**Tens of Millions of Hindu devotees make do with little at Maha Kumbh Festival**

The article “Tens of Millions of Hindu devotees make do with little at Maha Kumbh Festival highlights the intense devotion that such a large number of Hindu people share, and how they express it via bathing in the confluence of the sacred waters of the Ganges, the Yamuna, and the Saraswati.

The article highlights a few major points regarding the festival itself, describing the immense number of people who have already arrived at the time of the article’s writing and the number who are still expected to make the journey which is around tens of millions; it’s one of the largest cultural/religious gatherings in the world. It then talks about a few people and their families, commenting on their journey(ies) to the festival. A significant number of people coming to this festival bring minimal supplies and rely purely on their strong faith to get them through the several days, often making additional sacrifices as well. The article attempts to highlight the devotion these individuals have to their religion and their faith.

The practice of bathing in sacred waters is one that has been present in Hinduism for a very long time, as many rivers in India are regarded as goddesses, most especially the Ganges. The goddess Saraswati also is, of course, strongly associated with the mystical Saraswati River. The water flowing in these rivers is thought to be extremely purifying, and making a pilgrimage to these rivers is considered an opportunity for great spiritual purification. Further, along with many other holy sites in India, these places also provide the opportunity to exemplify their devotion to the gods/goddesses/deities associated with that place. Therefore, this festival is an extremely important and powerful opportunity for those practicing Hinduism. However, such a vast amount of people bathing in a centralized location brings up the question of environmental and safety concerns, a topic of interest in recent decades by Indian governments. According to *Living Religions*, immersion of ritual items into the sacred waters of the Hooghly River as well as other human wastes contributed to nearly seventeen tons of harmful materials like varnish and paints in only one single year. Further, industrial byproducts like waste have polluted the headwaters of the Ganges, one of the three rivers bathed in during this festival, among many others. This incurs a significant health risk for those involved in bathing in affected rivers. Fortunately, governmental efforts in many Indian cities are aware of this and have been encouraging the use of environmentally friendly materials for ritual idols, in order to ensure that those who attend the festival remain in good health and are able to show their faith. Global environmental efforts are also pushing for better handling of industrial waste.

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