The Pilgrims of Maha Shivaratri

Egyptian travel photographer Yasser Alaa Mobarak travelled on March 2024 to Nepal to visit The Pashupatinath Temple in Kathmandu to photograph the Pilgrims of Maha Shivaratri which is a Hindu festival celebrated annually in honor of the deity Shiva.

It is a notable festival in Hinduism, marking a remembrance of “overcoming darkness and ignorance” in life and the world.

Every year, the festival falls on the moonless 14 night of the new moon in the month of Phalgun, which correspondences to the months of March and February according to the English calendar. Maha Shivaratri is a revered Hindu festival that holds deep spiritual significance, signifying the triumph over darkness and life’s obstacles through fasting and meditation.

This auspicious occasion marks the convergence of the divine energies of Lord Shiva and Goddess Shakti. It is believed that on this day, the spiritual energies of the Universe are particularly potent.

Most of the Pilgrims are Sadhus who came from all over India and Nepal to celebrate Shiva in Pashupatinath Temple. Sadhus are a religious ascetic, mendicant or any holy person in Hinduism who has renounced the worldly life.

Sādhu means one who practises a ‘sadhana’ or keenly follows a path of spiritual discipline. Sadhus engage in a wide variety of religious practices. Some practice asceticism and solitary meditation, while others prefer group praying, chanting or meditating.

They typically live a simple lifestyle, and have very few or no possessions. The sadhu is solely dedicated to achieving moksha (liberation) through meditation and contemplation of God.

The Pashupatinath Temple is a Hindu temple dedicated to Pashupati, a form of Shiva, and is located in Kathmandu, Nepal near the Bagmati River. As one of the four most important religious sites in Asia and believed to be the world’s biggest and oldest Shiva temple, Pashupatinath has a strong spiritual impact on many people.

Its status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site adds to its cultural and historical value. Hundreds of thousands of devotees make pilgrimages to the Pashupatinath Temple in Kathmandu, regarded as one of the holiest Hindu shrines.

Yasser Alaa Mobarak (b. 1993) is an award-winning photographer from Alexandria, Egypt. He has won photography prizes from Travel Photographer of the Year, National Geographic, Sony World Photography Awards, The International Photo Awards, Paris Photo Award, Vienna Photo Award, Egypt Press Photo, Royal Photographic Society, International Federation of Photographic Art and Photographic Society of America.

Yasser’s works have been featured in The Guardian, VICE, National Geographic, and Deutsche Welle. He is Photographer for ZUMA Press and Visiting Instructor at Delhi College of Photography. He is Licentiate of Royal Photography Society in UK.

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