

[One Family's Mission: Reuniting lost Pilgrims](#)

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One Family's Mission: Reuniting lost pilgrims

Each year, thousands of pilgrims get lost or separated from their families and friends at the Kumbh. Mistakenly parted for but a moment, they quickly disappear into the countless faces and voices of the oceanic crowds. Thankfully, 86-year-old Rajaram Tiwari has made it his life's mission to help as many people as possible reunite with their loved ones. Mr. Tiwari's lost and found camp, Bhule Bhatke Shivir, is one of several such camps, but his is by far the largest and most active. Half century ago with just twelve other people he began the service. Today the Kumbh administration provides the land for the lost and found, as well as the use of an announcement booth from where they can broadcast throughout the whole area.



People in search of their loved ones dictate their names to a volunteer for the public address announcement

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Although his camp has not started using the Internet for connecting pilgrims, some other institutions are experimenting with it, and reporting good results. Mobile phones have made it easy for those who have them to be reunited. Now the majority of people who arrive at Tiwari's camp are those who don't use mobile phones, such as young children and the elderly. While lost pilgrims wait, volunteers serve them food and tea, and even provide travel fare to those in need.

When asked about stories of people abandoning their elderly at the Kumbh, Mr. Tiwari countered, "It is simply not true. This notion is completely baseless. Pilgrims bring elderly to the Sangam ghat with a lot of care and reverence, trying to fulfill their wish of having a holy dip in Mother Ganga. How could such devout children abandon their parents here? None of the people I've helped are ever separated permanently. All of them, elderly or young, are eventually reunited with their families." At the last Kumbh, the camp helped over 80,000 people. In Mr. Tiwari's 68 years of running lost and found camps during the Kumbh, Ardha Kumbh and Magh melas, he has reunited over 1,200,000 people with their families and friends.



Rajajram Tewari, 86, founded the camp 68 years ago

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