



KUMBHA MELA

January - February 2013 Special

THE FIRST-EVER, "GREEN" INITIATIVE KUMBH



Featuring

Ganga Action Parivar Events and Clean-Ups,
Visiting Saints, Divine Shakti Festival and more

Kumbh Mela: The Season of Nectar

Kumbh Mela is one of the most ancient, and yet still living, traditions of India's glorious past. The festival dates back to the pre-Vedic period, as even in the Vedas Kumbh Mela is described as a tradition that was already well established. The popularity of Kumbh Mela has only increased over the millennia, gathering millions together every twelve years at each of the four holy places in which the auspicious event occurs and making it the world's largest gathering of people on Earth for one common purpose. It is said that even those saints and sages who live in divine isolation, high in the Himalayas, engaged only in meditation and austerities, emerge from the mountains to attend the Kumbh. Kumbh is a world-renowned trademark of India's proud antiquity, and is a matchlessly divine occasion.

Kumbh Mela is a microcosm of the beauty and rich diversity of India. Amidst all the pomp and liveliness, one can drink in the nectar of India's ancient spiritual traditions. No matter where you go within the Mela, there will be people sitting in satsang with India's saints and sages, bathing in the sacred rivers, meditating at the banks, engaging in yogic practices and attending yoga classes, chanting mantras and singing bhajans. Even the 330 million gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon are said to attend the Mela on the inner planes. Every corner of the Mela is permeated with ancient tradition and spirituality.

This year, under the divine inspiration and leadership of Pujya Swamiji, efforts are being made to make this the first-ever, "Green Initiative" Kumbh Mela. Ganga Action Parivar – an organization founded by Pujya Swamiji dedicated to the restoration and protection of Mother Ganga, Her tributaries and the environment – in partnership with Allahabad's NGOs, schools, institutions and ministry, is taking up the "Green Kumbh Initiative". This is a first of its kind program, designed to beautify the grounds of Kumbh and its environs, while protecting the health and well-being of festival attendees. In addition, this program is spreading awareness and education about the importance of being "green," thus informing and motivating festivals-goers from all over the world to become stewards of the environment around them as well as spreading technologies like eco-friendly toilets, efficient water filtration systems, and more.

If you came to the Kumbh Mela and visited the Ganga Action Parivar camp and would like to share with us, please send your stories, pictures, videos and ideas to us at ganga@gangaaction.org.



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Iyengar Intensive with Manouso Manos



**Pujya Swamiji, Manouso Manos
and Sadhvi Bhagawatiji**

From 11th-13th, Manouso Manos, one of the most capable and skilled Iyengar yoga teachers, came to the Kumbh Mela to share his expertise and energy. Training for decades with the master himself, BKS Iyengar, Manouso holds one of only two Advanced Senior certificates granted by B.K.S. Iyengar. With over 30 years of committed practice, Manouso's knowledge and insights into Iyengar yoga are conveyed with authenticity and precision.

Students got to participate in two sessions of Iyengar yoga with Manouso each day during the intensive, as well as participate in special yagnas, snans in the Sangam, and darshan of saints and sadhus throughout the Kumbh Mela.





Pujya Swami Gurusharananandji Maharaj

On January 12th, Pujya Swami Gurusharananandji Maharaj from Raman Reti, Vrindavan came to the Ganga Action Parivar camp in the evening to see Pujya Swamiji and give darshan to the devotees and pilgrims gathered. All gathered felt very blessed and joy-filled with his presence.





Makar Sankranti | Clean Up of Sangam's Banks

On January 14th we celebrated Makar Sankranti, a day marking the beginning of the Sun's ascent into the Northern Hemisphere, as well as the official start to the Kumbh Mela.

Before taking a sacred dip in Sangam's waters, however, Pujya Swamiji declared "Let us first give a bath to Sangam before we take our own bath in Sangam!" Thus, devotees, pilgrims, and yogis in the Iyengar intensive joined together to clean trash and other waste from the banks of the Sangam.





Makar Sankranti |

Sacred Snan in Sangam's Waters



After thoroughly cleaning the banks of Sangam, removing pounds of plastic, polythene, leftover puja material and other waste, everyone gathered together to take the first holy dip in Sangam's waters. Parmarth Rishikumars recited sacred Vedic mantras as Pujya Swamiji led everyone into Her waters.





Later in the day, famous Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty, Shri SP Hinduja, Shri Gopi Hinduja and Shri Ashok Hinduja travelled from Mumbai to pay a special visit to the Ganga Action Parivar camp for divine puja and yagna and to have Puja Swami's darshan. Shilpa had been unfortunately unable to come for Puja Swami's 60th Janam Utsav in Rishikesh on November 3, but had promised she'd make it to the Kumbh.

While in the camp, Shilpa took part in a sacred yagna and sankalp ceremony to keep Mother Ganga clean and green.





Makar Sankranti | Special Night Yagna and Meditation



To end the auspicious day of Makar Sankranti, pilgrims and devotees once again gathered together in the evening as Pujya Swamiji led them in a special yagna ceremony and silent meditation.

Together we prayed and meditated on this auspicious night that the light should return to our lives, as the Sun was now returning to our hemisphere, and that the darkness of ignorance should be dispelled. Everyone was invited to leave behind anything that was preventing the full, divine light from shining in their lives, and to offer it into the sacred fire.





Clean-Up of Sangam's Banks



After the large clean-up on Makar Sankranti, it was simply too crowded and busy for the boatmen to shuttle all the trash back to the mainland, but the boatmen pledged to Pujya Swamiji to come back and they would do so. So, two days later on the 16th, we all returned and joined with the local boatmen to retrieve all the trash and ferry it back to be properly disposed of.





Green Pilgrimage Conference



On 19th January, His Excellency, Uttarakhand Governor, Dr. Aziz Qureshiji, Pujya Swamiji, distinguished Mayors and Government officials met to discuss ways to make the pathways of pilgrims as clean as the temple they pray in.

In bringing together lauded officials from across India, this conference will enable the sharing of information and ideas about how India's cities and pilgrimage places can become cleaner and greener.



“If every mayor gives one solution, imagine, you’ll have 20 solutions. And when you go back, you have not only had a dip in the sangam, but you have experienced the sangam of some of humanity’s brightest minds, who have come together to share,” said His Holiness Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswati.

In addition to the Mayors’ Conference, His Excellency, Uttarakhand Governor, Dr. Aziz Qureshi, alongside DRDO, FICCI, and Ganga Action Parivar launched the Ganga Tat Pe Ganga Jal Initiative. The historic program is to place Waterlife water filtration systems on the banks of the Ganga for the use of pilgrims visiting some of India’s holiest places and festivals.





Pujya Sant Rameshbhai Ozaji (Bhaishri)



On the 19th, Pujya Sant Rameshbhai Ozaji (Bhaishri) came to the GAP camp to see Pujya Swamiji and give darshan to gathered pilgrims and devotees.

Much to the delight and blessing of everyone gathered, Pujya Bhaishri led a beautiful, prayerful, meditative kirtan of “Om Namō Narayanaya.”

Also while there, our beloved Swami Paramadvaiti sang for Pujya Bhaishri a joyful song about Prahlad and Naramsimha in English, much to everyone’s delight. beautifully sang “Om Namō Narayanaya” during the divine satsang.





Green Kumbh Utsav



On January 20th, Ganga Action Parivar organized a special procession of 5,000 school children from thirty Allahabad-area schools, to inspire them in solidarity and support for saving the Ganga and Yamuna Rivers. The students paraded through the grounds of the Kumbh Mela, singing songs and carrying hand-made signs, some of which stated, “Ganga’s Rights are Our Rights”, finishing their march at the Ganga Action Parivar camp.

His Excellency Uttar Pradesh Governor, Shri B. L. Joshiji was guest of honor at the event, whom

Pujya Swamiji named our “Green Governor.” The program was organized in order to harness and channel the energy of the youth to protect and preserve the rivers and environment of India.

The children were inspired by the stirring words of Pujya Swamiji and the Hon’ble Governor, who appealed that all must come together to take action to clean and restore the Ganga. Afterwards, all participants received tree saplings, which they will plant in their own communities.





Green Kumbh Utsav





Ganga Sansad



The Ganga Sansad (Ganga Parliament), which ran from the 21st to the 23rd, came to conclude the day at the Ganga Action Parivar camp. Participants in the Sansad included Pujya Swamiji, retired General Shri V.K. Singhji, Jal Purush (“Water Man”) Shri Rajendra Singh, Pujya Swami Harichetanandji, and Shri D.N.S. Subbaraoji among other esteemed guests.

The esteemed members of the Sansad spoke about how it was a great moment to speak on Ganga and Yamuna at the holy Sangam during the Kumbh, and how now that many discussions have been held, it is time for results, taking a pledge to stand for Ganga and Ganga’s rights. They also praised how now not only India’s great saints, soldiers, workers and people are coming together, but indeed how all of the world is coming together for Ganga.

Pujya Swami Harichetanandji praised the work of Pujya



General Shri V.K. Singhji and Pujya Swamiji



Jal Purush (“Water Man”) Shri Rajendra Singhji

Swamiji and Ganga Action Parivar, saying that in Pujya Swamiji has been found a modern-day Bhagirath to protect Ganga. He said that GAP has become an umbrella for all to serve under, and that seeing the work each day of what GAP is doing, everyone is inspired to join hands and help in whatever way they can.

Famed pioneer and leader of the Youth Revolution, Shri D.S.N. Subbarao gave an uplifting talk of how previously the song for social change was “Jai Hind” - Victory to India. Yet now, as the whole world is coming together for Ganga, we must sing “Jai Jagat” - Victory to the Universe. He then closed the conference by leading all the esteemed guests along with audience members in an inspirational musical moment as everyone sang together “Jai Jagat! Jai Jagat!”



Shri D.N.S. Subbaraoji leading everyone in “Jai Jagat!” at the close of the Sansad



Harvard University Group | Clean-Up of Sangam Banks

On the 22nd of January, students from Harvard University along with Harvard Professor Dianne Eck, who were visiting the Kumbh Mela to study it from numerous perspectives, joined with GAP to help clean the Sangam.

At the completion of the cleanup, the Harvard students took a snan in the Sangam.





Harvard University Group | Sacred Yagna Ceremony



After the clean-up, the students from Harvard came back to the Ganga Action Parivar camp for divine yagna ceremony and satsang with Pujya Swamiji. Pujya Swamiji spoke to them about how the Harvard students came all the way to Kumbh to move from hard work to heart work for Mother Ganga.





Pujya Pilot Babaji and Pujya Swami Umakantiji



From left to right: Pujya Swami Umakantiji, Pujya Swamiji and Pujya Pilot Babaji

Later that evening, Pujya Pilot Babaji and Pujya Swami Umakantiji came to the GAP camp to meet Pujya Swamiji.



Bhakti Fest



From the 21st to the 25th of January, a beautiful Kumbh Bhakti Fest was organized at the Ganga Action Parivar camp. Participants came together for kirtan, yoga, meditation, sacred baths in the Sangam's waters and more, with teachers and musicians from around the world including Sridar and Saul David Raye.





Shyam Das Memorial



Pujya Swamiji singing prayers at the Shyam Das memorial evening



A special yagna was held in memory of Shyam Das

On the 22nd, a special yagna was held in honor and memory of beloved Shyam Das. Shyam Das, a great orator, musician and bhakta of the Divine, was very close to the ashram, and was due to join us at the Ganga Action Pari-var camp at Kumbh Mela for Bhakti Fest, yet passed away the day before he was to arrive.

On the 23rd, people gathered to remember Shyam Das in a special evening program. Pujya Swamiji spoke and sang special prayers, followed by Sadhvi Bhagawatiji. The rest of the evening was filled with bhajan and kirtan, story telling about Shyam Das and his life, and watching video recordings of him.

To watch a short video of this evening, [click here](#).



Pujya Sant Shri Morari Bapuji



Pujya Sant Shri Morari Bapuji came to the Ganga Action Parivar camp on January 23rd to visit with Pujya Swamiji. Pujya Bapuji, a renowned expounder of the Ram Katha, had been visiting Kumbh Mela to delivering divine katha.

Pujya Bapuji had just recently been in Rishikesh in November for Pujya Swamiji's 60th Jayanti celebrations. Pujya Bapuji appreciated the eco-friendly simplicity of the camp, and it was a great blessing for all the Kumbh pilgrims gathered to be graced by his presence.

To read more about Pujya Swamiji's 60th Jayanti celebrations, [click here](#).



Divine Shakti Festival



From January 24th to 29th, the Ganga Action Parivar camp hosted the Divine Shakti Festival, a festival in celebration and reverence of the Divine Feminine. Approximately fifty participants came from around the world to take part in yoga classes, meditation, inspirational motivational talks and discussions about the Divine Feminine, and its role in the world today.

While at the Kumbh Mela, participants in this festival also got to take part in Ganga Action Parivar events, such as clean-up programs of the banks of Sangam, sacred snans in Her waters, an environmental parade and a special talk by renowned environmental activist Dr. Vandana Shivaji.



National Day of the Girl Child



As a divine start to the Divine Shakti Festival, the National Day of the Girl Child on January 24th with a unique ceremony in which 60 daughters of fishermen were worshiped by the Parmarth Rishikumars as goddesses led by Pujya Swamiji.

The purpose of the ceremony was to shed light on India's girl children as worthy of respect and reverence. Pujya Swamiji spoke about how girls represent the past, present, and future of Mother India, and that for India to grow and thrive, they must be allowed to grow and thrive.





Shakti & Prakriti Conference

On the 25th, as part of the Divine Shakti Festival, we were honoured to host inspirational environmentalist Dr. Vandana Shivaji as guest speaker at an afternoon conference held to discuss the protection of Mother Earth, in connection with the celebration of the divine feminine.

Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji mentioned how one of the meanings of the word 'Kumbh' is 'the womb of creation', so it is fortuitous that here at the Kumbh Mela, we discussed the importance and the spiritual value that the feminine has held for millennia.

Sadhvi Bhagawati noted that the conference brought together women from around the world, having come to this sacred land to delve deep within themselves and to connect their inner divine feminine with the Divine Feminine of the Mother Goddess, Mother Ganga, Mother Earth.



We were also treated to beautiful dance and musical performances by visiting children from the far north-eastern states of India.

[Click here to listen to Dr. Vandana Shivaji's inspiring talk.](#)





Republic Day Environmental Parade

More than a thousand people – from across India and around the world - marched together to celebrate India's Republic Day on January 26th on the banks of the Sangam, as part of an environmental parade to call for India's independence from pollution and to pay homage to the war heroes, who have faithfully served India's past.

Led by Puyja Swamiji, participants from of all castes, creeds and cultures came together to call for an Indian "Clean Revolution." The parade-goers, hailing from more than 54 countries, as well as students from the Northeast states of India, waved their national flags, colorful banners, costumes and slogan-signs calling for all to keep Mother India and Mother Ganga pollution-free.





Republic Day Environmental Parade



Parents of Kargil martyr Captain Manoj Pandey honored at the Republic Day Aarti



Speaking at the event, Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswati said that by gathering all together, we send a strong message to protect and restore Ganga, and that as we celebrate our freedom of sovereignty, we are not truly free until our country is liberated of pollution. We must continue to work and to strive for the freedom to live in a country blessed with clean air, water and land. Just as we fought long and hard for our rights and independence, we now must stand for Ganga's rights.

The event also paid respect to the war heroes, who have protected the land, culture and people of India. In doing so, it sent a message of inspiration for all to serve in the footsteps of these martyrs and veterans in order to preserve our environment. Just as they dedicated themselves to India, we must now too dedicate ourselves to cleaning and restoring Mother Ganga, our National Heritage.

After the parade, a special Aarti ceremony was held at the Sangam.

[Click here to watch video from this event.](#)





Pausha Purnima |

Clean-Up and Snan at the Banks of Sangam



On the sacred day of Paush Purnima, January 27th, nearly four hundred devotees and pilgrims from approximately fifty countries traveled out to the Sangam and took part in a huge clean up program.

After this, which Pujya Swamiji called “sadhana in action”, everyone gathered back together for a sacred snan in the waters of Sangam to the chanting of Vedic mantras by Parmarth Rishikumars.

In the evening, everyone once again gathered for a special silent full moon meditation directly on the banks of the Sangam in front of the Ganga Action Parivar camp.





Kavi Sammelan

On 28th January, the Ganga Action Parivar camp hosted a Kavi Sammelan (Poetry Conference), bringing poets came from Allahabad and Lucknow.

Pujya Swamiji praised the power of poetry and literacy to keep moving India forward, and have if all come together to speak about Ganga, Yamuna and the environment through means like poetry, it will help protect and restore these sacred bodies.





Divine Shakti Festival



On the 29th, the last day of the Divine Shakti Festival, participants gathered directly on the banks of the Sangam in front of the GAP camp for a special yoga class. After the asana class, Sadhvi Bhagawatiji led the participants in meditation.



Sadhvi Bhagawatiji leading participants in meditation



Yagna in Memory of Mahatma Gandhiji



On 30th January, members of Ganga Action Parivar performed a special yagna ceremony in memory of Mahatma Gandhi, on the day which marked the date on which he was assassinated. 108 offerings were made to the sacred fire during the Kumbh Mela to honour the teachings, principles and values of Gandhiji which are forever immortal.

After there ceremony, it was stated beautifully that Gandhiji, like Lord Shiva - the Hindu God who in the great Kumbh story of the churning of the ocean swallows the poison to allow for the nectar of immortality to come forth - is immortal because he too swallowed the poison of colonization to bring independence to India. He selflessly served for the welfare of all, living his life as his example.

Gandhiji's simplicity and deep grounding to the Earth made him one of the earliest pioneers of the environmental movement in India. For Gandhiji, a non-violent lifestyle was one that honored the soil and its people. How to live one's life with a small carbon and water footprint in a way that is just enough to meet one's need is one of the many lessons one can learn from his life.



Shri Ram Mahesh Mishraji speaking at the yagna on Mahatma Gandhiji's life





Local Schoolchildren Performance



On February 2nd, over 150 students from the local Ganga Gurukulam and Maharishi Pantanjali Vidya Mandir, along with their teachers and principals, came and performed beautiful, creative and inspirational cultural program involving dance, theatre and music based on Mother Ganga and Her protection. In their performance pieces, the students portrayed the roles and responsibilities of the many people that depend on Mother Ganga as their very lifeline.



The performances were followed by a question and answer session with Pujya Swamiji in which He explained that the time to stay quiet about Ganga's pollution is over - the time to act has come.

Pujya Swamiji told the students that the youth must set the way of how to protect and respect our rivers and women, as these are keys to preserving our nation. He urged each student to become an agent of change and transformation in their respective community.

A Festival in Celebration and Reverence of the Divine Feminine

When women come together,





Sangam Aarti



On February 3rd, Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji led a special Ganga Aarti ceremony, graced by the presence of Pujya Swami Ramdevji and many revered saints and spiritual leaders of Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Jainism and Christianity as well as distinguished guests and dignitaries.

The Aarti delivered the great message of unity of the leaders of the world's religions in the importance of protecting our national environment and particularly the sacred and life-giving waters of Mother Ganga. As the revered saints waved the brightly burning aarti lamps, it brought a message of light and peace to the world.





Innovation in Spirituality



In the evening after the Sangam Aarti, Pujya Swamiji and Dr. Bhupendra Kumar Modiji, Chairman of Spice Global and President of the Global Citizens Forum, hosted a conference on the theme of “Innovation in Spirituality,” to explore how spirituality is crucial to innovative, creative and “green” development today.

The event featured renowned faith and business leaders, who discussed the interconnectedness of today’s world, as well as the importance of spirituality and service.

Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji spoke at the event about how by developing innovations from a spiritual perspective, we are serving the world, furthering the cause of peace, and enabling the growth and development of humanity. Spiritual innovators make the world a better place by balancing the needs of development with the importance of preserving our environment for future generations.

Other speakers at the conference included the President of the All India Imams Association Imam Ahmed Umar Ilyasiji, Global Chairman of Spice Global Dr. B.K. Modiji, Sadhvi Bhagawatiji, a leader of the Earth Traditions lineage Rev. Patrick McCollum, CEO of Dragon Gate Entertainment William Pfeiffer, and leader of the World Conscious Pact Pujya Swami Paramadvaitiji.



Pujya Imam Umer Ahmed Ilyasiji

February 4th was a historical day at the Kumbh Mela. Pujya Swamiji presented special saplings of neem, rudraksh and kalpa vriksh to Imam Umer Ahmed Ilyasiji, the President of All India Imams Association. They joined hands symbolizing the union of the religions to work together for peace, unity and for protection and preservation of the natural environment, particularly the waters of Mother Ganga.

Pujya Swamiji and Pujya Imam Sahib declared that they will unite the temples and the mosques of India in the service of safeguarding the natural environment of India and the river Ganga. They will unite the Hindus and the Muslims together in



a joint effort toward a “Clean & Green Ganga, Clean & Green India, Clean & Green World, and Clean & Green Century.”





Global Citizen Forum



**Dr. BK Modiji, Pujya Swamiji,
Pujya Imam Ilyasiji and
Sadhvi Bhagawatiji**

On February 4th was the official launch of the Global Citizens Forum, founded by Dr. Bhupendra Kumar Modi. The occasion was graced by the presence of Pujya Swamiji, Pujya Imam Ilyasiji, the first official “Global Citizens” and other members of Dr. Modiji’s family.



Members of the Global Citizen Forum



Bhandara at Parmarth Camp



On the 5th of February, the Parmarth camp at the Kumbh Mela hosted a large bhandara which fed over 5,000 saints. A regular Kumbh Mela event, the Samasthi Bhandara feeds thousands of revered Mahamandaleshwars. Led by M.M. Pujya Swami Asanganandji and the whole Parmarth family, the sacred sattvik feast goes on for much of the day.



Bhandara at Parmarth Camp





Sir Mark Tully

On the 5th, renowned BBC correspondent Sir Mark Tully came to the Ganga Action Parivar camp to take interviews of Pujya Swamiji and Sadhvi Bhagawatiji. He was deeply touched to hear about the work being done by Pujya Swamiji through Ganga Action Parivar to clean and preserve Ganga.

Pujya Swamiji invited him to come to the Ganga Aarti which was just about to start. Having attended aartis previously during his decades of living in India, he was familiar with the ceremony. However, he had never actually held the aarti lamp itself. So that evening for the first time, he had the opportunity to not only witness the aarti but to actually perform the aarti. Following the ceremony he explained, full of great emotion, that the experience was deeply moving and touching. He thanked Pujya Swamiji for providing him not only with the experience of being in the aarti but also with actually gifting him the aarti lamp to wave. He said, “It is so beautiful to see how tolerant the Hindus are.” Pujya Swamiji responded, “Yes. It is also more than tolerance. It is acceptance. One tolerates that which one does not like. With our spiritual tradition, it is not about tolerating other religions and other cultures. It is about accepting them with love.”





Hon'ble Minister Shri Sachin Ahirji



On the 6th, the honorable Minister of Housing and Industries of Maharashtra Shri Sachin Ahirji visited the Kumbh Mela with his team in an effort to study the Allahabad Kumbh Mela to improve the upcoming Nasik Kumbh Mela in 2015. Shri Ahirji and his team met with Pujya Swamiji and discussed all the ongoing efforts to “green” this Allahabad Kumbh, and ideas were discussed and planned on how to make the Nasik Kumbh even more eco-friendly and clean.



Yoga & Pranayama Program on Sangam's Banks



Pujya M.M. Swami Gurusharananandji speaking on the true meaning of yoga



A special yoga and pranayama program was held on the banks of the Arail Sangam in front of the Ganga Action Parivar camp for several hundred yatriis that was graced by the presence of many of India's greatest saints. The program began with Pujya Mahamandaleshwar Swami Gurusharananandji Maharaj giving a divine talk on the beauty and importance of yoga and spirituality, followed by a wonderful class on yoga and pranayama led by renowned "Yogrishi" Pujya Swami Ramdevji. Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji, Pujya Swami Gyananandji, Pujya Swami Ganeshdasji, Pujya Swami Nirgundasji, Pujya Prem Babaji and Pujya Swami Paramadvatiji also graced the occasion.



Pujya Swami Ramdevji leading participants in pranayama and yogasanas

After the beautiful yoga and pranayama class and demonstration given by Pujya Swami Ramdevji, all of the participants joined together for kirtan and a sacred pledge to keep every river and water body clean in all of their cities and countries around the globe.





Ekta Kapoor, Emraan Hashmi & Huma Qureshi



Director Ekta Kapoor and actors Emraan Hashmi and Huma Qureshi came to the Ganga Action Parivar camp where they performed sacred puja and a Mahayagna for peace, positivity, environmental preservation and upliftment, led by Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji, founder of Ganga Action Parivar and President of Parmarth Niketan Ashram, Rishikesh. After the puja and yagna, Pujya Swamiji and the



Ganga Action Parivar took them for a divine Sangam Snan preceded by a clean up of the sacred banks.

Deeply touched and committed to protecting and preserving Mother Ganga and our natural environment, they took part in a special ceremony for the protection of Ganga's Rights, followed by pledges to preserve and protect Mother Ganga.





World-Renowned Percussionist Sivamani

World-famous drummer Sivamani came to the Ganga Action Parivar camp where he gave a special concert which awed and inspired all present.

Everyone enjoyed Sivamani's music so much that although he was scheduled for a concert elsewhere, he ended up cancelling that concert to perform for two nights at the camp, and even brought in his singer Runa Rizvi from Kolkata!



At the end of the concert, Sivamani praised Pujya Swamiji and the work to restore and protect Mother Ganga, proclaiming "Mother Ganga is the Mother of our Nation and the music of our lives."





World-Renowned Percussionist Sivamani



Runa Rizvi, Sivamani and Puja Swamiji



Sivamani playing drums with the Parmarth rishikumars upon his arrival





Preity Zinta



On February 10th, the auspicious day of Mauni Amavasya, famous actress Preity Zinta came to the Ganga Action Parivar camp at the Kumbh Mela with members of the Hinduja family. After participating in the sacred yagna at the camp, Pujya Swamiji led her and the Hindujas to the Sangam for a holy dip and prayers in the sacred waters. Pujya Swamiji gave her jal from the Sangam with which she took a sacred sankalp and performed achaman prior to the snan.



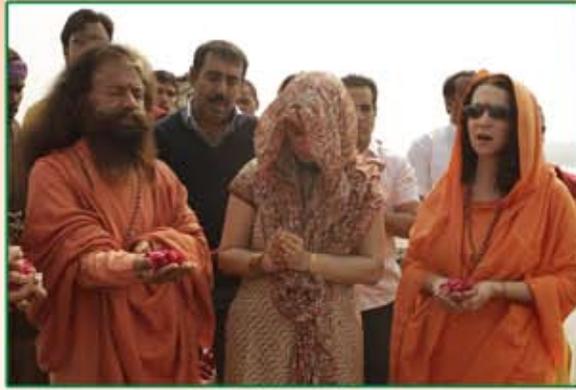
Later on, Preity spoke to the media about her sadness at seeing so much trash and pollution in the holy waters. She said that coming to the Kumbh was such a sacred and beautiful experience but that the condition of the holy waters made her sad to see. She pledged herself to be part of the Ganga Action Parivar and to do whatever she is able to for the protection and preservation of Mother Ganga. She said, "As we all work to keep our own homes clean, so we must all realize that Mother Ganga IS our home and therefore we need to also work to keep these flowing waters, which are depended upon by so many, clean and pollution free."



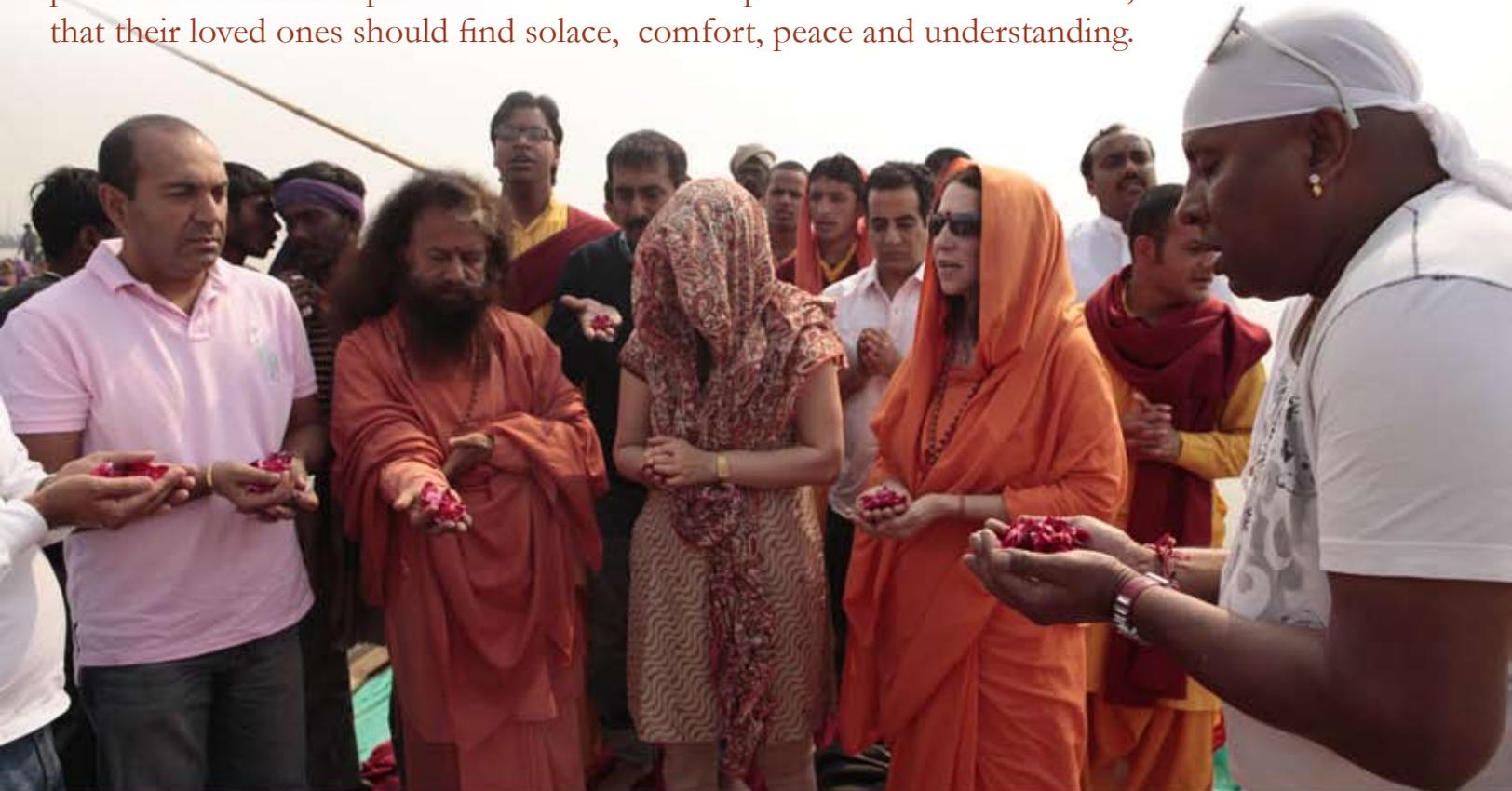
Click here to watch a video of Preity Zinta interacting with our plastic con!



Divine Shradhanjali Puja on Sangam



On the 11th, Pujya Swamiji led a divine “shradhanjali” puja and ceremony with Preity Zinta, Sivamani, Sanjay Hinduja, Prakash Chhabria and several other yatris, along with the rishikumars of Parmarth Gurukul, priests and acharyas on the holy Sangam. As soon as the news had been received that morning of a terrible accident in the Allahabad train station, which killed numerous pilgrims of the Kumbh Mela, Pujya Swamiji spoke with Preity and others and suggested that a sacred shradhanjali puja should be performed. Preity immediately said “absolutely.” So, in the morning hours, sacred prayers and mantras were chanted and puja performed that the departed souls should attain peace in the Divine Abode, and that their loved ones should find solace, comfort, peace and understanding.





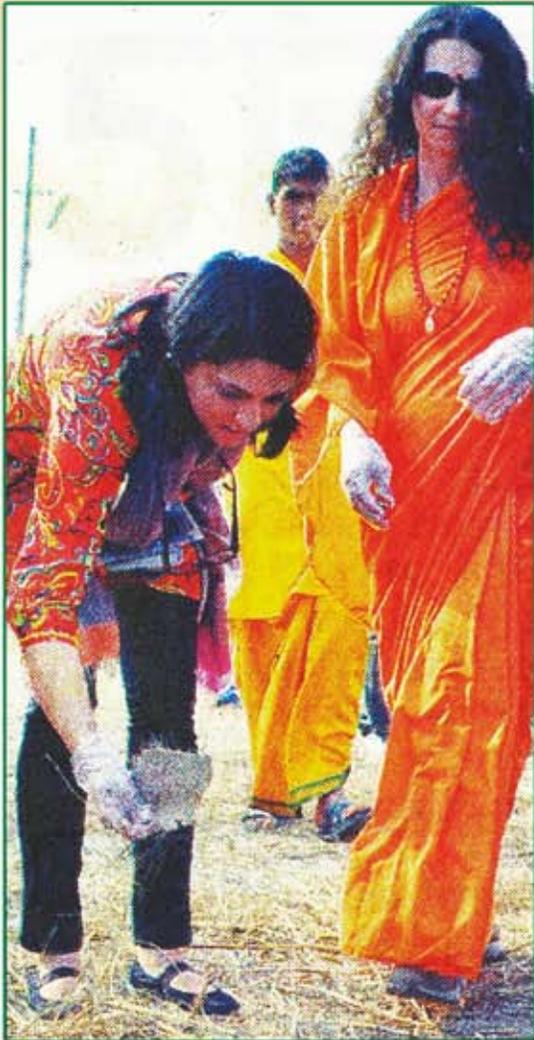
Brahmachari Dr. Girish Chandra Vermaji



On the 12th, Brahmachari Dr. Girish Chandra Vermaji, Chairman of the Maharishi Vidya Mandir Schools group, visited Pujya Swamiji at the Ganga Action Parivar camp. Pujya Swamiji took him out to the sacred Sangam where they planned for the major snan of the following day.



Lok Sabha MP Priya Duttji



Priya Dutt, MP, Lok Sabha, daughter of late Shri Sunil Dutt and sister of Bollywood actor Sanjay Dutt, attended the Kumbh and spent time at the Ganga Action Parivar camp. Priyaji comes regularly to Parmarth Niketan and eagerly came to see Pujya Swamiji in Kumbh. Of course, she took part in the Sangam clean up organized by Ganga Action Parivar and led by Pujya Swamiji on a regular basis.





A Sangam of Leaders for Ganga

A special program was held which brought together top political leaders and great saints on the same stage for Ganga, including the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Uttarakhand Shri Vijay Bahugunaji and former Union Minister and Congress leader Dr. Suresh Pachauri. The stage was blessed with the presence of great spiritual luminaries Pujya Swamiji, Pujya Sri Sri Ravi Shankarji, Pujya Mahamandaleshwar Swami Asanganand Saraswatiji, Pujya Mahamandaleshwar Swami Harichetanandji, Pujya Mahamandaleshwar Dr. Swami Umakantanandji, Pujya Swami Swatantranandji and other great saints.

Shri Bahugunaji spoke about how the Sangam is representative of the eternal traditions and culture of Ganga and Yamuna to India, and how the people of Uttarakhand and India are now being called upon to help ensure Ganga remains pure from her source in Gangotri to her end at Gangasagar.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankarji spoke about the great opportunity of the Kumbh Mela to bring together cultural, social and political forces for the contemplation and refinement of our minds and souls. He continued that the future light of the nation and the world is directly tied to the youth of the country, saying that the future lies with India, the future lies with the youth.

At the end of the event, Pujya Swamiji gift Shri Vijay Bahuguna with five trees as a symbol of the kind of development which is to take place in Uttarakhand. Ganga Action Parivar has pledged its full cooperation to the State of Uttarakhand to help develop Uttarakhand in ecologically-sustainable ways which provide for all but protect Mother Ganga, Yamuna, all their tributaries and the environment.



**Hon'ble Chief Minister of Uttarakhand
Shri Vijaya Bahugunaji**



Pujya Sri Sri Ravi Shankarji





In the evening of the 13th, ABP TV organized a special broadcasting event on Ganga. Having attained a great deal of research regarding levels of bacteria and waste present in Ganga's waters at four different locations, the program included live panels in Allahabad, Haridwar and Nasik on this topic.





“Make Ganga Your Green Valentine” Rally



On the 14th, more than 500 “Green Kumbh” participants from more than 45 countries joined together in a celebration of dance and music to declare Ma Ganga, India’s Green Valentine on this Valentine’s Day.

The gathering was graced by the presence of Pujya Swamiji, Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudevji, Sri Prem Baba, and Pujya B.A. Swami Paramadvaiti.



The lively rally showcased the colors of India’s flag and theatrics demonstrating all of Mother India’s beautiful, natural beauty. Of the flag’s colors, orange was the symbol for sunshine and alternative energy, white represents simplicity and purity to encourage living in a sustainable and simple way and green stands for the importance of organic farming plays in keeping Mother Ganga’s waters clean. Further participants from the different countries carried signs of their countries symbolizing the unity of everyone in the love for Mother Ganga and their support in her preservation.

Click here to watch video from this event.



Pujya Jaggi Vasudevji and Pujya Swamiji



Wedding



On the 15th, Pujya Swamiji graced the massive wedding of over 150 couples in Allahabad. This wedding ceremony was truly special, as all the couples come from impoverished families and also suffered various physical challenges. The wedding was organized by Justice Arun Tandonji of the Allahabad High Court.





International Conference on Ayurveda, Yoga & Vegetarianism



A two-day International Conference on Ayurveda, Yoga and Vegetarianism was held from February 17th to 18th at the Ganga Action Parivar Kumbh Mela camp. Experts from all over India came together with participants from around the world to share their knowledge on these subjects for the betterment of body, mind, spirit, and the world.



Vegetarianism is an important subject dear to Ganga Action Parivar, as vegetarianism is directly linked to our environment. The raising of livestock for the purposes of eating is one of the biggest consumers of the Earth's natural resources in the world, as it heavily uses and wastes precious water (significantly more than agriculture) and land (which is often in places where forests once stood, cut down for grazing land and ranches). Animal by-product industries are also major polluters of the Ganga, especially the tanneries, which dump their toxic effluents directly into Ganga and Her tributaries, often without any treatment. Thus, the importance of going vegetarianism is not only for our own health and our own peace of mind, but it is truly important for the Earth and Mother Ganga.

[Click here to download Pujya Swamiji's book on "Vegetarianism: For Our Bodies, Our Minds, Our Souls & Our Planet."](#)





“Sangam se Sansad ko Sandesh” Event

On the 17th, a special “Sangam se Sansad ko Sandesh” event was organized by the Prabhatam group at the Ganga Action Parivar Camp, which was then telecast internationally in many countries.

Pujya Swamiji, Pujya M.M. Swami Kailashanandji and other leaders gave talks on the importance of the protection of Mother Ganga by the Parliament and what steps can/should be taken by the Parliament. Consul General of Argentina, Sergio Lais said, “As a Christian, I am sure that if Jesus Christ were alive today, He would say ‘Love Ganga as Thyself.’”



Pujya Swamiji (above) and Pujya M.M. Swami Kailashanandji (below) speaking at the event





Maha Sangam Aarti



On the 19th, Pujya Swamiji led a special aarti at the VIP ghat on the sangam which was graced by the presence of Pujya Shankaracharya Vasudevanandji, Pujya Shankaracharya Narendranandji, Pujya Shankaracharya Adhokchajanandji, Pujya M.M. Swami Avdheshanand Giri and other revered saints and leaders.

As Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji said: “Here we have a sangam of saints, a sangam of Shankaracharyajis

together on the sacred Sangam. I am sure that with the blessings of our divine saints and the commitment of so many people from across India and from abroad, we truly can change the course of our sacred rivers from polluted to clean, natural and free-flowing.”

All of the saints present deeply appreciated the work being done by Pujya Swamiji and GAP.





Spirituality in Leadership Conference



Shri Mahesh Bhatt speaking at the conference



On the 22nd, a Spirituality in Leadership conference was held in the School of Management Sciences (SMS), Varanasi in which Pujya Swamiji and prominent Indian film director, producer and screenwriter, Shri Mahesh Bhattji, as well as Padmashri Professor Geshe N Samten, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor of Central University of Tibetan Studies, were the guests of honor.

Amongst many inspiring words by all the speakers the resounding message was that spirituality begins with oneself, and that in we must be the change, starting by preserving and protecting our environment and our cultural, spiritual and natural heritage. Pujya Swamiji inspired all participants to reach out to friends and family to urge them to take a pledge to make our communities and our rivers "clean and green." He inspired all to vow to stop the use of polythene within a month's time and to plant at least one tree in the monsoon season. Pujya Swamiji invited all to join GAP to dedicate their time, talent and technology to the cause.

A special performance was shared by the disciples of Swami Paramadvaiti from Vrindavan, a patron of the Ganga Action Parivar, illustrating the crisis that is faced by our environment and our role of change in it. Gifts of tree saplings and clothe bags were given by GAP to all speakers and dignitaries.



Spirituality in Leadership Conference





Bhajan Sandhya

In the evening on the 22nd, a bhajan sandhya program was conducted, on the occasion of Shri Dinesh Shahra's birthday. He had come to Kumbh from Mumbai with his family and friends to celebrate his birthday with sacred snan, satsang and sangeet.





Hon'ble Minister of Water, Shri Harish Rawatji



On the 23rd, the Respected Union Minister for Water Resources, Shri Harish Rawat, stood alongside Pujya Swamiji and other respected saints and dignitaries for the launch of the National Ganga Rights Movement. The movement, which is being spearheaded by Ganga Action Parivar, is promoting the National Ganga Rights Act to protect and restore one of the world's most precious and beloved river systems.

Present environmental laws, which regulate the amount of allowable harm that may occur to ecosystems, have not proven adequate to protect our National River, which also sustains the lives of some 500 million people.

The proposed National Ganga Rights Act takes its precedence from other nations. Rights have been bestowed upon nature within the Constitution of Ecuador, have been granted to the Whanganui River in New Zealand, have been recognised for Mother Earth in Bolivia, and have been mandated within municipalities including Pittsburgh, USA.

Said HH Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji, "If Ganga dies, India dies. If Ganga thrives, India thrives.

In violating Her, we are violating basic human rights, and we are putting at risk the bright futures our children so greatly deserve. Now is the time for action. Let us all stand up and say, it's time for the National Ganga Rights Act."

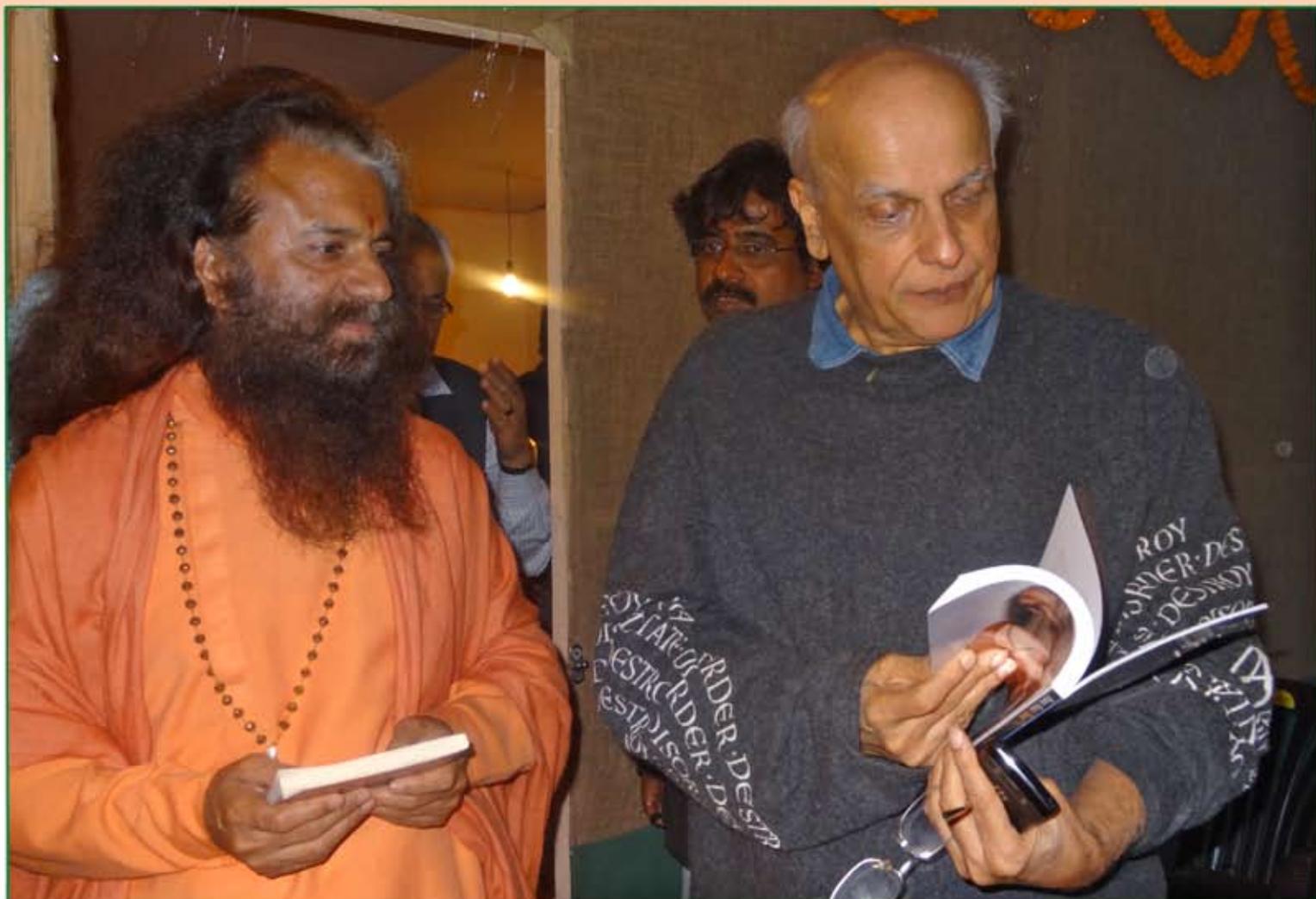
Said Shri Harish Rawatji, "This way, we can offer this new thought, change the way of our society and protect future generations."

Under a rights-based system of law, a river may be recognised as having the right to flow, fish and other species in a river may be recognised as having the right to exist and evolve, and the flora and fauna that depend on a river may be recognised as having the right to thrive. Laws decreeing the rights of nature also grant legal authority to residents and governments to enforce and defend those rights. These laws change the status of ecosystems from being regarded as property under the law to being treated as rights-bearing entities.

The draft National Ganga Rights Act and Petition can be found at www.gangarights.org.



Mahesh Bhatt



In the evening, renowned film director and producer Mahesh Bhatt visited the Ganga Action Parivar camp and met with Pujya Swamiji.

While meeting with Pujya Swamiji, Mahesh Bhatt was shown some of the films and ads Ganga Action Parivar is currently creating to spread awareness about the plight of Ganga and to inspire all to take up the important cause of environmental protection. Bhattji was impressed with the films and was eager to find out how he can help.



108th Anniversary of the Rotary Club

February 23rd also marked the 108th Anniversary of the Rotary Club. Pujya Swamiji and Ganga Action Parivar joined Rotarians in Allahabad, Chandigarh and all over the world to spread the message that service truly is the ultimate path to peace.

Speaking on the anniversary, Pujya Swamiji shared a beautiful quote from Mother Teresa, saying: “The fruit of prayer is faith. The fruit of faith is love. The fruit of love is devotion. The fruit of devotion is service. The fruit of service is peace.”

One of the greatest services needed today is the preservation of the environment and our natural heritage, especially our rivers and water bodies such as Mother Ganga. It is by so doing that we can truly ensure a peaceful and more sustainable future for ourselves and our posterity.



Click the picture above to watch Pujya Swamiji's special message on the 108th Anniversary of Rotary



Bhandara



During the Kumbh, the Ganga Action Parivar camp hosted many bhandaras (feasts) for local indigent, people, families of boatmen, children and women. While feeding of saints is considered a great punya, we also extended the concept of bhandara to include all those in need.





An Evening Dedicated to Humanity



The day before the last major snan of the Kumbh Mela, an evening was organized and hosted by GAP with music and poetry dedicated to the welfare and service of humanity. Special guests were famous Bollywood actor Vivek Oberoi with his family, Hon'ble Home Minister Maharashtra Shri Kripa Shankar Singh, former CM of Goa Shri Digambar Kamat and Chairman of the All-India Anti-Terrorist Front Shri Maninderjeet Singh Bitta.



Famous actor Vivek Oberoi

The event had many talented Hindu and Muslim poets share their inspiring poetry. Although unable to make the event physically, Respected Kalbe Sadhiq Sahib and Respected Imam Umer Iliasji sent their support and blessings for this enchanting evening and the larger message of harmony and unity.



Shri Maninderjeet Singh Bittaji and Major General Vishwambhar Dayal



An Evening Dedicated to Humanity

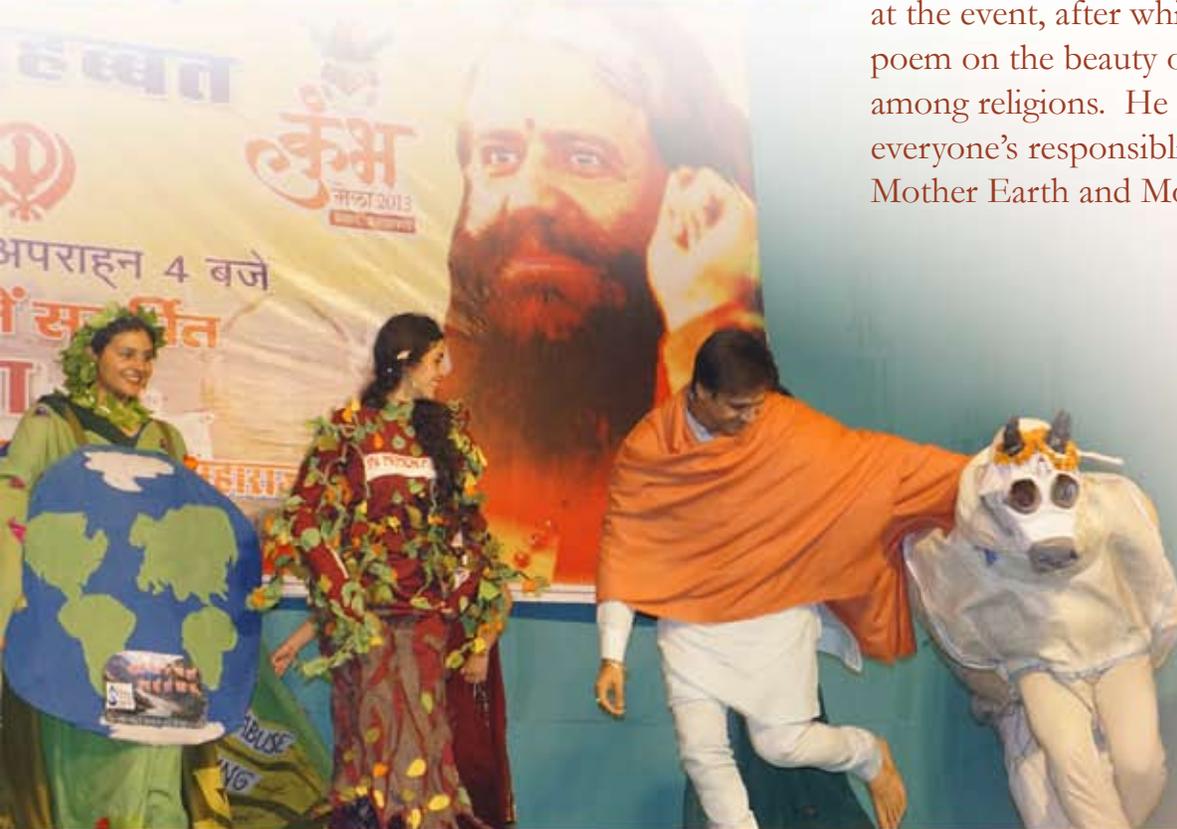


Vivek Oberoi had arrived at the Ganga Action Parivar camp just in time for the function. He had come to visit his Guru, Pujya Swamiji, and brought his mother and his aunts to the Kumbh.

Vivek eagerly joined the performance on stage at the event, after which he spoke a beautiful poem on the beauty of the unity seen in India among religions. He then spoke about how it is everyone's responsibility to protect Mother Cow, Mother Earth and Mother Ganga.

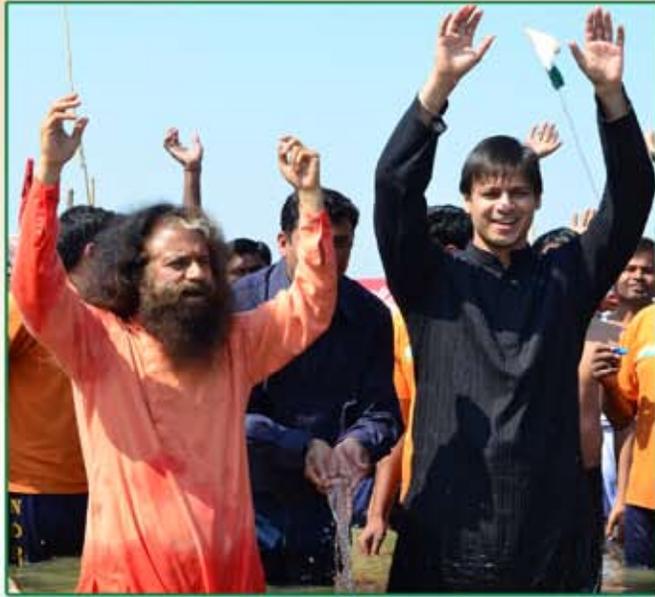
[Click here to watch video from this event.](#)

[Click here to listen to Vivek Oberoi's beautiful words at the event.](#)





Vivek Oberoi



On the 25th, the final snan day of the Kumbh Mela, Vivek Oberoi, his mother and aunts went for Sangam Snan, along with other devotees, led by Pujya Swamiji. We chanted prayers and mantras and also Vivek gave a special Sankalp, one in Hindi and one in English, about protecting Mother Ganga. Vivek pledged: “We pledge, in the waters of Mother Ganga, the greatest spiritual energy in the universe, at the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati, we pledge as children of the Great Mother Ganga, that we will dedicate a part of our lives to the service of all the great rivers. Let us come forward and let us serve these beautiful mothers, these divine rivers that have given us so much.” Vivek also participated in a Sangam Clean up program.

[Click here to listen to the divine sankalp for Ganga taken by Vivek Oberoi.](#)





Temples to Toilets Program

In the evening, Pujya Swamiji showed a film which had been made on the need for toilets in the presence of members of DRDO, FICCI and the media. The lack of proper toilet facilities is not only a major factor contributing to pollution in Ganga, Yamuna and all rivers, but also is a source of violence, fear and illness in girls and women. Embarrassed to go to the toilet in the daytime, they suffer innumerable ailments from holding until the dark of night. Then, in the dark of night, they fall prey to wild animals and violent men. Hence, the toilet program initiated by Pujya Swamiji is an answer to problems faced by Mother Ganga, Mother Yamuna and all the young and old girls and women living on their banks.

Said Pujya Swami Chidanandji: “Every time we drive and I see women and girls having to jump up in the middle of answering nature’s calls due to shame of passing cars, it hurts my heart and I feel that we are inflicting great physical and emotional violence against our “Matri Shakti” by not providing them with safe, available places to go to the toilet. Also, lack of toilets is one of the main reasons for young girls dropping out of school, so we are committed to building toilets in schools so our young girls can continue their studies. Our temples purify our minds and thoughts, but a toilet is necessary for the body. Just as temples are crucial for spiritual health, so are toilets crucial for physical health. That is why, after decades of building temples, I am now focused on building toilets.”

Said Vivek Oberoi: “I am so glad to be part of such an important initiative which not only helps keep Mother Ganga clean but which also is seva for all of our mothers and sisters -- of every age -- who don’t have access to toilets and must brave the jungle and rapists in the dark of night. Giving our women the dignity they deserve is our duty.”

Members of Ganga Action Parivar explained that currently, much of India’s sewage is disposed of within water bodies such as the Ganga. The Ganga is deluged with nearly 2 billion liters of human waste a day, while being the sole source of drinking water to a population approximating that of the United States, Canada and Russia combined. The resulting public health crisis has taken a tremendous toll. According to the World Bank, 21% of communicable diseases in India are related to unsafe water. Of these diseases, diarrhea alone is responsible for over 1,600 deaths each day.

The DRDO-Developed Biodigester uses no chemicals and requires no electricity, nor moving parts. Rather, the biodigester tanks provide an oxygen-free environment within which harmless bacteria dissolve all sewage. What’s left is clear, 99% pathogen-free water, which is rich in agricultural nourishments, and odor-free methane gas which can then be utilized as a fabulous source of energy. Cars have been developed which can reach a top speed of over 180 kph which are fueled for an entire year from the biogas produced from the sewage of just 70 homes. A consortium of Japanese auto makers reports that this fuel can potentially cut carbon emissions by 75%.

The next day before leaving the camp, Vivek Oberoi took a pledge for the construction of the first 2 toilet complexes being built by a partnership between Ganga Action Parivar, DRDO and FICCI. Led by Pujya Swamiji, Vivek performed puja, yagna and a ceremonial “bhoomi puja” blessing for bricks to be used in the eco-friendly, bio-digester toilet complexes. The 2 toilet complexes sponsored by Vivek will be located in Allahabad and in the sacred teerth of Badrinath.





Minister of Irrigation of UP Shri Shivpal Singhji



On the 26th, the Hon'ble Minister for Irrigation of Uttar Pradesh, Shri Shivpal Singhji came to the camp. Pujya Swamiji showed Shri Singhji several films which GAP has made on the urgent need for toilets, the benefits of solar energy and the current state of pollution in Mother Ganga. Deeply inspired by the film and by detailed discussions with Pujya Swamiji, the honorable Minister pledged that the State of Uttar Pradesh would construct eco-friendly bio-digester toilets -- as per the model developed in partnership between Ganga Action Parivar, DRDO and FICCI -- along the banks of Ganga and Yamuna throughout Uttar Pradesh.



He pledged for a new vision for a Green Kashi and Green Prayag. The program, as discussed and developed today in conversation with Pujya Swami Chidanandji and other members of Ganga Action Parivar, will include the bio-digester toilets, utilization of solar energy and prevention of waste from entering the waters of Ganga and Yamuna. A special "brick puja" was performed for the toilets today, by Shri Singhji, Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji, Pujya Mahamandaleshwar Kailashanandji and other revered saints and dignitaries. These will be the bricks used in the construction of the first biodigester toilet complex here in Prayag.

The Honourable Minister expressed his great sorrow to see the statistics, facts and figures regarding the situation of trash and sewage flowing into Ganga and the consequent rate of illness and death. He expressed his great appreciation for the work being done by Pujya Swamiji and his Ganga Action Parivar.

Upon the honourable Minister's departure he received the prasad of saplings of sacred trees which Pujya Swami Chidanandji has been giving out as prasad since the beginning of Kumbh.



Mahadev Ganga Mahotsav



On the 26th, the final day of the Ganga Action Parivar camp at Kumbh Mela, a special Mahadev Ganga Mahotsav and Kumbh Se Samvaad event was organized by Life OK. The event brought together spiritual leaders and devotees on a common platform to deliberate upon the current state of the river and the need for ground-level contribution by citizens.



The Samvaad, an open discussion, featured participation of various spiritual leaders such as Pujya Swamiji, Pujya Shankaracharya Vasudevanandaji, Pujya Shankaracharya Narendranandji, Pujya M.M. Kailashanandji, Pujya M.M. Umakantagiriji, Mahant Narendra Giriji, and Sadhvi Bhagawatiji, as well as eminent personalities from the field of science such as Dr. B.D. Tripathiji of the National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA)



Mahadev Ganga Mahotsav



and Dr. Rashmi Sanghi ji of IIT-Kanpur along with Shailendra Jhaji, Creative Director of Life OK.

All spiritual leaders present at the Samvaad, took a pledge at the Sangam to contribute in keeping the river clean and safe and not immersing dead bodies in the Ganga.

Noted singer and composer Aadesh Srivastav was also present to sing the Ganga Anthem, composed by well-known lyricist Praseen Joshi for Ganga Action Parivar.

Mahadev Ganga Mahotsav is an awareness drive aimed at motivating and mobilizing masses on various issues that continue to deeply impact Ganga. It is driven by intent to awaken people from their slumber and inspire them to do their bit for India's national river. The Mahotsav also aimed at making the residents of Allahabad hopeful of a better future for their city and its lifeline, Ganga.

In the evening after the main stage event, all took to the waters in a boat rally to bring the message and spread awareness directly at the Sangam, where millions have gathered for the length of the Kumbh to dip in Sangam's holy waters.



Ganga Action Parivar in the News

In addition to being in newspapers, the work of GAP and events throughout the Kumbh Mela were featured in national and international news. Below are a selection of these stories from the beginning to end of Kumbh.

Please follow the links to read or watch the stories.

- “Green issues to be discussed during Maha Kumbh Mela” - The Indian Express, 1st January, 2013
- “World’s Biggest Holy Gathering Aims Green” - The Wall Street Journal, 15th January, 2013
- “Kumbh Mela: Foreign direct cleanliness for Ganga” - Mizo News, 18th January, 2013
- “Sangam Tat Se Adhyatma-Dharma Par Charcha” - NDTV, 18th January, 2013
- “Clean Sangam Program” - Star News, 19th January, 2013
- “America Se PhD, Bharat Men Ganga Ki Seva” - NDTV, 19th January, 2013
- “30 Minutes: Maha Kumbh of Faith” - CNN-IBN Live, 20th January, 2013
- “Ex-army chief VK Singh joins save Ganga campaign” - DNA India, 22nd January, 2013
- “Kumbh Clean Up with Harvard Students” - Star News, 22nd January, 2013
- “Project helps to endorse greener pilgrimage at Kumbh Mela” - Asian Image, 22nd January, 2013
- “Divine Shakti Festival launched at Kumbh” - News Track India, 25th January, 2013
- “Pilgrims from 54 countries participate in Paryavaran parade at Mahakumbh” - Times of India, 26th January, 2013
- “A ‘Green Kumbh’ initiative” - The Hindu, 28th January, 2013
- “Muslim body supports save Ganga campaign at Mahakumbh” - Times of India, 4th February, 2013
- “Seer champions sanitation cause at Kumbh” - Times of India, 5th February, 2013
- “Mauni Amavasya: Maha Snan ko Taiyar Kumbh Nagari” - Aaj Tak, 10th February, 2013

Ganga Action Parivar in the News

“Sangam Ke Tat Par Umda Bhakti Ka Sagar” - Aaj Tak, 10th February, 2013

“Worshiping at Kumbh Mela” - New York Times, 10th February, 2013

“Rashtray Vichar Manthan, Prayagraj Mahakumbh” - Aastha, 11th February, 2013

“Seeking A Glimpse Of Immortality In The Waters of India’s Holy Rivers” - NPR, 12th February, 2013

“At Kumbh, call to make Ganga your valentine” - NDTV, 14th February, 2013

“This Valentine’s Day, seer spreads love for Ganga” - Times of India, 14th February, 2013

“Kumbh pilgrims declare Ganga as ‘green valentine’” - DNA India, 14th February, 2013

“Saving the mother river” - Harvard Gazette, 14th February, 2013

“Uttarakhand CM pitches for clean and unrestrained Ganga” - Times of India, 14th February, 2013

“Priya Dutt sets an example by cleaning the Ganga at Kumbh!” - Daily Bhaskar, 14th February, 2013

“Muddha: Kya Aastha Ko Raajni ke sath jodna chahiye?” - IBN, 16th February, 2013

“Seers blend spirituality with social cause at Maha Kumbh” - Times of India, 19th February, 2013

“Harish Rawat launches national Ganga rights campaign at Mahakumbh” - Times of India, 23rd February, 2013

“Vivek Oberoi offers prayers to river Ganga at Kumbh Mela” - India TV, 25th February, 2013

“Maninderjeet Singh Bitta for apolitical bid to cleanse Ganga” - Times of India, 25th February, 2013

“Vivek Oberoi pledges to keep Ganga clean” - Times of India, 26th February, 2013

“Support pours in to save Ganga” - Times of India, 27th February, 2013



Ganga Rights Campaign

Ganga Action Parivar's campaign for "Ganga Rights" was officially launched during the Kumbh Mela, and many people from all backgrounds joined hands with GAP to support the cause!

To learn all about the campaign to establish an Act which will grant Ganga and our rivers constitutional rights to flow freely and unpolluted, and to add your name to the petition, [click here!](http://www.GangaRights.org)



Thousands of schoolchildren march for Ganga Rights



Pujya Swami Ramdevji



Pujya Swami Umakantji, Pujya Swami Harichetanandji, Pujya Prem Babaji, Pujya M.M. Swami Asanganandji, Pujya Swamiji, Pujya Sri Sri Ravi Shankarji, Hon'ble CM Shri Vijay Bahugunaji, Pujya Swami Paramadvaitiji and others stand together for Ganga's rights



Ganga Rights Campaign



Pujya Swami Avimukteshwaranandji



Ekta Kapoor, Emraan Hashmi & Huma Qureshi



Pujya Sant Jaggi Vasudevji



International Ayurvedic and Yoga Acharyas



Vivek Oberoi, Shri Maninderjeet Singh Bittaji and Major General Vishwambhar Dayal



Hundreds of pilgrims and devotees from around the world



Ganga Rights Campaign



Hon'ble Minister of Water Resources Shri Harish Rawatji



Above: Shri Mahesh Bhattji



M.M. Swami Kailashanandji and Hon'ble Minister of Irrigation of UP Shri Shivpal Singhji

Right: Vivek Oberoi and the Hinduja Family





Special Announcements | Ganga Action Parivar

“Clean Ganga. Green Ganga. Serve Ganga.”



Officially launched in April of 2010 by the hands of Pujya Swamiji, H.H. the Dalai Lama and numerous other saints and dignitaries, Ganga Action Parivar is a global family of professionals, environmental engineers, scientists, activists, government leaders and devoted volunteers from all across the world dedicated to serving Mother Ganga. It is a sincere effort to provide effective and sustainable solutions for the millions of people whose lives depends on the purity of the river.

GAP is working in numerous areas - from “Grand Plan” scale to “Ground Plan” scale - to address the many issues that face Ganga and her tributaries, such as creating solid waste and wastewater management programs, building toilets, planting trees, cleaning and beautifying holy pilgrimage sites, spreading awareness on how to be eco-friendly, creating alternative environmentally-friendly energy plans, and so much more. GAP’s projects have been blessed and supported by saints, scholars, yogis, economists, scientists, environmentalists and agriculturalists, among many others.

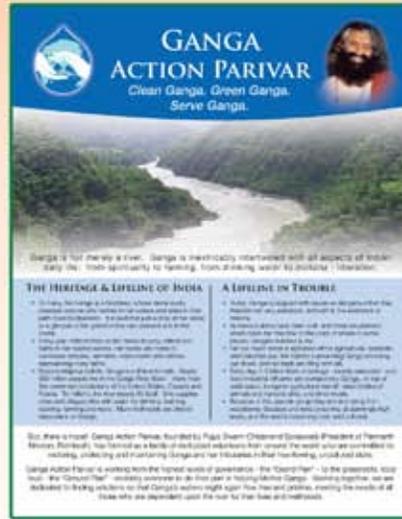
Log-on to www.gangaaction.org to learn more about Ganga, about the issues, and about the programs and projects GAP is working on. Interact and share your ideas, and find out how you can truly help no matter where you are in the world! Together as a family, we can restore, protect and maintain a free-flowing and unpolluted Ganga!



Spread the Message and Inspire Others!

Help others learn about the urgent issues facing Ganga, Her tributaries and the environment, and inspire them to be the change and join this crucial cause!

Download and print GAP flyers and banners around your communities, schools, businesses, and other public areas (just click the links to download printable files)! Inspire all to not only be the change but to bring the change!



Ganga Action Parivar Flyer (front and back) - A4 size



GAP "Green" Initiatives Banner



GAP "How You Can Help" Banner



Special Announcements | Volunteer with us!

Parmarth Niketan is happy to announce a 3-month (minimum) residential service program for those interested in engaging themselves in seva (selfless service)!

Volunteer in Parmarth and Ganga Action Parivar's numerous projects to restore and protect Ma Ganga, save the girl child, help animals, and much more. As our projects grow, so has our need for professional, inspiring, and productive volunteers who can work with us in our mission to achieve a greener, cleaner, and safer tomorrow for all humanity.

If you would like to get involved and volunteer in any one of our projects, please download our Volunteer Application Packet and send us your application.

[Click here to download the Volunteer Application Packet.](#)



Links

Please visit us on the web for videos and music from Parmarth Niketan, as well as information on upcoming programs and seva opportunities.



Links

Thanks to Eros Entertainment,
you can now watch videos of Pujya Swamiji online!
Click on the videos below to watch...



A Divine Life - Pujya Swamiji's
60th Birthday Film



Pujya Swamiji at
Shree Ram Mandir



Guru Purnima 2011



Peace Through
Nonviolence



Sadhvi Bhagawati:
Power of Thought



Power of Prayer &
Divine Connection

...and click [here](#) to see even more videos online!

Gratitude and Acknowledgements

This year's Kumbha Mela began for many much before the first bathing date of January 14th. For the Mela and City Administration it had been long months of planning, organizing, coordinating and implementing plans on the ground, along with the state and central government, so that the largest gathering of people on Earth could not only be welcomed warmly but accommodated comfortably during their nearly two month-long stay. We truly appreciate the entire administration's tireless efforts, without which this spectacular festival would not have be possible.

Many judges, advocates and lawyers of the Allahabad High Court also played tremendous role in passing important judgements and setting firm standards to ensure the river maintains sufficient flow for bathing, retains adequate water quality, that plastic is banned throughout the Kumbh grounds and the city, and strict requirements were set to protect the sacred rivers from the sewage and industrial waste generated. Many other measures were also taken to safeguard the *aastha* (faith) of the pilgrims who came to take the holy dip. We salute their tenacious dedication in making the festival safe, pleasant and memorable.

The citizens of Allahabad as well as its schools and NGOs also joined in to extend a clean and green welcome to all. Inspired by Pujya Swamiji and with the support of the administration the schools, citizens started in July of 2012 to plant thousands of trees and green their localities. Hundreds of schools participated in slogan-writing competitions, street plays, debates, art and drawing competitions on diverse environmental topics and the sacred rivers of India. They also stitched and made thousands of clothe and paper bags to promote alternatives to plastic, and distributed these handmade bags in their communities and during the Kumbha Mela to spread this message. We are so impressed by how every citizen and institution of Allahabad came together to model the change they wish to see in the world, upholding the Indian tradition of *athithi devo bhava* (guests are a form of God) by cleaning and greening their homes, streets and schools months before the festival even started.

So many devotees from all over the world came with their deep faith, leaving behind their comfortable homes and sometimes their families to camp out in the Kumbh. It is

Gratitude and Acknowledgements

the power of their faith and their willingness to bare every situation with a smile that makes Kumbh one of the greatest symbols of India's strong cultural and spiritual heritage and reaffirms humanities deep connection with our environment and with one another.

Along with the devotees from all over the world we thank the spiritual leaders who offered their words of wisdom and love to all, granting shelter and food to all that found their way into their camp. GAP had the wonderful opportunity to host and welcome Prem Babaji's group from Brazil and Swami Paramadvaitiji's group from Vrindavan to Ganga Action Parivar, and we are thankful for their participation and integral support in the wonderful awareness raising events for Mother Ganga.

We are appreciative of the immense role that the international and national media played in bringing the messages of the Mela and the Green Initiatives to the forefront of their coverage. It is with their media power that the messages of the Kumbh reached out to touch and transform people from all across the nation and the world.

There were also many Bollywood celebrities who came to the Mela for a holy dip and who left endorsing their support to help keep Mother Ganga clean. We are truly thankful for this, as the media and our celebrities hold great influence over our communities, and thus have the potential to truly inspire all to be the change and join the cause.

Lastly, we are grateful for all the Parmarth and GAP volunteers - local, national and international - who served before, during and after the Kumbha Mela. They, as divine vessels of their Guru's and Mother Ganga's Grace, ensured not only the safe and comfortable stays of the pilgrims at our camp grounds but also served day and night to make possible all of numerous GAP's green initiatives and awareness events and programs.