CHAPTER VI: Religious Colors of the Streets

6.1 Religious Ritual Days

Many religious groups coexist in Delhi. They celebrate their religious ritual days with their own ways. Nonetheless, it is interesting that most of them are equally passionate to enjoy using the streets for their festive days. They hold many kinds of festivals in the streets and it changes the scenes of the streets dynamically. Sometimes, I feel that Delhi’s carriageways are paved not only for vehicles but also for festivals.

< Table 3: The names of months in several calendars >

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<tr>
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<th>Hindu Calendar</th>
<th>Muslim Calendar</th>
<th>Nanakshahi Calendar</th>
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<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Chaitra</td>
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<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Jyeshta</td>
<td>Rabi’al– awwal</td>
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<td>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Shravan</td>
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<td>6&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>7&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Asvin</td>
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<td>8&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Kartik</td>
<td>Sha’a ban</td>
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<td>9&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Margasirsa</td>
<td>Ramadan</td>
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<td>10&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Paush</td>
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<td>Magh</td>
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<td>12&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Phalgun</td>
<td>Dhu al– Hijjah</td>
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The dates of festivals are decided by diverse calendars like the Hindu calendar, the Sikh calendar, the Islamic calendar, etc. To begin with, Hindus have several regional

27  Wikipedia – Hindu Calendar
28  Wikipedia – Islamic Calendar
29  www.sikhs.org
calendars transformed from the calendars of the ancient times. However, nowadays, the Indian Government encourages people to use the same calendar, that is, the Indian National Calendar. The calendar was introduced by the Calendar Reform Committee in 1957. A normal calendar has not only big numbers of the Gregorian calendar system but also small letters written below the numbers. The small letters designate the names of days to be calculated by Hindu calendar systems. For me, such a calendar looks like the boards to be filled with ciphers.

The system is truly complicated and its explanation is beyond scope of a layman. The source of the information for them are the calendars, the government notifications and the pundits. It has happened many times that the three don’t agree with one another about the correct Roman date on which people should celebrate their festivals, leading to much confusion. (Channa, 1984: 118)

I often missed chances to observe festivals due to misguided information or my miscounting. Therefore, I started to check its venues from two days before festive days in order to avoid such a mistake. Nonetheless, in some cases, I could not participate in some celebrations inevitably. In the case of Holi 2012, I planned to observe Holika Dahan (burning Holika) in the main road of Chandni Chowk. Around 8 pm, I found a Holika to be set up of the road. There were several men around it. I had already watched the rite in the staff residential area of Delhi University in 2011 and the bonfires of 2011 had set on fire around 8 pm. Therefore, I expected that the Holika of Chandni Chowk of 2012 would be blazed soon. However the time for Holika Dahan was postponed to 9 pm and the men returned home. After 9 pm, they appeared in the venue again. However its ignition was put off until midnight, once again. At the moment, I received a call from the Resident Tutor of my hostel. She said that I had to come back as soon as possible because the hostel did not allow inmates to stay outside after 9 pm on chhoti holi. Later, I learned the fact that the notice paper had been attached on the wall of the hostel for a few days before Holi, in order to

30 Wikipedia- Indian national calendar
announce the change of curfew time on the days of Holi. For me, the change of curfew time was interesting more than the custom of Holika dahan. It is said that some guys try to harass young ladies or girls on Holi.

Hindus celebrate many religious rituals which are dated by their traditional calendar systems and, in many cases, their names designate the days on which these are performed: for example, Karwa Chauth should be performed at the 4th day of Kartik month. Vasant Panchami, at the 5th day of Magh month. Navratri, for 9 nights of Ashvin month. Vijay Dashmi, at the tenth day of Ashvin month. In Hindi, Char, Panch, Nau, Das respectively means the numbers of 4, 5, 9, 10.

Next, Muslims also have their own calendar. In the Islamic calendar, each month has the Arabic name to express religious events or seasonal changes. For example, Ramadan is the name of ninth month and means ‘scorched’ and Mauharram, the first month, means ‘forbidden’. These two months are considered as the holiest period by Muslims. They keep a fast or take out a procession, juloos, to commemorate these days.

Lastly, Sikhs use the Bikrami calendar and the Nanakashi calendar with Gregorian calendar. The Bikrami calendar is a traditional lunar calendar used in Punjab. However, Sikhs started using a new calendar since 1988, namely the Nanakashi calendar. It is a tropical solar calendar and the epoch of this calendar is the birth of Guru Nanak in 1469. The Nanakashi calendar is comfortable to be used along with the Western calendar as its year has the same length as that of the Western calendar.

6.1.1 Hindus

In Delhi, it is easy to observe festivals in the streets except for a sultry summer season. The streets are decorated for a few days before festival days. Therefore, I used to get hints about the upcoming festivals through decoration of the streets. For example, a stall is temporarily set up in front of a mandir during Navratri or Durga Puja and several ritual items for the puja are displayed for selling on the stall. On the day of Janmashtami, the nets woven of silver cords are covered the space above
alleys like a ‘roof of street’, and it guides people to the mandir located at the end of a deep and narrow alley. On Diwali, children make performances bursting firecrackers. Especially, the following festivals largely affects the landscapes of streets in Delhi: Holi, Kanwar yatra, Diwali, Janmashtami, Navratri or Durga Puja, Ramlila, and so on.

Firstly, Holi is commonly said as ‘the festival of welcoming spring’ and ‘the festival of color’. From a few days before Holi, children enjoy throwing water balloons at by-passers. However, people do not get too much angry at these children even if their clothes get wet. Their clothes get dry soon, thanks to warm weather. It is usually said that a cold shower is possible after Holi.

People celebrate Holi for two days. The first day is termed as ‘Holika Dahan’(burning Holika) or ‘chhoti holi’(small holi) and the next day, as ‘holi’ or ‘bari holi’(big holi). There is a mythology associated with Holi. There was a demon, Hiranyakashipu, who was against the Lord of Vishnu. But his son, Prahlada, was a great devotee of the god and never lost his faith. At the end, the demon tried to kill his son. However, the demon’s sister, Holika, sacrificed herself in order to rescue her nephew, Prahlada, with her fire-proof blanket. In Delhi, Holi is usually regarded as the day to commemorate Holika or her sacrifice.

At the day of chhoti holi, people pile up wood for a bonfire in front of the entry of alley, or a crossing. A pile of wood is called ‘Holika’. In some streets, Holikas is covered with a red cloth which symbolizes the Holika’s ‘fireproof cloak’. In other streets, Holikas are made up of some pieces of thin boards without large logs. Also, we can see a Holika to which colorful balloons are attached. The appearances are various depending on place and time. Some Holika are small and humble and others are large and colorful. The appearance of Holika tells where Hindus reside, how many Hindus live in that area, whether they are rich or not, and so on.

Housewives perform a Holi Puja(a religious ritual) in front of ‘Holika’. Many of them come at the site holding a big brass plate along with their children who wear necklaces made of a coconut and snacks. First, women put off their shoes, offer one bowl of water to Holika going around it, and dedicate many items like a diya(earthen lamp), a ring of cow dung, coins, food, thread, and so on. When it becomes dark, men
gather around Holika and set fire to it. When the fire is alight, they sing and dance together going all around it. Then they go back home with a bundle of channa (chickpea) stalks to be scorched on the fire. It is believed that it is good for health to have baked channa grains on the day of Holi. A few men take home an ember in order to burn another Holika at home.

In the next morning, people enjoy playing with dry colors. They play together throwing water and dye powder on each other regardless of gender, caste, position, and so on. Channa interprets it as ‘anti-social ways’ (Channa, 1984: 139) According to him, most of the barriers of interaction that exist in daily life are broken down at this time, and all people are levelled out in ‘the blanket of colours’.(Ibid.: 139)

On the other hand, numerous processions of men are taken out in the streets. In 2012, the day of Holi fell on 8th March and I resided in the University Hostel for Women(UHW). As the Hostel did not allow students to go out from the night of chhoti holi until the lunch time of the next day, I observed the Holi processions on the fourth floor of my hostel with some girl students. A few processions of men passed by the hostel in the morning. For a while, they stopped in front of the hostel and gave an improvisational performance. For instance, some men sang and danced, being soaked with colored water and powders. Others performed playful fistfights and even their clothes were torn during the process. The fuss of the streets died away after 2 pm. However, for a few days, the stains on the roads still remained and dogs’ furs were smeared with colored powder.

Second, people in orange-colored clothes start to appear in the streets around the beginning of the monsoon season. They are kanwariyas who set out to take part in the Kanwar Yatra (a pilgrimage). They carry holy water from the Ganga River to their hometown in order to offer it to Lord Shiva. The pilgrims carry kanwar (bamboo stick) on their shoulders. Normally, the pole has two vessels dangling on its both ends and is simply decorated with spoons and plastic snakes. Nowadays, the kanwars tend to become bigger and more colorful with addition of house-shaped objects to it.

Kanwariyas carry it to their homes walking on foot. It should not happen that the vessels touch the ground during their journey. During the period of the yatra, many
kinds of Hindu organizations set up their service camps along the streets, and provides the kanwariyas with food, shelter, medical-aid, the stands for kanwars, and so on. Above all, it is important to prepare the stands to hang kanwars in front of the shelters. Kanwariyas are in saffron colour attires during their pilgrimage. Only those who keep such a dress code can enter into the service camps on the streets. That is to say, their clothes are like a ticket for receiving free services. The pilgrims offer the holy water, or *Ganga Jal*, to *lingam* from the new moon day of the *Shravan* month. The rite is called *abhisheka* After the rite, they can return home. Shravan is also the name of a pilgrim in the ancient epic. It is said that Shravan placed his parents in the baskets tied on the two end of the bamboo polestick, and performed a yatra carrying them on his shoulders.

In the *kanwar yatra* 2011, a service tent was set up in front of a tent shop near GTB metro station, and a lot of kanwariyas stayed in the tent. The shopkeeper of the tent shop explained the reason why the pilgrims did not go back their homes as follows.

Q: Why do people stay here?
A: It is *Kanwar Yatra*. We are worshipping Lord Shiva. In the monsoon, they pour the water taken from Ganga over the *Shiv-Lingam*. (On the day of) 28th, the *Jal-abhishekh*, No. 29th, they celebrate. They belong to Delhi, but, on 29th, they will pour it on the *Shiv-Lingam* and they enter their home. They stay here till 28th, then they go to the temple, pour water on God and they enter their home.

Q: Who supports the services?
A: People, friends, and our societies. They make a *pandal* (committee). Different temples make their own *pandals*. This is a group, and many persons, many many persons.

Kanwariyas stay in the camp near their hometown until the new moon of *Shravan* month arrives. As the new moon approaches, the kanwariyas increase in number in the streets. Their clothes and kanwars make the street landscapes colorful.
In the case of Delhi, the pilgrims return to Delhi through Khatauli, Modi Nagar, Ghaziabad after visiting Ganga River in Haridwar. Generally, they pass through two areas to enter into the centre of the city, or Nehru Vihar and Kashimere Gate. Therefore, we can witness a spectacle at these entries during a few days before the Shravan month. I observed the amazing scene near the Kashmere Gate metro station before the new moon day of Shravan in 2012. Kanwariyas occupied a part of 6 lane-road on the last day of Ashadha month. They walked on the carriageways with red colour buses(a kind of express bus), green colour buses(general bus), and policemen. Even though Kanwariyas did not smile, they seemed to be happy. They were walking without hesitation towards their destination. Policemen were busy arranging vehicles for them. There were a lot of tents providing them with shelter, food, and medicine along the road. In my opinion, they seemed to become the center of the world at least during the period.
Kanwariyas diversely expressed the reasons why they performed the yatra. A young couple with a girl and a baby told that his wife had given birth to a son after their family visited the holy river and therefore, they were taking part in this yatra with their son again. A middle aged man answered that he did it for fulfilling his desire and another man, for his family.

To fulfill my desire, for our Lord Shiva.”

“Prayers of my family are answered.”

Thus, people participate the yatra to fulfill their personal hopes. Until a few decades ago, Kanwar Yatra was a small affair undertaken by a few saints and the elder devotees. But, nowadays, it has gained popularity. Therefore we can observe many Kanwariyas in the streets during the festival period. According to a female student of Delhi University, many men perform the Kanwar Yatra to get a son, a good wife, a pretty girlfriend, but the 90% of boys go to the Ganga just for fun because they can easily get food and shelter. Really, Kanwariyas are of various appearances. Some of them walk on bare feet. Others come back from the river Ganga by motorcycle or
automobile.

Third, Diwali is ‘the festival of lights’. From a few weeks before the festival, shops are decorated with items like small lights and pictures of diyas, and are piled up with commodities like silver ware, kitchen utensils, sweets, chocolates, crackers, and so on. On the other hand, in the residential areas, houses are cleaned and decorated with lights, colorful lamps, etc., from a few days before Diwali. For instance, middle-class families ‘cover’ their house’s facade with the strings of tiny electric lights. The poor also decorate their houses drawing in person flowers and diyas on the walls. Accordingly, during the festival, we can enjoy the most gorgeous landscapes of the year in residential areas as well as markets. The season is also so disturbed because of the explosion of fireworks. People believe that the sound drives away evil spirits.

The festive mood lasts for a long time. The Diwali of 2010 fell on 5th November. When the day was drawing near, I saw that people were turning round and round along the wall and singing a song inside a mandir every morning. I met an elderly woman coming out of a mandir during the term and I asked her why people were singing and going around inside the mandir. She explained it as follows.

“Sanā mahīne pūja pāt kartā hain. Divāli ātī hain, or karaṇā bātī hain. Sarē bhagavanā kī pūja kartā hain. Sarā mahīne kī 22 se lēkār aṅgāni kī 23 tak.”

“We hold puja for the whole month. Diwali comes and Karwa Chauth comes. We hold puja for all gods, from 22nd of this month to 23rd of next month.”

Like many other Hindu festivals, the reason why people celebrate Diwali is explained by a few tales or myths, too. One of them is that Diwali is the day to worship Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. In the markets, housewives buy earthen idols of Goddess Lakshmi and Lord Ganesh, and the earthen house on which they place them. Therefore, for kumhar (potter), Diwali is a rush period. Another version is

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31 The festival falls on the fourth day after the full moon of Kartik month. The puja is performed for the safety and longevity of husbands by their wives.
that Diwali is the festival to celebrate the Prince Rama’s return to his Kingdom after 14 years of being into exile. It is said that people celebrates the day of his arrival with diyas (earthen lamps) as their ancestors did when he actually returned.

Fourth, Janmashtami is the day to celebrate Lord Krishna’s birthday. The festival is in the middle of the monsoon season. Mandirs are decorated with lights, flowers, leaves, or balloons. Some mandirs set up the tableaus depicting the episodes of Lord Krishna’s life. There are even mandirs which represent the Himalayas by putting many pieces of ice in one pile. Some mandirs fill their floors with ice-water in order that visitors can walk dipping their feet in the water. Others have a few children seating after dressing up as Krishna-Radha in front of their doorsteps. The mandirs in the back lanes makes the glittering shade with silver stings from the entry of lane to the mandir. Thus, there are various ways to attract people into their mandirs and such a decoration tends to be more and more colorful.

When darkness falls, the streets are crowded by people. They visit several mandirs, enjoy watching their gorgeous views, and pray to Lord Krishna. Prashad also makes them smile. In the case of Chandni Chowk, policemen block the main road with yellow barricades in order to prevent vehicles from getting through it, because hundreds of people visit the historic Gauri Sankar Mandir.

Another common sight is the cradle to set Krishna on it. Such a cradle are placed in various places like streets, mandirs, and houses. The devotees swing the cradle pulling the thread attached to it. It symbolizes their lulling the baby god. Then, the celebration is highlighted by a ritual bath that is given to the god at the midnight. On the Janmashtami of 2012, Gauri Sankar Mandir performed the rite in the room of the ground floor. The room had big doors and the doors were opened widely. Therefore, the ritual could be observed from the road. First, delightful music was played by the devotees during a few hours. Around midnight, a hijra danced in front of the cradle. Then, a few elderly shielded the cradle with a large sheet of fabric and gave a holy bath to the Krishna’s idol behind the cloth. After the bath, the idol was adorned with new clothes and jewelry. Then, the large fabric was unveiled and the god was

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32 Prashad means a kind of sacred food that a pujari distributes to them.
displayed in sight of devotees. Thereafter, people prayed to the god and returned home with some *prashad* after midnight. This is the night when many Hindus are awake for celebrations.

Sixth, *Navratri* is the festival to worship the nine avatars of the goddess Mother, or *Devi*. In Sanskrit, Navratri means ‘9 nights’. The festival is celebrated during 9 days of the month of *Asvin*. There are various elements to affect the street landscapes of Delhi during this period: *Durga Pandals*, children who are roaming in the streets, *Ramlila* performances, etc. First, *Durga Pandals* are displayed in the streets. The forms are various from traditional design to creative ones. Usually, these are beautifully decorated with lights, flowers, fancy costumes, etc. At every night, the crowds flock in front of the pandals to watch its sparkling facades.

Next, on the ninth day of the festival, children are roaming in the streets from early in the morning. They tend to appear in small group. They drop by many houses and receive from them many gifts such as silver dishes, plastic plates, money, toys, food, etc. In the afternoon, their carry-bags are filled with such gifts. Traditionally, it is the ritual to worship young pre-puberty girls as Goddess. Housewives invite to their house young girls who are wandering in the streets, perform a *Kumari Puja*, and present them silver dishes and food. In the *puja*, young girls are worshiped as manifestations of the goddess *Durga*. At the 9th day of *Navratri*, 2012, I observed that a housewife gave a girl some food in a residential area of Hudson Line. I asked the girl, “Why did the woman give you food?” She explained that the food was “*Kanjak Khane*”.

> कन्जक खाने। उस घर में गए, क्योंकि सबसे भी उन्हीं ने खिलाया था।
> अब दूसरे घर में जाएंगे। जो ब्रत रखता है वो खिलाता है और जो नहीं रखता है वो भी खिलाता है।
> बहुत से घर जाता है घर बुलाने आते हैं।

> “*Kanjak Khane*. We went to her house. She gave us food in the morning.

Now we will go to another house. Whether they keep a fast and do not

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33 The name to call persons who are biologically a man but has feminine gender.
keep fast, both of them give us food. We will go to many houses. They invite us to their homes.”

*Kanjak* is a ritual that young pre-pubescent girls are invited to be worshipped, are fed with delicacies like puri, halwa, etc. and were given gifts or money. It is also called as *Kumari Puja*. It is the tradition to worship young girls who have not attained puberty as manifestations of the divine female energy or *Devi* in Hindu religious traditions.\(^{34}\) *Kumari* means the “Living Goddess” (Van Kooij, 1978: 10) In other words, young girls are worshipped as the manifestations to impersonate the Hindu Goddess, Durga.

Therefore, for children, it is a good chance to get a sizable sum of money. But it is not always easy to find the house to welcome them. Usually, children roaming around in neighborhoods are in shabby clothes and it tells that they are from poor families. They are often shunned by housewives. Sometimes, they lose out on the chance to enter into the house by those children who arrive before them. Once in a while, children in luxurious clothes also appear holing a large plate in the streets. However, they do not stay in the streets for long time. They appear and disappear quickly.

In Delhi, with the Navratri festival, Ramlila dramas start to be performed in many places. The dramas continue for 10 days and each day’s drama is preceded by a pageantry with several carriages. The highlight of the story is played at the last day, or *Vijay Dashmi*. This day shows the victory of Lord *Rama* over the demon king *Ravana* in the final battle. Giant effigies of *Ravana*, his brother *Kumbhakaran*, and son *Meghanath* are blazed. Historically, the performance started for the entertainment of Hindu soldiers in Delhi by the order of *Bahadur Shah Zafar*, the last Muslim King. At that time, it was celebrated behind the Red Fort wall near the river Jamuna. (Channa, 1984: 68)

Today, it is performed in many grounds like the Ramlila Maidan, the Red Fort Ground, and so on. The Ramlila Maidan is the venue for the Ramlila of *Ram Lila Committee* that is one of the oldest committees in the city. During the festive days, the

\(^{34}\) Wikipedia – *Kumari*
committee takes out a pageantry from the Esplane Road in Old Delhi to the Ramlila Maidan in New Delhi every evening.

| Esplane Road – The Main road of Chandni Chowk – Nai Sarak - Chauri Bazar – Hauz Qazi Chowk – Ajmeri Gate – The Ramlila Maidan |

Another Ramlila ground is the Red Fort ground which is located in the open space in front of the Red Fort. The large space results from the clearance work that the British government did after 1857 and now, several functions are held in the ground. As Chandni Chowk was my field area, I watched the Ramlila dramas at the Red Fort Ground for the festival of 2011. The drama was prepared by Luv Khushi Committee. When I visited the ground for the first time, a young security guard asked me to show them a “pass”. I answered that I had no pass. Then I asked the boy where I could buy the ticket. However, he said to me, “there was no ticket. It is a pass.” I asked him again where I could buy the pass. He explained that ‘pass’ could not be sold. Then he just gave me his own pass in free. Honestly, I could not understand what was the difference between ticket and pass, even after I interviewed the vice president of the committee.

Q: There is a ticket?
A: No. There are passes. We, Ramlila is held by donation given the people. And so we have no ticket. And passes are given, to anybody who asks for it or persons who made a donation. As much amount of donation that he pays, he is given passes. So, the number of passes are given under the amount of donation given. And we allow to give friends and related ones.

Q: With just one ‘ticket’, they can have many companies?
A: Many passes, I give to him. One pass will take two child and two adults.

Passes are distributed to persons in consideration of many elements like the amount of donation, the relationships with the committee, and so on, while a ticket is sold at the fixed price. The pass can be called an invitation card and all of the
audiences are the invited guests. The invitation cards have several colors and the colors respectively designate the sections of seats. In the Ramlila festival of 2011, the historic red wall of Red Fort that was the fort wall of Mughal empire, was hidden by the colorful stage background and the area for audience seats was divided into several sections such as ‘VVIP’, ‘VIP’, ‘common persons’, ‘office bearers and donators’, and so on. According to the vice-president of the committee, those who donated from Rs. 51,000 to 1 lakh can receive a large corsage and the office bearers, a small corsage. Other “ordinary” guests are divided into tree types by the colors of passes. In other words, new order is inscribed in the ground by the colored passes.

< Figure 8: The Red Fort Ground (2011) >
Behind the audience seats, there were set up entertainment tents and food stalls. Except for the last two days, people seemed to be interested in the fair (mela) rather than the performances. Although there were a thousand seats, only dozens of them were filled with audiences. The atmosphere of the play was very liberal. Actors were amateurs and their actions were improvisatory. The audiences enjoyed talking with families or friends rather than concentrating on the plays. From time to time, celebrities visited and the proceedings were interrupted by their speech.

The culmination of the festivals is the 10th day. In many Ramlila grounds, the enactment of final battle takes places before giant effigies of Ravana and his brothers. Finally, the effigies are set fire to celebrate the victory of the princess Rama. At the last day of Ramlila festival 2011, I watched the play sitting between a family and a group of teenagers. A few of them climbed on chairs and others were standing to watch Ravans’ parade. At that time, a fat woman next to me was holding in her arms
her husband’s legs who was standing on his chair and, all of a sudden, she started to mimic the demon king Ravana’s laughing voice. “Ha-, Ha-, Ha-, Ha-” She was instantly directing the new version of the play. She played the role of Ravana and her husband became Sita, Prince Rama’s wife, who was kidnapped by the king. People around her started to laugh aloud seeing her. At the moment, I felt that it seemed to create a sense of unity. We were together in joyful moment and would share the memory. Also, it was the moment that I directly observed in the scene that the ordinary people reinterpreted the play by her practice.

Also, many Ravana effigies are set up in the residential areas and markets although its size is more or less small. As the body of effigy is filled with fire crackers, the sound are so clamorous when it is burnt. After Ravana fall down on the floor, boys collect a singed bamboo stick which was the frames of the effigy in dark streets. It is said that the stick gives them bravery.

In addition, several small-scale Hindu festivals are also celebrated like Raksha Badhan, Lohri, Vasant Panchami, and so on. Raksha Badhan is the day to celebrate the relationship between sisters and brothers. Sisters tie rakhi(sacred thread) on their brother’s wrist on this day. Rakhi symbolizes the sister’s love and prayers for her brother’s well-being. On the day, we can see men with rakhis on their left wrist at every place. Small dolls or toys are attached on rakhis for children.

Lohri is a winter festival to worship Lord Agni for abundant crops and prosperity. At night, families set up a bonfire in front of their houses, gather round the bonfires, throw sweets and popcorn in the flames, and talk to each other sitting around it. Therefore, streets of residential areas are filled with such small bonfires and people stay around it until late at night. We can also see a big bonfire prepared by a community. Around a bonfire, residents get together, take off their shoes, take turns around it, and throw popcorn in it.

Vasant Panchami is a festival that worships Saraswati, the Goddess of knowledge. People put on yellow colored clothes and take part in Saraswati puja. Especially, the puja is performed very seriously by students who are supposed to take an exam. I observed a yatra that was be held by Gauri Sankar Mandir in 2011. People in yellow
turbans walked scattering yellow petals in front of the mandir and then distributed yellow colored food like *jalebi*. In that day, the Mayor of Delhi visited to the *mandir* and joined in the Saraswati *puja*. In my opinion, the mayor’s white car seemed to play an important role as much as yellow petal in the landscape of the day.

As we have seen above, Hindu festivals are characterized by several features. Whatever they celebrate, Hindus enjoy getting together in open spaces. They perform a yatra, set up a Pandal and distribute free food to bystanders or devotees. In addition, they passionately decorate the outside walls of their houses or *mandirs*.

6.1.2 Muslims

There are *Eid-ul-Fitr*, *Eid-ul-Zuha*, and *Mauharram* in the Muslim main ceremonies. The atmosphere of *Eids* is cheerful but, at the same time, calm. Fast(*roja*) and prayer(*namaz*) are important to celebrate the days.

First, *Eid-ul-Fitr* is a Muslim holiday that marks the end of *Ramadan* or *Ramzan*. For Muslims, it is one of the most important months in which the Quran were revealed to the Islamic prophet, Muhammad. Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset for the whole month. Usually, they enjoy going to a big *masjid* for joint-*iftar*(the meal to break the fast). Some of them carry a tiffin box filled with some fruit and sweets, but there are also many people who buy some food for *iftar* near the *masjid*. Therefore, the month is the rush season for merchants who work in the markets near *masjids*.

In the Ramadan of 2012, Jama Masjid was jam-packed with Muslims every evening. Around 7 pm, the areas around the *masjid* were filled with men putting on white scull caps and women in black burkha or chador. Vendors were packed along the fence of the *masjid*. All of them had food stalls like fruit, *khajur*(dates), *samosa*, and so on. In the landscapes of festive days, beggars could not be missed. They were sitting making two lines in the middle of the stairs. Muslims went up the stairs with some water and food between the lines. When it was around 7:20 pm, people’s footsteps suddenly became faster. After a while, a man set off a few firecracker in an empty lot in front of the *masjid*. It was a signal to announce that people could break their fast. People started eating some fruit, sweets, and water as *iftar*. At the same time, the electric lights on the *masjid* were turned on and thus the festive mood was highlighted. After 10 minutes, people got out of the *masjid*. Beggars shouted to them, “Allah, Allah”. Such scenes were repeated during the entire month of Ramadan.

Muslims finish their Ramadan fast after seeing the crescent, or the new moon of the next month. If the crescent is not sighted at the last day of Ramadan as it is so cloudy, the fasting will be prolonged one more day by the formal announcement of the Shahi Imam.\(^{35}\) *Eid-ul-Fitr* is the festival to celebrate the ending of fast. I interviewed a Muslim man to have finished his prayer in front of Fatehpuri Masjid on

\(^{35}\) A title of superior authority in the issues of Islam.
the Eid-ul-Fitr of 2012. They defined the day as follows.

“After keeping fast, we celebrate Eid. We do the Eid prayer. For Muslims, it is a very big festive day. Then, we go back home and have some sweets. We also embrace each other. It is our Allah’s command. Our prophet did it. We will do it, too.”

At the day, the big masjids are so teeming with Muslim men at the festive days. In the case of the Walled City, so many people prefer to pray at Jama Masjid or Fatehpuri Masjid and, therefore, part of them have to pray on the roads outside the masjids because the buildings are not big enough to accommodate all of them. From early in the morning, the roads in front of the masjids are enclosed with yellow barricades and cloth in order to protect the devotees to pray on the road. The carriageways become the ‘yard’ of the masjid. Muslim men enjoy to make a big congregation and to offer namaz together at Eids. I asked a Muslim man why they come to prayer in Chandni Chowk. Their answers are as follows.

**Q:** Is there a masjid in your neighborhood?

**A:** There is a masjid. But we need to pray in a spacious place.

“It is the gift of Ramzan. It is Allah’s command that everyone should pray together in a place.”
Next, *Eid-ul-Zuha* is the festival about the spirit of sacrifice. People commemorate the willingness of Abraham who sacrificed his son Ishmael as an act of obedience to God. The scene of the festive occasion is almost similar to that of the *Eid-ul-Fitr*. People go to a *masjid*, pray together, and then go to a market. However, at the day of *Eid-ul-Zuha*, Muslims perform the goat sacrifice after going back to their houses, and it makes an unique landscape in the market. On this day, we can see peddlers to sell grass for ‘the last supper’ of goats and men to drive goats carrying some grass. There are also a few peddlers to sell goat skin bloodstained. It is the reason why people call the day as *Bakri-Eid*, or goat-festival. The following newspaper article explains the scene of the ritual.

“Eid-ul-Zuha is about the spirit of sacrifice”(The Times of India, 7Nov.2011)  
Eid-ul-Zuha is seen by most of my non-Muslim friends and even my own children to be an occasion to slaughter animals for no fault of theirs. My children see me as a “butcher” when I go ahead with this ritual! Others react the same way. Tilak Rastogi, a friend, doesn't come to my house on the day of Eid-ul-Zuha as he can't bear the blood, gore and stench on account of the sacrifice of goats.

In 2010, I observed *Eid-ul-Zuha* in the main road of Chandni Chowk. From the morning, policemen prohibited vehicle traffic in the streets near masjids with yellow barricades. In the case of the Fatehpuri Masjid, a lot of pieces of cloth was blocked between carriageways and sidewalks. The Muslim men who could not enter into the masjid, were sitting on the pavement in front of the masjid. In the sidewalks, Muslim men were still heading towards their prayer place in white caps and kurtas. They were accompanied with their children but without wife. Their daughters were adorned with glittering clothes and shoes. They dressed up, put make-up on faces, and carried hand bags. Even some girls were in long dresses and crowns. Therefore, it seems to be the day for girls. I thought that the day seemed to be a part of the precious memory of childhood to the girls. In contrast, there were few Muslim woman in the crowd.
Imam’s sermon continued from 8 am to 9 am. Then a siren blared through megaphones outside the masjid. All Muslim men stood up and prayed. After the ritual, people looked high and low for their acquaintances. Whenever they met relatives or friends, they hugged each other three times. They also had their sons embracing their peers. Then, they went to the market in order to break the fast.

As I stated above, the two Eids have something in common with each other. Both of them were proceeded in an orderly manner, or the thousands men lined up neatly by themselves in front of a masjid. After the prayer, they went to market for buying some food. Therefore, for vendors, these days were their high season. Another common scene was that beggars were sitting in a long line in front of masjids and that a lot of Muslims gave them alms.

However, Mauharram celebration is different from those of the Eids in the respect that processions are held out. Muslims take out large processions on the day of Ashura, the tenth day of Mauharram. On this day, Sunni Muslims cheerfully celebrate the day because Moses obtained a victory over the Egyptian Pharaoh on this day. The mood is almost the same as that of the Hindu pilgrimage of Kanwar Yatra. They carry banners and tazias or taziyas\(^{36}\) from Jama Masjid of the walled city to the Karbala ground of Jor Bagh.

In 2013, Mauharram processions started from the early dawn. Muslim men got together with their tazias in front of Jama Masjid around 4 am, or before fajr, and then show off their works. After that, they go back to their town, again. Some of them remained and displayed their tazias in front of Jama Masjid and Matia Mahal from in the morning. Then around 2 pm, tazia processions got together at the Matia Mahal at around 3 pm. Boys led the processions playing with swords. The play had no synopsis and was roughly proceeding as follows. First, two boys volunteered to fight with swords. Second, their play finished when one of them was pushed to the crowd. Third, boys run forward shouting with joy. Then, other boys started another fight. A few boys were injured during such a performance, but no one seemed to take it seriously. The boys were followed by a few trucks on which the letters such as Islami Sabeel or Dini Sabeel were written. People on the truck gave away free food to the ‘pilgrims’. At last,

\(^{36}\) Replicas of coffin or shrine made of bamboo and colorful paper.
colorful tazias were carried by men.

Unlike Sunnis, the Shia Muslims consider *Ashura* as the day of mourning and remembering martyrdom of Imam Hussain\(^\text{37}\) which happened at Karbala on the tenth day of Mauharram in AD. 680. Shia Muslims are mourning the death of Imam Hussain and his followers, for 2 months and 8 days. First, they take out a procession near Shia Jama Masjid on the day of *Ashura*. They put on black dresses, attend *majlis* (congregation), listen the recitation to represent the death of Hussain. They are crying out and beating their chest with hands to express their sorrow. Then take part in *mattam* (flagellate their bodies with chains or whips) or in mourning. The ritual starts in the Shia Jama Masjid in Kashmere Gate around 10 o’clock in the morning, and continues until arriving in Punja Sharif Karbala in the same locality. However, they do not carry tazias like Sunnis on the day of Ashura.

Their tazia processions hold on the fortieth day from Ashura, *Chehlum*, and the day after 2 months and 8 days from the first day of *Mauharram*. According to the member of the Anjuman TaaziaDaran committee, they call the latter as “Black Tazia”. Their tazia is distinguishable from that of Sunnis in the respect that the former is not colorful. They emphasize that their tazia is white or black.

We can divide Muslim functions into ‘Eids’ and ‘Mauharram processions’. The former is clearly distinguishable from both the Hindu festivals and the Sikh ones, in the respect of only men’s ritual. The latter produces almost the same landscapes as the processions of Hindus and Sikhs. All of them take out serve free food and give unprofessional performances in the streets. However, Eids and Mauharram processions have one thing in common that both of them are passionate about appropriating of the streets.

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\(^{37}\) Imam Husain is the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad.
< Picture 17: Processions on the day of Ashura – Chauri Bazar/ Nov. 25, 2012 >

< Picture 18: Boys’ small size tazias – Chauri Bazar/ Nov. 25, 2012 >
<Picture 19: A performance to express their sorrow on “black tazia”-Matia Mahal, Jan. 20, 2013>

<Picture 20: Bakri Eid prayer in front or Fatehpuri Masjid - Nov. 2010>
6.1.3. Sikhs

As for Sikhs, main ritual days are Guru Nanak’s birthday, Guru Tegh Bahadur’s martyrdom day, Vaisakhi, Diwali, and so on. On these ritual days, they hold a parade called ‘nagar kirtan’ (town parade) and enjoy giving out free food, or ‘khana Sewa’ (food service).

First, on Guru Nanak’s birthday, Sikhs come together at the Sisganj Gurdwara in the morning and then start a procession from the Guru Nanak Piao Gurdwara. Vehicle traffic is blocked in many streets from the morning and hundreds of service tents are set up along the route. On this day, anybody can set up a tent for food service on roads without any permission. They distribute free food to people who fill up the streets.


Second, the Sisganj Gurdwara holds a procession at the martyrdom day of Guru Tegh Bahadur. It starts at the Gurdwara around 10 am, passes through Gurdwara Bangla Sahib, and then continues until they arrive at the Rakab Ganj Gurdwara.


The Sikh processions look like a little more systematic rites as several professional bands lead people and many students in uniforms participate in the parade. However, it is not much different from the Hindu or Muslim processions in the respect that everybody can take part in the parades and anybody can set up a service tent for free food without permission or reporting.

Third, Vaisakhi was an ancient harvest festival celebrated across the northern
Indian subcontinent. In modern cities, Sikhs adds new meaning to the day, the day of the formation of the Khalsa. In 1699, Guru Gobind Singh established the Khalsa and eliminated the differences of high and low and established that all human beings are equal. Sikhs also celebrate Diwali. For them, Diwali is the day when the sixth Guru Hargobind Sahib was released after being imprisoned by the Muslim Emperor Jahangir and the foundation stone of the Golden Temple was laid. On the day, the Sisganj Gurdwara gets a continuous flow of devotees to offer candlelight in front of the entry.

Thus, in Delhi, there are several religious groups. They respectively celebrate their own ritual days. They enjoy appropriating streets for their functions, make a noisy, light up dark streets, give away free food to people, and so on. These attract people to come out on the streets. Therefore, Delhi seems to be in festive mood throughout the year and it makes Delhi look like ‘the city of festivals’. I feel that these groups show off how many members are in their groups, how they are happy, and how they worship their gods and ancestors.
< Picture 21: Guru Nanak Birthday’s eve – G.T. Road Nov. 19, 2010 >

< Picture 22: Diwali – in front of Sisganj Gurdwara/ Nov. 5, 2010 >
6.1.4 An Arena for Expression

In Delhi, a lot of religious functions are held in the streets, which become an arena that people express themselves. People appropriate carriageways for taking out processions, giving performances, and displaying their works like tazia. Therefore, it is natural that they prefer to pass by the areas to have many populations. For instance, Sikhs take out a procession on the Guru Tegh Bahadur(GTB)’s Martyrdom. On the way of the procession, Sikhs take a roundabout way around Chunna Mandi. I interviewed a middle aged Sikh man who speaks in fluent English in a gurdwara. He interprets the reason why Sikhs do not pass by the New Delhi Railway Station but pass through the market Chunna Mandi Bazaar as follows.

< Figure 9: The route of procession on the GTB’s Martyrdom day >

“Because there is no population in this area(around the New Delhi Railway Station)… It is not like a kind of frogmarch. So, it is not like a procession to show our mighty but to help organize a decorum under the
system, ‘Here we are, and we know in which way you live in such localities.’ You understand what it implicates? These are strategical things, which are not usually need to be talked about. O.K.? But then, obviously, there is nothing to hide because we don’t mean any harm to anyone. Our purpose is to organize a system, to live in discipline and to learn to live in harmony, in this system.”

His explanation shows that the procession needs spectators and is designed to express their cultural values. We can also guess it from the gorgeous carriages of the procession. With all sincerity, Sikhs decorate with colorful flowers the carriages on which the Holy Books rest. Such a decoration usually continues for one or two hours before their procession.

Usually, large scale processions provide people with arenas of expression. Sometimes, people transform the shapes of ritual items like tazia, kanwar, Ravana effigy, etc. Especially, many Sunnis respectively make their own tazias and it brings the diversity in the shapes or the decorations of tazia. I asked many wrong questions during my fieldwork because I thought that the functions were organized by a few leaders. I used to ask, “Who is the director?”, “Who prepares the ritual?”, and so on. However, in many cases, they answered that they participate individually and just follow what their ancestors did. I interviewed a middle aged man who is a Sunni at Matia Mahal (a market near Jama Masjid) on the day of Ashura, 2012. I asked him, “From whom did you learned the way to make tazia?” He did not logically explain the reason as follows.

A: How much did you spend for your tazia?
Q: हमारी इसके में लगा जाता है इस हजार से लेकर पच्चीस हजार तक।
( Rs. 10000 to Rs.15000 for our tazia)
A: Who supported the cost?
Q: नहीं जो अपने पैसे से करते हैं। हम अपनी जब से करते हैं।
(No, we make it with our money.)
Q: From whom did you learn the way to make the tazia?

A: इसका जवाब तो मैं भी नहीं दे पाओगा और पीढ़ी दे पीढ़ी ताजिया बनाता आ रहा है वो इसलिए हम भी बनाते हैं। ये जो मेरे बड़े है ना, वो भी सफल है। और जो मेरे कफन भिल रही है, वो असल में ऐसा है, वो सामाजिक शिक्षा को अंदर निकलती है, समझी हैं, और ख़ाबतक मुझे ईलम है इस बात का तो एत भी है कि ये तो श्रीक का महिमा है हमारा और इसके अंदर हम निरंतर मान्य करते हैं, और ये ताजिया इसी condition से अपनी पीढ़ी दे पीढ़ी से विकसित चला आ रहा है।

( It is difficult to answer. Tazia has been made from generation to generation and therefore, we make it, too. My elder could answer it. Actually, a coffin is taken out in a social committee. Understood? As far as I know, this is a month to mourn and …. Tazia is taken out under such a condition from generation to generation.)

The Sunni tazia procession is an interesting example to show people’s talents to adjust new situations. Historically, tazia processions were performed only by Shia Muslims during Mughal Empire. However, after the Independent of India, the Indian Government allowed diverse processions to be taken out in the boulevards and then Sunnis started to perform tazia processions on the day of Ashura. A staff of a madrasa explains the reason why Sunnis started such a procession as follows.

इसका एलटमाम तश्सी से है, दोनो जुलूस, मुस्लामात जब में नहीं रहे थे और ख़ाफ का माहूल था।
पता नही हमारी कौम है की नहीं यहाँ, तो फिर बूढ़वों ने उसकी मजबूती को जाहीर करने के लिए, यहाँ हम हैं,
तो ताजिया का जुलूस, ईद उल मिलाद उन नबां का जुलूस, ये दोनो बकायदा शुरू कराया।
Government ने बकायदा मंजूरकिया इन दोनों को.
“These tazias are taken out since then. When Muslims left India, we went through an identity crisis. We did not know how many Muslims left India. So our ancestors started the tazia processions and Id-ul-Milad-un Nabi in order to express their concern. Also, Government gave it consent and supported people who take out these procession.”

A teacher of another madrasa explains that the Sunni tazia processions imitate the Shia ones. According to him, a small amount money is collected from each to make a tazia and there are a lot of committees to make a tazia in this way.

Q: चूनियाँ ने कब start किया?
A: ऐसे ऐसे ननका देख-देखी काम है, ऐसे मिल जाए ऐसे ऐसे भी तो। ननका अलग committee होती है।
Q: आपल मैं चंद करते है ये।
A: नाम नहीं होता, कुछ लोग मिल लिए, Rs 100/-, 50/-, ये के बना हिया, बस। अलग है, हर इलाके के अलग-अलग committee होते है। बहुत स्वाभाविक committee है।
Q: When did Sunnis start (a tazia procession)?
A: They imitate what they saw. They collect money among themselves. There are several committees.
Q: People donate for it?
Q: There is no name (to call it). Some people who we meet, collect, Rs. 100, Rs. 50, in order to make a tazia, that is it. They are many groups and each area has their own committee. There are many committees.

However, the Sunni tazias does not exactly imitate the Shia ones. Sunnis make colorful tazias and carry them in a joyful mood, while Shias beat their chests and mourn to express their condolences on the death of Hussain. I asked the reason why a Sunni Muslim make a colorful tazia but he was embarrassed at my question. He just
lamented as follows.

एक ही दिन है, अब खुशी मनाएँ या गम मनाएँ

“These days falls on the same date! So, should we celebrate it or should we be sad?”

On the other hand, the Shia processions also underwent a transformation. Nowadays, their processions do not pass through the main road of Chandni Chowk. After the Partition of India, Hindus and Sikhs became the majority groups in the area, which is clearly revealed in the election of MCD members. (see Appendix) A Muslim man tells that such depopulation affected the change of route. Today, these tazia processions show that Muslims are adapting to new environments or new situations that they face, both through creation and transformation.

“As many Muslims do not live there, so we do not want to disturb the other communities. There are people from other religions, so we do not want to hurt their feeling. They are not disturbed if we take out procession from our locality. Looking at the road where Muslims play with knives, other people may be scared at it.”
These rituals seem organized when we watch them from a distance. But many people take part in these rituals personally. Each committee or person can participate in these rituals by their own ways. Everybody can participate in such a procession. Everybody can serve food to people if they can afford to do it. Although there is no a central organization to manage these functions, these have an united color. These resulted from repeated practices throughout history. In Delhi, many large scale processions were approved by the Parliament after 1948 and now, these are taken out under the support of government departments such as the Police Stations, the Fire Stations, and local authorities. These functions are allowed to use thoroughfares. Policemen are placed from place to place for security for these processions.

In such a large scale procession, as thousands of people get together in the streets. Therefore, it has enough potential to turn into a political rally. I observed many cases that the religious festivals were keeping its political inclination. First, a Gandhian activist, Annan Hazare, held a hunger strike from 16th August to 28th August in 2011 which asked the Indian Government to enforcing anti-corruption laws. The term almost coincided with the period from Janmasthami(22nd August) to Ganesha
Chaturthi (1st September). His hunger strike affected these festivals.

Specifically, on Janmasthami of 2011, a few of tents for singing performance were set up in the main road of Chandni Chowk. In the tents, the organizers did wear the hat with the words, “Mae Anna Hazare Hoon” (I am Anna Hazare) and repeatedly shouted his name in the middle of the performance. Also, there was a placard on which a few phrases were printed as follows.

श्री रानीगंज नवसुबक कीतें...  
अच्छान हजारे के...  
मईल 33 श्री जन्माष्टमी...  

“Sri Raniganj…  
for Annan Hazare…  
Mandal 33rd Sri Janmasthami…”

On the day of Ganesh Chaturthi 2011, a murti of Ganesh was adored with a hat to symbolize Anna Hazare. Such a mood was continued during the Dussehra festival, or from 28th Sep. to 6th Oct. A procession was appropriating the road from Fatehpuri Masjid to Town Hall for a few hours. On their first carriage, an adolescent made up as Gandhi was sitting. On the second, an adult dressed up as Anna Hazare and was standing waving big flags. Besides, the Ravans of other committees were referred to as ‘an effigy on Corruption’ in 2012. The meanings of Ravans can be changed depending on issues or committees. During the Dussehra of 2012, a social issue was about ‘Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in retail’ and many committees set up the Ravans to symbolize ‘FDI’ and burn them. In the city of Indore, people even built an effigy of a Western general.

38 “Night Sky Lights up as Ravana Meets Fiery end on Dussehra” (The Times of India, New Delhi, Oct. 7, 2011).  
39 Indore is located in Central India and is famous as a commercial city.
As Dussehra, festival symbolising victory of good over evil, culminates on Wednesday with the burning of effigies of demon king Ravana, the effigy makers have tried to bring creativeness to this age-old practice by touching people's chord. So, this year get ready to burn Ravana's effigy symbolising foreign direct investment (FDI), Swine, inflation and many more….. Apart from these, Ravan constructed at Rambagh by Dushehra Utsav Samiti will be suffering from flu. He is going to sneeze and snort. One at Rabindra Nath Tagore Marg will shoot fire from its mouth and eyes.
As for Muslim ritual days, the Ashur a of 2011 coincided with the day on which Babri Masjid was demolished, or 6th December, 1992. On that day, a stage was set up in front of Jama Majsid around 1 pm. Political leaders gave a speech to demand the rebuilding Babri Masjid to the India Government.

"Today, 6th December, It is the day of Yaume Ashura and of Yaume Martyrdom. Rebuild new Babri Masjid on the same site of old Babri Masjid. Congress Party has to be ashamed…"

Like this, these religious festivals give people opportunities to get together in a place, to showcase their artistic talents, and to express their opinions. Also, people get experience to appropriate the carriageways. It contributes to diversify the functions of carriageways.

6.2 Temples as a Center in Everyday Life

In Delhi, everyday life is closely related places of worship, for instance, mandirs (Hindu temples), gurdwaras(Sikh temples), masjids(Muslim temples), and so on. Usually, these are located in accessible places such as the sides of carriageways or the junction of the two cross roads. All day long, people go in and out these temples. Sometimes, we can see the elderly dozing off or meditating in a mandir or a Gurdwara. Thus, temples are the spaces not only for praying but also for taking a rest.

40 Picture source : “Dussehra Celebration” (The Times of India, Oct. 24, 2012)
Also, these temples provide devotees with several services like schools, hospitals, and so on.

First, the great temples in Chandni Chowk respectively run a school: the Sikh Khalsa Girl School, the Baptist Church Primary School, the Fatehpuri Madrasa, and so on. For instance, the Khalsa Girls School was founded in 1950 and today, it is financially supported both by the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) and by the Government of Delhi. The school has 12 classes from the first class to the twelfth one, and approximately 1500 enrolled students. All of tuition fee and uniform are offered free of charge. In winter, students put on their winter uniforms, blue skirts and blue sweaters and in summer, white skirts. Students in these uniforms throng in the streets at every opening time and closing time of the school.

The Church Primary School, it was founded in 1973 by the Central Baptist Church Committee. It is a private primary school for both girls and boys, and has 6 classes. The tuition fee is Rs. 700 per a month and it tells that almost students are from the middle class. Students put on not sweaters but jackets as a winter school uniform and the teachers are proud that all courses are proceeded with English textbooks and that the school provides their students with computer lessons. The school provides a shuttle system. Almost students commute from home to school by a ‘carriage rickshaw’, or a developed cyclerickshaw. The service fee is Rs. 400 per a month. As the school rickshaw pick up and drop off students inside the church, it is not easy to see the students in the streets. Actually, I had not recognized for long time that there is a school in the church.

The Fatehpuri Madrasa is a traditional Muslim school which is located inside Fatehpuri Masjid. It was founded at 1658 and has 150 students. About 2/3 of the students stay in the school hostel. The school has 8 classes from first grade to eighth grade and provides students with subjects like Arabic, Hindi, English, Phasi, Urdu, etc. School lessons start from 8 am and continue until 12: 45 pm in winter and, in summer, from 7am until noon. Students put on white kurta and white cap. The tuition fee is not only free but also students receive the pocket money of Rs.500 per a month from the school. As for vacation, there is a “Ramzan vacation”. It starts from 10days before the month of Ramadan or Ramzan and finishes at the tenth day after the month. In other
words, it is a 50-day vacation. There is no fixed winter or summer vacation. Instead, the school gives students temporary holidays depending on weather conditions, like heavy raining, a cold wave, a heat wave, etc.

Second, as for the medical services, a lot of mandirs provide doctors with the rooms for homeopathic clinic in the neighborhoods. Usually, such a clinic is open in the evening of weekdays or in the morning of the weekends. For example, there are two mandirs in Hakikat Nagar and both of them have clinic centers. The one is called the Shyam Kripa Dispensary and the other, the Sanatan Dharma Homepathic Dispensery. Both of them run Homeopathic clinics during weekdays. The doctor of the Shyam Kripa explains that Homeopathy is a kind of system of medicine like Ayurveda, Allopathy, or Unani. In addition, the Shyam Kripa serves ‘eye clinic’ from 11 am to 1 pm and the ‘acupuncture’ clinic from 6 pm to 8 pm every Sunday. The center invites a medical specialists who work in other hospitals or companies and provide them with examining rooms and monetary support. Therefore, residents can use these services at cheap cost. On the other hand, Sikhs run many hospitals both small and big. Sometimes, they open a ‘street clinic’ on the sidewalk. Such a clinic has just a desk and a chair, and patients are sitting on floor in a queue before the desk. It creates a ‘spectacle’.

Thus, Delhi people have their own medical systems. They have the unique mark to symbolize the system. Many medical centers use the mark that two snakes wind themselves around a pole and we can see it easily in the streets. The mark is the emblem of Indian Medical Association which is a national organization of the medical profession. The association started in 1928 and has used the mark as their emblem. This mark is for medical specialists and doctors can attach it to all things for their services.

Third, Delhi people still keep their traditional marriage ceremonies. Hindus wedding needs a pandit(a scholar skilled in the Sanskrit language) or a pujari to guide the rituals. Their wedding rituals are essentially performed with a ritual fire, or havan. The bride follows the bridegroom's footsteps turning around the holy fire. It also forms an integral and indispensable part of marriage rituals. By law and tradition, no Hindu marriage is deemed complete unless seven encirclements have been made
around the fire by the bride and the groom together. After the marriage ceremony, the bride and the groom visit a temple to take blessings of God when the bride arrives at the bridegroom’s house. Therefore, they have to keep in touch with the *pandit* or *pujari* of the *mandir* in their neighborhood. In the case of Sikhs, many gurdwaras provide devotees with the place for wedding reception. Hakikat Grudwara has a wedding ground near the public park. Muslims also need a priest, *Imam* for their wedding ceremony. *Imam* go to the wedding place and ask three times respectively the bride and the bridegroom whether they agree to their wedding or not. Without the process, the wedding is not accepted as valid. To sum up, temples play a role as a medical centre, an educational institute, a marriage place, etc. Many temples are located in the neighborhoods and help devotees to practice their religious in their everyday life.

### 6.3 Passion to uncover their own religious Identity

*I am walking in Chandni Chowk.*

*Streets, once, water had flown on and moonlight had danced in.*

*Spaces, blacken and brighten, waning and waxing,*

*Here, people easily discern their friends.*

*Sikhs wearing turbans, Muslims with white caps,*

*Strangers looking the streets through digital cameras*

*(From my fieldnote: April 27th, 2011)*

Delhi residents are enthusiastic about displaying their religious identity through costumes, accessories, hair styles, etc. Men commonly put on both *kurta* and Western shirts, but Sikh men are recognized by their turbans and *kara* at first sight. The Sikhs were commanded to keep the five ‘Ks’ by the tenth Guru Gobind Singh from 1699. The five *Ks* means the five items of *kesh* (unshorn long hair), *kara* (a steel bracelet), *kangha* (a wooden comb), *kachera* (a kind of underwear), and *kirpan* (a short sword). Among them, *Kara* is a symbol of permanent bonding to the community and *kesh* shows the will not to get rid of whatever God has given. For Sikh women, a turban is
not essential but optional. They usually put on a kurta which the costume is also called as punjabi-suits. Nowadays, because a kurta becomes a common dress for women in Delhi, it is not easy to distinguish them from others by the dress. However, some of them carry a dagger called a kirpan on their shoulder. It tells that they are Sikhs. Also, they are distinguished by their young sons who wear a patka like Buddha’s hairstyle.

As for Muslims, men wear a skull cap and a white kurta. Especially, they have to wear the cap during their prayers. Therefore, we can easily observe a lot of Muslims in white cap and white kurta near masjids before and after every prayer time. Muslim women have more severe dress restrictions than men. When women go outside, they usually hide themselves in chador, hijab, or burkha. Women ‘show off’ their religious identity in the streets and they are considered just as ‘Muslim women’. Thus, many Muslim women have little chance of expressing their individuality or personal tastes in the streets.

Lastly, the red dot which is called as tikka or bindi is worn by Hindus. Many Hindu men go to work with such a forehead mark in the morning. They get such a mark from a pujari (a priest who are available to perform rituals) after praying to gods and goddess in a mandir or from his wife at home. It is believed that the dot protects against all bad luck. Women also wear bindi on their foreheads. In addition, married women apply sindoor with bindi. Sindoor is a kind of red pigment powder and is applied on the front of the parting-line of a woman’s hair. Hindus are also distinguished by a red thread on their wrist, maulli. Sikh women apply bindi on their foreheads and Muslim women have maulli with their wrists, but they are not the same in the respect that the former nearly always wears bindi and maulli because they take part in a lot of pujas and receive bindi and maulli in the rituals.

In many cases, we can easily discern a person’s religious identity in the streets as it is emphasized by his or her physical appearance. Goffman refers to body idiom as a kind of nonverbal communication. According to him, appearance and manner are ‘items of expressive equipment’. (Goffman, 1959: 24) Especially, in the Indian society, body idioms play an important role in everyday life. Das points out that in the Indian society, great care is taken in everyday life. For instance, Indian women are expected
to see that body-extremities are properly bound by the use of bangles, anklets, etc. (Das, 1986: 189) In Delhi, many heterogeneous groups share spaces and the streets are the spaces where frequent contacts happen between different groups and where it makes tensions occur from time to time. The facts give a glimpse of the reasons why Delhi people put on different clothes and headdress, and decorate with their own religious items, public spaces like water tap stands, parks, and so on. According to Goffman, conventional situation closure can play a role as communication barriers in the absence of actual physical closure. (1963: 151) In Delhi, People are passionate about body idiom and decorating spaces and it would be considered as ‘walking walls or barriers’.

Also, we cannot overlook buildings and belongings for they often highlight religious identities through them. In the streets, buildings show their ‘identities’ with decorations and facades. First of all, temples have their own unique features. Normally, mandir structures are characterized by a pink lofty roof made by a quadrangular pyramidal shape. Some mandirs also display the statues of Lord Krishna or Lord Ganesh on façade. Masjids can be discerned with domes, minarets (tall towers), battlement, and Arabic Letters. Gurdwaras also have domes as masjids, but the former is distinguishable from chattris, and the Punjabi letters.

Next, many Hindus protect their homes with items like a kali mask, a Hindu emblem or a horseshoe on the outer walls of houses. Sometimes, new car has a mandir emblem painted on its hood. It means that the owner is a Hindu and that it has not been long since he performed a puja for safe driving. Sikhs do not decorate their building. However they also put on their vehicles, the stickers with the emblem or letters of Sikhism. In the case of auto-rickshaws, cycle-rickshaws, and trucks are decorated with god-idols, religious pictures, emblems, and letters. Almost all of them like to decorate colorfully their own vehicles with god-idols, pictures, and so on. Even some Hindus tie a holy red cloth on their bicycles or motorcycles.

Shopkeepers are also very passionate about decorating their own shops. The entrance of shop displays different symbols. Hindu shopkeepers deploy a little ‘alter’ inside their shops and, for Muslims, they hang an Arabic calligraphy, Masha’Allah41.

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41 It means an Arabic phrase, ‘Whatever Allah wants’. (www.Islamic-Dictionary.com)
in their shops. Vendors decorate their workspace with religious pictures. For example, they hammer a nail on the wall of public buildings and hang the god’s pictures. Therefore, it is very easy to see religious items in many places like residential areas, markets, thoroughfares, or lanes. It is not an exception for street vendors. They put diverse religious items on their stalls, too. Thus, the urban spaces of Delhi are colored with lots of religious items, people’s diverse costumes, and so on.