Pilgrim Voices: Germany, Kannauj, Lucknow
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Pilgrim Voices

GERMANY

â□□Their Faith Is Anchored at Sangamâ□□

I TEACH INDOLOGY. THAT IS WHY I am here at the Kumbh, to cover the aspects of the modern religiosity in Hinduism. Iâ□□ve been a board member of VHP in Germany for almost 12 years. It is quite positive here. There is no perfect organization, and we should understand that. A perfect organization would be flawless, and it is not flawless. The police are extremely polite and well trained. In general, information technology has been used well, and they have tried to maintain cleanliness, though the sanitary conditions are not good.

Kumbh is not affordable for most foreigners. The tented accommodation being offered by the UP Tourism is us$261 per day. Foreigners cannot understand why a government agency has put its prices so high.

I have great regard for the silent majority of pilgrims from rural areas. They are completely dedicated and surrendered. The greatest pleasure in the Kumbh is that it is an affordable destination even for the poor of this country. They might be traveling thousands of kilometers in ordinary buses or by cheapest train class. They face difficult situations, yet the whole of their astha, faith, is anchored on just one shore, the holy water of Sangam. It is a pleasure watching the youth come here in big numbers, both from rich families and poor families. There is a tremendous momentum in youth with the renaissance of Hinduism and Hindu philosophy.

Professor Ajit Sikand of the Department of Indology, Mainz University, Frankfurt
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KANNAUJ

â□□Opportunity to Learnâ□□

I AM HERE WITH MY FRIENDS TO gather knowledge about my Hindu religion. I belong to a family of farmers. It seems everything is happening here perhaps as it was written in our Vedas. The biggest realization Iâ□□ve had is that there is no caste discrimination here. Everyone is propagating and serving Sanatana Dharma. To the people back home, I suggest everyone come and experience the Kumbh. It is a great opportunity to learn about our religion in depth and about how scientific our Hindu dharma is.

Shivam Bharti, graduate student from Uttar Pradesh
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LUCKNOW

â□□Bliss Difficult to Explainâ□□

THE WHOLE ARRANGEMENT here is so good. The security is excellent. The kind of bliss we experienced after having a dip in Mother Ganga is something very difficult for us to explain. This is the first time we have come to attend the Kumbh, though we have come to Sangam many times in the past. I am a man of science, but I also believe our religion has a lot to do with science. In fact, the scholars related to our religion first talked about science. Last night we went to different akharas and met the saints belonging to different sects.

Jaydeepâ□□s wife Ritu adds: The message we got from the naga babas and other saints was that they are also a part of the society and should not be treated in any different manner. The naga babas told us they were here as members of our society, and therefore we must treat them as family members only. When they are

in the jungles and caves, their duty is to do penance. But they are here at the Kumbh mela to interact with Hindu society. Last night, when we visited the akharas, it was very cold. We were all wearing a lot of woolens, but most of the saints were wearing very few clothes or even naked. They have extraordinary powers that they can brave the winter weather without any proper clothing. We were under the impression that the place would be extremely overcrowded, and so we deliberately avoided bringing our kids. Now we are repenting for not bringing them and their missing this once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Dr. Jaydeep Chandra (center right), a neurosurgeon, with wife Ritu
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