

[Pilgrim Voices: United Kingdom, Mumbai, Delhi](#)

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Pilgrim Voices

UNITED KINGDOM

âI Am Being Transformedâ

SHRAVAN PODDAR: THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I am visiting a Kumbh Mela. I was born in Bihar, but my family is from Rajasthan. I have lived in Glasgow, UK, since 1967. Staying at the Kumbh with Guruji is a unique experience. Every moment new things are happening. I feel I am being transformed

Sunita Poddar: Seeing people in such big numbers overwhelms me, as they all have so much faith in their God and their traditions. In 2010 I participated in the Haridwar Kumbh. At first I was so scared because of the heavy rush, but then I felt as if God was personally taking care of me. There was a great rush that morning at the bathing ghat, but when I arrived, it suddenly slowed so we could have a leisurely bath. My experience there was very divine and unique. Today we will take the holy dip in the divine company of Guruji. With his blessings, our children are also good Hindus and pure vegetarians. We are associated with a Radha Krishna temple in Glasgow as trustees.

MUMBAI âQuestions on Realityâ

WE ARE HERE BECAUSE WE want to learn about spirituality and connect it to the life we live. I have questions about reality and consciousness, as we ourselves are living in a material world. I am getting very interesting answers. Here these people are in a spiritual world. We are Punjabis from Mumbai and train people in martial arts. The naga baba we just met called me Bruce Lee. He did not know my business but amazingly still connected me with martial arts.

We are living in times where the current system is failing, whereas this system has existed over six thousand years. The sadhus themselves are on the spiritual path and may not always have the answer. Now, as I am preparing to leave, I feel this is a place not for getting answers, but for generating more questions in our mind. As we interact with the saints, we realize there is no one way of doing things.

I did not have a bath in Ganga. Maybe that is where I differ. I do not get the logic of why people would like to drink that water. Ganga water is polluted, and still hundreds of thousands of people are bathing in it and drinking it without falling sick. We are here to precisely understand what this faith and energy is all about.



Akhil Kapoor (center), Shiva Malani and Varun

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DELHI

“Expensive”



Pankaj Kholi, 42, works for Indebo travel agency

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I HAVE COME WITH A BIG GROUP of foreign tourists, mostly professionals. We have been preparing and planning for this trip for the past two years. Most of my clients are from Belgium and Italy. They are amazed to see so many people gathering at one place. Our clients came here to attend the first royal bath. Now we are coming here to participate in another royal bath. We will be here for a fortnight or so, till the 17th. I, too, had a holy dip. Being a Hindu, it is impossible not to have a holy dip. I sipped some water and got sick, but I am OK now. Our clients are cautious that they do not do anything which is against the traditions. They get permission before they take any photographs. Many of these foreigners close their eyes and meditate before taking any food. Sometime I feel they are learning from us the right things,

while we are becoming more and more Westernized.

India is a very expensive destination when it comes to hotels and accommodation. Here cottages are available for a minimum of us\$110 per day. Those foreigners who have a limited or low budget cannot afford them.
