

What is Kumbh Mela?

Kumbh Mela is a 55-day festival which occurs once every 12 years. 100-million Hindus participated in Kumbh Mela in 2019. Hindus cleanse themselves in the River Ganges during this festival. The River Ganges is 1600 miles long and is located in India. The River Ganges is considered a sacred river in Hinduism because Hindus believe that it contains drops of amrit. Amrit is a special nectar created by the Hindu Gods which brings about immortality. Hindus believe that bathing in the River Ganges will remove their sins and allow their wishes to be fulfilled. Performing Kumbh Mela will also give Hindus good karma.

What is the Caste System?

The Caste System originated in India around 3000 years ago. The Caste System is a social hierarchy. A hierarchy is a system where people are ranked according to importance, status or authority. The Caste System divided Hindus into four main Castes. Each Caste had their own duties (dharma) to perform.

Caste	Who Belongs To This Caste?
Brahmin (Bra-mins)	Priests, Scholars and Teachers who had special religious knowledge.
Kshatriya (Cash-tree-yas)	Warriors and Rulers.
Vaishya (Vii-shas)	Farmers, Artisans and Merchants.
Shudra (Shud-ras)	Servants.
Dalit (Dar-leet-s)	Also called "untouchables". Dalits were people who did not belong to any other Caste and had no rights in society.

Key Terms

Dharma (Dar-ma)	Translates to "duty" - a moral or legal obligation.
Sva-Dharma (S-va-dar-ma)	A Hindu has their own dharma (duty) known as sva-dharma (self-duty).
Atman	The soul of a person.
Samsara	The cycle of birth, death and rebirth.
Moksha	Freedom from the cycle of samsara, when the atman becomes united with Brahman (also known as enlightenment).
Reincarnation	The rebirth of the atman (soul) into another body.
Karma (Car-ma)	Karma means "action". Good actions attract good karma, whereas bad actions attract bad karma.
Caste System	A social hierarchy which divides Hindus into four different "castes".
Brahman (Bra-man)	The Supreme God in Hinduism.
Bhagavad Gita (Bag-a-vad Gee-ta)	A Holy Book in Hinduism which teaches Hindus about the importance of dharma. The two main characters are Krishna and Arjuna.
Pilgrimage	A journey to an important religious place.
Kumbh Mela (Kum Mel-ah)	A Hindu festival held once every twelve years.
Amrit	The nectar of immortality created by the Hindu Gods.

Key Beliefs About Dharma:

What Happens in the Bhagavad Gita?

The Bhagavad Gita is a Holy Text in Hinduism. It is set during a battle between the Kauravas and the Pandavas (two different Kingdoms which are part of the same family). Arjuna is a warrior Prince who is part of the Pandava Kingdom. When he goes on to the battlefield he realises that he must fight/ kill his uncles and cousins. This frightens Arjuna and he runs away.

Arjuna goes to talk to Krishna. Krishna is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu (a form of Brahman) and Arjuna's charioteer. Krishna tells Arjuna that he must fight because he is a warrior therefore it his duty (sva-dharma) to fight. Krishna also teaches Arjuna about reincarnation, samsara and moksha.

The Bhagavad Gita ends with Arjuna getting ready to go into battle. He is no longer scared to fight and understands that it is his sva-dharma to do so.

What Does Krishna Teach About Dharma?

Krishna tells Arjuna he must fight because it is part of his duty as a warrior (Kshatriya).

The concept of dharma is important in Hinduism:

- "It is better to do one's own duty badly, than another's duty well".
- "By doing the work that is proper to him and rejoicing in his work, a man succeeds and perfects himself".
- "By casting off both honour and duty, thou wilt bring evil on thyself".

What Does Krishna Teach About Death?

Arjuna does not want to kill his uncles and cousins. Krishna teaches Arjuna about what happens after death:

"Just as in this body the embodied soul (atman) must pass through childhood, youth and age, so too (after death) will he take another body".

Krishna teaches Arjuna that the atman is reincarnated after death in a process known as samsara. Only through achieving moksha can the cycle of samsara be broken. Moksha can be achieved by collecting good karma, completing your sva-dharma and overcoming ignorance and desires.



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