The Kumbh Mela (Kumbh Congregation) is one of the greatest festivities of the world. Held every 12 years, the festival attracts millions of Hindus. In 2001, an estimated 100 million Hindus congregated, over a period of a month, at the confluence of the Ganga and the Yamuna rivers at Prayag in the North Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. The author is a member of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and was the Secretary, Urban Development, the Government of Uttar Pradesh at the time the Kumbh Mela was held in 2001. He was the official overseeing the administrative arrangements for the Mela. This book is an account of how the Mela was managed by the government.

The government defined the challenge as primarily a municipal one: how to create a temporary city in which millions of people could live for a brief period without stampedes, outbreak of epidemics, crimes, and violence. The challenge was obviously gargantuan, for, an average of two million persons per day, peaking to 30 millions on Mauni Amavasya (literally, the dark night of silence), had to be housed, their human wastes safely disposed of, their medical needs met, the availability of food and other provisions for them ensured, and their transportation to and from the Mela site facilitated. The world’s ‘largest city’ had to be created on a site that was 80 per cent submerged during the monsoon months and available for construction work only during the two and a half months before the beginning of the Mela. The state government sanctioned over Rs 1,350 million for the management of the event.

The book is organized in 12 chapters. Chapter 1 gives a brief history of Prayag, a corruption of Pratishthan. The town is now known as Jhunsi. Prayag is where the muddy waters of the Ganga meet the dark blue waters of the Yamuna. According to legend, the ancient river Saraswati, mentioned frequently in the Vedas, but vanished for thousands of years, invisibly joins the two in the sangam or confluence. For Hindus, the confluence of the three sacred rivers is among the holiest of sites.

Chapter 2 provides some information on the legend of the Mela. The version provided by the author is that the gods and the demons collaborated to churn the ocean and procure amrit or the nectar of immortality lying in its depths. The churning raised a pitcher (kumbh) of amrit to the ocean’s surface and there was a fierce struggle for its possession by the erstwhile partners. One of the gods fled with the pitcher but drops from it fell at various places in India including Prayag. The occasion is celebrated every 12 years at a time when Jupiter is in the constellation of Aquarius or Kumbh, the pitcher-bearer. However, the author may have missed the original
Chapter 3 describes the administrative arrangements that were made for the 2001 Kumbh Mela. Seven committees were set up for this purpose. The apex committee was headed by the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh with five other ministers of the state government as members, as also a dozen bureaucrats, including the chief secretary of the state. The members of these committees consisted of only politicians and bureaucrats. Chapter 3 also indicates that the planning for the Mela began in September 1998, over two years before the event. Two dozen review meetings were held, headed by ministers or senior bureaucrats. A number of municipal services were planned for the pilgrims.

Chapter 4 describes the layout of the site. The Mela area was enlarged by 20 per cent to accommodate a peak presence of 30 million persons. The area was divided into three main zones and 11 sectors with a magistrate in charge of each sector. Fifteen floating pontoon bridges were set up on the Ganga and the Yamuna to facilitate the movement of the pilgrims. A major challenge faced was the allotment of the camping area to various sects of sadhus (ascetics) called akharas.

Chapter 5 lists the basic services provided: over 130 kilometers of roads; nearly 30 tube wells to provide continuous water supply of about 70 million litres per day of treated potable water; around 1,100 fire-hydrants and 30 fire stations; around 165 kilometers of drains; over 140 water tanks; a 2.2 kilometre long earthen bund to impound over 30 million litres of waste water per day along with four waste water stabilization ponds; nearly 20,000 fittings of sodium vapour, metal halide, tube, halogen, and search lights; a 100-bed hospital and ten ‘circle’ (area) hospitals with 20 beds each, some 21,000 toilets, 51,000 toilet seats, 20 Sulabh toilet complexes, and 2,000 urinals. About 7,000 sanitation workers were employed and 3,000 buses were deployed to transport the arriving pilgrims to the Mela area.

Chapter 6 describes the police administration and security arrangements. For this purpose, the whole Mela area was divided into strategic sub-areas with police stations, police outposts, fire brigade units, and various police units. Terrorist threat had to be mitigated. All this required the deployment of some 10,000 policemen, home guards, and volunteers. Logistics and other support were obtained from the Indian Army and the Air Force.

Chapter 7 is on media and communications. The mega event not only attracted national but also international attention. Some 50,000 media persons descended on the site. Separate complexes were set up for the national and international media. A media centre was set up that included a hall to seat 300 media persons. Fax, internet, video conferencing, telephone facilities, and daily press briefings were provided. The coverage of the Kumbh Mela was open to all agencies and channels.

Chapter 8 describes some innovative initiatives. One of these was the distribution of food grains at subsidized rates through 107 fair price shops. Similarly, a network of outlets for other necessities was also created. Another initiative was an insurance scheme for the pilgrims during the Mela period to cover accidental injury/death. Huge electronic display boards were set up to help people who had got lost, and these along with the local area network helped 1,80,000 persons to get reunited with their family members. Telemedicine provided speciality medical care to hundreds of persons through computer networking with medical institutions.

Chapter 9 deals with the principal akharas or sects of ascetics whose processions are a major attraction of the Mela. Several of these roam naked, and when provoked, they can be quite ferocious. The allotment of camping land to these frequently squabbling sects is a ticklish affair; but, it was successfully done. The exact time of bathing for each akhara was fixed in advance to prevent any altercations.

Chapter 10 discusses the roles played by various local government bodies in the Mela, mostly vis-à-vis maintenance/enlargement of civic amenities in Allahabad and Jhunsi.

Chapter 11 extols the management achievements of the Kumbh Mela, 2001. There was, incredibly, not a single incident of traffic mismanagement and human failure. According to Danny Sims, a visitor, ten times more
rubbish than in the Mela would be found in a single music festival in Britain!

Chapter 12 titled The Mantras for Future Kumbhs lists some lessons for the future. Some of the major success factors apparently were the determination of the state government, the coordination and perseverance of the Mela administration, effective networking among the various governments, government organizations, and private agencies, the proper selection of the Mela Officer who is, in effect, the CEO of the event (who, according to the author, should be a seasoned IAS officer), the Mela management team, advance planning, the creation of a network to distribute daily necessities, securing of the cooperation of the media, adequate financial allocation, tact in allotting land to religious sects, the provision of various facilities, etc.

Some comments on the book are in order. The book provides a wealth of information on a mega event that was exceptionally well managed in terms of the smoothness with which the Mela came and went without any significant hitches. Could more information have been provided by the author? Undoubtedly. There is very little on management processes like leadership, the way decisions were made and conflicts resolved or the way effective teamwork was created throughout the Mela administration. True to the spirit of bureaucracy, roles and positions are mentioned, sometimes in tedious detail (e.g., the listing in Chapter 3 of all the members of the seven committees), but no names are mentioned. The blurb on the back cover of the book eulogizes the author. But who was the Mela Officer, the ‘CEO’ of the event, who seems to have played a huge role in the success of the event? How did he/she manage? The All India Management Association honoured the author. Who honoured the Mela Officer and countless others who must have contributed a lot to the success of Mela management?

The Indian bureaucracy has been faulted so much for incompetence and corruption that the effective management of the Kumbh Mela stands out like a triumphal arch. Surely the author could have analysed why this effort succeeded so well despite the general failure of government systems in India. The Mela had a huge political significance. Was that a factor in its success? Is the Indian administrative and political system geared to work well only in situations where the political pickings are large? Is this why, in the same state of Uttar Pradesh, development and poverty alleviation programmes of the government have gone astray, because the poor are not organized into an effective political constituency? I wish the author had freed his eyes from his bureaucratic blinkers to examine such issues.

Another point is that despite 10 per cent of India gathering into a tiny spot, the authorities made no effort to involve social scientists—particularly anthropologists and sociologists—into a study of why so many people were spending so much time and money, and even risking their health and life, to participate in the Mela; what the Mela meant to them; where the pilgrims originated; the sex ratio; the age profile; the regional and cultural mix; whether they were happy with the arrangements, and so on. The subtitle of the book ‘The Greatest Show on Earth’ possibly gives a clue. This was the title of an MGM picture about a circus. To the bureaucracy, was the Kumbh Mela no more than a show to be managed so that there were no hiccups for them and their political masters?

Finally, true to the aloofness and arrogance of the Indian bureaucracy, there was virtually no involvement of the civil society in the whole enterprise. Except for IT, apparently no institutions or NGOs were co-opted into any of the dimensions of the huge effort.

The book lucidly documents a huge administrative achievement. There are many coloured photographs and some of them are quite striking. But, the book lacks in analytical depth. On the whole, though, the book is well worth browsing through.

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The analytic perspective of networks to study organizations and economic systems is growing in relevance as the global economy is becoming more interdependent and interconnected. The proponents of the social network theory find the network approach an extremely powerful complement to the economic perspective in understanding, explaining, and possibly predicting the behaviour of individuals in firms, individual firms, and groups of firms. In fact, network-based theories are identified as one of the future directions of strategy research (Venkatraman and Subramanian, 2002). It is in this context that the book under review by Kilduff and Tsai becomes relevant and appropriate for management research.

The applicability of the social networks perspective ranges across different streams of research in management like strategy, organization theory, and knowledge management. It is relevant at multiple levels of analysis like groups (dyads, triads, cliques), organizations, and networks of organizations. Thus, immense scope exists for eclectic research agendas combining the network paradigm with others from the various streams. An understanding of the network perspective is, thus, not only important to the student of social network theory, but also to a larger group of researchers of organizations. The book is an appropriate starting point and valuable reference for both (a) students of social network theory, and (b) management researchers seeking network paradigmatic answers to questions in their stream of research.

For a student of social network theory, the book presents one of the recent and well-organized reviews of literature in the discipline. The authors do not stop at that. Following a review of relevant literature in each section, debates are highlighted and placed in the context of a suitable research agenda. Thus, for a student of social network theory, the book becomes a resource for understanding the literature, obtaining key references for further reading, and also familiarization with debates that could potentially be researched.

For an experienced researcher from another management stream, the book provides a concise introduction to the major concepts, theories, methods, and debates in network theory. Extending the usability of the network perspective to other disciplines is thus easier. Compared to handbooks and edited collections of articles on the network perspective, this book provides a logical build-up to the network theory starting from its historical origins, influential disciplines, key concepts, methods, and debates. A researcher from another management discipline with no prior exposure to network theory would find this book an essential first read before moving on to handbooks, edited collections, and the like.

The substantive part of the book (Chapters 2 to 6) carries an overview of social network research with a detailed and illustrative explanation of orienting concepts like embeddedness, social capital, structural holes, and so on. The distinctiveness of social network research and the ability of a network research agenda to span micro-macro levels of analysis are brought out clearly. This is followed by a critical analysis of the claim of the network perspective in being a theory. The authors trace the origins to mathematics and social psychology and provide a succinct introduction to the most influential theories from mother disciplines — like graph theory (mathematics), balance theory, and structural role theory (social psychology). Theories developed in network research and then applied in organizational research, like weak and strong ties and structural holes are discussed along with illustrations from celebrated studies.

In the following chapter, by far the most critical in the book, the authors look at the debate between the research agendas focusing on networks and those focusing on individual attributes. In this, the authors outline two emerging approaches: (a) cognitive network theory, and (b) emergent theory of personality and social structure. The former seeks to understand organizations as a network of cognitions. The latter explores the influence of individual personality orientations on the structuring of social ties in organizations. Both are approaches that might prove useful in studying organizations as they afford a multi-level perspective to the understanding and explanation of organizational phenomena.

The subsequent chapter handles the criticism that network theory is static by looking at the issue of network
change over time. This is organized by analytically viewing network change as (a) serendipitous, and (b) a goal-directed process. Illustrations are used to provide a cogent explanation. Lastly, the philosophical underpinnings of network research are articulated. The authors explore the possibilities of network research extending into directions like pluralism, fluidity, subjectivity and so on in answering the post-structuralist critique of network theoretic assumptions.

Throughout the book, the authors have argued for the methodological distinctiveness of network theoretic research agenda in terms of ability to combine qualitative, quantitative, and graphical analysis. The various illustrations from well-known studies that are central to each chapter underpin this claim.

What are the major highlights of the book? Considering the extent of topic and literature covered in the book, it is extremely concise. In five chapters (excluding the introductory and concluding chapters) and less than a hundred pages, Kilduff and Tsai manage to give the reader a clear picture of social network research as its stands today — its origins, borrowings from disciplines like mathematics and social psychology, major theoretical and methodological contributions, critical debates, applications in management and other disciplines, and possible future directions of research.

Each chapter of the book is appended with a list of suggested further readings. Two salient features of this listing deserve mentioning. First, for each of the references, a crisp summary of its contents and contribution is provided. Second, the listing contains seminal works in the area of social network theory, covering books by reputed authors and highly influential articles that have appeared in top class peer-reviewed journals.

For researchers, the book presents a single point and topic-wise collection of pertinent literature to delve deeper into.

The authors have thoughtfully included a glossary of technical terms at the end of the book. This is not only useful while reading the book but might also be handy in general. Two appendices introduce the reader to methodological issues of research in network theory. The first appendix provides a step-by-step approach to testing some of the key concepts in network theory like drawing cognitive maps, testing for structural holes, and structural equivalence. A detailed illustration is given which should help the researcher new to network approach start off with empirical analysis. The kind of data required and how to analyse it are explained lucidly. The second appendix provides a brief note on carrying out cognitive network analysis.

In sum, the book is an essential read and a good source of reference for researchers in social network theory as well as those from other management disciplines seeking to incorporate network theory in their research agenda.

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Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques

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Conducting research may seem fairly intuitive to a skilled researcher but raw students tend to be rather awed by methodological issues relating to the research process. Defining the research problem in precise terms and linking it with the subsequent steps of research design can be extremely confusing to them given the myriad tools and techniques available to choose from.

There are several good books providing broad guidance on how to conduct research though most make heavy reading for beginners. Green, Tull and Albaum’s (1988) Research for Marketing Decisions, despite its discipline-specific title, is a good methodology textbook covering problem definition, its linkages with different types of research design, research design linkages with various data collection approaches, and also data analysis
tools. Amongst the more easily readable books on research methodology is one by Tull and Hawkins (1986) titled *Marketing Research: Measurement and Method*. It is more focused on the different data collection approaches and covers in an extremely student-friendly manner the do’s and don’ts of constructing a questionnaire and other such practical issues likely to be faced by a raw researcher.

The book under review is based on the author’s experience of teaching M. Phil students at the University of Rajasthan. It falls somewhere between the two books mentioned above: it attempts to combine the comprehensive treatment of the first with the user-friendliness of the second. Virtually identical to the first edition except for an added chapter on ‘Computers and the Researcher,’ the second edition also aims to equip research students with the ability to undertake applied research by offering a step-by-step guide and also a wide range of methods and techniques for developing a research project.

The introduction quickly covers the significance of research and the various types of research. Like most books on research methodology, the subsequent chapters till data analysis are constructed based on the different steps involved in developing and undertaking a research project. Research design is discussed from a conceptual perspective giving differences between exploratory and descriptive designs. The different types of scales and related analysis are covered along with different approaches to data collection. A large part of the book is devoted to statistical analysis which is separated into chapters based on the technique being discussed and includes hypothesis testing, ANOVA, regression techniques, and the related commonly used tests of significance like the Chi-square and the F-ratio tests and also tests using the normal distribution. Other chapters of data analysis cover the non-parametric tests of significance and multivariate analysis. The new chapter in this edition ‘The Computer: Its Role in Research,’ shows how computers are useful to researchers, business houses, and governments.

This book provides generic guidelines on how to translate a broad question into a research problem. Unfortunately, they are supported by just one illustration which fails to bring out the complexity of how alternative definitions of the research problem could lead to significantly different research methodologies.

The author distinguishes between exploratory and descriptive research and devotes a fair amount of discussion to designing experiments. This is useful given the recent academic interest in this method.

The author is rather brief when it comes to sampling, broadly covering the criteria for selecting a sample and various types of probability sampling techniques. As stated in the preface to the book, the author’s leaning is clearly towards descriptive, empirical, applied research. Nevertheless, it is surprising that non-probability sampling, despite its wide application in applied research, has less than a page devoted to it. Different methods of non-probability sampling are not discussed let alone the appropriateness of those methods in different situations. By providing the less practically-oriented formulae to calculate desired sample size from an infinite universe and following it up with large sections devoted to hypothesis testing and various tests of significance, both parametric and non-parametric, the book moves away from its practical approach to research design and begins to discuss central tendency measures, regression, and sampling distributions in a rather academic manner as one would expect in any book on statistics. Even in probability sampling, common concepts like sampling frame generation and its use are not explained.

Assuming that exposing students to different distributions rather than a detailed discussion of any distribution is the objective of these chapters, one finds here only the most common distributions like the Chi-square and normal distributions. Others like beta or gamma distributions are passed over with no reference at all. In fact, student researchers wanting to learn basic data analysis tools and techniques, especially tests of significance, would probably consult the far more robust, well-illustrated, easy to comprehend, and fairly standard textbook of *Statistics for Management* by Levin and Rubin (1988).

In regression too, no mention is made of advanced concepts such as autocorrelation and heteroscedasticity which are critical for good research. In measurement and scaling, the author does a creditable job of discussing all the popular scales. The reader may, however, experience some degree of confusion because tools like MDS are clubbed with specific scales like the Likert-type and Thurstone-type scales despite there being a separate chapter on multivariate analysis.

On methods of data collection, the author again packs a lot in a few pages including different methods of obtaining information right down to the case study method and various projective techniques. In an appendix
to this chapter, he provides guidelines on how to conduct an interview. These are fairly commonsensical guidelines, especially on questionnaire construction, which do not explain what could go wrong in a research project if these guidelines are violated.

Multivariate analysis is primarily a discussion of factor analysis in a fair amount of detail with little on cluster analysis and MDS. In describing how to write a good report, the author seems more oriented towards a business consulting report rather than an M.Phil or Ph.D research report.

Probably the area where this book disappoints the most is the newly added chapter, ‘The Computer: Its Role in Research.’ One would expect the chapter to discuss various software packages such as SPSS and SAS and describe various tools for advanced research such as using LISREL for factor analysis but the chapter instead describes how computers code data in binary form! And in case you are interested, there are several illustrations to help you code data in binary terms. The chapter obviously assumes the readers to be clueless about the computer but does little to improve their practical knowledge of software usage which is what they would be looking for. The discussion of application of computers to research is again typical of this book: generic. It talks about how computers have contributed to education and business but says little about practical application.

The book has several sections such as ‘Problems Encountered by Researchers in India’ that seem to address faculty, university research departments, and business houses rather than students planning research projects.

There are questions at the end of each chapter; but they neither provoke thought nor lead to any additional insights. With no good case studies or comprehensive illustrations, the book has little for readers who are looking for anything new or different.

If there is one department in which the revised edition is clearly superior to the first, it is copy-editing; but a spelling error in the preface itself shows that even copy-editing needs improvement.

The book attempts to combine the existing concepts of research methods and methodology with statistics, and the result is a not-so-good handbook for management summer trainees not serious researchers. Instead of generic guidelines on topics like ‘conducting a successful interview,’ even a modest attempt to systematize the linkages of problem-method-scale-analysis would have helped students better. This is a difficult task as it needs walking the fine line between discussing concepts and illustrating application of these concepts, especially in a field where alternative methodologies can be adopted to achieve the same objective. Also, in discussing concepts, the author could have provided topic-wise references to other books and authors who have written on the subject in detail. This might have enabled a more balanced narration — allowing for most concepts to be mentioned and at the same time affording enough scope for only relevant concepts to be discussed in keeping with the book’s objectives. Instead, the author has arbitrarily sacrificed several relevant concepts to randomly enumerate others in detail. This is evident in the way the case study method is discussed in relative detail while advanced regression concepts are given a miss in a book that is essentially oriented towards quantitative research.

This book is recommended to desperate summer trainees who want to somehow put something together on their research project at the last moment! They will find in this book a plethora of scales, methods, and techniques with few clues on how to put them to good use.

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