

## DESIGN AND PLANNING:

### 1) (Question in progress) What are the variations in the Mela over time (how has the city structure changed)?

Certainly the structure of the city had changed over time. We just have to consider the tremendous variations on quantity of people attending to the Kumbh and the increasing challenges that each version brings to all the involved community. For instance on 1953 the quantity of attending pilgrims was 6.000.000, on 1965 was 7.000.000, on 1977 was 10.000.000, on 1989 was 15.000.000 and on 2001 it was 63.500.000.

*"The Kumba Mela alternates every three years between Allahabad, Nasik, Ujjain, and Haridwar. During the Kumba Mela festival at Allahabad in 1989 nearly 30 million people attended throughout the 41 days. It is by far the largest gathering in the world, what to speak of religious festival. For that reason it has been called "the largest number of human beings to ever assemble with a common purpose in the entire history of mankind" by the Guinness Book of World Records. That was describing the event in 1989 when 15 million people attended on the Amavasya day. This year, in 2001, nearly 30 million people assembled at one time over the January 24 Amavasya day, making the area of Allahabad the most populated region in the world. Over the course of the 41 days, an estimated 70 million people visited the site." - Steven Knapp A description of the Kumbh Mela.*

### 2) (Question in progress) How can we visually and spatially document temporary urbanism?

Using Aerial photography (Kite or Balloon) Photography - Video we can visualize:

- Flux patterns at different moments of the day and at different days
- Spots of morning baths and preys
- Main baths
- Impact of events in the spatial occupation.
- Outcomes of the grid under different occupancies

*It is possible to produce mappings of:*

- Spatial Use
- Material Flows
- Operational zones
- Kinds of Occupants
- Density of people per block
- Hourly Occupation
- Spatial Elasticity (Quantity of people using the space at different time)
- Material Geography (Effects of the extracted materials in the surrounding area)
- Access, flux and contained spaces
- Percentage of land occupied
- Compatibility of uses
- Reoccupation or elimination of all the infrastructure once the festival ends

*Observations of the urban code at the Kumbh:*

It is possible to take as reference the recently published book "Urban Code" by Anne Mikoleit and Moeritz Purckahuer and answering the following questions using diagrams sketches and photographs, as they do in their 101 rules for Soho. .

- Where does people walk more?
- Where are street vendors located?
- Where people buy more? Why?
- Where the rent for the tents increases?
- Does rent increase or decrease with density?
- There is presence of global brands? Which ones?

- Who knows better the districts, pilgrims, salesman, Tourists, Gurus, Sadhus, Prayagawalas,
- Tirtha Purohits, Akhara, Anna Ksetra?
- What are the landmarks of the place?
- What are the bigger attractors for people?
- Are shops located together?
- What does kind occupants carry in their hands while walking?
- Different typologies of shops sell different kind of objects? There is specificity in this sense?
- Does shops start selling in the early morning bathes or after?
- Crowding attracts people or people want to be by themselves?
- Does emptiness plays an important role on crowding formation or congregation tents play the main role?
- Does parking have any kind of protection structures - niches?
- There is wasteland inside the Mela boundaries? If yes, who occupies it?
- How flexible or fix are the movement patterns through the grid? Which are the more repeated?
- How is the composition of the blocks? Are there typologies of blocks? Blocks made up of big tents divided or are always single tents one next to the other?
- Does density per tent represent income of the dweller?
- How many entrances tents have? Access to blocks is given in the perimeter or there are also courtyards?
- Are entrances meeting points? How big are entrances? Does their size influence different kinds of behaviours?
- Does a pedestrian enter the space of the shops or they remain outside on the street?
- How active are residential roads versus more business oriented? Does different kind of occupation affect level of activity on streets?
- At what times does the provisions arrive? How are they distributed? How is the infrastructure of distribution composed?
- Does different kinds of occupant use the streets at different moments of the day?
- Does people moves at different paces at different times of the day?
- Day to day happens at the rivers on the streets or inside the tents?
- What are the different kind of clothes that different people occupies? Particular ways of dressing contribute with particulars colours to the cityscape?
- How many people move using boats rickshaws or tuc tuc? And where are they located for catching the people? Do rickshaw men live inside the Mela boundaries?
- There are children? Where do the plays? Are there public amenities like benches or playgrounds?
- What are the meeting points?
- How is the smell of the city? Does different parts have different smells? If yes which ones? Can we map it?
- What is the role of street performers and particular characters in animating the public space?
- Where and how is the trash collected?
- How is the nightlife? Uses change during the night or they remain the same?
- What are the outcomes of narrow versus wide streets? There are one-way streets?

*Diagrams of:*

Flux

Structural elements (Walking paths, streets that allow vehicles, plot structures of the grid)

Assemblage of the city

### **3) (Question in progress) Is there a stratification within the grid that separates types of pilgrims, and genders, from each other?**

At Kumbh Mela of 1989 the administration designated inside the grid places for different kinds of pilgrims. They basically separated in five categories, each of them designated in the plan with one letter.

P	Prayagawalas (Local People)
TP	Tirtha Purohit (Priest of pilgrimage)
K	Kalpawasi (Place for people how goes to the Kumbh with religious purposes)
M	Sadhus

A Akhara  
AN Anna Ksetra (People who volunteer and give food to everybody for free because it gives food karma)

Sadhus got the one of the most privileged sites occupying the first row on the banks of the river, just after them "Prayagawalas", which is the denomination for people from Allahabad got placed in the second row. Perpendicular to The Sangama there was two spots designated for the "Akhara", which are a particular kind of Sadhus. The second, third and four row parallel to the Ganges and perpendicular to the Yamuna was shared between the "Kalpawasi", "Prayagawalas", and the two spots just described at the encounter of the river for the Akhara. Since for Hindus the encounter of the rivers is the most holy place, we can assume that the most privileged site is the occupied by the "Akhara" and the "Kalpawasy" which where located just bit more west. Right after the to rivers get together there is place for the "Anna Ksetra" These are people who take care of the food and volunteer feeding the assistants for free. They do this because it gives them "good Karma."

(Image 1 Kumbh Mela Map 1989)

"The *akharas* (the different spiritual sects or groups) stay in different camps at the Kumbh Mela wherein their religious discourses and spiritual talks and debates are one of the main attractions for visitors to the Mela." - *Steven Knapp: A description of the Kumbh Mela.*

**4) (Question in progress) What is the relationship between pedestrians and vehicle traffic during the festival?**

Based on the 1989 plan we can see that the most of the pedestrian areas are concentrated in the most dense part of the city, in the place in which the tents are located. Vehicles and pedestrians are segregated intentionally. We can read from the map that vehicles are located on the southern part of the Yamuna and easter part of the Ganges including also boats that travel along the Yamuna. On the Ganges there are not boats because of the presence of bridges. The segregation of Vehicles is probably a form of controlling risks of accidents.

**5) What is the relationship between the physical structure of the temporary city and the temporal events that occur there?**

**6) How is land allocated?**

**7) How does temporal or temporary urbanism challenge large and permanent, but often brittle, urban form?**

**8) How can the spatial systems that emerge from this study inform natural and political emergency situations (i.e., refugee camps)?**

**9) What are the physical boundaries of the festival, and do they change from festival to festival?**

**10) How is the city zoned between public and 'private' (residential) spaces?**

The city is organized in Sectors and Camps. As lecorbusier's Super

**11) How are the collective systems—tent construction, electricity, water, sewage management, internet, cell phone towers, public restrooms, food distribution, medical care, and crowd control, to name a few—spatially constructed and deconstructed?**

**12) What are the timetables and route maps of public transport in the surrounding city, and to what extent do they change for the festival?**

- 13) **What is the land use data over the course of multiple years for the site?**
- 14) **Can we relate the Kumbh to other similar models (temporary army camps and music festivals), or does it have a completely unique structure?**
- 15) **Is the transition between the festival use of land and the agricultural use of land conscious and well embedded in the cultivators imagination or is it a spontaneous action?**
- 16) **What is the relationship between the physical structures and the temporal events that occur in the Kumbh?**
- 17) **What are the physical boundaries of the festival?**
- 18) **Do they change from festival to festival?  
What are the ways in which the Kumbh challenges traditional ways in which cities are designed and built?**
- 19) **What is the relationship between pedestrians and vehicles during the festival?**
- 20) **What is the relationship between the Kumbh and the broader landscape that contains it?**
- 21) **(Question in progress) What are the timetables and route maps of public transport in the surrounding city, and to what extent do they change for the festival?**

#### *Airport*

The airport is located at a distance of 12 km from Allahabad city and is operational for domestic flights. Nearest other operational airports are Lucknow, Varanasi and Kanpur. Allahabad Airport. Currently two flights operate from this airport, both being Air India Regional, to Delhi. The Airport currently doesn't have Night landing facility, but in near future the system would be installed as a part of upgrading the airport. The Airport has VOR (Very High Frequency Omni Range) and DME (Distance Measuring Equipment) installed as part of up gradation in 2011. Allahabad airport's area is 1 Acre, the terminal's capacity being 50, for both arrival and departure. It's a civil enclave. The adjoining concrete apron measures 500 by 150 metres, and has 2 parking bays to cater to 1 CRJ and 1 ATR aircraft simultaneously. Allahabad's runway is oriented 12/30, is 8125 metres long and 150 metres wide. The Airfield has ground lighting facility and also equipped with Instrument Landing System (ILS) as well as Navigational facilities like DVOR/DME and an NDB.[1]

In normal dates there is an average of two daily flights arriving from Delhi

AI 9912 Air India	(DEL) Delhi	9:15 AM
AI 9812 Air India	(DEL) Delhi	4:25 PM

In normal dates there is an average of two daily fights departing to Delhi.

AI 9912 Air India	(DEL) Delhi	9:15 AM
AI 9812 Air India	(DEL) Delhi	4:25 PM

#### *Trains*

Arrivals in normal times

Image 2 (Time Table 1)

Image 3 (Time Table 2)

Image 4 (Time Table 3)

Image 5 (Time Table 4)

Image 6 (Time Table 5)

Image 7 (Time Table 6)

Image 8 (Time Table 7)

Image 9 (Time Table 8)

*Departures in normal time*

Image 10 (Time Table 9)  
Image 11 (Time Table 10)  
Image 12 (Time Table 11)  
Image 13 (Time Table 12)  
Image 14 (Time Table 13)  
Image 15 (Time Table 14)  
Image 16 (Time Table 15)  
Image 17 (Time Table 16)

*Buses*

*Taxis*

*Rickshaws*

*Auto Rickshaws*

- 22) **What is the reason for the grid?**
- 23) **What are the physical, political and economical variations in the Kumbh over time?**
- 24) **How does the weather affect the site daily, monthly or yearly?**
- 25) **How can we visually and spatially document temporary urbanism?**
- 26) **Where do pilgrims come from and how do they travel?**
- 27) **Where and how are religious institutions allocated space?**
- 28) **How is the technology for the festival chosen and why?**
- 29) **Is there anything conspicuously missing?**
- 30) **How has the technology used at the festival evolved over the years?**
- 31) **How are collective systems such as tent construction, electricity, water and sewage networks, internet hubs, cell phone towers, public restrooms or food storages constructed and deconstructed?**
- 32) **How is land allocated?**
- 33) **How can the spatial systems that emerge from this festival inform other temporal settlements?**
- 34) **How is the city zoned between public and 'private' spaces?**
- 35) **How much new infrastructure is deployed at the place of the Kumbh?**

Most people may not know the many preparations that are required to get ready for such a huge festival. We have to remember that the Kumbha Mela grounds has to accommodate 50 times more people than the city of Allahabad. Therefore, at the Mela site, over 145 kilometers of pipelines for the water supply have been laid, plus 120 kilometers of connecting pipes. These would be serviced by 26 tubewells specially bored at the ghats. There are also 450 kilometers of overhead power lines, serviced by 35 substations to light up 15,000 streetlights. For the event of a fire, there are 1090 fire hydrants set up. This is a very important factor when one considers that there are about 5,000 ashrams or camps, most of which are using tents, in the Mela grounds, each with numerous participants. Additionally, to get to and from the *sangam* area and around the main grounds, there are 15 specially built pontoon bridges, along with 75 kilometers of metal plated roads (the plates are long steel sheets big enough only to allow traction for the tires of a vehicle), and 74 km of sand and cloth roads. - An Extra Report on Kumbha Mela, 2001. Stephen

Knapp

**36) How does pilgrim get in and get out of the city?**

For one thing, as you can imagine, there were serious traffic problems within the city of Allahabad. Some local workers could no longer drive cars to work because of the number of people on the streets of the city. They had to resort to using bicycles to get to work for several weeks. As groups of 10 to 50 pilgrims would come by train, bus or cars and make their way to the Kumbha Mela camps in unending processions, the city could do nothing but cope and make way. The train and bus stations were filled with arriving and waiting pilgrims milling around or sleeping in whatever space they could find. Trying to get out of Allahabad was sometimes more difficult than trying to get in. - An Extra Report on Kumbha Mela, 2001. Stephen Knapp

**37) Does transportation system change from year to year?**

As the time drew closer to the Amavasya Day (the new moon), more and more people were streaming into the Kumbha Mela grounds. There had been seen a four-fold increase in vehicular traffic since the 1989 Mela, and certain vehicles used in the past, like bullock carts, were no where to be seen. By the time Amavasya arrived, no cars or trucks were allowed into the grounds or to drive along the streets of the Mela grounds for a day. There was room only for the huge crowds. - An Extra Report on Kumbha Mela, 2001. Stephen Knapp

**PUBLIC HEALTH:**

**(Question in progress) Where are pop-up hospitals located in the city?**

On 1989 hospitals eight hospitals were located inside the mela boundaries. One on the border of the Ganges, five in the northern part of the Yamuna, One next to the Jail, one in the southern part of the Yamuna and one on the eastern part of the Ganges.

**(Question in progress) What are the overall environmental impacts of temporary infrastructures and bathes at the festival?**

The bathes have huge impacts on the quality of the water. Measurements done by Allahabad Regional Laboratory at the Ardh Kumbh Mela on 1995 showed that several water indicators got important changes drastically due to massive bathing. The following are the indicators provided after the analysis.

	<b>Before</b>	<b>On</b>	<b>After</b>
Temperature	23	20	22
Ph Value	7.50	8.0	7.32
Do (ppm)	7.09	6.0	6.50
BoD (ppm)	6.20	9.5	5.9
Total coliform	26000	54000	33500
Faecal coliform	11000	25000	15000

From the data we saw that the mass bathing affected environmentally the quality of the water into levels that harm human health. For this reason the Mela administration took several measures.

- 1 - Treat the water
- 2 - Advise pilgrims to use soaps and shampoos
- 3- Forbidden cattle washing
- 4 - Advised pilgrims to take bath from safe tape water after a holy dip
- 5- Mass awareness of public health

**How are vaccinations and other available medications distributed to Kumbh visitors?**

**What are the changes in air quality and air pollution during the festival?**

**What is the overall environmental impact of the festival?**

**What pathways open up to let a sick person move out of the crowd and seek medical assistance?**

**What is the layout for appropriate sources of water and sanitation and waste management?**  
**What are the placements, numbers, and personnel relating to health clinics of all kinds?**  
**Where are pop-up hospitals located in the city?**  
**How are vaccinations and other available medications distributed to Mela visitors?**  
**Who participates in vaccination initiatives, and at what scale do they expect to continue?**  
**How are such large numbers of people organized in relatively peaceful and secure ways?**  
**What happens when a disturbance breaks out?**  
**What pathways open up to let a sick person move out of the crowd and seek medical assistance?**  
**Do people seem to sense when the crowds are getting dangerously dense?**  
**What is the layout for appropriate sources of water and sanitation and waste management?**  
**How are proper procedures for hand-washing, bathing, drinking, and cooking managed at the family or group level?**  
**What are the placements, numbers, and personnel relating to health clinics of all kinds?**  
**How is the vaccination process organized, announced, and conducted?**  
**What organizational and leadership structure exists to help prevent and respond to large crowd emergencies (weather emergencies, stampedes or outbreaks of group violence, use of weapons)?**  
**When and how food and medicine are distributed?**  
**How are proper procedures for hand-washing, bathing, drinking, and cooking managed?**  
**How is the vaccination process organized, announced, and conducted?**

#### **RELIGIOUS STUDIES:**

- 1) **How do groups of pilgrims from different economic and social background relate to one another spatially?**
- 2) **Is there a stratification within the grid that separates types of pilgrims, and genders, from each other?**
- 3) **How does the Mela negotiate the tensions between self-identity and national and religious identity?**
- 4) **Who are the major religious players (both individuals and institutions) at the festival, and what is their impact on the larger population?**

A mammoth gathering of spiritualists from the various *akharas* (sects or training camps) flock to the Mela site. Understanding who is who can be difficult, especially for the foreigner. The word *akhara* refers to an arena or venue for a wrestling match. In the context of the Kumbh Mela, it designates the great congregations of *sadhus*, members of religious communities - mostly celibate, who are sometimes called 'monks' in English. There are different dwelling places for different sects. They have been established at different times and worship their own deity.

*Akhara* is a special form of 'Math'. Saints belonging to these *akharas* normally stay together in one camp.

The origin of *akharas* can be traced to Hindu Monasteries called *Maths*. The objective of *Maths* was to impart intellectual, physical, and spiritual training to those who were willing to lead the austere life of an ascetic. Later, Adi Shankaracharya, in his effort of national integration and cultural enhancement, formed four such *Maths*, one at Dwaraka in the West, another at Jagannatha Puri in the East, Badrinath in the North, and Mysore in the South.

The Ten Sects

The saints were further divided into ten sects: namely Giri, Puri, Bharati, Tirth, Vaan, Aranya, Parvat, Ashram, Sagar, and Saraswati. Besides Adi Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya also established eight *Maths*, and Madhavacharya established eight *Maths*. The spiritual and religious head of the *Maths* are called Shankaracharyas.

Some of the many categories of spiritualists you will find at the Kumbh Mela are: Missionaries and preachers from other religions (Buddhist, Jains, and Christian Missionaries also visit the Kumbh Mela and some of them camp there), along with spiritual saints, spiritual healers, and astrologers. Other Hindu sects include the Aryasamajis (followers of Dayanand Saraswati), Kabir Panthis (followers of Saint Kabir), Rama Krishna Missionaries, and ISKCON followers, among others.

These are also divided into the Kalpwasis: Pilgrims who spend the whole of Kumbh Mela on the sandy bed of the *sangam* (holy confluence).

Promotional Personnel: Since the Kumbh Mela is the largest gathering of mankind on earth, many spiritual institutions and companies set up camps for promoting their products.

Vendors of occult items: Kumbh Mela is a shopping paradise for those who are interested in general and occult shopping. Many items, artifacts and myriad products from various nooks and corners of India are on display and sale.

#### Types of *Akharas*

The *akharas* are divided into different types according to the concept of God they worship:  
Shaiva *Akharas*

These are the followers of Lord Shiva, although some also show respect for Lord Vishnu. Some of these are also known as 'Nagas'; they are known for their celibacy and renunciation of material possessions, and are good in the use of arms for the defense of their religion. The Nagas lead a very austere life and are naked. The Shaiva sects are divided into further groups or *Akharas* which are called Dashnami *Akharas*. These are:

MAHANIRVANI AKHARA  
ATAL AKHARA  
NIRANJANI AKHARA  
ANAND AKHARA  
BHAIRAV AKHARA  
AWAHAN AKHARA  
AGNI AKHARA

The Vaishnava or Vairagi *Akharas*:

These are the wandering mendicants who are followers of Lord Vishnu. They see themselves as parts of the Supreme Lord and live a life of service and dedication to the Lord. They are above the concept of liberation or merging with the Brahman or non-dual aspect of the Supreme. The initiator of these is said to be Shree Balanand Jee. They are divided into three broad categories:

1. Nirmohi Ani Akhara: The various sub-sects of this *akhara* are Ramanandiya Nirmohi Akhara, Ramanandiya/Jhariya Nirmohi Akhara, Ramanandiya Maladhari Nirmohi Akhara, Ramanandiya Mahanirvani Nirmohi Akhara, Harivyasi Nirmohi Akhara, and Dadupanthi Akhara.
2. Nirvani Ani Akhara: The various subdivisions of this Akhara are Ramanandiya Nirvani Akhara, Ramanandiya Khaki Akhara, Ramanandiya Niralambiya Akhara, Ramanandiya Tatambari Akhara, Harivyasi Nirvani Akhara, Harivyasi Khaki Nirvani Akhara, Balbhadri Akhara.
3. Digambar Ani Akhara: This is further divided into Ramji Digambar, Shyamji Digambar.
4. Udasin Akhara: These are the followers of Guru Granth Sahib and comprises Sikhs who have converted to Hinduism. This is further divided into: Udasin Panchayati Bara Akhara and Udasin Panchayati Naya Akhara.
5. Nirmal Akhara: These are Sikh followers of Guru Nanak Ji. The *akhara* is known as Nirmal Panchayati Akhara. The religious preacher and the head of the *akharas* of ascetics is popularly known as Mahamandaleshwars. They are held in high esteem and reverence by the inmates of the *akharas* and are carried around in beautifully decorated palanquins during the procession of the *shahi snan* (royal bath).

The Kalpwasis

*Kalpa* means a day of Lord Brahma. It is believed that if one spends the whole month of Magh (Jan/Feb of Roman Calendar) at the banks of the Ganga leading an austere life in thatched huts (nowadays tents) and sleeping on the sandy river bed listening to discourses, giving alms, bathing thrice daily in the holy confluence, eating once in 24 hours, they purportedly can be freed from the cycle of death and rebirth (*moksha*).

#### **5) What are the differences in their relationships to pilgrims, tourists, the press, and the Mela's governing organizations?**



- 6) **What are the edges of sacred space?**
- 7) **Where do pilgrims come from and how do they travel?**
- 8) **Where and how are religious institutions allocated space?**

## **BUSINESS**

### **1) (Question in progress) What is the business model of the Kumbh Mela?**

During the seventeenth century the Kumbh Mela was mainly financed by patronage. Wealthy people financed less wealthy people's trips to the Kumbh as a way to achieve spiritual benefits. However now the situation had changed. The Kumbh Mela is not an improvised event. It includes very specific planning and several economic actors are involved in its development.

There is a big amount of investment from the part of the organizations of the Kumbh in order to provide the required infrastructure and personnel. However it also generates a big opportunity for profits. Considering that during two months the quantity of people living in Allahabad grows at least 10 times, this is a big opportunity for commerce and tourism that would not be possible outside the framework of the Kumbh. There are several agencies of tourism, changing very high amounts of money for tents and food. - An Extra Report on Kumbha Mela, 2001. Stephen Knapp

- 2) **Is it considered a not-for-profit venture?**
- 3) **What role can private organizations (corporations and NGOs) play in the development process in India, especially in the face of a 'dysfunctional state'?**

**Does the Kumbh Mela provide a clear**

- 4) **framework for these relationships to unfold over the course of a few weeks, or is it a different model?**
- 5) **What is the balance between government involvement and the private sector in organizing, deploying, and managing the festival?**
- 6) **Is there a fixed partnership structure?**
- 7) **How do partnerships between public sector and private actors emerge in short order?**
- 8) **Are basic necessities like water supply subsidized by the state or federal government?**
- 9) **Is there a charge for the use of public amenities, like restrooms?**
- 10) **Is there an advertising or branding presence for the companies that are there (like internet vendors)?**
- 11) **How large is the presence of informal methods of business, including hawking and vending of consumables?**
- 12) **What is their governance structure?**

**(Desired Cell Phone Information: Time of call; GPS or cell tower location from which call is made (longitude and latitude); duration of call; the city, province, or country the phone is registered to, and the original phone coverage provider; the area code or country code for the phone number from which the call is being made; the area code or country code for the phone number receiving the call)**

## **ENGINEERING:**

- 1) **How can we map infrastructure engineering, traffic patterns, and food and water delivery?**
- 2) **What kinds of physical systems are in place for these?**
- 3) **How is physical infrastructure planned and deployed at the festival?**
- 4) **What are the changes in air quality and air pollution during the festival?**
- 5) **How might data like this be visualized with the tools available to engineering and design?**
- 6) **Does the religious nature of the Kumbh Mela completely determine how effectively people work together to deploy infrastructure?**
- 7) **Are the systems set up here only capable of lasting for the duration of the Mela, or can they be more permanent?**

- 8) How does the pontoon bridge system, which carries millions of people in and out of the 9) festival site in a short span of time, interact with both land and water?
- 9) How is it physically located in the river?
- 10) What are the overall environmental impacts of temporary infrastructures at the festival?
- 11) How to minimize the quantity of waste plastic bottles?
- 12) How to design for reuse then the installation, dismantling and repurposing of all of the pipes, latrines, pumps, and filters?
- 13) Who makes the initial investment in water and wastewater infra and how is the money recaptured?
- 14) How are contingencies considered financially, for example does someone provide insurance against equipment damage or extra rain or not enough rain or a cholera outbreak?

#### **GOVERNANCE:**

- 1) What is the structure of authority (organizational and legal) and how are levels of authority designated?
- 2) What is the interface with the Army?
- 3) Do they have an authoritative presence outside of the actual construction of the city?
- 4) How is law enforcement carried out?
- 5) Are there designated police?

In view of the fact that there would be as many as 70 million people visiting the Kumbha Mela and taking bath in the waters at the *sangam* (confluence of the Ganges, Yamuna and Sarasvati) over the course of the 41 day festival, there were plenty of police and military keeping guard. Thousands of police, military personnel, and volunteers stood guard against any militant attacks or other dangerous incidents. They also used 10 minesweeper vehicles to comb the grounds, six teams of naval divers to monitor any suspicious activities under the water, as well as sniffer dogs to help watch for any danger to the pilgrims.

The fact of the matter is that the Pakistan-based militant outfit called "Lashkar-e-Taiba" who were responsible for the recent attack on an Army camp in the Red Fort in Delhi, had planned to make similar attacks at the Kumbha Mela. The inside information was that the Lashkar-e-Taiba had deputed top ultras to strike at the Kumbha Mela. For such an organization, the festival is considered a soft or easy target because of the sheer size of it. Naturally, it may have been fairly easy to get in and cause a major disaster against the numerous pilgrims in any part of the festival. It also would have been one of the most cowardly and deceitful ways of attacking Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist pilgrims who had congregated for the festival. Such an attack would have naturally produced serious adverse impacts on not only India's ongoing peace process in the Kashmir Valley, but also on the opinion of the world toward Pakistan and the militant Muslim groups.

In the attempt to watch for snipers, 20 highly sensitive closed circuit television cameras were also used. These could photograph a person from 1.5 kilometers away, even under street lights. The use of underwater nets were also used to sieve out any underwater mines which may have been placed in the river by the militants to reach the *sangam*, where most of the people would be. - An Extra Report on Kumbha Mela, 2001. Stephen Knapp

- 6) What laws formally exist?
- 7) How are different zones in the city—tourism, religious institutions, press, different castes of pilgrims—designated?
- 8) Who decides where different visitors live, eat, and pray?
- 9) What is the overreacting economic system, if one exists?
- 10) Is the festival comprehensive in this sense or is it a collection of micro-economies?
- 11) Do city planners or event planners have a presence at the festival?
- 12) What happens when a disturbance breaks out?
- 13) What organizational and leadership structure exists for helping and preventing large crowd emergencies?
- 14) What is the relationship between the government and the private sector in the festival?
- 15) What is the structure of authority (organizational and legal) and how are levels of authority designated?
- 16) What is the relationship with the army besides the construction of the city?
- 17) What laws formally exist?
- 18) What is the overreacting economic system, if one exists?

- 19) What is the relationship between pilgrims, tourists, press, and Kumbh's governing institutions?
- 20) How are such large numbers of people organized in relatively peaceful and secure ways?
- 21) How does the Kumbh negotiate the tensions between self-identity and national and religious identity?
- 22) Does Politicians use the Kumbh Mela as a venue for their activities?

Naturally, there could not be the avoidance of politics being played out at the Mela, although few pilgrims took notice. In any case, probably the most apparent use of politics was the arrival of Sonia Gandhi, the Congress president, to have a visit at the *sangam* and a "darshan" of a section of the *sadhus*. Especially apparent was that the *sadhus* were outside the Sangh Parivar fold. Why would she want to visit the Kumbha Mela and the *sadhus* anyway? She is not a Hindu, but a born and raised Catholic Christian. So this has triggered a debate with political overtones.

The Sangh Parivar fold, of which the BJP is an associate, had organized a discussion on the Ayodhya issue to decide when the date will be for starting the construction of the temple they want to build there on the site of Lord Rama's birth, where the mosque used to be that was torn down. They also had a display of the proposed temple they want to build at Ayodhya. Therefore, they attempted to use the religious sentiment of the festival for their campaign. And Sonia Gandhi obviously steered clear of this.

Of course, Sonia Gandhi, like anyone else, has a right to attend the Kumbha Mela and take a dip in the waters at the *sangam*, but she is no ordinary citizen given her political position. Just being in the vicinity puts the security personnel under even more stress than they are already, especially when she wanted to tour some of the Mela grounds and meet a number of the religious heads. History has shown when visits by VIPs have caused stampedes when people tried to see them. That is why Jawaharlal Nehru, when a Prime Minister, suggested the VIPs keep out of such Melas. So it can be considered another ploy in Sonia Gandhi's political strategy to gain favor by visiting the Mela, although visiting Swaroopananda Saraswati, the Sankaracharya of the Jyotishpeeth, because he is one of the religious heads who refused to join the VHP's cause. None of her predecessors in her office ever thought it necessary to display their Indianness in such a manner. They gained favor simply by its sensitivity to the needs of the people. Therefore, aside from her "pilgrimage" to the *sangam*, all the controversy that accompanied it and the meetings she had while there would make it an unnecessary diversion - *Steven Knapp A description of the Kumbh Mela*.

#### TECHNOLOGY:

- 1) What is the history of technology at the festival?
- 2) At what point were different technological systems (grid, power lines, toilets, internet, etc.) introduced and why?
- 3) Which technologies have the festival chosen to use and why?
- 4) Is there anything conspicuously missing?
- 5) What is the balance between temporary and permanent technologies?
- 6) Is everything put in place just for the festival, or are their existing systems into which the festival can plug?
- 7) Where are internet stands at the festival, who runs them, and how effective is the access? How are cell phones charged?
- 8) Can the technologies and methods used at the festival give us clues about how temporary technologies can be used in cities outside the religious context?
- 9) Is there a way to incorporate the light technological footprint developed at the festival into already-established, and more rigid, urban environments?
- 10) What is the reason for the grid?
- 11) Can we construct a timeline of technology for the festival, perhaps back to the 19th century?
- 12) Which systems are consistent from one festival to the next, and which evolve?
- 13) Can we chart the evolution or stagnancy of these systems over time?
- 14) Does the festival function like an ecosystem, with stresses, stimuli, and flows?
- 15) What are these potential stresses and how do they affect the city?

- 16) **What are the variations in the Mela over time (how has the city structure changed)?**
- 17) **What is the history of technology at the festival?**
- 18) **What is the balance between temporary and permanent technologies?**
- 19) **What is the scope of internet access in terms of pilgrims and tourist population?**
- 20) **How are cell phones charged?**

**GENERAL:**

- 1) **(Question in progress) How is the relationship between different participants at the Kumbh?**

The Mela is like a huge convention of spiritual groups and ashramas allowing everyone to check them out. The large tents become the temporary dwellings for various spiritual sects, or *akharas*. In some ways, it may seem like they are competing with each other for the attention of the public. They often use very loud public address systems with speakers pointed to the passers by on the road, or large and colorful gateways and facades attracting people into their camps. As soon as you get out of the range of one loudspeaker, you hear the next one. You can walk by the entrance and hear over the loudspeaker the lecture that's being given inside. This may attract people who then go in and sit and listen to the lecture and possibly ask questions.

- 2) **Is the Kumbh also a venue for important transnational meetings?**

For the first time in the history of Prayag, there was also a "Jyotish Mahakumbh," or a global meeting on the science of Astrology from January 19 to 21. This was held at the Prashasan Pandal where more than 2,000 of the world's top astrologers, gem therapists, occultists, clairvoyants, etc., participated. It was organized by the Prachya Vidhya Jyotish Adhyanevam Anusandhan Sansthan (PVJAAS) with the primary motive of promoting a scientific slant to an age old science that is often shaded in mystery or controversy. In light of the fact that the main bathing days and the time of the Kumbha Mela is calculated astrologically, such a gathering would seem most appropriate for the Mela. As it is quoted in the ancient texts: *Makare Cha Divanathe / Brikhage cha Brihaspa toh / Kumbh Yogo bhavettatra Prayage / Hyati Durlabha* "When the Sun is in Aries in the month of Magh (January-February) while the sun is in Capricorn, the Kumbha occurs at Prayag." And:

*Magh Mesh Gatey Jive / Makhare Chandra Bhaskaro*

"When Jupiter is in Aries in the month of Magh while the sun and moon are in Capricorn, the Kumbha occurs at Prayag." - An Extra Report on Kumbha Mela, 2001. Stephen Knapp

- 3) **How is the virtual coverage of the Mela?**

Like no other year before, this Kumbha Mela was also given much coverage over the internet. There were many sites that had coverage, but there was a special site at: [www.webdunia.com](http://www.webdunia.com). Unfortunately for us English speaking people it was in Hindi. Nonetheless, for those in India this site provided the means for the faithful to witness the sacred aspects of the festival, such as a "virtual bath," for those who couldn't attend personally in over 150 countries. The site was also updated every four hours with new stories, photographs, and information.

Furthermore, the Kumbha Mela also had two cyber cafes that provided online information about the city, the festival, accommodations, weather, and to help people, such as media personnel, to communicate outside.

- An Extra Report on Kumbha Mela, 2001. Stephen Knapp

- 4) **How is the media coverage of the Mela?**

Not only was there virtual coverage, there was more media coverage than ever before. Such big names as the BBC, CNN, Stern magazine from Germany, NHK Japan Broadcasting, and Mainichi Broadcasting System from Tokyo were covering the Mela. The major news organizations started arriving on January 2, when registration started. Other journalists and photographers also arrived later. Over 30 tents were provided for the visiting journalists, with most of them reserved in advance. The spiritual channel, Aastha, was present with a 125 member crew with ten cameras, after having been granted the rights to telecast the daily events of the Mela. - An Extra Report on Kumbha Mela, 2001. Stephen Knapp

## 5) Is the Mela starting to be destination for western people?

A friend of mine who attended the last major Kumbha Mela in 1989 told me that for the whole month he was there, he never saw but maybe a dozen Westerners, aside from the Hare Krishnas. This year there were hundreds if not thousands of Western tourists and pilgrims who attended, seeking an amazing experience of Indian culture, or maybe salvation. Even the hippies of the Rainbow Festival had their camp near the woods. However, even the stars of Hollywood were said to have visited or had wanted to. Such guests who were said to have had interest or actually attended were Madonna, Sharon Stone, Pierce Brosnan, Demi Moore and Richard Gere. I don't know if any of these were spotted. The Dalai Lama also attended and mentioned that he did not take a bath in the Ganga because he felt the water was too cold. It was the British tour operator Cox & Kings who had made the arrangements for most of these people and confirmed the visit, but would not give names for security reasons. They said they brought in as many as 600 premium guests, as they called them, from around the world, but mostly from the U.S., the UK and France.

The Indian tour company Travel Corporation of India are also selling the Kumbha Mela as a great value for their itinerary to experience the quintessential exotic East. Tour operators have included special discourses by spiritual leaders, along with consultations with astrologers, for premium clients.

If a person has not previously booked a tent at a camp or *akhara*, the hotels are usually completely booked up on the main bathing days. Even many of the camps were full. Sometimes a person could find a room in one of the hotels in the city, but often they were very basic, and with the demand so high, a room that normally would have cost Rs. 200 could now fetch Rs. 1200. Besides, getting from a hotel to the Kumbha Mela grounds can be difficult, especially on the main bathing days, and adds extra cost if you take transportation. Sometimes you can't even find a cycle ricksha. It is better to simply stay at the Kumbha Mela itself.

Among the Indian VIPs who were seen at the *sangam*, these included Murli Manohar Joshi (human resources minister), Sushma Swaraj (information and broadcasting minister), Uma Bharati (minister for youth and sports), and Madhya Pradesh chief minister Digvijay Singh, along with other Supreme court and high court judges and top bureaucrats. - An Extra Report on Kumbha Mela, 2001. Stephen Knapp

## 6) Why are they so many lost and found people at the Kumbh Mela?

Millions of people attend the Kumbha Mela, and many of these are family groups that come together. Often the sons and daughters bring their parents to share in such a traditional and time honored custom as the Kumbha. However, it was found at this Mela some sons and daughters or daughters-in-law, had brought their parents only to leave them to die there. Five women and seven men over 70 years were reported to have been dumped here by their sons and daughters-in-law. Unreported cases were expected to run into the hundreds, mostly because such old people are embarrassed that their relatives have done this. While others accept the fact that they have been abandoned by their off-springs because they are not wanted. Some don't want to go back to their relatives because they know they will be beaten, and probably abandoned again at some time. Some are forcibly taken to the Mela and then ill-treated and later deserted. Still others are not even taken to the Mela grounds, but simply dropped off at the Allahabad train station while their son or daughter disappears, abandoning them. Not knowing what to do, some simply want to go to any *akhara* or camp for consolation and spend the rest of their short lives in *kirtan* and *bhajan*, singing and chanting the Lord's holy names. It was reported that up to February 5, the total number of lost and found were 118,000, according to Raja Ram Tiwari, founder of Bharat Seva Dal. - An Extra Report on Kumbha Mela, 2001. Stephen Knapp