



“Tourist Facilities At Maha Kumab Mela Balancing Tradition, Cultural Heritage And Sustainability”

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ABSTRACT

The Mahakumbh Mela is one of the largest religious gatherings in the world, held every **12 years** at the sacred confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati rivers in Prayagraj, India. Rooted in ancient Hindu traditions, the festival attracts millions of devotees, saints, and tourists seeking spiritual purification through the Punya Snan (holy dip).

The Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 is expected to witness an unprecedented influx of over 400 million pilgrims, making it a significant cultural and logistical event. To accommodate this scale, the Uttar Pradesh government has introduced modern infrastructure, including enhanced transportation, sanitation, security, and digital services, while ensuring environmental sustainability through waste management, eco-friendly accommodations, and river conservation efforts.

Apart from its religious significance, the Mahakumbh Mela serves as a global platform for cultural exchange, promoting India's rich heritage through spiritual discourses, yoga sessions, and traditional rituals. The event also exemplifies the balance between tradition and modernity, integrating technology and sustainability measures for a more organized and eco-conscious experience.

As a UNESCO-recognized Intangible Cultural Heritage, the Mahakumbh Mela continues to symbolize faith, unity, and the timeless essence of Hindu philosophy, making it a spiritually transformative and culturally enriching event for participants worldwide.

KEYWORDS: Mahakumbh Mela, Religious gathering, Tourist Facilities, Cultural Heritage, Sustainability, Economics Impact.

INTRODUCTION

The literal meaning of Kumbh is Kalash. Here 'Kalash' is related to the Amrit Kalash. It is about the time when after the Devasura war, both the parties agreed to churn the ocean. The ocean was to be churned, so the churning rod and neti were also required accordingly. In such a situation, Mount Mandarachal became the churning rod and Nagvasuki became its neti. Fourteen gems were obtained from the churning, which were divided among themselves, but when Dhanvantari gave the Amrit Kalash to the gods, a situation of war arose again. Then Lord Vishnu himself took the form of Mohini and said that everyone should drink Amrit and entrusted the responsibility of the Amrit Kalash to Indra's son Jayant. After getting the Amrit Kalash, when Jayant was running away to protect the Amrit from the demons, then in this sequence the drops of Amrit fell at four places on the earth - Haridwar, Nashik, Ujjain and Prayagraj. Since, on the orders of Vishnu, Sun, Moon, Saturn and Jupiter were also protecting the Amrit Kalash and due to moving in different zodiac signs (Leo, Aquarius and Aries), all of them became the symbols of Kumbh festival. In this way, due to the participation of planets and zodiac signs, Kumbh festival also became a festival of astrology. It took 12 days for Jayant to take the Amrit Kalash to heaven and it is believed that one day of the gods is equal to one year on earth. This is the reason that in the course of time, Kumbh Mela started being organized at the mentioned places every 12 years on the special combination of planets and zodiac signs.

According to astrological calculations, Kumbha is celebrated in four ways:

When Jupiter enters Aquarius and the Sun enters Aries, the Kumbh festival is organised on the banks of the Ganga in Haridwar. The Kumbh festival is organized on the banks of the Triveni Sangam in Prayagraj on the day of Amavasya when Jupiter enters the Aries zodiac and the Sun and Moon enter the Capricorn zodiac. When Jupiter and Sun enter the Leo sign, the Kumbh festival is organised on the banks of Godavari in Nashik. When Jupiter enters Leo and the Sun enters Aries, the Kumbh festival is organised on the banks of Shipra in Ujjain.

Along with religiosity and planetary position, Kumbh festival can also be tested on the touchstone of metaphysics, which proves the usefulness of Kumbh. On analyzing Kumbh festival, it is known that this festival establishes harmony between nature and living elements and includes life-giving powers in them. Nature is the basis of life and death, in such a situation harmony with nature becomes very important. It has also been said “Yad Pinde Tad Brahmande” i.e. whatever is in the body, is in the universe, hence Kumbh is the festival of the mystery of how the body establishes harmony with the powers of the universe, how it gets life-giving powers. Kumbh is the festival of practical churning of various opinions and views, and the nectar of knowledge that comes out of this churning is the prasad of Kumbh festival.

Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 is being organized in Prayagraj, which will run from January 13, 2025 to February 26, 2025.

Ritual of Bathing: At the heart of the Kumbh Mela is the ritual bath, known as the Shahi Snan, which draws millions to the sacred rivers' confluence. Devotees believe that bathing in these waters during the Kumbh Mela can cleanse them of their sins and liberate their souls from the cycle of birth and death (samsara).

The Four Sacred Rivers

The cultural impact of maha kumbh is deeply connected to the four sacred rivers. These rivers are the Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswati, and Godavari. Each river has its own spiritual importance and is revered by millions during the Kumbh Mela. The four sacred rivers play a key role in the Kumbh Mela. The Ganga is seen as

India's lifeline, with healing waters. The Yamuna is the spiritual sister of the Ganga, known for its purifying properties.

Punya Snan Dates for Maha Kumbh Mela 2025:

1. Makar Sankranti (First Shahi Snan): January 14, 2025, Marks the transition of the sun into Capricorn (Makara). Signifies the beginning of an auspicious phase in Hindu culture.
2. Paush Purnima: January 25, 2025 Celebrated on the full moon day of the Paush month. Considered highly favorable for performing religious rituals.
3. Mauni Amavasya (Second Shahi Snan): February 11, 2025 Known as the "silent new moon," devotees observe silence and take a holy dip. This day holds special significance due to a rare celestial alignment occurring once every 144 years, known as 'Triveni Yog.'
4. Basant Panchami: February 16, 2025 Celebrates the arrival of spring. Dedicated to Goddess Saraswati, the deity of knowledge and arts.
5. Maghi Purnima: February 24, 2025 Observed on the full moon day of the Magha month. Considered auspicious for bathing rituals and charity.

Significance of Punya Snan:

Participating in the Punya Snan during the Maha Kumbh Mela is believed to:

- Purify the soul and absolve sins.
- Enhance spiritual growth and lead to Moksha (liberation).
- Provide an opportunity to participate in various religious ceremonies and connect with a vast community of devotees.
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CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF MAHA KUMBH

The Maha Kumbh Mela is a celebration of diversity, showing India's rich cultural heritage. The cultural impact of maha kumbh is clear in how it brings people together. It shows the deep bond between culture, spirituality, and community in Hinduism.

The cultural significance of maha kumbh highlights Hinduism's diversity and richness. It reflects the many traditions and customs of the pilgrims. From local food to music and dance, every part of the festival celebrates India's cultural heritage. It offers a unique and enriching experience for all who participate.

Some key aspects of the cultural significance of Maha Kumbh include:

- Celebration of diversity, with people from all over India and the world coming together to participate in the festival
- Rich cultural heritage, with a wide range of traditions and customs on display
- Deep connection between culture, spirituality, and community, reflecting the core values of Hinduism

The cultural significance of Maha Kumbh goes beyond the festival itself. It has a broader impact on the local community and the world. The festival offers a chance for people to come together, share their experiences, and learn from each other. It promotes cross-cultural understanding and exchange.

The Akhadas (Akharas) of Kumbh Mela are monastic orders of Hindu saints and ascetics, primarily associated with the Dashanami Sampradaya (established by Adi Shankaracharya) and Vaishnavite and Udasi sects. They play a central role in the religious activities of the Kumbh Mela, including the famous Shahi Snan (royal bath).

The 13 Main Akharas of Kumbh Mela

These are divided into 3 main sects: Shaiva (Shaivite), Vaishnava (Vaishnavite), and Udasi.

1. Shaiva Akharas (Followers of Lord Shiva)

- Juna Akhara (The largest and most prominent)
- Mahanirvani Akhara
- Atal Akhara
- Avahan Akhara
- Agni Akhara
- Anand Akhara
- Niranjani Akhara

2. Vaishnava Akharas (Followers of Lord Vishnu)

- Nirmohi Akhara
- Digambar Akhara
- Nirvani Akhara

3. Udasi Akharas (Associated with Guru Nanak's teachings)

- Bada Udasin Akhara
- Naya Udasin Akhara

4. Naga Sadhus

- While not a separate Akhara, the Naga Sadhus are warriors and ascetics associated primarily with the Shaiva Akharas, known for their fierce devotion and participation in the Shahi Snan.

Other Important Sansthas and Hindu Spiritual Organizations

- Various sects of Ramanandis, followers of Lord Rama
- Gaudiya Vaishnavas (followers of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, including ISKCON representatives)
- Various Shankaracharya Peethas (such as Jyotirmath, Dwarka, Sringeri, and Puri)
- Aghori sects (such as Baba Kina Ram's followers)
- Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya
- Various Bhakti sects and saints' disciples from across India

LITERATURE REVIEW

B.K. Jha, a senior journalist, highlighted the profound spiritual essence of the Mahakumbh, emphasizing its role as a celestial convergence of rivers, spirituality, and wisdom. He noted that the 2025 gathering was particularly significant due to the 'Samagam' of seers and spiritual leaders discussing Guru Nand Kishore's teachings on Sahaj Smriti Yog, a meditation practice aimed at self-realization. Jha portrayed the event as a testament to India's rich cultural heritage, fostering a collective spiritual experience among millions of pilgrims.

Journalist Mudit Mathur reported that the Mahakumbh 2025, while drawing an unprecedented number of pilgrims, faced significant challenges. The event was marred by tragic incidents, including stampedes at the Mahakumbh site and New Delhi Railway Station, resulting in numerous casualties. Additionally, environmental concerns arose due to reports of faecal bacteria contamination in the river waters, despite official assurances of safety. These issues highlighted the gaps in crowd management and infrastructure, underscoring the need for improved safety measures in future gatherings.

Diana L. Eck (1981), in her book *banaras: City of Light*, highlights the religious and spiritual essence of Hindu pilgrimage, with Kumbh Mela serving as a prime example of mass devotion and collective rituals.

Gupta & Jain (2021) studied the role of **spiritual tourism** in the Indian economy, emphasizing that Mahakumbha Mela enhances GDP through hospitality, transportation, and local commerce.

Chatterjee & Mukherjee (2022) explored smart city initiatives and the use of **technology in crowd management**, citing the integration of AI-based surveillance and GIS mapping in the 2025 Mahakumbha Mela.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To evaluate the general satisfaction of attendees regarding the facilities and arrangements at Mahakumbh Mela 2025.
- To examine the effectiveness of waste management and the availability of clean restrooms and sanitation facilities.
- To determine the adequacy of security personnel, surveillance systems, and crowd control measures in ensuring public safety.
- To assess the availability, comfort, and hygiene of temporary shelters, tents, and hotels provided for pilgrims.
- To evaluate the efficiency of public transportation, shuttle services, and parking facilities for smooth travel and movement.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

- Examining the historical roots and mythological importance of Mahakumbha Mela.
- Analysing the role of the festival in preserving and promoting Hindu traditions.
- Evaluating the role of hotels, Dharamshalas, temporary accommodations, and homestays in handling massive inflows of visitors.
- Analysing the financial contributions of the festival to the local and national economy.

- Examining the adoption of sustainable initiatives such as eco-friendly products, renewable energy use, and water conservation measures.

METHODOLOGY

In the present study the data has collected using a structured questionnaire which was designed after having a proper review of literature. The structured question was distributed in Google forms to collect the required data. These questionnaires were distributed to students, working women, and girls at bus stops who regularly use buses for travel. The survey links were sent via email, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter. To prevent duplicate responses, respondents had to verify their email addresses. The survey was conducted and received responses from 35 individuals. The collected data from the survey were analysed for further insights. Also collected information from secondary sources which includes websites and other secondary sources.

Secondary data:

Secondary data sources include government documents, economic reports, media articles, and expert commentaries that provide insights into the mahakumbha mela . Data from sources like district of prayagraj website and kumbha mela government data.

TOURIST FACILITIES AT MAHAKUMBA MELA

The Uttar Pradesh government has undertaken extensive infrastructure projects to accommodate the anticipated 600 million pilgrims attending the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 in Prayagraj.

Temporary City and Accommodation

Expansive Setup: A temporary city spanning 4,000 hectares has been established, featuring approximately 150,000 tents to house visitors. **Sanitation Facilities:** To ensure hygiene, around 145,000 restrooms and urinals have been installed, with a dedicated monitoring system and a workforce of about 10,000 sanitation workers maintaining cleanliness.

Transportation and Connectivity

Enhanced Road Infrastructure: Over 450 kilometers of new roads have been constructed within the Mela area to improve accessibility. **Parking Facilities:** Parking areas covering 1,850 hectares have been designated to manage the influx of vehicles. **Railway Services:** Indian Railways has increased the number of coaches on key trains and is operating approximately 360 trains, including 190 special trains, to accommodate pilgrims.

Safety and Security Measures

Law Enforcement Deployment: Around 40,000 police officers, supplemented by surveillance systems, have been deployed to ensure safety. **Technological Integration:** A network of approximately 2,300 cameras provides continuous monitoring, and underwater drones are utilized for recovery operations. **Fire Safety:** The Uttar Pradesh Fire and Emergency Services Department has deployed over 350 fire fighting vehicles and more than 2,000 personnel across multiple stations and posts.

Health and Sanitation

Medical Facilities: Mobile health units and emergency medical services are available to address health emergencies. **Ganga Praharis:** The state government has appointed 500 dedicated personnel to maintain the sanctity of the river during the festival.

Technological Enhancements

Digital Assistance: A mobile application has been launched to provide information to pilgrims, and artificial intelligence tools, including chatbots, are employed to assist visitors.

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MAHA KUMBH

The Maha Kumbh Mela has a big economic impact on the area. It's expected to draw 40 crore people (400 million) to Prayagraj. This will bring in a lot of money, adding over 1% to the GDP. The cultural significance of maha kumbh shows in its support for local traditions. It highlights the strong bond between culture, economy, and community in Hinduism. The festival is set to create a total economic impact of Rs 2 lakh crore (₹2 trillion). It could also see an increase in spending to Rs 10,000 per person. The Maha Kumbh Mela's economic benefits last long after the event. It will create jobs and help local businesses grow. The event is expected to make Rs 25,000 crore (₹25,000 million) in revenue.

Sustainability Initiatives at Mahakumbh Mela 2025

The Mahakumbh Mela 2025 is expected to attract over 400 million devotees, making it one of the largest human gatherings on Earth. Managing an event of this scale requires significant environmental and sustainability efforts to minimize its ecological impact. The Uttar Pradesh government has introduced several measures to ensure that this sacred event is conducted in an eco-friendly and sustainable manner.

Sustainability Initiatives

1. Waste Management & Sanitation

Zero Waste Policy: Large-scale waste segregation and disposal systems have been set up to manage solid and liquid waste efficiently. **Biodegradable Toilets:** Over 145,000 temporary bio-toilets have been installed to ensure proper sanitation. **Waste Collection & Recycling:** The government has partnered with waste management agencies to process waste into compost or recyclable materials.

2. Clean Water & River Conservation

Strict Pollution Control Measures: Industries near Ganga and Yamuna rivers have been monitored to prevent contamination. **Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs):** New and upgraded STPs have been deployed to prevent untreated sewage from entering the rivers.

3. Sustainable Transportation & Green Energy

Electric Buses & E-Rickshaws: The mela had a fleet of electric buses and battery-powered rickshaws to reduce pollution. **Solar-Powered Infrastructure:** Solar panels have been installed to power streetlights, camps, and other facilities. **Pedestrian-Friendly Paths:** Walkways and cycle tracks have been created to minimize vehicular emissions inside the festival area.

4. Eco-Friendly Accommodations

Green Camps & Tents: Temporary accommodations are made from eco-friendly, recyclable materials. **Plastic-Free Zones:** Single-use plastic has been banned inside the mela premises, and biodegradable alternatives are promoted. **Organic Food Stalls:** Vendors are encouraged to use organic produce and serve food in leaf plates (pattal) to minimize plastic waste.

5. Digital Initiatives for Sustainability

Mobile Apps & Digital Maps: Reduce the use of printed materials and provide pilgrims with real-time navigation. **AI-Based Crowd Management:** Helps in preventing overcrowding and excessive resource consumption.

STATISTICS USED

Table no 1: table showing Age of the respondents

Particulars	No of respondent	Percentage
Below 18	0	0%
18-25	29	85.3%
25-40	5	14.7%
Above 60	0	0%
Total	35	100%

Interpretation:

The above table shows that 30% respondents were under the age group of 18-25 and 5% of respondents were the age group of 25-40.

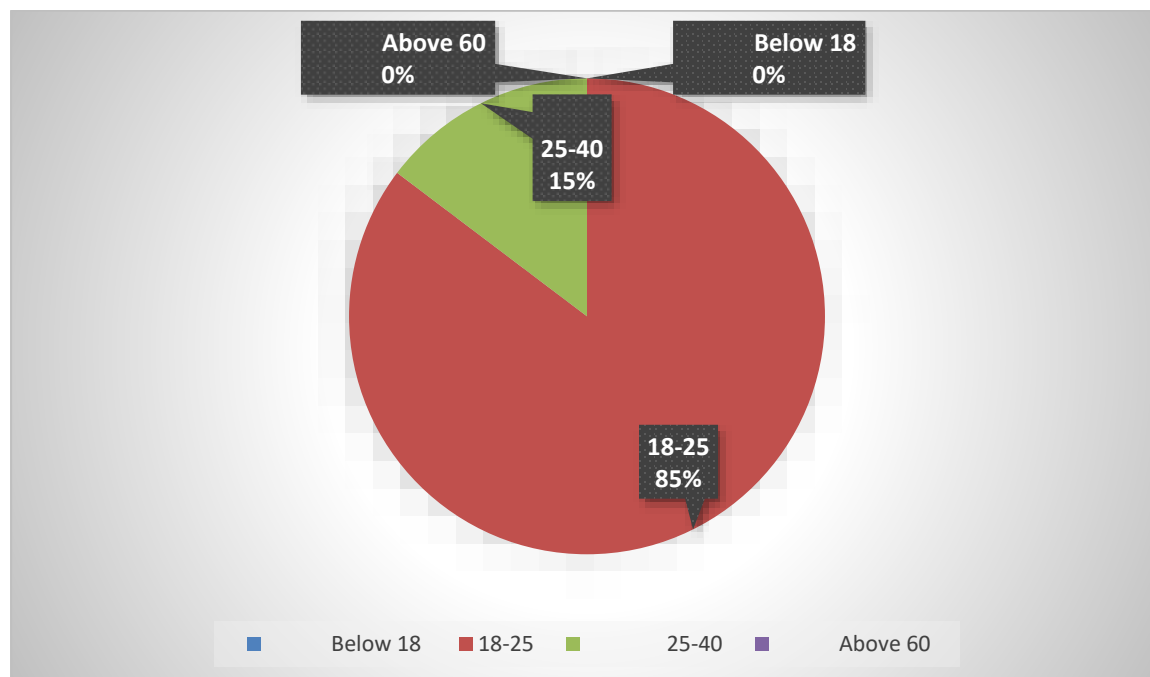


Table no 2: Table showing Gender of the respondent

Particulars	No of respondent	Percentage
Male	24	72.7%
Female	9	27.3%
Total	33	100%

Interpretation:

This above table showing that 72.7% respondents are male and 27.3% respondents are female.

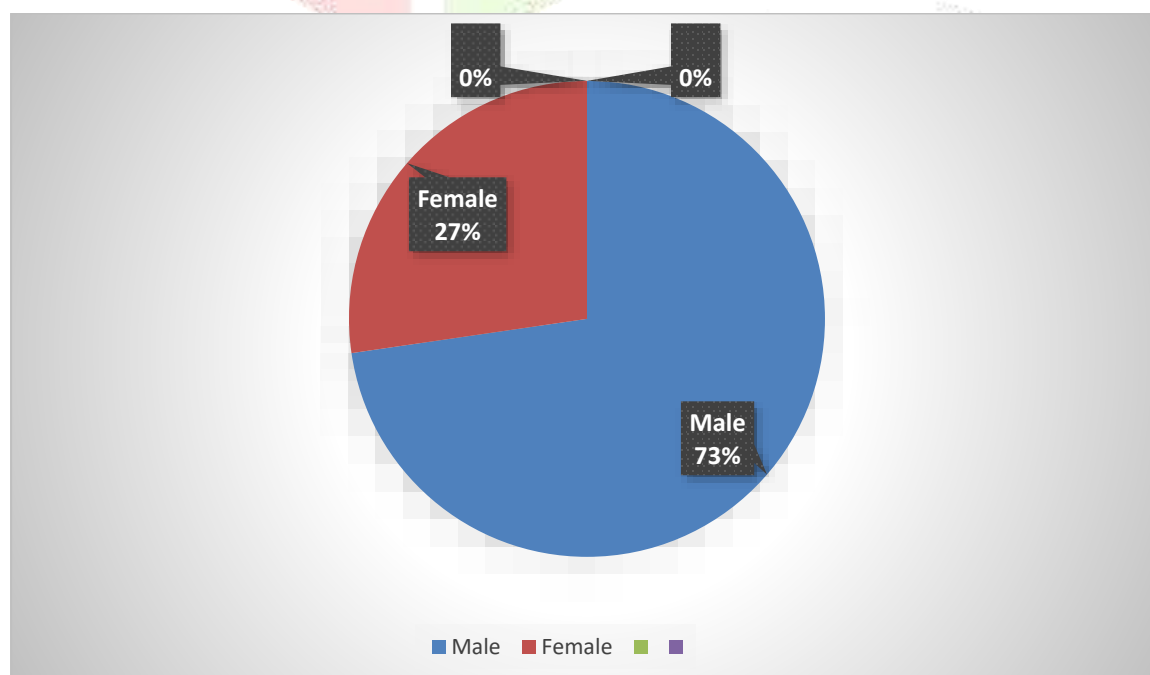


Table no 3: Table showing marital status of respondents

Particulars	No of respondent	Percentage
Married	3	8.8%
Unmarried	31	91.2%
Total	34	100%

Interpretation:

This above table shows that 8.8% respondents are married and 91.2% respondents are single.

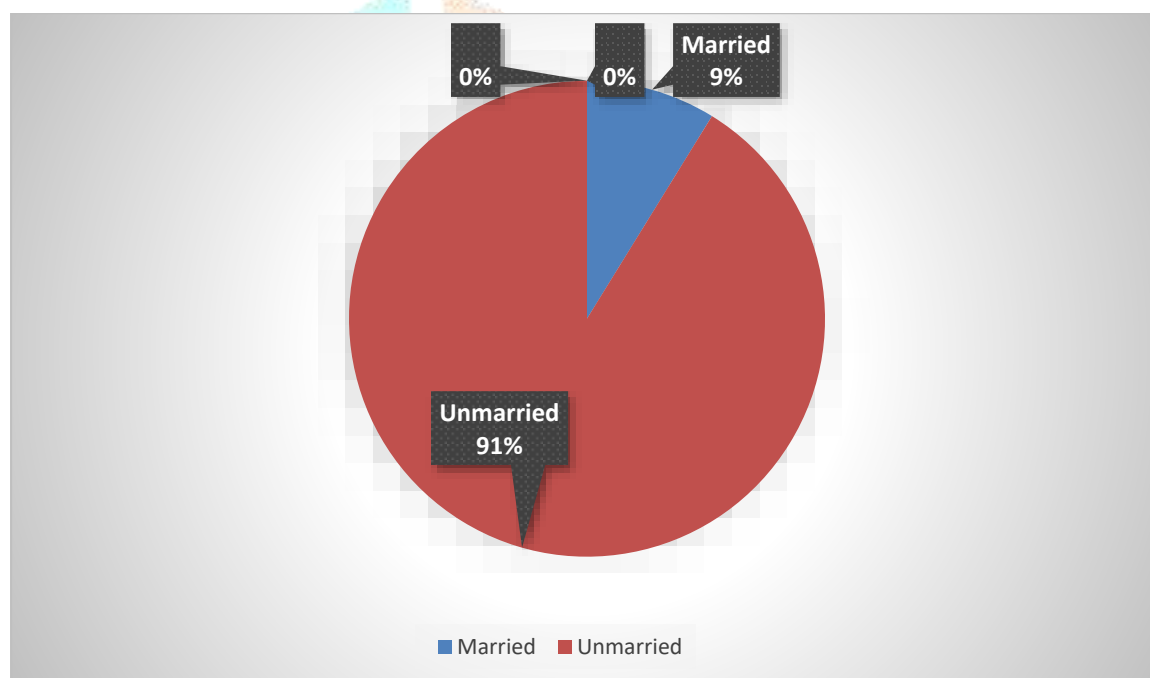


Table no 4: Table showing qualification of respondents

Particulars	No of respondent	Percentage
High school	2	5.9%
Graduate	21	61.8%
Post graduate	10	29.4%
Others	1	2.9%
Total	34	100%

Interpretation:

This above table showing that 5.9% studied High school 61.8% are Graduates and 29.4% respondents are postgraduates and 2.9% respondents is others.

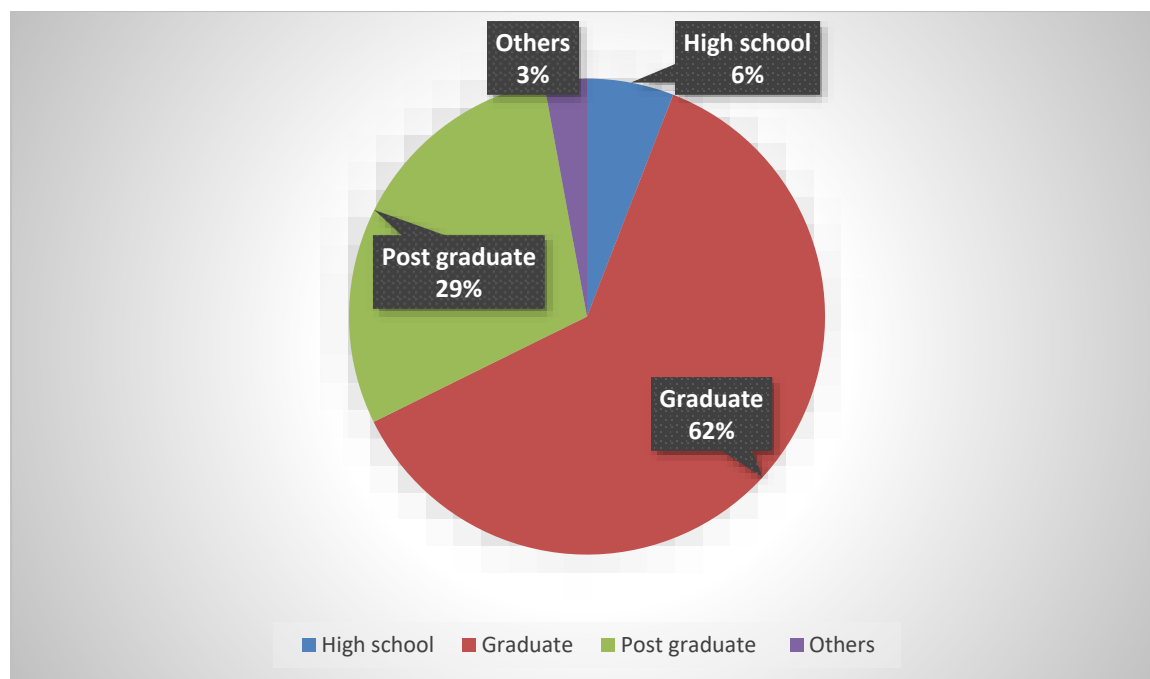


Table no 5: Table showing satisfaction of respondents for the overall arrangements of mahakumbhamela.

Particulars	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	21	61.8%
Agree	9	23.5%
Neutral	5	14.7%
Disagree	0	0%
Total	34	100%

Interpretation:

This above table shows that satisfaction with the overall arrangements of mahakumbh mela. 61.8% strongly agree they were satisfied with arrangements 23.5% agree and 14.7% were neutral and 0% disagree with the overall arrangements.

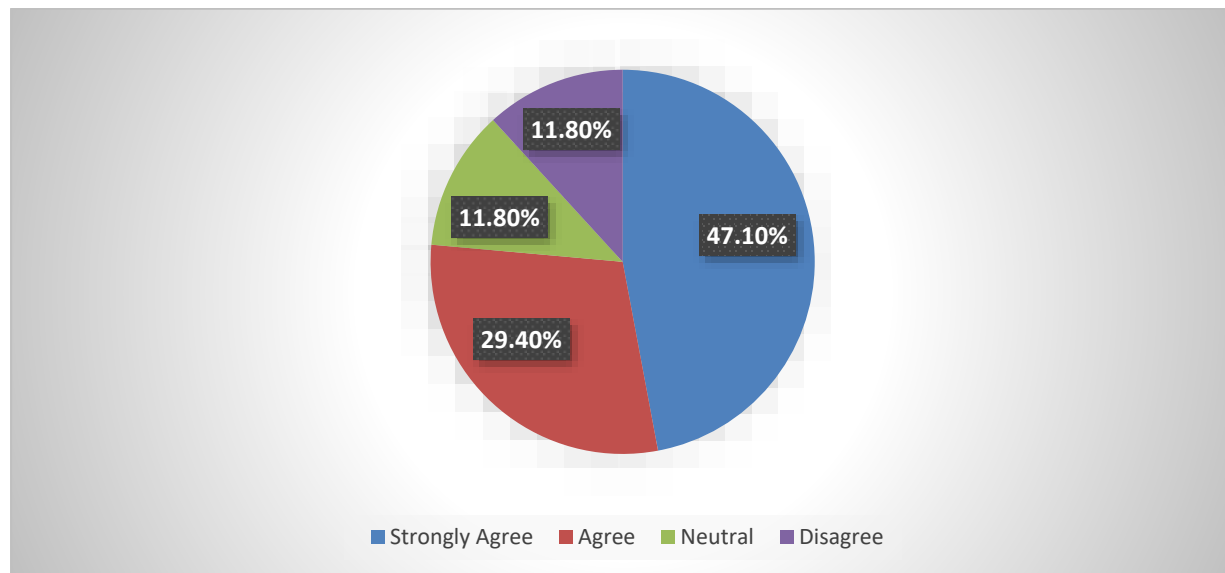


Table no 6: Table showing Cleanliness and sanitation facilities were well-maintained throughout the event.

Particulars	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	16	47.1%
Agree	10	29.4%
Neutral	4	11.8%
Disagree	4	11.8%
Total	34	100%

Interpretation:

This above table shows that 47.1% respondents were strongly agree and 29.4% agree and 11.8% neutral and 11.8% disagree with the Cleanliness and sanitation facilities were well-maintained throughout the event

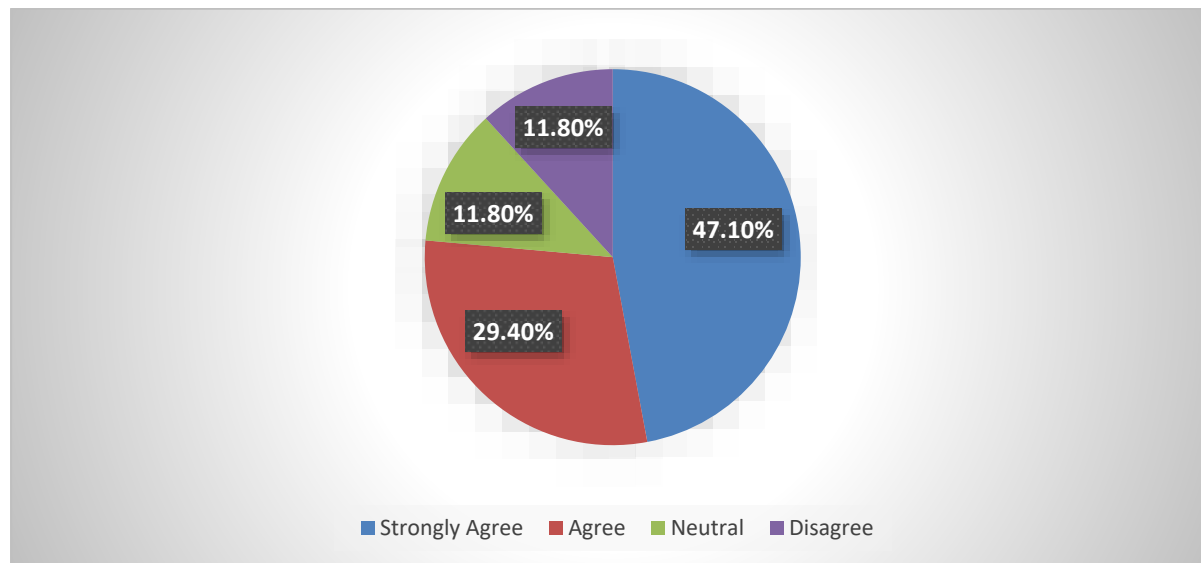


Table no 7: Table showing Public restrooms/toilets were sufficient and properly maintained?

Particulars	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	11	33.3%
Agree	12	36.4%
Neutral	6	18.2%
Disagree	3	9.1%
Strongly disagree	1	3%
Total	33	100%

Interpretation:

This above table shows that 33.3% respondents strongly agree and 36.4% respondents agree 18.2% were neutral and 9.1% were disagreed and 3% strongly disagree with the public restrooms and toilets were sufficiently and properly maintained .

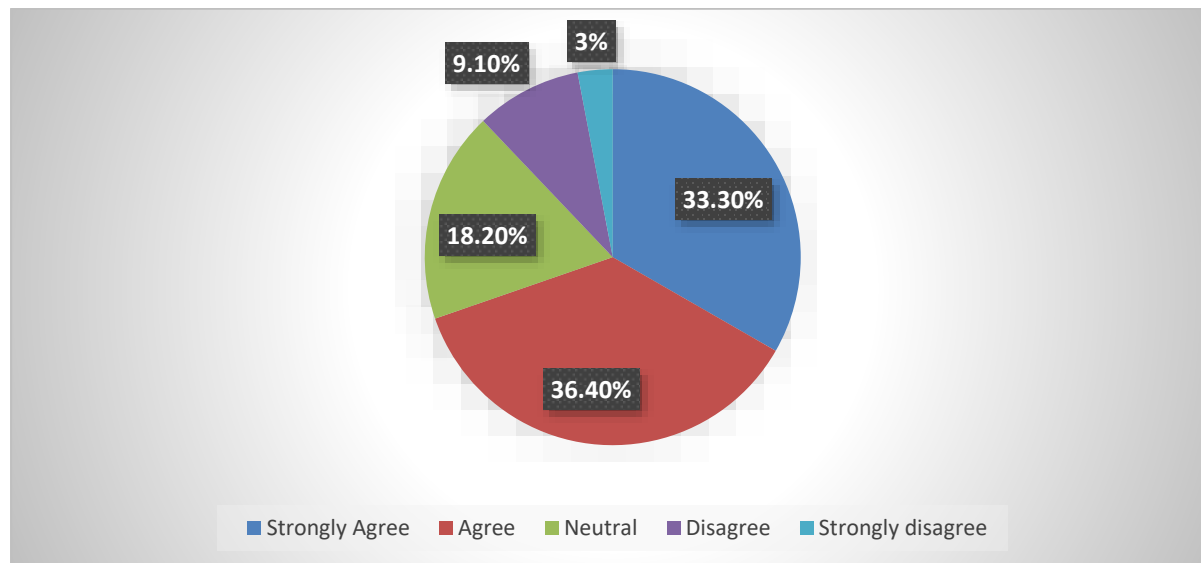


Table no 8: Table showing that Accommodation facilities (tents, dharamshalas and hotels) were adequate and comfortable?

Particulars	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	12	42.4%
Agree	14	36.4%
Neutral	4	12.1%
Disagree	2	6.1%
Strongly disagree	1	3%
Total	33	100%

Interpretation:

This above table shows that 42.4% respondents strongly agree and 36.4% respondents agree 12.1% were neutral and 6.1% were disagreed and 3% strongly disagree with the Roads and pathways within the Mela area were well-planned and accessible

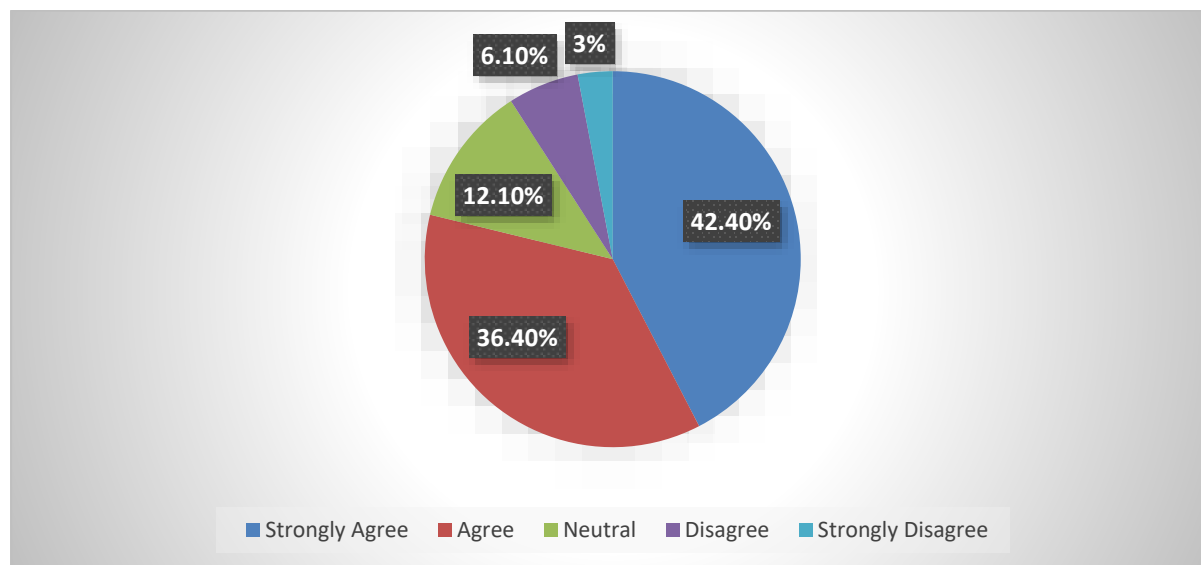


Table no 9: table showing that CCTV surveillance and emergency response teams were visible and accessible?

Particulars	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	16	48.5%
Agree	9	27.3%
Neutral	4	12.1%
Disagree	2	6.1%
Strongly disagree	2	6.1%
Total	33	100%

Interpretation:

This above table shows that 48.5% respondents strongly agree and 27.3% respondents agree 12.1% were neutral and 6.1% were disagreed and 6.1% strongly disagree

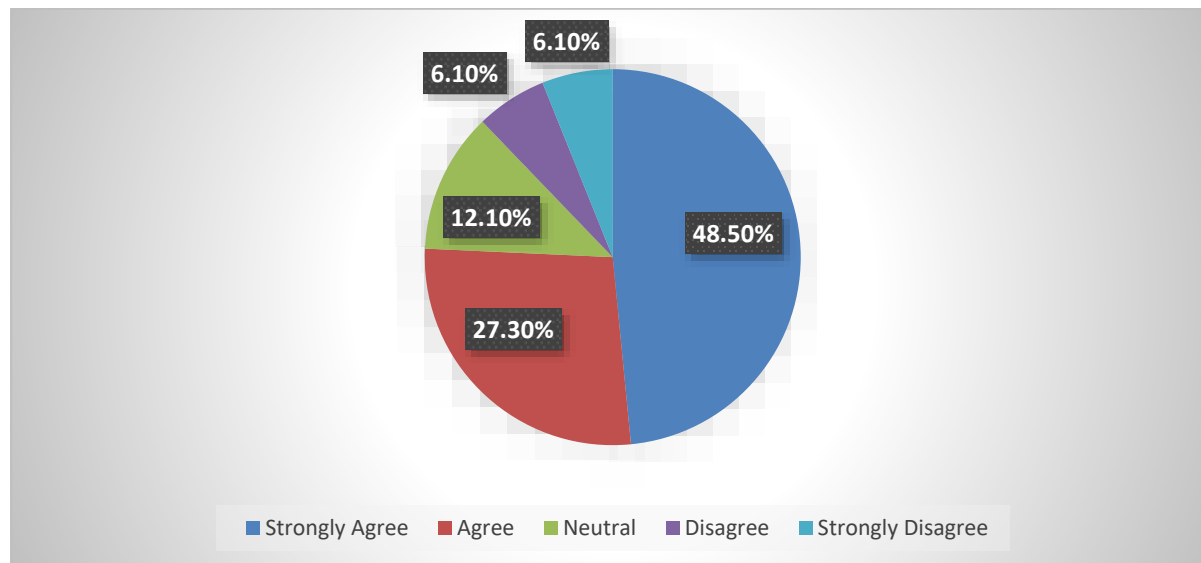
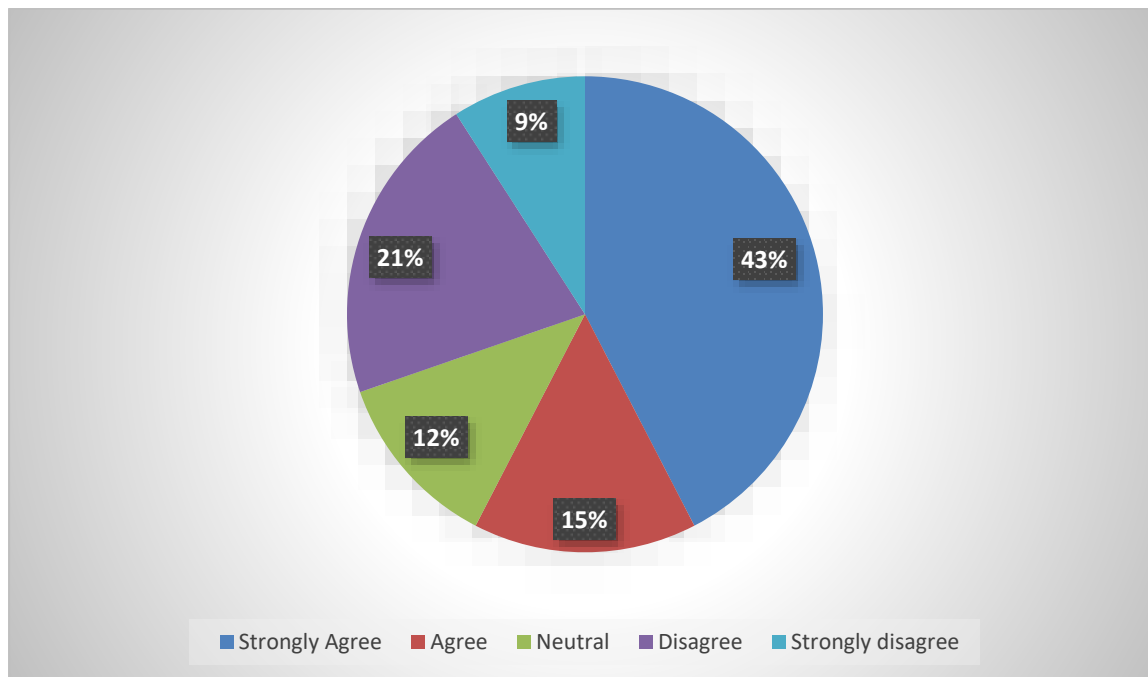


Table no 10: table showing that Public transport (buses, trains, e-rickshaws) was convenient for reaching the Mela site?

Particulars	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	14	42.4%
Agree	5	15.2%
Neutral	4	12.1%
Disagree	7	21.2%
Strongly disagree	3	9.1%
Total	33	100%

Interpretation:

This above table shows that 42.4% respondents strongly agree and 15.2% respondents agree 12.1% were neutral and 21.2% were disagreed and 9.1% strongly disagree with the public transport facility.



CONCLUSION

The Maha Kumbh Mela is one of the largest religious gatherings in the world, attracting millions of pilgrims and tourists. While the event offers a well-organized infrastructure with accommodation, transport, medical, security, and sanitation facilities, several challenges remain. Issues such as overcrowding, environmental impact, sanitation concerns, and security risks pose significant limitations to tourism management.

Despite these challenges, continuous efforts by the government and local authorities, including technological advancements and improved planning, have enhanced the overall experience for visitors. However, for sustainable tourism, long-term infrastructure development, better waste management, and crowd control strategies must be prioritized. With the right measures, the Maha Kumbh Mela can continue to be a spiritual and cultural marvel while ensuring the safety, comfort, and well-being of all attendees.

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