CHAPTER VII: The Open and Closed Spaces

7.1 Living with Vegetation and Animal

When I am walking in the street, my route has to take curves for evading big trees standing in the middle of sidewalks. It is not difficult to see the trees that occupy half of the space in sidewalks. Sometimes, pedestrians walk in the hot sun due to the dogs sleeping in the shade on the roads. Thus, the landscapes of Delhi are largely affected by animals and vegetation.

< Picture 24: Sleeping dogs in front of the Chandni Chowk Metro Station >

Above all, a ‘maze-shaped entry’ is found from place to place in the public spaces like neighborhood parks, colleges, and so on. Such a side gate has no doors and is open 24 hours a day. The shape of gate prevents big animals like a cow from entering
into the spaces. Nowadays, it also plays an important role to block motorcycles.\textsuperscript{42} Thus, such a gate is open to persons but closed to a few kinds of animals and vehicles. Thanks to such a gate, a space can be always open for human beings.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{maze_gate_delhi_university}
\caption{Picture 25: A maze gate – Chatra Marg, Delhi University}
\end{figure}

Next, Delhi residents coexist with animals as well as vegetation. It is easy to see the animals like dog, cow, and monkey in the streets. People feed them well despite not being the owners of these animals. Even children are willingly to give their biscuits to stray dogs. In the streets, there are many stray dogs and they seem to belong to spaces, not to persons. Sometimes they behave like landlord. When ragpickers pass through the streets, the animals bark at them loudly and drive them away. In my opinion, the dogs are like a ‘walking wall’. They do not allow for a certain kind of people to enter into ‘their streets’. As for cows, they are wandering in the lanes to find leftover of fruits and vegetables which housewives throw away in

\textsuperscript{42} Nowadays, there is a tendency to build doors before these entries. It is identical to the today’s trend to make a wall and to limit the usage time even in the public spaces.
front of houses in the morning. Also, dumping grounds become good ‘lunch places’ for these animals. In Delhi, many dumping grounds are open toward sidewalks. Such a dumping ground emits a bad odor, especially in summer, and sometimes, makes even sidewalks to be covered by garbage. However, at the same time, these have many good things. First, these are easily accessible for several animals like crows, dogs, or cows who help to reduce the volume of waste as having food residue. Next, scavengers do not have to work in dark and airless places.

For Monkeys, they live in forest areas, but they also make frequent appearance in residential quarters. Kids are scared at the appearance of monkeys, but people do not complain too much about that. In Hinduism, feeding animals and taking care of them is considered as pun that means right, moral, and the highly virtuous deeds or intentions. (Channa, 1984: 160-161) A man in the middle age tells the reason why he gives grains to birds as follows.

Q: आप क्या करते हैं?
A: मैं actually पक्षियों को दाना देने जाता हूँ। रोज़ स्कैने, मुझे अच्छा लगता है। यह क्वांटिक मन को खुशी होती है। And, satisfaction होती है। मैं regular उनको खाना मिलता है।

Q: क्यों यहां पर? Every day, here?
A: Daily, different place जरूर-जरूर पक्षियों को दाना जाता है। परंतु मैं आ जाता हूँ।

Q: क्यों देते? Why you give food to birds?
A: यह है कि दाना देने के लिए मेरा business भी बढ़ा improvement होता है। profession है।

Q: What are you doing?
A: I actually give grains to birds, because I like it. It makes my heart happy, and it gives me satisfaction. I come here regularly to give food to them.

Q: Why only here? Every day, here?
A: Daily, different places. Wherever I find birds in large number, I go there.

Q: Why give? Why you give food to birds?
A: My business and profession was improved after giving them grains.
< Picture 26: A man who gives birds grains – Science Faculty >

< Picture 27: A man who gives monkeys bananas – near Kamla Nehru Ridge >
According to the newspaper article, “Keeping rabies on a tight leash”\textsuperscript{43}, India accounts for a large proportion of the world’s rabies cases. A detailed WHO-sponsored assessment carried out in 2003 by the Association for Prevention and Control of Rabies in India (AP-CRI) estimated that there were more than 17,000 “furious rabies” cases in the country annually. On the other hand, the total number of rabies deaths was put at about 20,000 each year. The number is understandable when we are considering packs of dogs wandering around the streets. However, Delhi people do not choose an easy way to repel dogs from the city in order to solve the problem. For example, there is a big board to be set up in the opposite of the Old Delhi Railway Station and it explains how to do first-aid treatment when one is bitten by a dog. According to the pictures of the board, one have to wash the infected part with water and soap, and then get an injection at a hospital. It shows that people put up with the inconvenience to be caused by sharing spaces with animals rather than drive them from their residences.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{A sign board - Near the Old Delhi Railway Station}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{43} The Hindu, Sep. 28, 2012
Hindus follow the rules of their jati, or dharma. People believe that, when a person neglects his dharma, it causes him to be relegated to a lower caste, or even to an animal in their next life. Thus, Hindus do not draw a clear boundary between human beings and animals. Also, many animal gods appear in Hindu mythology and they are widely loved by people. For instance, Saramaa contributed to take back the god Indra’s cattle from demon king Panis and, as a result, Saramaa got a boon from Indra. The story is as follows.

Indra sent Saramā, the birth of the gods, to find out the place where the cows had been hidden; Indra acted according to the advice of Agniras. At first the bitch did not consent to go. But when Devendra promised to feed her young one with milk she agreed. Saramā found out the place where the cows were hidden and informed Indra of it. (Parmeshwaranand, 2001: 74)

Meanwhile, the sages of Angira's gotra had found the cows hidden in the caves and they also managed to release them. Indra had greatly honoured them at their this achievement. Indra had given a lot of edible matter to the she-dog called Sarama of the deities. Bestower of the best material, Indra, ever remains at the forefront of any battle. When he performed yagya with the Marutaganas he made the cows the instrument to receive the offerings. (Pandey, 2006: 77-78)

Another character, Hanuman, is one of main characters in the Ramayana and is famous for helping Prince Rama to win against Demon King Ravana. Especially children are excited about the story filled with adventure, excitement, and fun. In a park or a tile on the wall, we can see the picture or the statue of Hanuman where he is lifting a mountain. Such figures describe the episode of the Ramayana in which
Hanuman delivered an entire mountain to the battlefield because he was unable to identify the powerful life-restoring herb in it, when Lakshmana was seriously wounded during the battle against Ravana.
Third, a curved wall or a hole on wall makes the landscapes of Delhi unique. These are designed to protect trees when people build a wall. There are many cases that the forms of wall or sidewalk are transformed depending on positions and shapes of trees.

Fourth, a lot of streets have ‘street gardens’ next to sidewalks. Especially, the streets gardens of the Delhi University have almost the same size as the carriageways. I thought that it seemed to be non-economical as the street gardens occupied ‘too much’ space. However, I got to hate to even imagine the streets without these gardens after experiencing Delhi’s notorious summer season. The gardens provide pedestrians with shadow and vendors with workplace. Now, I think that it is like a ‘desert oasis’.

For instance, there is a streets garden between the Patel Chest and the Miranda House. (See Figure 10) For measuring the width of partitions, I counted my foot steps during walking on the road. The numbers in Figure 10 means the number of my footsteps. The width of the carriageways is of 16 steps by my footsteps and that of

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44 The tree disappeared in 2012.
street gardens is of 17 steps. As another example, the road between the UHW and the Miranda Hostel has the street garden whose width is of 11 footsteps. In short, the large part of the streets is allotted to greenery in the Delhi University areas.

< Figure 10: The way between the Miranda House and the Petal Chest(2011) >
In Hinduism, some plants and animals are considered as sacred. Hindus are encouraged to feed animals. Muslims love and revere vegetation, too. A beautiful garden symbolizes paradise that the Quran promised them as a reward for faithful and steadfast worship of Allah. (Blake, 1986: 160) It is clear that these religious philosophies affect on making beautiful public gardens and feeding animals everyday. Although Delhi is a metropolitan city, people live with animals and vegetation. They are familiar to share space with them.

7.2 Jati and Gender of Street Workers
In Delhi, streets are open to vendors and artisans. They use streets as their workplaces. It is evident that the city has a high demand of street workers. There are many public areas such as public colleges, public parks, and public institutions in which private shops are not located. Especially, the streets of the Delhi University are like a ‘vendors’ paradise’. Many kinds of food stalls wash in and go out like a tide everyday. Also, residential areas are an important sphere for vegetable vendors. In my field areas, full size refrigerator is not yet popular. People do not only buy in bulk at a big mart or mall but also stock their refrigerators with food. In the areas, there are very many full-time housewives and it is not easy to find the malls which run on the ‘grim’ principle of small profits and quick returns. Therefore, there is no reason to store buying a lot of vegetables at once. It is understandable for residents to purchase fresh vegetable whenever they need it. It is possible that a lot of vegetable vendors work in the streets. Many of them are still involved in their jat. I interviewed a female merchant to sell vegetables in a fair in Hakikat Nagar and she explained the reason to choose the job as follows.

बहुत सारी हमारे जात वाली बेचता है, बहुत सारी, हिसाब नही है.

“Many people of our jat (the word meaning ‘jati’ or ‘community’) are engaged in selling, almost of them, although we do not know the number.”

Several craftsmen also have their workplaces in the streets. They occupy fixed places as a result of using for long time. Their belongings like toolboxes or worktables are left in the places even after they return home. These craftsmen are referred to as the name of jatis except for chamar. The term of chamar is strongly prohibited under the provision of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes Act, 1989.45 The jati was at the bottom in the Caste System and, sometimes, it is used to give humiliation to the members of SC/STs. However, the names of dhobi, darji, and nai are still used to call these jobs. They keep lots part of traditional working ways

and express their works as “hamara kam (our work)”.

Q: आपको ये जगह कौन से मालमतें जैसे हुआ?
A: यह मेरे बहन नहीं रखती है ना।

Q: वे Particular काम आयने कैसे लिया?
A: यहाँ हमारा काम है, सब कोई घर में यही करते हैं।

Q: आप और भी कोई काम कर सकते, ये काम और, कम है या बड़ा से?
A: ऐसा ही समझ लो - बाकी काम से औसत-लिखाई को ऊपर होता है न, पढ़-लिखी तो हम है नहीं, इसीलिए ने काम।

Q: How did you know the place?
A: My sister lives in the neighborhood.

Q: Why did you decide to do this work?
A: This is our work, our families work here.

Q: You can do other works, why you do this work? In the aspect of income?
A: Think about it. To get other jobs, we have to learn more. We do not learn much. So we do this work.

More specifically, let us look at the appearances of ‘street artisans’. First, a darji or tailor places a sewing machine on the road and makes or repairs clothes running the machine by foot from morning till sunset. In my opinion, many people of Delhi are not interested in losing weight. Even girls are not obsessed with losing weight and getting in shape. They do not try too much for having a fit body. Nonetheless, they have no difficulty to get clothes to fit their body type. They do not always need to buy ready-made clothes in the markets. They can easily order darji (tailors) to make their clothes. Second, people do not throw away their old sandals or slippers. Instead, they have them repaired. In the streets, many shoes-fixers make the platforms above the ground for their workplaces, because shoes are easily tend to break during monsoon season. Third, a nai or barber is waiting for a customer hanging a mirror on a tree. Every place where they can hang their mirror can be their workplace,
< Picture 32: A shoesfixer’s platform – Delhi University >

< Picture 33: A shaver – Delhi University >
Fourth, dhobis install their ironing tables in front of public buildings or parks. Their tables remain on the roads even after they go back home, telling that the places are already occupied by someone. Dhobis are still using an iron with charcoal which makes it possible to work without using electricity in the streets.

Thus, many artisans work in the streets. They set up their worktables or platforms in the streets and remain their belongings or toolboxes in their workplaces even when they return home. It affects the street landscapes.

Manual labourers also occupy public spaces, but they are distinguishable from the above-mentioned craftsmen in the respect that they appropriate the streets for their personal life as well as their work. Laborers pitch up small tents with plastic covers in front of building sites and live in it with their families for several months. In other words, the tents are their temporary dwellings. Many of them work with their families, as the pair of husband and wife, and therefore it is easy to see women working in building site and young kids playing near them. In summer, many men sleep in mosquito nets to set up next their tents. Early in the morning, they bathe, cook, and eat in the open space. That is to say, they use the streets like their backyard, bathroom, bedroom, etc. On construction sites, the majority of manual laborers are from rural areas. As they can not afford to get a rent, they stay in empty space near the building sites. They set up their shelters on sidewalks or parking areas. Their appropriation in the public space is taken for granted.

In my field areas, it is difficult to find high-rise buildings. These areas are usually housed by 3 or 4 story buildings because MCD limits the height of houses to 48.5 feet. When such a building is renovated, the house owner hires a contractor who is responsible for providing all of the material, labor, equipment, and services necessary for the construction. The contractor hires all kind of laborer through his personal connections. Also he can get labourers who have experience in doing many type of work in the streets. In the city, there are many areas where labourers sit on the ground waiting for work. Such a day-labour market exists in many places like Jama Masjid, Fatehpuri Masjid, Camp Market, Chawri Bazar Metro Station, Town Hall, and so on. In Delhi, small building sites still rely on manual labourers more than machines like a
excavator, a crane, and so on. Labourers spade up the soil, carry sands in a handcart, carry bricks on their back, and so on. Especially, manual labourers play a large role in the stage of engineering works like demolition, foundation, concreting, drainage, and basement construction. Therefore, the process is very slow. According to a building contractor, it takes about two years to build a four story house.

Thus, many vendors and craftsmen keep up their traditional works. It prohibits them from distancing themselves from their caste status to be traditionally associated with their jobs. Many immigrants from rural areas work in the city as chaiwalla, rickshawalla, street vendors, and so on, and therefore, street workers are not always identical with their jatis. However, many of them keep their traditional jobs and this affects the landscapes of the city. It makes me feel that time flows slowly in the city.

Many of them are included in Sudra and Untouchables in caste system, which nowadays, are termed as the new words of Backward Caste(BC), Scheduled Caste(SC), Other Backward Caste(OBC), and so on. Traditionally, Hindus consider as impure those people who habitually come into contact with bodily emissions and wastes.(Srinivas, 1989: 38) For instance, there are barbers(nai), leather and hide workers(chamar), washermen(dhobi), scavenger(bhangi), and so on. In other words, for Hindus, lower caste is characterized by ritual impurity, manual labor, and service jobs. They consider hard work or physical labor with a little negative attitude. It is referred to as the Shudra’s Dharma, or lower caste. In India, it is said that caste still shapes ideologies of work and status. It makes for compartmentalised labour markets, with non-competing groups whose options are severely constrained.(Harriss-White, 2004: 21)

As for women workers, I have been often surprised by the fact that there are few women around me while walking on the streets. Although streets are thronged with men from young kids to the elderly, I usually face with a less number of women in the streets. Actually, the spaces are not friendly to women. As an example, there are toilets only for men in the streets and these clearly tell that the streets are the space to be convenient for men. I, a female researcher, had to spend much time in the streets and the lack of female toilet often made me uncomfortable.
Normally, women are not encouraged to work outside in India. However, women in lower caste are less constrained to work in open spaces than those in middle or upper class, even though they are accessible to only a few jobs. For example, they can work such as a dhobi, vegetable vendor, or construction workers.

First, dhobi is the name of a jati to be termed washermen. Traditionally, the dhobis identify themselves with the occupation of washing clothes. (Channa, 1985: 177) Men washed laundry which they brought from customers’ houses and women ironed dry clothes. But, nowadays, many of them truncate their job to only ironing. (Channa, 1985: 183) Before the Independence of India, Brahmins and Muslims inhabiting Delhi would never thought of washing their own clothes. (Channa, 1985: 178) However, a

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46 In 2009-2010, women were 26.1% of all rural workers, and 13.8% of all urban workers. (“Workforce Participation Rate by Sex and Sector in India.” http://www.indiastat.com)
lot of Punjabis immigrated to Delhi after the Partition of India and Pakistan and their hard working and industrious ethos widely did spread the culture to do laundry at home. Thus, *dhobis* did not need to stay near the River Yamuna anymore. They found their new workplaces near residential areas and male dhobis converted their job from washing to ironing. As a result, we can see many dhobis, both male and female, working in the streets.

Second, in Delhi, it is not a strange scene that women in saris carry bricks or cement on their heads or on their backs at a building site. According to Sarde’s report, women constitute more than one third of the construction labor in India. Yet, the division of labour is gendered. The skilled jobs such as masonry or carpentry are reserved only for men. Women are engaged in unskilled work and their wages are less compared to men in the both cases of unskilled and skilled work. Women are paid Rs. 60-70 a day while unskilled male laborers are paid Rs.100-175 and masons earn up to Rs. 175-250 a day.(Sarde, 2008: 3-4) Like this, women provide cheap and unskilled labour in a building site, but they are allowed to work in the streets.

Third, we can see female vendors to sell vegetables in the streets. Most of them have no handcart nor bicycle trailer unlike male vendors. They daily occupy a place for their vending and display vegetables on the ground. Therefore, for them, it is important to arrive earlier than other merchants and appropriate a prime location.

In short, a few jobs are open to women but their choices and access are limited to low paying and small scale work that can start without some capital investment. Their lower jatis give a chance to make money in the streets, although their gender causes discrimination and limitation in workplace.