

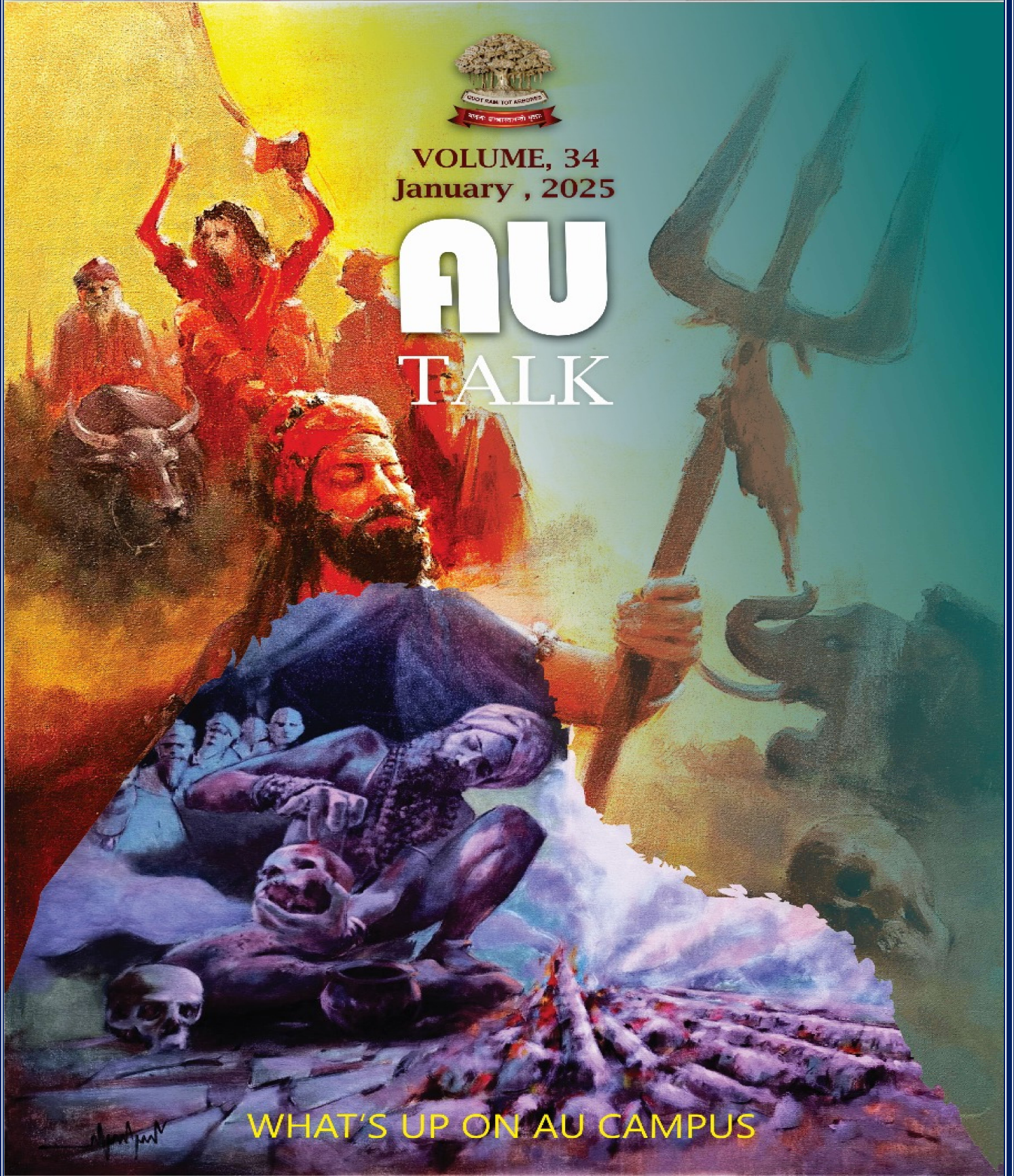
VOLUME, 34

MAHAKUMBH SPECIAL



VOLUME, 34
January , 2025

AU TALK



WHAT'S UP ON AU CAMPUS

VOLUME, 34
January, 2025
Editorial Board

AU TALK is a monthly digital newsletter of the University of Allahabad. **AU TALK** a long cherished dream and a brainchild of Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, has been regularly and successfully disseminating news and information on various academic and research activities happening across the Departments/Centres of the University. The original idea behind the digital platform is not only to spread out information about various developments related to the departments, but also, to revitalize a connection among them. **AU TALK** as a digital space facilitated its faculty members to publish their own informative articles, research accomplishments and potential future plans.

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VOLUME, 34
January , 2025

Contents

Page No.

Republic Day Celebration at University of Allahabad

4-5

The Sangam of Mahakumbh 2025 and the University of Allahabad

6-7

Visit of Additional Secretary, Ministry of Education to the University of Allahabad

8-11

Department of Sociology

12

Faculty of Law

13

Article: Walking Among Sadhus: A tranformative Mahakumbh Experience

14 - 15

Book & Movie of the Edition

16

Republic Day Celebrated with Gusto at AU

26th of January is no ordinary day for India. This year, on the 26th of January, as India marked its turning a Republic in 1950, the nation and our University both were in a proud mood of jubilation. As the flow students, teachers and staff began pouring in on the morning of the 26th, the smartly turned-out guards in their full ceremonial uniforms efficiently guided all in. The finely manicured green university lawns lined by tall Ashoka trees was the destination for all, where stood the NCC cadets facing the podium.



Upon the arrival of the Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, Prof. S. Srivastava, the tricolour was unfurled and the national anthem was sung. The Vice-Chancellor addressed the gathering with words of congratulations, pride and encouragement. The Vice-Chancellor honoured Dr. Vishnu Prabhakar Srivastava, the International Students Advisor, for assisting international students and furthering the goal of inclusive education at the University of Allahabad.





A cultural performance ensued which was a musical drama based on the lives of Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Rajguru & Sukhdev. It was performed by the students of the Department of Music under the guidance of Dr. Vishal Jain. As the programme concluded, students, faculty & staff captured the moment in their cameras and chanted “Long Live our Republic.”

The Sangam of Mahakumbh 2025 and the University of Allahabad

Since its inception, the great Ganga has always churned up its holy water to welcome millions of its devotees and votaries to assemble and to augur every Mahakumbh with great spiritual, cultural and congregational fervour. The Mahakumbh 2025 is no different, and it, too, has heralded a special aura for Prayagraj and its residents to declare the onset of a spiritual and cultural celebration of faith in terms of their hosting of and their participation in this greatest spiritual gathering happening after another 144 years of the Kumbh cycle. This mega event marks the biggest spiritual, social and cultural congregation of 2025, which is being attended by more than 40 crore people at the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati and has become the keen attraction of the entire world. The Sangam of these waters, in collaboration with the changed course of the moon and the sun, called out all its devotees to recharge themselves with renewed spiritual devotion and cultural unity. If the Mahakumbh 2025 paved the inroads for its devotees to reach the holy waters, it also entrusted several responsibilities to its stakeholders and the residents of Prayagraj. When the state and the local administrative bodies were fully engrossed in the management of logistics and administrative support, the other stakeholders undertook the self-responsibility to extend their unconditional support in an unprecedented way. One such responsible stakeholder eventually turned out to be the University of Allahabad. Seeing the massive and unprecedented gathering of the devotees of Mother Ganga and their striving to find shelter and rest, the University of Allahabad too came forward and created a hospitable sangam within its premises for thousands of the devotees of Mother Ganga.





The University of Allahabad, without any second thought, opened its gates, corridors, lawns, gardens, etc. for the thousands of the devotees wandering helter skelter to find both shelter and respite from the chilly winter. The university showed its human-sensitive character for these thousands of devotees who had gathered here after coming from far-off places and had no clue about their stay and food. The motto of the university “Quot Rami Tot Arbores”, which stands for “as many branches, as so many trees”, turned out to be a proven testimony when the university literally extended its branches of support and comfort for the masses. The support stemmed out in terms of the offering of the amenities like arranging potable water, clean washrooms, bonfires, etc. The hostlers of the university too joined hands in offering tea and eatables to the people sheltered in the university. Hopefully the devotees too had blessed the university in kind.

A Visit of Additional Secretary, Ministry of Education to the University of Allahabad Campus

Engaging in philosophical and spiritual discourse reveals a profound connection between the Maha Kumbh and the Gyan Kumbh! The Mahakumbh is not just an event for physical purification; it symbolizes the gathering of wisdom, knowledge, and spiritual awakening, leading to mental, emotional, and intellectual enlightenment. It is a confluence of ideas where sages, seers, rishis, intellectuals, educators, and reformers come together to share insights that benefit both institutions and humanity. The advent of significant people brings new ideas and perspectives to age old institutions nestled in the age-old seat of learning at Prayag!

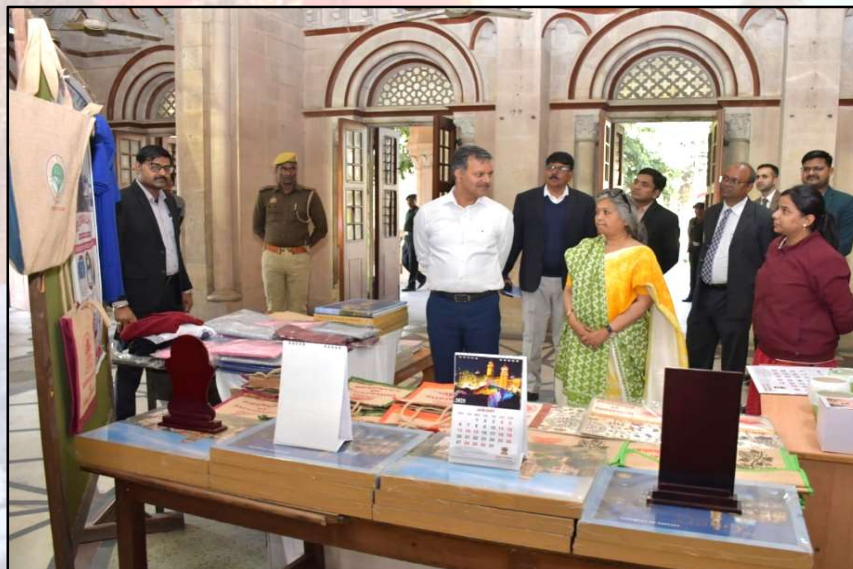
One such distinguished visitor graced the university when Shri Sunil Kumar Barnwal, Additional Secretary (Education), Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India visited the University of Allahabad on 25th January, 2025.



The university laid out a grand welcome to the distinguished guest, who toured the expansive Science and Arts campuses. The state-of-the-art office of the Honourable Vice Chancellor, located on the top floor of the iconic building with its open terrace, that reflects a blend of Egyptian, English, Islamic, and Indian architectural styles, left a lasting impression on him.



The iconic Senate Hall and North Hall in the Faculty of Arts cast a quiet spell, while the Vizianagaram Hall in the Science Faculty was a sight to behold, said to be almost as stunning as the Taj Mahal.



The iconic Memorabilia Shop near Vizianagaram Hall made a strong impression; however, the highlight of the visit was his tour of the Early Childhood Care Centre.

Established in March 2023, under the vision of Prof. Sangita Srivastava, the Honourable Vice Chancellor of the University of Allahabad, the Early Childhood Care Centre was prompted by the need for a safe space where children of university staff could be cared for while their parents worked. Catering to children aged 2-6, it offers a secure, loving environment that supports the children's social, psychological, and physical development.



The visiting guest was impressed with the centre's thoughtful features, such as the playroom and the glass window that allows parents to watch their children during lunch hours. He was particularly struck by the mini beds where children nap, and the story sessions that follow, contributing to character development. He found the small-sized dining tables, wash basins, and potty seats fascinating. So much so that he suggested the Early Childhood Care Centre could serve as a model for other universities across India to replicate.



A detailed presentation about the journey traversed by the university along with significant milestones reached in the last four years, under the leadership of Hon VC was given at the modern Ishwar Topa Complex.



In his address, he said that dwelling solely on an institution's past and celebrating past achievements hampers growth of an institution, as it keeps drawing people back into nostalgia and thus stagnates an institution. The real challenge is using legacy as strength to build a better future. He said that institutions which help to continually adapt to changing times and transform themselves require a strong leadership. Such institutions leverage their legacy and continuously evolve themselves to stay relevant. Universities must design programs that prepare students for the future. The Vice Chancellor and senior faculty should mentor new staff to create a strategic roadmap for the next decade. Embracing digital technology is key to building stronger connections with students. In this regard, Samarth is a highly beneficial software, and all universities are encouraged to upload their data onto it. This will streamline processes and support a paperless environment. Admissions, appointments, financial transactions, changes to statutes, and faculty promotions should all be transparent, leading to greater efficiency in the system. While legacy can attract students, one must avoid burdening them with outdated curricula. Instead, students should be provided with more relevant degrees that may empower them financially in today's world.

In the same way, the University of Allahabad must reposition itself to use its legacy as a foundation for future growth and engage in forward-thinking. Legacy can attract top talent and inspire pride, but the key is to maintain a balance that makes people feel they can contribute to making the university truly world-class. He said that ***"I can see that the university is moving in that direction, and it stands out as one of the best-managed institutions among India's older central universities, especially considering its large student and faculty population"***.

He added that managing such a complex environment is no small feat, and in that regard, the University of Allahabad under the leadership of Vice Chancellor has done a remarkable job over the past four years.

VOLUME, 34
January, 2025
Department of Sociology

The Department of Sociology, University of Allahabad, undertook outreach activity to Kazipur Gram Panchayat on 3rd January, 2025. Despite extreme cold weather, people of Kazipur Gram Panchayat, along with the Village Panchayat President, extended a very warm welcome to the entire team of students, staff, Head of the Department, and the faculty members of the Department of Sociology. While addressing the gathering, Prof. Ashish Saxena spoke about the gender, health, and environmental issues that affect people at large in rural areas. Dr. Deborah Darlianmawii, Coordinator of the outreach program, gave a detailed outline about the outreach activities. Students performed poster presentations on topics such as women's health, gender stereotypes, women empowerment, myths about menstruation, and depletion of groundwater.



Further, a skit program was also performed on environmental degradation of plastics and anemia, respectively. Moreover, the data collection was also carried out by PhD research scholars, first-year and second-year M.A. students, and first-year, second-year, and third-year B.A. students on a topic entitled "gender, health, and environment." Dr. Sathish, C, Assistant Professor and Administrative staff, namely Mr. Vikas, Mr. Ajay, and Mr. Arun, also participated in the outreach activity. At the end, Dr. Keyoor, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, proposed the final vote of thanks.



VOLUME, 34 January , 2025

Faculty of Law

Faculty of Law organized a special lecture on 24th January, 2025 on the topic “Indic-Knowledge System and Jurisprudence : A way towards Academic Spirituality in India” delivered by Prof. Himanshu Pandey (Professor, Maharashtra National Law University, Nagpur) at Auditorium. Prof. Himanshu Pandey gave a fresh perspective on Jurisprudence and urged students to see jurisprudence not just as a subject but as a living, evolving philosophy rooted in our own traditions. Dr. Sandhya Verma, Convenor of the Juris lecture committee delivered the vote of thanks. The session was concluded with the National Anthem.



The programme was hosted by Saumya Sonkar and Ananya Mishra students of B.A.LL.B. (Hons.). All the faculty members and students of the Law faculty attended the lecture.

Walking Among Sadhus: A transformative Mahakumbh Experience

* Saurabh Maloo

When the journey began, I had no knowledge of the Akhadas—their names, customs, or even the decorum of how to approach a Sadhu. Yet, against all odds, everything aligned effortlessly. Out of the few hundred millions who throng the Mahakumbh, only a handful get to experience this world from within. What was meant to be a two-night stay turned into six when fate intervened. I had a bus ticket for the evening of the 30th , but after meeting Shri Shiv Giri Maharaj, a Naga Sadhu from Girnar Parvat, I knew this was a once-in-many-lifetimes opportunity. I canceled my ticket on the spot and on his offer, I moved from my tent to his *kutiya*, right between Juna and Niranjani Akhadas (these are the India's top two Akhadas for Naga Sadhus) on the main pathway. The time spent with him offered a rare and profound glimpse into the Naga Sadhu way of life.

A few observations about their daily habits,

1. They eat with minimal salt in their food.
2. Their meals have a high content of green chilies.
3. They eat only once a day, usually around 7 PM.
4. They consider adding water to tea a sin and strictly avoid it. Have tea 2/3 times a day (High on ginger).

While spending four days with the Sadhus was teaming with wisdom, they either are uttering some meaningful doha or talk about stories of sacrifice/love/dare/wisdom from mythology. I asked one of the respected Maharaj as to how he sees me sharing the same seat and chatting with them at length. He paused for few seconds and said "adbhut, ye asambhav hai" and he continued saying that taking someone in the Shahi Snan is unheard off. I was bursting with blessings inside me. These Naga Sadhus are very protective about their aura and don't general public to even come close and also are short-fused just like Shiv Ji. Probably that happens due years of tapasya n solitude. These Naga Sadhus, who are not associated with any Akhada, live in caves n only come down during Kumbh to give darshan and blessings to people and also expect to earn some dakshina in return as they are bhikshu and that's main source of their livelihood for years after that. But sadly they do not even collect Rs fifty per shack. By making Ganga pavitra (pure), they are the ones who give to Ganga what we people go to seek- the spiritual cleansing, by being in contact with the Sadhus. There is a saying that mere sight of a Sadhu is equivalent to Ganga Snan. Shri Shiv Giri Maharaj also asked me to make him my Guru, which typically may take decades of tapasya. Knowing him enough and as it's the connection of souls. I immediately and gladly agreed. Perhaps it was my inadvertent tapasya—the way I have consciously subjected myself to suffering, embracing discomfort in every form —that perhaps led to this moment. For years, this has been my nature, pushing myself through my boundaries, to love being perpetually uncomfortable, and knowing that personal growth can never come out of comfort zone. Maybe that's what Shiv Giri Maharaj saw in me, an unspoken recognition of the path I had already been walking on.

In the spiritual world, *patratā* is everything—the readiness to receive. And in his eyes, I was already a *patra* for *tapasya*, not by renouncing the world, but by enduring its challenges with the same resilience as a *tapasvi*. Because as much as physical pain is a part of *tapasya*, so is emotional and mental suffering. A *tapasvi* in the real world faces it all—not just bodily hardships, but the silent battles of the mind and heart. Later, Shiv Giri Maharaj went around the Juna Akhada, introduced with his fellows and set the scene around and asked me join him with Juna Akhada Sadhus for the Amrit Snan on Basant Panchami, on the 3rd Feb. It was expected to be conducted under very high security, especially after the incident and they had barricaded the entire pathway upto Triveni Sangam Ghat to make sure Sadhus don't miss the Amrit Snan at the Brahma Muhurat. They have come down all the way, most specially for these three days of Amrit Snan - 14th January, 29th January and 3rd February.

I eventually went with Shiv Giri Maharaj in the dedicated parade of Sadhus under strict barricading and police-military protection. I could see non Sadhus getting badly bashed by sticks. They carry a stick and do loud chanting - "Har-Har Mahadev" while swinging their lathis, shoving aside anyone wasn't supposed to be there. Police remaining indifferent. Knowing that Shiv Giri Maharaj had set the ground, it was a smooth ride for me, while also witnessing some Sadhus enjoying *chillam* in the parade on the banks of Ganga.

I do feel blessed to have walked and being treated like Sadhus "you're as good/bad as your company". People coming touching feet and giving me *dakshina* and being referred as Saurabh Giri Maharaj. It's tough to express the feeling in words. Planning this trip from Singapore, I decided to just go despite the challenges of securing bookings amidst the overwhelming demand. Though it seemed difficult at first, everything seamlessly fell into place, far beyond my expectations—almost as if the universe had aligned everything perfectly. To be welcomed, to sit and walk among them, share meals, wash utensils, sleep on a thin bedding, brisk walking barefoot, and spend early hours in just a *langot* felt surreal. Taking a dip in the Ganga without feeling the cold (thanks to ice baths), returning drenched, as you should let the sacred waters dry naturally—every act felt like a ritual in itself and gladly it was all very effortless too. To share in their way of life was nothing short of extraordinary. I feel immense gratitude for this rare blessing—one that will stay with me eternally, beyond lifetimes.

Looking back, my six days at Mahakumbh felt nothing short of divine orchestration. I took four dips at the Sangam, each holding its own sacred significance. Two of them were during the Brahma Muhurat on Amrit Snan days—an honor few can claim—while the final one, alongside the sadhus, was something beyond imagination. The way it all unfolded was far more than coincidence; it was a blessing beyond words.

It feels as if this journey was not just a fleeting experience, but a script written by the divine long before I set foot on this path. Perhaps, for lifetimes, my soul had longed for this moment, waiting to be deemed ready. Every step, every encounter, and every blessing felt predestined—an unfolding of something far greater than my own will. Some journeys are not planned; they are revealed. This was one of them. And for that, I remain eternally grateful. My mantra remains the same—avoid keeping expectations, stay nimble, follow the signs, and trust your instincts. The universe always has a way of aligning things when the time is right.

* Co-founder and CEO www.Kryzel.io

BOOK OF THE EDITION

The Universe Always has a Plan by
Matt Kahn



MOVIE OF THE EDITION

Chhava



- AU TALK publishes news about seminars/workshops/conferences that have taken place at any Department or Centre of the University. A piece of news along with a **photograph of the organizers** should be emailed at editorialboard.autalk@allduniv.ac.in
- The magazine publishes informative articles also. Articles should aim to bring out important scientific, ethical, and environmental issues and must be lucid in their message to society. They can be written in Hindi or English. In one edition, the magazine can publish up to four such articles.
- **Do not send pictures capturing garlanding or shawl/memento-giving moments.**
- The magazine should be widely circulated among students and faculty and on all social media platforms so that the excellent work done under the auspices of the University of Allahabad reaches far and wide and benefits all.
- *Please feel free to contact the Editorial Board.*