

# KUMBH MELA INDIA





The Kumbh Mela takes place every 4 years, switching between 3 cities. In 2013, the Maha Kumbh Mela took place in Allahabad. 100 million pilgrims came, making it the biggest gathering of humans in history.



The giant camps that are home to 20 million people at a time are built especially for the Kumbh Mela. The biggest problem for the authorities is people getting lost. All day, loudspeakers blare out names and descriptions of people separated from their friends and family!



The Kumbh Mela provides an opportunity for young people to join the order of the Sadhus. This boy is in the process of joining. He has not yet cut his hair, a symbol indicating that he has renounced his past life.



The young recruits are shaven, their hair put into a ball and buried on the banks of the Ganges.





After staying up all night, the initiates take their first bath. Access to this ceremony is strictly forbidden.







A young Sadhu spends his days blessing believers who come touch his feet as a sign of respect. He rubs their foreheads with ceremonial ash. He also smokes illegal substances to better open his mind.



Little girls dressed up as Hindu divinities.

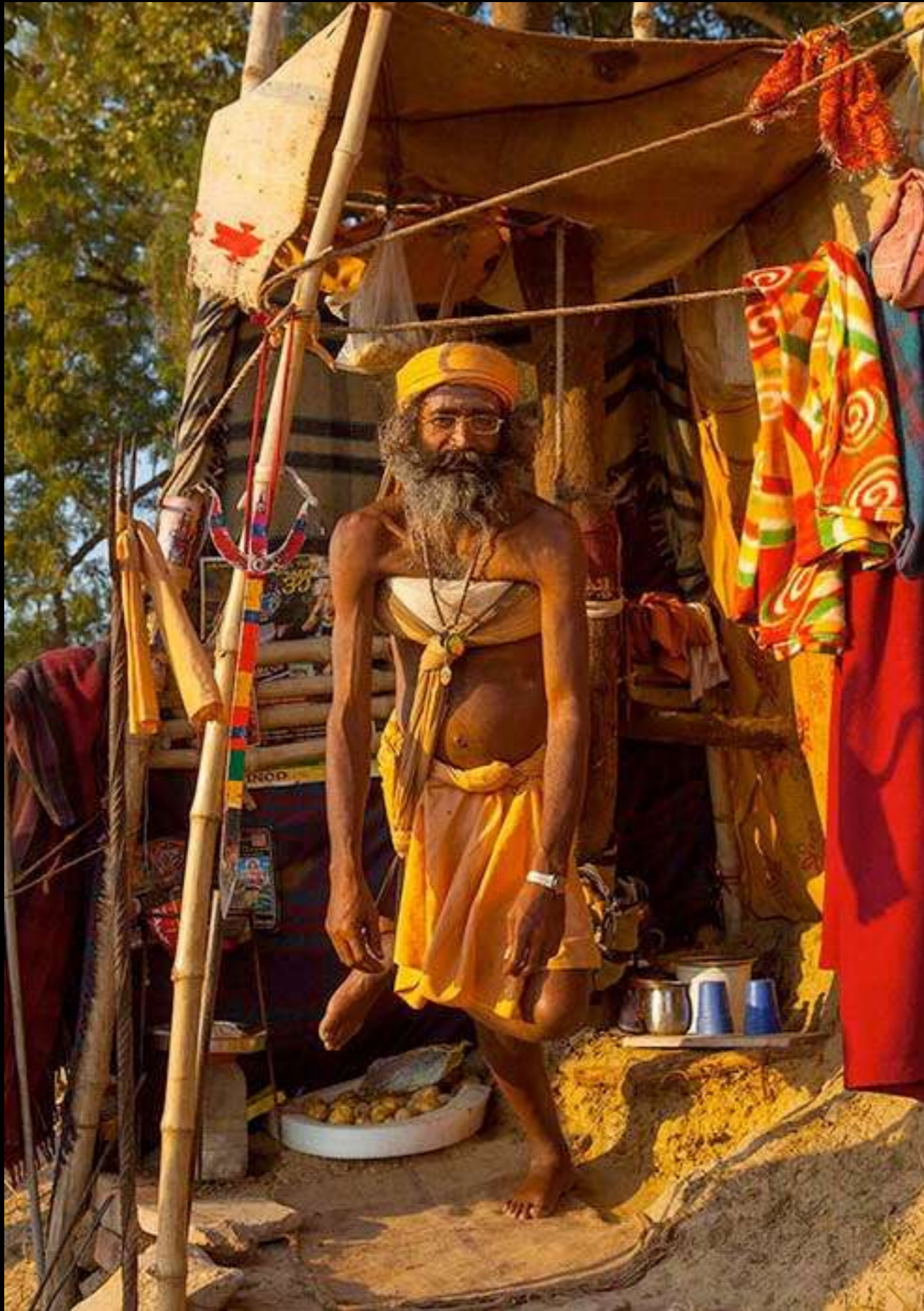




The Kumbh Mela gives the fakirs opportunities to receive donations. This one has kept his arm in the air for 20 years.



All day, this fakir stays in between thorn bushes making predictions for the faithful.



This fakir took a vow to not let his left leg touch the ground for two years. Along with the others who undertake such extreme shows of faith, he is considered a living God by the pilgrims.



A young “black Sadhu” from a very low caste that takes care of cremations. Dreaded by most pilgrims, these black sadhus are rumored to eat human flesh from the corpses. This man is 16 years old and it is his first Kumbh Mela where he oversees some cremations.

At 3AM in the morning on the most important day for bathing. Millions of pilgrims walk towards the banks of the Ganges. The crowd must always be carefully managed to avoid stampedes.





The first bath of the morning. These women stay dressed.





After the festivities, people bring back water from the Ganges to members of their family who were not able to attend.

