहरे पर भय की कोई लकीर नहीं थी।

भगवान ने कहा, 'अंगुलिमाल मारने में भी कोई कला है। यह तो कोई साधारण से साधारण आदमी भी कर सकता है। इस पेड़ की शाखा को काट कर मुझे दो' अंगुलिमाल मानो भगवान की बातों में अभिभूत हो गया, उसने जल्दी से पेड़ की शाखा को काटकर भगवान की तरफ बढ़ा दी। भगवान ने कहा अब इसे वापस उस तने पर जोड़ दो जहां से काटी थी। मारने में क्या महानता, जोड़ना महानता है, मैं जानता हूँ जोड़ना क्या होता है। मैं तुझे प्रकाश की तरफ चलने का निर्देश देता हूँ। अंगुलिमाल की आंखों से धार-धार आंसुओं की धारा बहने लगी। फरसा कांपते हाथों से गिर गया, और भगवान की चरण पंकज कर एक अविश्व बंधे को समान पंकज-पंकज कर सेने लगा।

भगवान ने उसकी पीठ सहलाई, स्नेह से उस पर हाथ फेरा। महाकाव्यिक भगवान बुद्ध ने अंगुलिमाल जैसे खूंखार डाकू को भी स्वीकार किया और अंगुलिमाल अहिंसक भिक्षु बन गया।

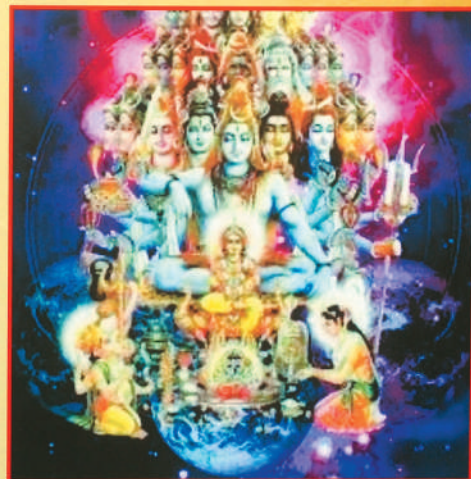




## तीन महाकाव्यों में समरसता भाव

अहम् ब्रह्मास्मि ।  
तत् त्वम् असि ।  
सर्वं खलु इदं ब्रह्म ।

एक ही ब्रह्म तत्त्व मुझमें है ।  
वही तुझमें है ।  
हम सब एक हैं ।



## आद्य शंकराचार्य

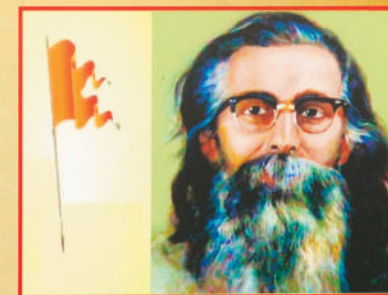
आचार्य शंकर का जन्म मालाबार (केरल) क्षेत्र के कालडी नामक स्थान पर हुआ था । काशी की एक गली में, श्री शंकराचार्य तथा चांडाल (श्वपच) का वार्तालाप प्रसिद्ध है । आदि शंकराचार्य काशी में गंगा-स्नान करने जा रहे थे, मार्ग में चांडाल रास्ता रोके खड़ा मिल गया । शरीर से दुर्गंध आ रही थी तथा कमर से चार कुत्ते भी उसने बांध रखे थे । श्री शंकराचार्य के शिष्यों ने उसे दूर हटने को कहा, इस पर श्वपच भगवत्पाद शंकराचार्य से पूछता है, 'महाराज, सर्वान्वैक्य तथा अद्वैत का संदेश देने वाले आप किसे गच्छ-दुरमिति कहकर दूर हटने को कह रहे हैं ? क्या अन्य-निर्मित एक शरीर को, अन्य-निर्मित दूसरे शरीर से दूर जाने के लिए कह रहे हैं या एक चैतन्य-स्वरूप को दूसरे चैतन्य-स्वरूप से दूर करना चाहते हैं ? क्या अभिप्राय है आपका ? इन वचनों को सुनकर श्री शंकराचार्य को अपने शिष्यों की मूल का बोध हुआ तथा उन्होंने चांडाल को गुरु स्वीकार किया तथा हाथ जोड़कर प्रणाम किया और अपने मनोभावों को व्यक्त करते हुए कहा—जागृत, स्वप्न, सुषुप्ति तीनों अवस्थाओं में, जो शुद्ध चैतन्य स्पष्ट दिखता है, जो ब्रह्म से लेकर पिपीलिका (मोटी) तक सभी प्राणियों के शरीर में विद्यमान है, यही मैं हूँ, ऐसी दृढ़ता से जिसकी प्रज्ञा हो, वह चांडाल हो या द्विज मेरा गुरु है, ऐसा मैं समझता हूँ ।

(मनीषापंचकम्—श्लोक—1)



## पू. माधव सदाशिव गोलवलकर तथा श्री गुरुजी

हिंदवः सोदरा सर्वे, न हिन्दू पतितो भवेत् ।  
उडुपी सम्मलेन



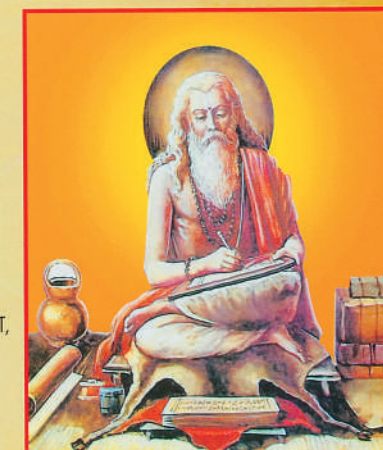
## वेद वचन

यथे माम् वाचम् कल्याणीम्  
आवदानीम् जनेभ्याः

ब्रम्हा राज्यन्याभ्याश्च शूद्राय चाय्यायच  
स्वाय चारणाय ।

यह कल्याणी वेदवाणी में सब प्रकार के लोगों को ब्राह्मण,  
क्षत्रिय, शूद्र, वैश्य तथा विदेशियों को भी देता हूँ ।

यजुर्वेद ...







LUCKNOW / 22-23 DECEMBER 2018

## YUVA KUMBH

The beautifully lit Chota Imambara in Lucknow sends a crucial message that youth will be the harbinger of change and prosperity in this century





Vice-President Shri  
Venkaiah Naidu being  
greeted by Chief Minister  
Yogi Adityanath





“ In most countries, the greatness of an individual is judged by his property and wealth. But this was never true in India, where greatness was accorded to Lord Rama and Raja Harishchandra, not because of their power but because of their values. One separated from his wife to protect her respect and reputation; the other sold his wife and son to pursue the right path ”

**Shri Rajnath Singh**  
Minister of Home Affairs, Government of India





EVERYONE, not just Indians but also international experts, is excited about India's 'Demographic Dividend'.

It implies that the country today has the youngest population in the world. More importantly, the proportion of productive people, i.e. those between 15 and 64 years, will continue to increase from 60% in 2000 to more than 68% in 2040. From then on, it will decline. However, in sheer numbers, the size of this age group will continue to rise till 2050, and sharply decline thereafter. This offers immense opportunities.

Some experts feel that growth, development and prosperity of a nation, especially the ones that are moving towards a peak, are dependent on demographics. "People's economic needs and contributions vary over the life cycle. For example, young people tend to be net consumers, while working-age people tend to be net producers and savers, with the elderly falling somewhere in between. This implies that the age structure of a population may be very consequential for its economic performance — as measured by income per capita. Large youth

India's younger generation has captured the imagination of the world with its energy and prowess. But in this quest for modernity, the youth should not relinquish the past. The cultural and spiritual traditions, as well as ancient scientific knowledge, needed to be wedded to new information. The youth had to stay away from western conspiracies

Yogi Adityanath  
Chief Minister, UP





and elderly cohorts might slow the pace of economic growth, while large working-age cohorts might speed it,” claimed a study by two experts.

Indian researchers feel that by 2020, the average age of Indians will be 29 years old, compared to 37 in China and the US, 45 in Europe, and 48 years in Japan. This implies that if this potential can be harnessed and channelised, India can witness double-digit growth rates for the next two to three decades. It can then emulate the prosperity levels achieved by the Asian Tigers, like South Korea and Taiwan, in the 1980s and 1990s, China in the 1990s and early 2000s, and the US during the Baby-Boomer decades.

It was in this context that Yuva Kumbh was organised in Lucknow, as a part of the five events under the overall umbrella of Vaicharik Kumbh. Most of the prominent speakers emphasised India’s Demographic Dividend, and its benefits over the long run. For India can do what other nations did: It can easily emerge as a political, economic, and cultural superpower, thereby fulfilling the existing dream of re-making the country into Vishwa-Guru, or World’s Leader. The country’s youth is its future.

Shri Yogi Adityanathji, Hon’ble Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh, reiterated this point, and added that India’s younger generation had captured the imagination of the world with its energy and prowess. But it needed to focus on clear goals. More importantly, he said that in the quest for modernity, youth should not relinquish the past. In fact, cultural and spiritual traditions, as well as ancient scientific and other knowledge, needs to be wedded to the new information order and technological developments. Hence, they should stay away from western conspiracies that debunk India’s past and present.

**I ask those who criticise our youth to come here, and see for themselves. India’s youth has taken a strong pledge to unite the country under a single flag. We should be proud to be Indians, and say so publicly without getting disuaded by those who question it. Swami Vivekanand said that a person is a true Hindu if the mere mention of the word electrifies him**

**Smt. Smriti Irani**  
Minister of Women & Child Development, and Textiles,  
Government of India





Enthusiastic youngsters at the handprint event, where a world record was set





**Dr Dinesh Sharma**, Deputy Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh

Then Hon’ble Home Minister, Shri Rajnath Singhji, too explained the importance of the links between the past and present. For example, in most countries, the greatness of an individual is judged by her property and wealth. But this was never true of India, where greatness was accorded to individuals such as Lord Rama and Raja Harishchandra. Lord Rama separated from his wife, Sita, whom he loved more than his life, to preserve her reputation and respect within society. Raja Harishchandra sold his wife and son to pursue the right path.

The common perception is that scientific knowledge and temper came from the West. But the Hon’ble Home Minister maintained that this was wrong and, for thousands of years, India has been an ocean of knowledge. This misinterpretation crept in because of long colonial rule by the British. To give a few examples, Rajnath Singh said that people believe that it was the Americans who perfected the art of predicting eclipses. “But walk into the house of any Brahmin, and he will tell you about eclipses 100 years ago, and 100 years in the future.”

However, the past and present have to seamlessly flow into the future. Shri Yogi Adityanathji highlighted several schemes that the central government had initiated over the past 54 months, ever since Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power in May 2014. There were expansive schemes for skill development and to launch start-ups for the youth. Loans were easy to get, as was seed capital to turn younger people into active, productive and profitable entrepreneurs. Such schemes encouraged participation of both women and lower castes to make them confident and a part of the Indian economy.

In Uttar Pradesh, ever since the Hon’ble Chief Minister assumed power less than two years ago, the state created jobs for 150,000 people. Adityanathji said that the process to hire

another 69,000 teachers and 50,000 new recruits in police was on, and will be completed within a month. By making Uttar Pradesh more investment-friendly, ample new employment opportunities will be available for youth. Under its ‘One District, One Product’ (ODOP) scheme launched by the Hon’ble Chief Minister, five million jobs will be generated over the next five years.

According to the official website, the ODOP’s aim is to “encourage such indigenous and specialised products and crafts in UP that are found nowhere else — like the ancient and nutritious ‘Kala Namak’ rice, the rare and intriguing wheat-stalk craft, world-famous chikankari and zari-zardosi work on clothes, and the intricate and stunning horn-bone work that uses the remains of dead animals rather than live ones, a nature-friendly replacement for ivory”.

Such initiatives are critical because the aspirations, ambitions, and confidence of the Indian youth are on a high. It aims to become prosperous and enable others to do the same. One of the paths to achieve this is through frenetic growth, combined with inclusive growth and development. But, as one researcher said, this can only be done with active government efforts. “However, this link between the demographic advantage and economic growth needs to be engineered with the help of active Government support in the areas of education, healthcare, and employability in order for the rising labour force to be productively employed, failing which the supposed demographic advantage could turn into a demographic disaster.”

But mere national wealth and defence powers cannot transform India into a Vishwa-Guru. What is required is a globalised cultural energy and passionate and motivated people. An example was given at the event of how without sending



a single soldier, India extended her cultural soft power over China centuries ago by exporting Buddhism from here. A similar Indian soft power needs to spread globally again — through the medium of energetic and migratory Indian youth, which has conquered hearts and minds in other nations. The Indian youth is undergoing a positive churn.

Speaking at the event, Madhur Bhandarkar, producer-director, mentions that he captures this essence of youth in most of his Bollywood films. His protagonists are generally young women in search of extraordinary greatness through ordinary lives. In his speech, Bhandarkar said that his movies are mirrors to society. They show the struggle, confidence, grind and transformation in New India, especially among women. Most countries that have achieved the heights of greatness have depended on the female gender to deliver with the support of men. They provide the foundations of successes. That's why the phrases that there is a woman behind every successful man, and there is also a woman behind a woman's triumph.

However, there are several dangers lurking in corners. Hon'ble Union Cabinet Minister Smt Smriti Irani claimed that there were sections in the country's Capital who give slogans to break India. "Some people question the nationalism of youth, putting them in the dock for bowing to Mother India and praying to Lord Rama. I ask these people to learn from the youth. India's youth has taken a strong pledge to unite the country under a single flag," she said.

Indian youth, according to her, should be proud to be Hindu, and say so publicly without getting dissuaded by those who question them. She reminded the audience of Swami Vivekananda, who said that a person is true Hindu only if the mere mention of the word electrifies her. She is a strong Hindu

**Young volunteers** spanned across the city to keep it clean, and for other purposes like traffic and pilgrim management





if the sorrows of others hurt as much as if they were her own sorrows. To encourage youth to wear its religion on its sleeve, she recited two lines from a poem by the late Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, “Koi batlaye Kabul mein jaa kar kitni Masjid todi? Hindu tan-man, Hindu jeevan, rag-rag Hindu mera parichay (Let someone go to Kabul and tell them how many Masjids we destroyed? Hindu by mind and body, Hindu lifetime, Hindu in my blood is my introduction).”

The fact remains that Hindu religion was -- and always will be -- assimilative. It is, in fact, because of religion that India stayed united despite centuries of foreign rule. Dr Krishna Gopal of the RSS emphasised this point, “It was not because of someone’s benevolence that we stood as one nation, despite the various ups and downs. During 800 years of foreign domination, outsiders tried to break the ideas of Whole India, Forceful India, and Serious India. They tried to break the unity of our culture. They made an attempt to reduce prosperity to poverty. They tried to destroy the prosperous India that guided the world in areas of religion, economics and science. But our gurus and leaders kept the idea of Spiritual India alive. This is the strength of our unified country.”

The country’s youth icons have added an additional dimension to nationalism, and the idea of the Indian nation-state. For example, Sushil Kumar, the renowned wrestler, said that young Indians are our global brand ambassadors. When the crowd hailed his home state of Haryana through slogans, he gave his definition of nationalism. “We need to get out of the mindset to think in terms of geographical state boundaries. We are Indians. If someone asks me whether I am from Odisha, I say, ‘Yes, I am’. If someone asks me whether I belong to Bihar, I say ‘Yes, I do’. I represent all the states because I am an

**Speaking at the event, the deputy CM said that the world moves as the youth move.**

**Hence, of all the five Vaicharik Kumbhs organised during Kumbh 2019, Yuva Kumbh was the most important. It is the younger generation that will change and transform India in the near future**

**Shri Keshav Prasad Maurya**  
Dy CM, Uttar Pradesh







**Youth seemed** keen to hear new ideas from spiritual and religious leaders, who came from across the country, including the North-East and South India

Indian. I belong to the nation.”

To emerge as a real representative of the country, the youth needs to fight, not physically but emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. Vijender Singh, the renowned boxer, narrated an incident to prove this point. “Before one of my bouts, I was told that my American opponent drank the blood of snakes. It was to scare me. I said I drink cow’s milk, and so nothing will happen to me. Let me tell you that the opponent lost the fight in less than three minutes.” He added, “A New India will only be formed if the nation’s youth fights. It is easy to be frightened, tough to fight. The one who fights with a true heart will be the winner.”

At the end of the day, apart from confidence and passion, what will unleash the real potential of Demographic Dividend will be skills and self-employment through local entrepreneurship. A recent study by a global consultancy firm maintained that India needed to work on several important fronts if it wanted to achieve these objectives. These included establishment of formal vocational education framework, reduce school dropout rates, build training capacity, and inculcate industry-ready skills, including soft skills.

Given the existing government policies, India seems to be on the right track. Apart from setting up new vocational institutes and revamping existing ones, policy makers have asked existing higher education colleges and universities, including those that offer graduate courses, to include skill imparting courses. Apart from bachelor degrees, the graduates will possess a skill that can be used to grab gainful and productive employment.

The construction of millions of toilets and Swachh Bharat campaign will have a huge impact on school dropouts,



**“In the past, external forces tried to negate the ideas of Whole India, Forceful India, and Serious India. They tried to interfere with the unity of our nation and culture. They tried to exploit Prosperous India that guided the world in areas such as religion, economics, and science. But our leaders kept the idea of Spiritual India alive”**

**Dr Krishna Gopal**  
Sarkaryvah, RSS

especially among girls. This is also true of the rural employment scheme. Hon’ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has repeatedly said that lack of toilets in schools is a primary reason why girls opt out of school at secondary levels. In several states, dropout rates have come down. Similarly, several studies indicate that the indirect impact of MNREGA is that girls don’t leave schools, spend more hours there, and attain quality education.

However, there can be a larger vision when it comes to Indian youth over the next few decades. As one of the studies noted, “India is expected to have the largest workforce in the world by 2025.... Within the same period, India has the potential to have a surplus of around 47 million skilled workers through its skill development programme, while countries across the world are expected to witness a shortage of around 56.5 million skilled workers.”

Therefore, apart from fulfilling the domestic demand for skilled labour, “India has the potential to become the worldwide hub for sourcing skilled labour. Increasing globalisation and digital presence is resulting in greater cross-border outsourcing. For instance, India’s current share in the global outsourcing market is around 37% amounting to US \$18 billion. Innovative BPO/KPO delivery models, coupled with a readily employable workforce, could help India significantly increase its global share.”

The fact remains that India has had a successful history of providing migratory labour to the world. In fact, in a recent book, India Moving, this is clearly established. For centuries, Indian males have crossed the seven seas for work, trade and business, even preferring to settle in other nations for years, if not for generations, and send money back home to their

**The youth** helped immensely to make Kumbh 2019 a grand success







Smt. Monika Arora, Lawyer



Shri Dattatreya Hosabale, RSS



Acharya Balkrishna ji,  
Patanjali Group



Ravi Kishan, Actor in  
Bhojpuri movies





families. This was unique, and is common only to very few countries. In fact, most of the labour suppliers of today have done it only for the past 100-200 years.

During this period, India's workforce migration, both internal and external, was possibly the highest in the world. India Moving dubs this as the Great Indian Migration Wave, when millions of Indians migrated from their native villages and towns. The bulk of them were males, they stayed semi-permanently at the new locations, at least for a few years, and consistently sent back remittances. States like Kerala, and areas like the Konkan, emerged as post office economies, where most of the money inflows came from outside.

Speaking at the Lucknow event, Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister of UP, Shri Keshav Prasad Maurya, said, "Yuva devo bhava (Youth are Gods)." He quipped, 'The way the youth go, the world goes' (Jiss aur jawani chalti hai, uss aur zamana chalta hai). Hence, he said that of all the five Vaicharik Kumbhs, Yuva Kumbh was the most important. It is the younger generation that will not only wipe out terrorism from the country, but also bulldoze the buildings of corruption. India will move in youth's footsteps.

Hence, the more affluent youngsters need to take along the others with them. Dattatray Hosbole of the RSS maintained that this was the way a nation can progress faster. But the younger generation needs to be equipped with compassion and sympathy. He reminded the audience about the time when Swami Vivekananda asked a question to youngsters about how deep was their compassion. That question, and the answer to it, are still relevant. Commitment without compassion is as unsuccessful as passion without commitment. The two need to

**Madhur Bhandarkar**, Producer-Director, felt that the movies reflect the realities of the society

**In his speech, the renowned Bollywood celebrity said that his movies are mirrors to the society. Not surprisingly, the protagonists in his films are young women in search of extraordinary greatness through ordinary lives.**

**Madhur Bhandarkar**  
Producer-Director





Even the youth projected the power of harmony in modern times



go hand-in-hand, and society has to collectively strive towards the desired objectives and goals. This is said to be Asia's century. More importantly, this will be Youth's century.

**Young Indians** join hands in a community-building exercise under Swachh Kumbh







Young Indians are our global ambassadors. We need to get out of the mindset to think in terms of regional and state boundaries. We are Indians. If someone asks me whether I am from Odisha, I say, yes, I am. If someone asks me whether I belong to Bihar, I say, yes, I do. I represent all the states, and not just Haryana, because I am an Indian. I belong to the nation

**Sushil Kumar**  
Renowned Wrestler

A New India will only be formed if the nation's youth fights. It is easy to be frightened, tough to fight. The one fights with a true heart will be the winner. Before one of my bouts, I was told that my American opponent drank the blood of snakes. It was to scare me. I replied I drink cow's milk, and nothing will happen to me. He lost in less than three minutes

**Vijender Singh**  
Renowned Boxer





PRAYAGRAJ / 30 JANUARY

**SARVASAMAVESI  
SANSKRITI KUMBH**



Prayagraj is the location of confluence of three rivers -Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati. The holy city disseminates the message of an inclusive globalised world, Sarvasamavesi Kumbh





The all-encompassing nature of Kumbh 2019 was depicted through culture from across the country; hereone can see the Punjabi Bhangra





Shankaracharya Swami  
Vasudevanand Saraswati Ji  
(Left), and Jagadguru Swami  
Hansdevacharya Ji

**T**HE interesting intellectual sidelight of events like Vaicharik Kumbh is that despite being focussed on specific issues, they throw up thoughts on several others. The same happened in Prayagraj, which hosted the fifth and final event on Sarvasamavesi Sanskriti Kumbh. For example, water conservation and water pollution emerged as topics of grave importance at the event. Acharya Satpal talked about a concern that he had raised several times in Parliament. He said that decades ago India decided to put a radar on top of the Nanda Devi peak in the Himalayas. The radar was powered by a plutonium (radioactive) pack. During the upward journey, the team was caught in a storm and left the pack behind. When another team went to search for it, it found that the pack was warm, and had slid down to an un-reachable location because of melting of the ice. The pack is still there, and is emitting radiation. There is an urgent need to find it and remove it because it is possibly polluting the River Ganga.

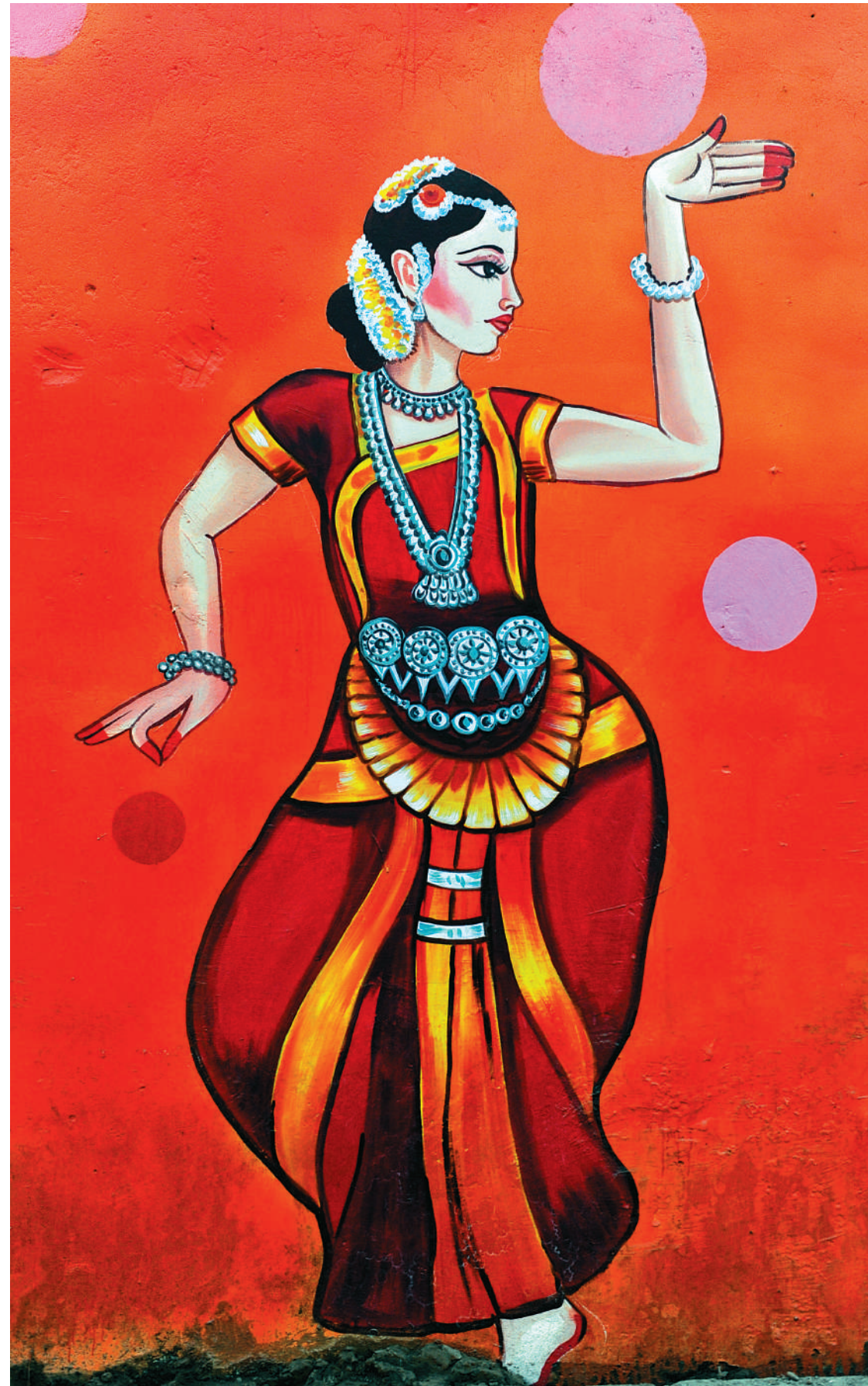
This was captured in a book, *Spies in the Himalayas*, co-authored by Mohan S. Kohli, a leading mountaineer, and Kenneth Conboy, a former US policy analyst. It details how America and India were “justifiably concerned” after China’s first nuclear test in 1964. The two countries undertook a joint mission to plant a “nuclear-powered sensing device” to “listen into China and monitor its nuclear launches”. The book contends that the “mission was beset by hazardous climbs, weather delays, aborted attempts, and even missing radioactive materials that may or may not still pose a contamination threat to Indian rivers”. The book was published in 2002.

Swami Chidanand Saraswati highlighted the need for water

**“Our Vedas, the ancient texts that are thousands of years old, contend that One Braham created the entire universe. The light, power, vitality and prosperity of this Braham is visible in the world. India has believed in the oneness of the world and universe. Since each person represents and contains this Braham, each is the same. There are no differences between people”**

**Baba Ramdev Ji**









Sadhvi Preeti Priyamvada (Left), said that unlike other nations and communities, Indians can choose from several paths to salvation



Swami Kamal Das Vedant Ji, explained how the contradictions between several paths and oneness of the universe are resolved in Indian philosophy

conservation. He explained, “If there is Sangam today, it is because of nature. Because there is water, there is Prayag. If there is water, there is Sangam, and if there is water, there is Kumbh. Without water, the Sangam will vanish. This is why we have to conserve water because experts contend that drinking water in the country will shrink by half by 2030. That’s why all of us have to stop the pollution of our rivers, and save whatever water we can. We need to plant trees along the banks of the rivers and conserve groundwater. If we can save water, we can save lives.”

At this holy city, some may contend the holiest of all cities, well-known speakers, who included globally-known saints and gurus, sadhvis and intellectuals, and the country’s policy makers, gathered to disseminate ideas of social inclusiveness embedded in Indian culture. In the 21st century, even as we divide and attempt to assimilate various communities within our society, even as there is a constant interplay between exclusiveness and inclusiveness, we have forgotten our past philosophical thoughts. For thousands of years, India has believed in a society that is assimilative; for centuries, it welcomed outsiders coming in, and insiders going out. It was a society where there was freedom of thought, values, and people. As we will detail out later, this wasn’t merely expressed at this Vaicharik Kumbh; it was elaborated over a century ago by Swami Vivekanand to a global audience in Chicago.

Hence, the above-mentioned two speakers, and others, elaborated on the main theme. Baba Ramdev, a spiritual guru, said that our Vedas, the ancient texts that are thousands of years old, contend that One Brahman created the entire universe. “The light, power, vitality, and prosperity of

**In Indian religion, a person can go to any saint, who can show him a specific path. Another person can go to another saint, and follow a different path to reach the single truth and One God. These specific paths become those of the individuals. Hence, in Indian thought, we have several paths, several texts, and several Gods**

**Sadhvi Preeti Priyamvada Ji**

this Brahman is visible in the world.” Hence, India has always believed in oneness of the world, Earth and the universe. Since each person represents and contains this Brahman, each one is the same. There is no difference between man and woman, between people from different geographies, communities, castes, classes and religions. In fact, this is the path shown by India.

Over centuries, Indian saints, philosophers and sadhus spread the same message across the country and the world. For example, Swami Chidanand Saraswati explained that this was the reason why Shankaracharya walked from Kerala to Kashmir. He took the coconut from South India to Jammu and Kashmir, and Vaishno Devi Temple. Such travels by our saints, from Kerala to Kedarnath, from Kashmir to



#### FOREIGNERS AT KUMBH

To ensure that Kumbh 2019 emerges as a global event, as it always was, the central government sent official invitations to 192 countries to send delegations and visitors. The response was terrific — travel websites witnessed 80% surge in queries from abroad; arrivals at Kumbh jumped by 30-50% during the 49 days; and, the government introduced easier travel policies such as visa-on-arrival and e-visa. Apart from the Union Ministry of External Affairs, and Government of Uttar Pradesh, several other organisations wooed foreign tourists. For instance, ICCR took the initiative to invite one foreign representative from each country of the world “to witness the world’s largest gathering of humanity”. At Kumbh 2019, apart from the tourists from expected countries such as Canada, the US, Bhutan, Malaysia, and South Africa, visitors came from other nations like Egypt, Cambodia, and Indonesia.







Foreign tourists and visitors attended several events that were organised at Kumbh 2019. These included those related to Indian culture, traditions, and values. This was in addition to the holy bath and puja. Most of the foreigners were excited about their visits. One of them said that she saw so much love and unity at Prayagraj, and the people were extremely supportive







Swami Kamal Das Vedanta Ji,



Swami Chidanand Saraswati Ji,  
highlighted the need for lobal water  
conservation, and emphasised that  
Kumbh happened because of the  
Sangam and water

Kanyakumari, represent the true oneness of culture and ethos of this country. This is the foundation on which our society and country is built. There can be differences and conflicts of opinions in this nation but there will not be any differences of minds.

This oneness has been repeatedly expressed in religious, philosophical and rational terms. Everything -- be it an organism, event, or non-living entity -- is connected to each other. This is part of other Asian religions and philosophies like Zen Buddhism. Unless a human is able to see this never-ending but ever-changing connectivity in the entire universe, one cannot experience the truth. This is why Indian tradition states that what we see around us in our daily lives is Maya (illusion). This is because the things around us seem to be separate, random and not tied to each other. In reality, this is not the case. Hence, there is a need to make a distinction between the inherent oneness of the universe and illusion of separateness.

Over the last 100 years, modern science, especially physics, has reached similar conclusions. Albert Einstein's relativity signalled the advent of relativism, or the death of a single truth, as we observe it in our daily lives and experiments. The observer, or the one witnessing events and making measurements, influences events directly. The truth, as they say, lies in the eyes and ears of the observer. This doesn't mean that there is no single truth. It means that the observer has to transcend the see-able, hear-able, and think-able reality, which is essentially illusory, to observe the oneness.

The same is true about quantum physics, or the physics of the atom. Heisenberg's uncertainty principle implies that

**If there is Sangam today, it is because of nature. If there is water, there is Sangam, and if there is water, there is Kumbh. Without water, the Sangam will vanish. This is why we have to conserve water because experts say that drinking water in the country will shrink by half by 2030. That is why all of us have to stop the pollution of our rivers, and save water**

**Swami Chidanand Saraswati Ji**  
Parmarth Niketan, Rishikesh

one cannot measure the position and velocity of an object at the same time. One will need to be sacrificed to accurately measure the other. As Encyclopedia Britannica puts it, "The very concepts of exact position and exact velocity together, in fact, have no meaning at all." The probabilities involved in quantum indicate that a particle can be at various positions at the same time, until it is observed and measured. This led to the famous thought experiment of Schrodinger's cat.

Given the multiple states a quantum particle can have before it is observed, imagine a cat, poison, a Geiger counter, radioactive element and a hammer in sealed container. Since the radioactive element is miniscule it has a 50:50 chance of being detected. If the Geiger counter detects the element, the hammer would smash the poison, killing the cat. But unless the container is opened and someone





#### DIVERSITY IN UNITY

Several well-known personalities, who hailed from Prayagraj, became the heroes and sheroes for the entire nation, and even the world. These street paintings include the images of Chandrashekhra Azad (Right), and Subhadra Kumari Chauhan (Left)





Cultural delegation came from the various states, including the North-East



observes what happened it is impossible to know the state of the cat. In effect, it is both alive and dead at the same time. But this is exactly what quantum wants us to believe.

Like in science, the concept of oneness in Indian thought throws up complex and invigorating questions. One of them that is consistently asked, as pointed by Swami Ram Kamal Das Vedant at the Prayagraj event, is that most of the world's religions advocate One Path, One God and One Scripture. In India, we have the four Vedas, the Upanishads, millions of Gods and Goddesses and several paths. How is this possible? How can we believe in the oneness of the universe with such diverse, even contradictory figures, paths, scriptures, thoughts and philosophies? The saints answered this quite eloquently at the Vaicharik Kumbh.

Swami Kamal Das explained what Lord Krishna told Arjuna, one of the five Pandava brothers, about himself. The manner in which people pray, and to which Gods and Goddesses they pray, determines the form that Lord Krishna, the One God, takes to descend on Earth to please that set of devotees. So, the real God is one, the one who created truth and this universe. It is only that people who pray to different Gods see him in different forms and avatars. It is only the truly initiated, the saints and sadhus, who are able to cut across the millions of Gods and Goddesses to understand this universal truth that has remained unchanged since the beginning of time.

“I am the one you see in all the forms of Gods. I am Lord Rama. I am Lord Krishna. And only I make the people aware of my greatness. If you really want to see the real greatness of the One God, you see it in Lord Krishna,” Swami Kamal Das quoted the Gita. In fact, in the course of the scripture,

**Acharya Satpal talked about a concern that he had raised several times in Parliament. He said that decades ago India decided to put a radar on top of the Nanda Devi peak in the Himalayas.**

Lord Krishna shows Arjuna his real form, a form so gigantic and huge that it encompasses the entire universe, both space and time. It takes a lot of effort on part of Arjuna to absorb this form of the God. Initially, his eyes are blinded, he cannot focus. Slowly, he manages to understand only some of the facets. In Gita, only Arjuna is able to see the real Lord Krishna, and no one else on the battlefield.

Obviously, one can ask that if there is One God and one truth, then why did the saints encourage several paths, several scriptures and several Gods? The reason is that Indian philosophy and Indian religion did not evolve as a matter of blind faith and belief, as is the case with many of the western religions, but through a process of rational and logical thought. The Indian saints discussed and debated various aspects of culture, intellectual issues, values, religion and spirituality to understand how one can understand



**Shri Satpal Ji Maharaj**  
Hon'ble Tourism Minister,  
Uttarakhand



**Swami Avdheshanand Giri Ji Maharaj**





**Shades of inclusive**  
Kumbh as people  
come from across the  
country and globe









the only truth about One God. They realised that asking an uninitiated individual to follow a single path, single God, and single scripture will require the use of blind faith and power. The people would have to be ordered to do certain things, rather than allow them to discover for themselves, to reach to an understanding through individual and personalised processes.

As Sadhvi Pruth Preyamvada puts it, the saints therefore gave the flexibility and freedom to the people to follow different paths to reach the single truth. It didn't matter which roads they walked as long as the goal was the same. According to the saints, the goal would always be the same. "In Indian religion, a person can go to any saint, who can show him a specific path. Another person can go to another saint, and follow a different path." These specific paths become those of the individual. In the end, they diverge into thousands of paths involving millions of Gods. This is why Indian philosophy and Indian religion is so expansive, unlike many other religions.

The saints were comfortable because they weren't straitjacketed with a single thought process, and they could explore different ways to attain the universal truth. This enabled them to give options and choices to the uninitiated, who could choose the path that worked for them. In fact, a number of Indians experiment with several paths before they realise the one that works for them, and helps them to seek the truth. But the saints never criticise or undermine the paths that are advocated by the other saints. They understand that the goal of all the saints is the same. And each path will result in the same universal realisation. Hence, there was no need to bicker.

**Shades of** how Kumbh 2019 represented not a specific city, a religion, or a class, but was completely inclusive





Foreign tourists flocked to Kumbh 2019; they came from different countries



This is possibly the prime reason why, as explained by Swami Govind Dev, Indian religion has never been an aggressor. It has been inclusive for thousands of years. It hasn't advocated attacks on people who follow other religions. In fact, those from other religions are amicably absorbed in Indian society, if they wish to do so. This is also the reason why Indian saints never go out of the way to advocate their messages, or actively woo followers. They are happy if someone follows their path, and they are happy if someone follows another path preached by another saint. There is tolerance, compassion, empathy, even sympathy, but no zeal or jealousy.

Sadhvi Priyamvada went on to give an example of how different people are satisfied with different paths. "The curiosity of Swami Vivekanand was satisfied by Ramkrishna Paramhans. When Vivekanand understood the truth, he was able to spread the message across the world. He even went to Chicago to give a lecture on Indian culture and philosophy." In 1893, at the Parliament of Chicago, Swami Vivekanand provided a real perspective on Indian religion. He spoke about the universality and oneness of Indian philosophy, which had no enmity with the followers of other paths and thoughts. This was because Indian religion actively advocated different paths to seek the single truth.

"I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth. I am proud to tell you that we have gathered in our bosom the purest remnant of the Israelites,

Kumbh 2019 was a rare amalgamation of several cultures, and sub-cultures







who came to Southern India and took refuge with us in the very year in which their holy temple was shattered to pieces by Roman tyranny. I am proud to belong to the religion which has sheltered and is still fostering the remnant of the grand Zoroastrian nation. I will quote to you, brethren, a few lines from a hymn which I remember to have repeated from my earliest boyhood, which is every day repeated by millions of human beings. 'As the different streams having their sources in different paths, which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee,'” he told the Parliament of Religion in 1893.

This is the true ethos of India. Since it was assimilative, Indian philosophy, thought, religion, and culture was able to permeate outwards and have a global influence. As one finds Indians seeped in most societies, Indian religion and culture influenced several others in Asia, Africa and even the western world. The craze and passion for Indian yoga or Indian thought attracts millions of foreign followers, who either come to India in search of the universal truth and One God, or follow the paths of Indian saints settled abroad. This universality and oneness provides the overarching umbrella to include anyone, and everyone.

At Prayagraj Vaicharik Kumbh, the saints emphasised that the growing feeling spread by a minority that Indian culture is inherently divisive and divides sections of society is completely wrong. This thought is not embedded in our ancient thoughts and scriptures. For thousands of years, we have believed in social and cultural inclusion, a live and let live mindset, which allows people to either join or go separate ways. In the end, everyone will meet together when they understand the single truth and concept of One God.

**Amitabh Bachchan** is a national icon; here he, in the centre, is surrounded by practitioners of Indian art and tradition



Like the various rivers, which take different and tortuous routes but flow into a single ocean, so is the case with us.

In the same way, various saints specified that it was wrong to think that Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) talks about division within Indian society. The real truth is that RSS prays to Goddess Bharat Mata, and announces that ours is a living nation. So, there is One India. Moreover, this is a culture and philosophy that thinks about the world and not about its nation. So there is One World. Indian religion doesn't breathe for itself, but for the world. There is a need to keep this thought alive, given the current criticism, through a congruence of culture, nature and future. If culture lives, if nature lives, the future will be alive.

As Swami Chidanand Saraswati put it succinctly, "Throughout history, one found a path through the Kumbh. But now, it seems, we need to give direction to the Kumbh." The reason is the failure to fully grasp Indian thought, and attempts by some to distort its meaning and interpretation. There is a need to explain to people the true ethos of the country. Hence, there was a need for the rise of a Sanskari Sarkar (Government of Culture), rather than the normal Sarkari Sarkar (Government of Governance). In this Kumbh, the central and Uttar Pradesh state governments have proved that they belong to the former. We are convinced that they are Sanskari Sarkars.

A culturally-rooted regime, be it in politics or within social and economic structures, does not imply going back to the past. It implies how the accumulated knowledge and insights of the past and present can be filtered and distilled so that it can be aptly applied in the future to make this world a much

**I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance... (and) which has sheltered the prosecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of earth. I am proud to tell you that we have gathered in our bosom the purest remnants of the Israelites... and sheltered the remnants of the grand Zoroastrian nation**

**Swami Vivekananda**  
At the Parliament of Chicago, in 1893

better one. As experience has shown, civilised, evolved and mature societies have inevitably interpreted and applied past values and ethos in newer forms at regular intervals. Academicians and researchers have concluded that this is true of philosophies, religions and social constructs. Over centuries, religions have redefined themselves, without losing the core messages, to become both relevant and helpful to their followers. Nothing can be static, as change is the only constant in this universe.

It is with this perspective in mind that we need political regimes that are culturally rooted so that they can prescribe a path for the future, a course that will take Indian civilisation to the next level. In the next hundred years, India can still show the right path to the world, as it did thousands of years ago.

The possibilities are many,  
when modern women  
empowerment syncs with  
traditional values





Delegates came from different countries, different communities. Here is a section of non-resident Indians







The state government invited official delegations from various countries, and they enjoyed the grandeur