

Title: KUMBH MELA: SONGS OF THE RIVER
Length: One Hour
Format: DVCAM
Language: English and Hindi (with English Subtitles)
Media Format: Color, Digital Sound Letterboxed
Media Standard: NTSC
Running Time: Sixty Minutes

“Official Selection”
Southside Film Festival Bethlehem, PA 2005

“Official Selection”
Port Townsend Film Festival, Port Townsend, WA 2005

“Official Selection”
Santa-Fe Film Festival in Dec 7-11, 2005

SYNOPSIS: The Kumbh Mela is the “Festival of the Urn” that pours out the nectar of immortality to Humanity. It is a great roving festival that has moved around India for more than four thousand years, erecting temporary cities along the Ganges River. Millions of Hindu faithful gather there to wash away their sins in the holy waters.

The 2001 Kumbh Mela in Allahabad, India was the largest gathering of humanity in recorded history. It was not just the final Kumbh Mela in a 12-year cycle of festivals. It was the final festival of 12 cycles – the conclusion of a giant 144-year cycle, making it “Maha” Kumbh Mela, the Great Festival. This 144-year buildup of spiritual meaning made it a powerfully auspicious time for pilgrims to bathe in the Ganges. Even the planets and stars joined in, providing heavenly alignments not seen for 144 years. Here, East joined West at the opening of the 21st Century. Roughly 70 million people came from all over the globe to pray for peace and rebirth for self and the world, truly a meeting of ancient and future in a remarkable moment.

STRUCTURE: A cinema-verité observation of a massive gathering of pilgrims and teachers of many faiths, races and nationalities. Very few direct interviews.

Key characters:

PILOT BABA: A yogi who turned to religion after serving as a fighter pilot in the brief war between Pakistan and India in the 1970s. His inclusive philosophy teaches the unity of all religions. In the course of the mela he plays host to:

HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA: Leader-in-exile of the Tibetan people and living embodiment of the ancient spiritual lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. He speaks to the meaning of major human events like the Maha Kumbh Mela.

YOGMATA KEIKO AIKAWA: A Japanese yogini with an avid international following, she demonstrates an “underground *samadhi*” in Pilot Baba’s encampment – allowing herself to be buried alive in a 9x9 pit for three days, in deep meditation.

DR. ANDREW WEIL: Renowned holistic medicine practitioner, author and teacher. He interviews Pilot Baba about the physical practice of *samadhi*.

SIR MARK TULLY: Legendary Delhi-based BBC journalist, much of whose professional career has been in India.

KALI BABA: A Masai from Tanzania and a longtime Los Angeles resident. Speaking around a large plate in his lip, Kali Baba reflects eloquently on the esoteric implications of the Maha Kumbh Mela. A profound intelligence shines through his extreme appearance.

Reviews:

“It is a fascinating look at our humanity and how our spirituality manifests in the world.” - Stephen Simon, Academy award winning Producer of SOMEWHERE IN TIME & Founder of Spiritual Cinema Circle

“*Songs of the River* displaces a Westerner from everyday certitudes and opens him or her to the power of the Kumbha Mela experience and the consciousness people like [Yogmata] Keiko Aikawa seek. All in all, a compelling cinematic experience.” -- Harold Crooks, whose documentary film credits include the award-winning *The World Is Watching*, *The Champagne Safari* and *The Corporation*.

“This documentary draws you into the kaleidoscopic mix of color, sound and mood. Watching it, you are adrift in a sea of exuberant spirituality that feels both strange and yet familiar, and you happily abandon your senses to its ebb and flow. It is a film to be experienced with the heart rather than the intellect”- New Connexion

“Woodstock for the Spirit.”

Robert Schnitzer-Oasis TV Los Angeles.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS:

NADEEM UDDIN

Born in Bhopal, India, Nadeem started seeking the ultimate ways to present his experiences in both East and West. He continues to illuminate through his art of filmmaking, spirituality and our sacred environment. His passionate work on the subject of the long term effects of the 1984 Union Carbide gas leak disaster in Bhopal, India, landed him a place as one of the producers of *Bhopal: The Search for Justice* [2004], with the participation of NFB for the CBC's "The Nature of Things" and Société Radio Canada's "Decouverte." Selected for Amnesty International Festivals in London, New York and Los Angeles and the Festival Internacional de Cinema e Video Ambiental [FICA] in Goia, Brazil where it won the 2005 Wolf Jesco von Puttkamer Award for Best Medium Length documentary. Broadcasted on the Sundance Channel in 2005-06. Uddin's other recent film "Kumbh Mela: Songs of the River" is a celebration of spiritual diversity in mankind coming together for one common purpose. Screened at Harvard Divinity School, broadcast over Oasis-TV satellite network; and has been on circulation through Stephen Simon's Spiritual Cinema Circles in April, 2006. His upcoming release is "Varanasi: Sacred River, Sacred Fire a film about last rites within Hinduism on the banks of holy Ganges.

Producer: JOY SHAYNE LAUGHTER

Joy adds “Producer” to her creative bag with the completion of “Kumbh Mela: Songs of the River.” She has been a top finalist in the Nicholl Fellowship and Cinestory screenwriting competitions, served as a Board Member and President of Women In Film/Seattle, and was a reader for the William Morris Agency. She has also been a freelance writer-editor for print and online publications in the Puget Sound area. Her travel diaries about the Maha Kumbh Mela were commissioned and published at www.MyPrimeTime.com, and are still available at www.kmp2001.com. Ms. Laughter lives in Seattle.

Music Composer: DAVID BRUNN

This accomplished musician, composer, sound designer and audio engineer is based in Seattle, Washington. He has been a master performer and teacher of North Indian classical tabla for more than 20 years, and has been a pioneer in synthesizer artistry. It was his vision of a “multi-media pilgrimage” to the Maha Kumbh Mela that resulted in the web site www.kmp2001.com and “Road to Allahabad” music CD used in the film. David Brunn has accompanied renowned Indian musicians such as Rama Shankar, the classical singer of Dhurpad tradition; and instrumentalists Akram Khan, Rakesh Prakesh, and S.A Alvi. More about David Brunn can be found at <http://www.davidbrunn.com>. He is the founder and president of Tonewheel Music.

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