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Pushkar Mela: Rajasthan’s Camel Fair and Brahma Pilgrimage

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Pushkar Mela is a big camel and cattle fair in Rajasthan. It is held every year at Pushkar, a small town in Ajmer district. The fair ends on Kartik Purnima, the full moon of Kartik. Pushkar is also holy, because it has a rare temple of the god Brahma.

1 Where is Pushkar, and why is its lake holy?

Pushkar lies north-west of Ajmer, in Rajasthan. The Aravalli Range surrounds the town on three sides.

How did the lake form, according to legend?



Pilgrims on the steps of a ghat at the Pushkar lake. Photo: Jakub Hałun, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

- The story says the god Brahma dropped a lotus flower on the ground.
- A lake appeared where the lotus fell.
- Brahma then named the place after the flower, which is how Pushkar got its name.
- Pilgrims bathe in the lake at 52 ghats, which are steps leading down to the water.

Is the lake natural?

- No. Today’s lake was created by building a dam.
- It sits in the folds of the Aravalli hills.

- Hundreds of temples line its banks. Sources differ on the exact count.
- A ridge called Nag Pahar, which means Snake Mountain, forms a natural border between Ajmer and Pushkar.

Think it through. Why is Pushkar not matched with the Mahadeo Hills in exams?

Pushkar lies in the Aravalli Range of Rajasthan. The UPSC 2015 question treated the Mahadeo pairing as wrong.

What is the memory hook?

Think “Pushkar sits in the Aravallis, not the Mahadeo Hills”. The lake and the hills go together.

> **Quick check 1.** The Pushkar lake was formed naturally, without any dam. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: ecoheritage.cpreec.org; outlookindia.com

2 Why is the Brahma temple at Pushkar so special?

Brahma is the Hindu god of creation. Temples to him are very rare. The Brahma temple at Pushkar is the best known. It stands on a high base, and pilgrims climb steps to reach it.

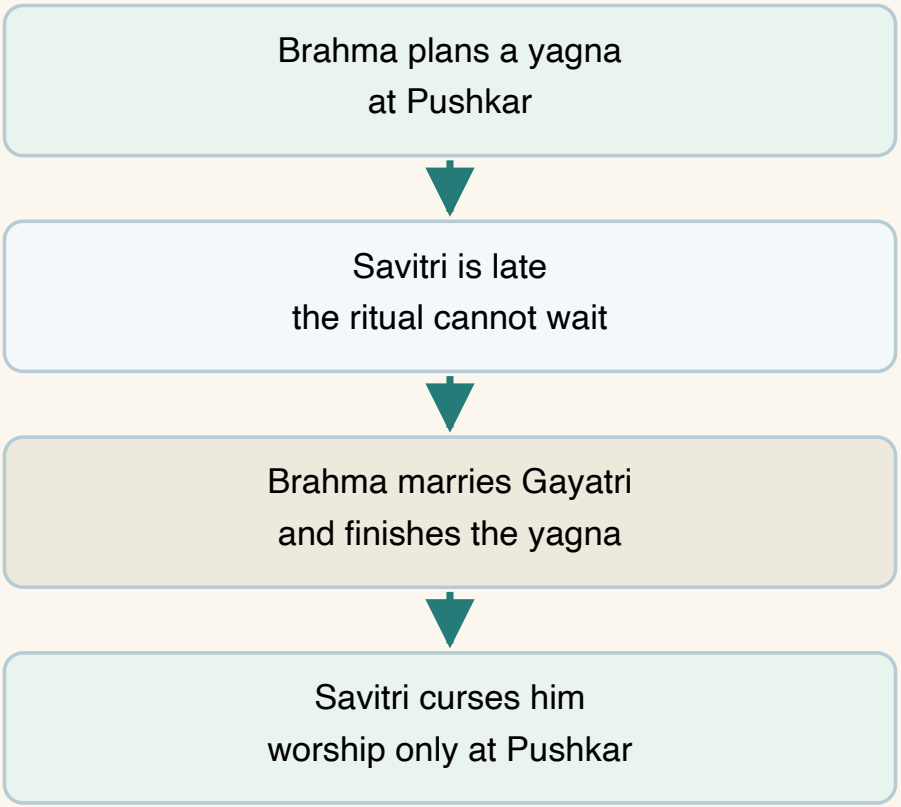
What is the story of Savitri’s curse?



The entrance of the Brahma temple at Pushkar. Photo: Adityavijayavargia, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

- Legend says Brahma wanted to perform a yagna, a fire ritual, at Pushkar.
- His wife Savitri was late to the ritual.
- Brahma married Gayatri to finish the ritual on time.
- Savitri was angry. She cursed that Brahma would be worshipped nowhere else except Pushkar.

Who is worshipped in the temple?



The legend of why Brahma temples are rare. Original explanatory diagram.

- The temple has a four-faced image of Brahma.
- Gayatri’s image stands beside it.
- Savitri has her own temple on a hill nearby.

Think it through. Why is Pushkar called Brahma’s town and not Vishnu’s or Shiva’s?

Many big pilgrim towns honour Vishnu or Shiva. Pushkar is known for Brahma, so a question that names Brahma’s temple points to Pushkar.

What is the memory hook?

Think “Savitri’s curse, one town for Brahma”. The curse is why the temples are so few.

> **Quick check 2.** According to legend, Savitri cursed Brahma that he would be worshipped nowhere except Pushkar. *(True or False?)*
>
> See answer ↓

Sources: ecoheritage.cpreec.org; inditales.com

3 When is the Pushkar fair held, and what happens there?

The fair runs for five to seven days, depending on the source, in the Hindu month of Kartik, which falls in October or November. Its dates change each year, because the Hindu calendar follows the moon. In 2025 it was scheduled from 30 October to 5 November.

Why does it end on Kartik Purnima?



Camels and a herder at sunrise at the Pushkar camel fair, 2015. Photo: Sudipta Dutta Chowdhury, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

- Kartik Purnima is the full moon night of the Kartik month.
- It comes about 15 days after Diwali.
- Pilgrims believe a bath in the lake washes away sins.
- Temple worship is also special on full moon nights.

What is traded at the fair?

- The fair is mainly a livestock market.
- Herders bring camels, horses and cattle.
- Camels are painted and decorated with cloth and ornaments.

- Herders and traders arrive days before the official start. In 2025, they began arriving on 22 October.

Think it through. Why does a livestock fair share its dates with a holy bath?

Pilgrims bring crowds to the town at this time. Herders and traders use the crowds to sell animals.

What is the memory hook?

Think “Kartik full moon: bath and bargain”. The holy dip and the animal trade share one week.

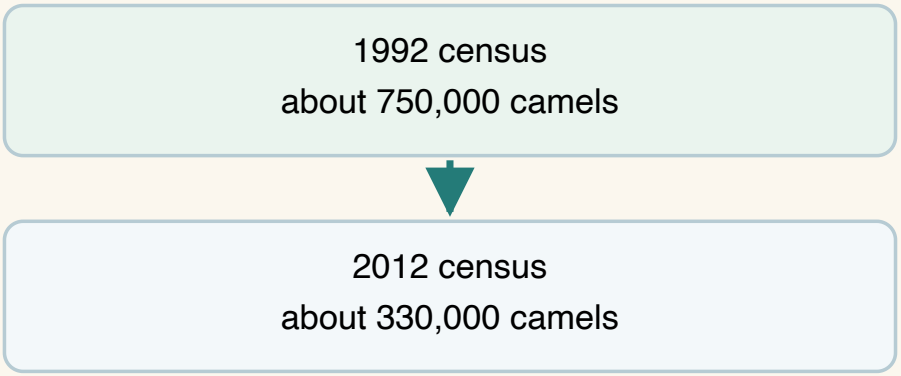
> **Quick check 3.** The Pushkar fair ends on Kartik Purnima. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: inditales.com; etvbharat.com

4 Why are camels disappearing from the Pushkar fair?

India’s camel numbers have fallen sharply. Fewer camels reach the fair than in earlier times. Herders say young people no longer want to keep camels.

How far have the numbers fallen?



The count fell by more than 56 per cent. Original explanatory diagram.

- India had around 750,000 camels in the 1992 livestock census.
- The 2012 census counted only about 330,000, a fall of more than 56 per cent.
- In Rajasthan, the count fell from about 420,000 in 2007 to a little over 210,000 in 2019.

What did the law do?

- Rajasthan declared the camel its state animal in 2014.
- In 2015, the state passed a law to stop camel slaughter and limit camels being taken out of the state.
- Herders say the law cut their income, because they could not sell young male camels outside Rajasthan.
- Herders say prices fell sharply after the law.
- A herder leader told ETV Bharat that in 2025 the state lifted the 11-year ban on moving camels between states, under regulated conditions.

Who keeps the camels?

- The Raika community has herded camels for centuries.
- The Rebari and Devasi communities have also reared camels for generations.

Think it through. How can a law meant to save camels hurt camels?

Herders earned money by selling male camels. When selling became hard, keeping camels no longer paid. Many herders sold their herds.

What is the memory hook?

Think “state animal in 2014, law in 2015, numbers still down”. Protection on paper did not stop the fall.

> **Quick check 4.** Rajasthan's 2015 camel law ended the fall in camel numbers. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: downtoearth.org.in; aljazeera.com

Sources: scroll.in; etvbharat.com

5 How has this topic been asked in exams?

Which questions has this topic produced?

Which traps repeat?

- Pushkar is in Rajasthan, in Ajmer district, among the Aravalli hills.
- UPSC 2015 paired Pushkar with the Mahadeo Hills. That pair was wrong.
- Pushkar’s special temple is for Brahma, not Vishnu or Shiva.

- The fair is tied to Kartik Purnima.
- All four fairs in the SSC question are held in Rajasthan.
- The 2014 state-animal tag and the 2015 camel law are separate events.

What is the memory hook?

Think “Pushkar: Rajasthan, Aravalli, Brahma, Kartik”. Four words cover most questions.

> **Quick check 5.** The Pushkar fair is held in the Aravalli hills of Rajasthan. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: ecoheritage.cpreec.org; inditales.com; etvbharat.com

Practice MCQs

1. According to legend, how did the Pushkar lake come into being?

A. A king dug a tank for his people

B. Brahma struck the ground with a staff

C. A river changed its course

D. Brahma dropped a lotus flower on the ground

See answer ↓

2. Gangaur Festival, Pushkar Fair, Nagaur Fair and Urs Fair are the popular fairs and festivals of which state?

A. Rajasthan

B. Maharashtra

C. Punjab

D. Tripura

See answer ↓

3. According to legend, why are Brahma temples so rare in India?

A. Savitri cursed Brahma to be worshipped only at Pushkar

B. Temples to Brahma were banned by a king

C. Brahma temples were destroyed in floods

D. Brahma was never worshipped in ancient times

See answer ↓

4. The Pushkar fair ends on which day?

A. Diwali

B. Holi

C. Makar Sankranti

D. Kartik Purnima

See answer ↓

5. According to the livestock census, what happened to India's camel count between 1992 and 2012?

A. It rose from about 330,000 to 750,000

B. It fell from about 1.5 million to 750,000

C. It stayed near 750,000

D. It fell from about 750,000 to 330,000

See answer ↓

6. In which hill range does Pushkar lie?

A. Mahadeo Hills

B. Nallamala Hills

C. Satmala Hills

D. Aravalli Range

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **D.** The legend says **Brahma dropped a lotus flower**, and a lake appeared where it fell. He then named the place after the flower. Today's lake is held by a dam and has 52 bathing ghats. Memory hook: lotus falls, lake forms. ↑ Q1
2. **A.** The answer is **Rajasthan**. Pushkar lies in Ajmer district of Rajasthan. The fair is held in the Hindu month of Kartik. Memory hook: Pushkar, Ajmer, Rajasthan. ↑ Q2
3. **A.** The legend says Savitri was late to Brahma's yagna, so he married Gayatri to finish it. An angry Savitri then **cursed Brahma to be worshipped only at Pushkar**. Memory hook: Savitri's curse, one town for Brahma. ↑ Q3
4. **D.** The fair ends on **Kartik Purnima**, the full moon night of the Kartik month. It falls about 15 days after Diwali. Pilgrims bathe in the lake on this night. Memory hook: Kartik full moon, bath and bargain. ↑ Q4
5. **D.** India had around 750,000 camels in 1992 and about 330,000 in 2012. That is a fall of more than 56 per cent. Memory hook: three-quarters of a million down to a third of a million. ↑ Q5
6. **D.** Pushkar lies in the folds of the **Aravalli Range** in Rajasthan. A UPSC 2015 question paired Pushkar with the Mahadeo Hills, and that pair was wrong. Memory hook: Pushkar sits in the Aravallis. ↑ Q6

Quick-check answers

1. **False.** it is false. Today's lake was created by building a dam. ↑ 1
2. **True.** it is true. The legend says Savitri cursed him after he married Gayatri. ↑ 2
3. **True.** it is true. It is the full moon night of the Kartik month. ↑ 3
4. **False.** it is false. Herders say the law cut their income, and the numbers kept falling. ↑ 4
5. **True.** it is true. Pushkar lies in the folds of the Aravalli Range. ↑ 5

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