4. Contemporary Celebration of Ganapati Festival in Pune City

Ganapati festival has been celebrated in the city for more than a century with great enthusiasm and fervor. The changing political, economic and social system has affected the way of celebration. Aspiration of masses for modern ways of life as well as for more and more religiosity is witnessed during the festival all the times. The transgressionary tendencies to overcome the norms of purity and pollution as well as of propriety have also been witnessed in the festival. The focus of this chapter is to note the important developments in the festival with regard to the observance as well as transgression of the social and religious norms. The attitude of the politicians and the elite class towards the festival and their relationship with it has also been noted in this chapter.

The period of last 15 years i.e. from 1985 to 2000 has been selected for the research work. The reports about the Ganapati festival during this period have been taken into account. The reports in the prominent Marathi daily, Kesari are primarily referred to while studying the contemporary celebration of Ganapati festival. Hence, in the following writings, whenever the reports in Kesari are referred, the date of the publication of the report and the number of the page are only mentioned. In very few cases other newspapers are considered and their names have been duly mentioned. The Kesari, as it is well known, was started by the great nationalist leader, Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak. This newspaper has consistently given wide coverage to the Ganapati festival, since its beginning. The two books published by the publishing house of the newspaper about Ganapati festival have been among very few reference books about Ganapati festival. Hence, it is quite reasonable to refer to the reports in the Kesari, to know the contemporary celebration of Ganapati festival. The chapter is primarily a reconstruction of the reports in Kesari by which some certain trends and developments in Ganapati festival could be understood. Such inferences and comments on the basis of the reports selected have been noted with the reports. It needs to be noted that the news reports quoted are referred to as evidences and hence paraphrasing them is avoided wherever necessary so that the evidences are not tampered. The language of the reports may not be found consistent with the observations and comments, but since the reports are used as evidences rather than
Increasing participation, religiosity and religious observance

The Ganapati festival in the period of 1985 to 2000 is marked by the exponential growth in terms of participation by the masses. The number of Ganapati mandals (mandal is a group of local people who celebrate Ganapati festival as a public festival in a public space in their locality) also increased in this time period. The observance of religious practices by people and especially by those who have conventionally stayed away (or are kept away) from the religious rituals became more visible as well as more significant. Those who are denied the religious and cultural space occupied it, by way of observance of religious practices during Ganapati festival. Participation of women and dalits in the Ganapati festival became more significant. Thus while the religious observance gained importance, it led to the denial of religious dogma and occupation of the religious as well as the cultural space by those who were denied it by the society. The non-Brahmin people have been always enthusiastic about the festival and it became more obvious in this period. The Shreemant Dagadusheth Halawai Sarvajanik Ganapati Trust became the most important Ganapati mandal in this period with the maximum support from masses. The mandal has been celebrating Ganapati festival in as grand a manner as possible. The mandal also played a pivotal role in propagating the Hindu religious practices and popularizing them among the non-Brahmin communities and women. With more and more observance of religious rituals, the festival also became one of the reasons of developing tension among
Hindu and Muslim communities. These features are noted in detail with evidences in succeeding text.

The participation of masses in the festival continued to increase to the gigantic level. It had its effect on various institutions. The increased level of participation of masses in the festival is indicated by its effect on the public transport system in the city. The public transport body in the city has been making special arrangements to carry millions of enthusiastic citizens from all over the city and surrounding areas. This is has been described in exact manner in a news item, which said, 'in seven days from 14th to 20th the Pune Municipal Transport (PMT) carried 2.4 million people and got the revenue of Rs.22, 89,000.' (24-9-1991,p3)

The participation of masses in the festival increased to such a level that all the main roads in the downtown area had to be closed for the vehicular traffic in the evening. This phenomenon has become common for last many years. Considering the crowd gathering to watch the public Ganapati festival, many roads are closed for (vehicular) traffic for certain period during Ganapati festival. The Ganapati festival is celebrated for about ten days and in the beginning for about three-four days the roads are not much crowded. The roads get crowded in the later half of the festival. In the year of the given news item, it was reported that the vehicular traffic had been banned on some important roads in the downtown area. Parking of any vehicle up to 200 feet from the place where the idol of Ganapati had been installed in the pandal was also banned from a certain day. The roads on which the vehicular traffic was been banned were as follows—

1] Laxmi road- from Hamjekhan square to Tilak square.
2] Shivaji road- from Kakasaheb Gadgil statue to the Jedhe square.
3] Bajirao road- from Telephone Bhavan to the Appa Balawant square.
4] Tilak road- from Jedhe square to Puram square.
5] Shankarsheth road.
6] Part of Pune - Satara road.
7] Road connecting Sanas statue to Hirabag square.
8] Shastri road- police station at Senadatta square to Tilak square. (26-8-1998,p5)

This news item is representative of the situation almost every year. Every year, the number of people flocking the downtown area has been growing. The roads, noted above which were closed for vehicular traffic are the most important roads in the central part of the city. Such a crowd, which makes it necessary for the authorities to
ban vehicles in the downtown area, is witnessed every year, in the later half of the Ganapati festival. Except for Ganapati festival for no other public event – cultural, political or social- the roads are filled by people to such a level. The people in the city who venture out on the streets to watch the decorations done by the mandals, remain on the streets in large numbers until late in the night. They are joined by the visitors from other places. The increasing number of people joining the celebrations and their staying on the streets until early in the morning has become a challenge to the authorities to maintain law and order. Many innovative ideas are implemented to control the huge crowd on the streets, enjoying the festival. One such unthinkable method was adopted from year 2000 to control the crowd. Like the vehicles, the pedestrians were forced to traverse the path in a unidirectional way. This was necessitated by the gigantic proportion of the participation of masses in the festival. This method has been described in the following news.

'Some routes to be allowed for one-way traffic of the pedestrians during the Ganapati festival---Additional police commissioner S. M. Mushreef informed that the city police have decided to allow only one-way traffic on some roads in the downtown area from 5th September after nine in the night so that the women and children could watch the decorations properly and the people who flock from the villages will be well guided.' (1-9-2000,p1)

This innovative way of controlling flow of pedestrians has been successful and was adopted by the masses with their common resilience and flexibility. This method of controlling the surging masses had been adopted for the next year and was appreciated by people.

The increasing participation of masses in the Ganapati festival is also indicated by the rising number of Ganapati mandals joining the immersion procession. The number of mandals in the main procession increased and the enthusiasm of the activists of the mandals rose significantly in the given period. This news item is about the main procession on the Laxmi road. This is not the only immersion procession in the city. Many mandals join the separate processions in their areas.

The news item said, 'it was seen that the Ganapati mandals have queued for immersion procession by bringing out their carts on the Laxmi road, by 24 hours prior to the start of the procession. The tractor of the Vijay Maruti mandal was brought near the City post office at midday. For last few years it has been observed that the
mandals which try to get good position in the queue bring in their carts 24 hours prior to start of the procession.' (12-9-2000, p8)

The mandals have been more and more enthusiastic about participating in the main immersion procession on Laxmi road. The increasing number of mandals in the procession is the reflection of the increasing participation of the masses in the Ganapati festival itself. The following news item throws more light on the growth of the festival in terms of popular participation. It said, 'Few hours left to the immersion procession- 125 more mandals to participate in the procession on Laxmi road- the police department in order to complete the immersion procession earlier than usual, has taken initiative and made available new ghats (constructions on riverbanks which facilitate entry into the river) on the riverbanks and also made other provisions. But the department has also allowed 118 more mandals to participate in the main procession on the Laxmi road. Thus the number of mandals which will go by Laxmi road for immersion has become 345 this year. Last year the total number of mandals on all the four roads (including Laxmi road) was 445, this year the number has increased to 572'. (24-9-1999, p5)

The immersion procession is the climax of the festival. The participation of masses and their enthusiastic approach towards the festival is demonstrated in the immersion procession. The procession normally continues for more than 24 hours with participation of hundreds of thousands of people. Those participating in the procession are assertive about their identity and consider the procession as an opportunity to defy the authorities at least symbolically. This aspect of utilization of the opportunity to occupy more and more public space and time and to defy the authorities is discussed in detail in the next section of the chapter. Here one news item has been quoted, which demonstrates that neither the rain nor the establishment can dampen the spirit of the festival. This is a representative news item. Every year the situation described is almost repeated with little variations. The news said, 'the immersion procession of 107th Ganapati festival took more than 28 hours to complete due to increasing gap between the Ganapatis of important mandals, raining, great enthusiasm of the activists and the passive approach of the police. The gulal (red colored powder sprayed in the air to express excitement) was freely splashed in the procession. Huge crowd had turned out on the Laxmi road to observe the eye-catching decorations. There was a dispute of activists of some mandals on the path of
the procession and an activist of one mandal was stabbed on the Kelkar road.’ (26-9-1999,p1)

This news item indicates the enthusiasm of masses while participating in the procession. The crowd has been getting more and more enthusiastic about the immersion procession. Over the years the immersion procession has taken more and more time to complete and this phenomenon indicates the growth of the festival in terms of participation. The time taken by the procession to complete and other aspects of the procession have been discussed in detail in the later part of the chapter.

Religious observance

As the festival continued to grow in terms of participation of masses, more and more religious observance is also witnessed all these years. There have been successful attempts of those who have been traditionally discouraged to worship god by undertaking the rituals, to conduct the rituals and occupy the religious space, which was denied, to them. The phenomenon is a complicated one. While on one hand the religious observance has increased, it has led to occupation of the social and religious space by more and more people (including those who were prohibited). On the other hand more and more people have occupied the social and religious space by conducting the very rituals, which they were not used to, due to social restrictive norms and thus this has led to more religious observance. Thus religious restrictive practices are broken due to religious observance by masses and religious observance has increased because the people who were not supposed to; observed them. The religious observance has itself been used by masses to transgress the religious restrictive norms of purity and pollution etc. But the fact is that the religious observance has increased through years and the number of people following these rituals has also increased significantly. Some news items have been chosen to elaborate this point as they serve as a clear evidence of supportive attitude of the masses towards religiosity.

The editorial on 3-9-1990 said that a lot of ‘improvement’ was observed in that year’s Ganapati festival. According to the editorial, the comment had not been made only because some good decorations were added to those done by Ganeshotsava mandals (or Ganapati mandals). The hope about the festival had been rekindled due to reduction in number of those who dance in a vulgar fashion before the mandals to the tune of equally vulgar songs, it was argued. The editorial noted that, that year one
Ganeshotsava mandal freely distributed cassettes of devotional songs and it certainly had made good effect.

There is praise in the editorial for not dancing in a vulgar fashion before the mandals. Almost from the beginning of the Ganapati festival about hundred years ago, the so-called educated and cultured group in the society has been objecting to the Ganapati festival for its carnivallistic nature. As it has been noted in the earlier chapter that the conservative people among Hindu community have not been happy about the festival regarding the ritualistic part of it (or the lack of it).

It has been described in the earlier chapter that the Ganapati is a tutelary god of some of the Chitpawan Brahmins including the Peshwas. As Ghurye has argued, the Brahmins in and around Pune have been on the forefront to establish Ganapati as an important deity. But after the Ganapati festival was celebrated in a public manner it did not remain the God only of Brahmins but has been revered by the people belonging to other castes (and also religions!) This is in a way the occupation of religious and cultural space and thus the social space by the non-brahmins. This has been witnessed well in modern times also. Here is one such example regarding a non-Brahmin community. The concerned news report is an evidence of the participation of the non-Brahmin people in the festival and it has been discussed below.

Twashta Kasar community belongs to other backward castes group. This community is always on the forefront in celebrating Ganapati festival with its religious fervor and rituals. Most of the families belonging to this community live in the downtown area of Kasaba Peth. In this area people belonging to almost all castes (upper and lower) live. The Twashta Kasar community is traditionally engaged in production of utensils. The community has its organization and a temple. The community is well organized and conducts many activities for its members. Many of the activities are secular events of enjoyment. But the community made it a point to celebrate the centenary of the celebration of Ganapati festival by their organization. The community has been celebrating Ganapati festival for over hundred years. The centenary celebrations consisted of many secular events like blood donation, but the religious part of it was very much significant. The religious rituals undertaken by the community were joined by those belonging to other castes also. This is an example of the complicated phenomenon described above that those who have been traditionally discouraged to undertake rituals do them in the Ganapati festival and it leads to occupation of social and religious space by those who were denied it and in turn it
leads to more religious observance. The concerned news item has been noted below. It is a clear evidence of observations made above.

The news item said, 'the religious functions of the centenary celebrations by the public Ganeshotsava of Twashta Kasar Samajsantha would begin on 31-8-1993. The president of the mandal, Kaka Wadake, told that the centenary festival started on 2nd February. Since then, various functions including five health camps, five blood donation camps, nine tournaments of games, one lecture series consisting of lectures of fifteen noted personalities, were arranged. Twashta Kasar is a community, which manufactures copper utensils. There are about 225 families of this community in the city and the population is about seven thousand. There are 60 factories, which manufacture copper utensils. In Kasaba peth people belonging to 27 castes and five religions live. In the times of Ganeshotsava, one couple from each caste would be invited to worship Ganapati. Chiefs of all castes, communities and religions would be felicitated during the festival. The couples belonging to other religions would also be specially invited to the pandal of Ganeshotsava.' (30-8-1993,p5)

The increasing tendency to follow religiosity is demonstrated by the changing patterns of sale of the audiocassettes. In last few years, the sale of cassettes of devotional songs is increasing. It can be easily noticed that the mandals are playing more and more devotional songs at the pandals. Normally the mandals used to play the famous songs in Hindi movies and it was objected by a certain class terming these songs as not religious. Now the trend is changing and the mandals themselves are playing the devotional songs. Of course, the playing of popular songs from Hindi movies as well as some pop music has not stopped and it is still popular among the activists of the mandals. This tendency of the activists of Ganapati festival was noticed way back in 1990. That year in very few places, the vulgar songs were heard. The change in the festival was felt strongly, that year. Most of the mandals were broadcasting devotional songs and sentimental songs on the loudspeakers. The proportion of Marathi songs being aired was more than that of Hindi songs. (28-8-1990,p3)

The following news item is the proof of the changing pattern. It does indicate the trend as well as it illustrates the trend. It said, 'great demand for the audiocassettes of devotional songs- the Ganapati festival is a few days away and there is a great sale of the audiocassettes of devotional songs. These cassettes are available in large numbers in the market. The prices of these cassettes are between Rs.25 to 30. The songs of
Ganapati sung by melody queen Lata Mangeshkar are heard during the festival and also at other times. A cassette of these songs has been published by HMV. This cassette is in great demand like every year. .... The cassettes consisting of devotional songs of Ganesh sung by famous playback singers in Hindi film industry are a special feature this year. Sadhana Saragam, the famous singer in Hindi film industry has sung for the first time in Marathi. The cassette of the songs sung by her is called 'Gajanana Moraya'. This cassette consists of songs sung by well-known singers like Suresh Wadkar, Ravindra Sathe and Uttara Kelkar. A cassette of Hindi devotional songs by Vinod Rathod and Vandana Vajpeyee is also available. Recently the cassettes, which describe the Ganeshpooja, have also become popular.' (1-9-1997,p5)

The news item noted above makes it clear that major audiocassette companies like HMV have been taking interest in the festival for their commercial activities. Important singers have also been playing their role in music industry regarding Ganapati festival. This indicates that although the elite class in the city has been staying away to some extent from the festival, the established business houses recognize the mass appeal of the festival. The recognition of the mass appeal of the festival by important business groups including multinationals has been discussed in detail in later part of the chapter where the economic aspect of the Ganapati festival has been noted.

The trend of playing the devotional songs at the pandals by the Ganapati mandals has continued. Here is one more news item published after some years, which clearly indicates the trend. The news said, 'great demand for the cassettes of Ganeshgeete (songs of Ganapati)--- The audiocassettes of various companies comprising of the Ganeshgeete (songs of Ganapati) have arrived in the market and they have good demand from the public Ganeshotsava mandals as well as from citizens. Every year the cassettes of aartis (distress calls in the form of a song) of Ganesh, devotional songs and the songs based on the tunes of famous Hindi songs are brought to the market before the Ganapati festival. Likewise these cassettes have been brought to the market this year, informed owner of 'Parekh Radios' on Tilak road, Manohar Parekh. It is estimated that the turnover of cassettes of songs of Ganapati in Pune city and surrounding area will be about Rs. 2.5 million.' (25-8-1998,p5)

It has been noticed, lately that those celebrating Ganapati festival, are getting more and more interested in traditions and religiosity. There have been some incidences where people have demonstrated their interest in ancient beliefs. One such
example is the creation of Ganapati idol as it was described by the great Marathi poet saint Janeswara. He had written Janeswari about 800 years ago. A special idol of Ganapat which has been developed according to the description by Janeswara was installed in newly built temple in Kesariwada. Kesariwada is the mansion purchased and developed by Lokmanya Tilak. His descendants live in this mansion and the daily Kesari is also published from this mansion. The idol was installed at the hands of trustee general manager of Kesari Dr. Deepak Tilak and Mrs. Gouri Tilak. On this occasion religious functions of Punyahwachan and Ganeshyaag were held. The idol was installed behind the statue of Lomanya Tilak after duly worshipping it. (25-8-1998,p5)

The activists of Ganapati mandals are often accused of indulging in hooliganism by a class of white-collar community which believes in strict disciplined civil behavior. But as the mandals are more and more following religiosity, they are also increasingly adopting the ways of fighting the social ills. The Ganapati festival activists are well concerned about the national and social problems. The concern of the mandals is reflected in the scenes they present for decorations as well as by the social initiatives they undertake. The following news item records the observations about this development. It said, 'many Ganapati mandals have deliberately nurtured social consciousness by various initiatives like presenting ill effects of Gutakha (scented tobacco, used for chewing) through decorations instead of advertising them. It has been observed that the mandals have tried to carry on efforts of making the festival a constructive one. Every year some so called intellectuals dispute with the activists of the mandals about the size of the pandals before the Ganapati festival, such events were not seen this year. Since, this year the preparatory period of Ganapati festival coincided with the elections, the activists were busy for last two months. The Kargil war had taken place recently and hence there were reflections of this war on the festival also. Many mandals in the city had developed decorations in order to pay homage to the brave soldiers. Many mandals devoted some part of the contribution to the soldiers. This year, the decorations about science and social problems are in good numbers with events from history and the puranas. The Puneits did not get the opportunity to watch the decorations of political satire due to the model code of conduct of elections. The popular television serials have made impact on the decoration every year and it is continued this year also. The number of persons
coming to city from sub-urban areas in the surrounding as well as other towns to watch the decorations has increased.' (22-9-1999,p5)

It has been commented in the news item noted above that, ‘every year some so-called intellectuals dispute with the activists of the mandals about the size of the pandals before the Ganapati festival, such events were not seen this year.’ This issue is related to civic inconvenience due to Ganapati festival. Although the issue has been discussed in detail in the later part of the chapter, it needs to be noted that the ‘educated and cultured elite class’ has always despised the festival since its beginning. As it has been noted earlier that this class has been objecting to the carnivalesque aspect of the festival by raising the religious or civic issues. The news item noted above clearly indicates that the festival is not all carnival but the masses do show tendency for social awareness and responsibility.

As there is increasing acceptance among the activists of Ganapati mandals for the social initiatives, some people tried to channelize the monetary and physical resources of the Ganapati festival for some noble cause. A proposal had been put forward to undertake some permanent initiative to attain the ‘original purpose’ of the festival in view of centenary of the festival. In this respect it was decided to establish a trust named ‘Vidyanidhi’. (Established later) The idea behind the Vidyanidhi was that some part of the money spent by the mandals on the celebration should be given to this trust. The money collected would be spent to encourage education, arts and culture. Jayant Salgaonkar was nominated the president of the trust and the trustees were Vijay Kuwalekar (editor of Sakal), Arvind Gokhale (editor of Kesari), Gopalrao Patwardhan (senior journalist) and V.M. Bachal (former principal of a reputed college). (13-9-1994,p4)

The Ganapati mandals have continued to increase in numbers. But more mandals mean more expenditure and more noise at the time of the festival. Hence, the white-collar class has always wished and demanded for containment of the celebrations and self-discipline. There is an appreciation for such attempts among the journalists also. Hence, the effort of self-discipline and containment is lauded. The following news item is an example of this appreciation. But it also indicates that there is a tendency among the activists also to follow the norms of order and containment. The news said, ‘A commendable effort has been made by four Ganapati mandals in Ravivar peth by bringing together four mandals viz. Shree Rajasthani Sangh, Shreekrishna Mitramandal, Ganesh Mitra Mandal and Shree Someshwara Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava
In the earlier half-century of the Ganapati festival in the city, the melas or the cultural troupes were very popular. The melas were the group of local artists and of those who aim to be artists. These groups used to perform in front of the Ganapati idol at the pandal of the mandal. People belonging to the white-collar middle class used to attend this cultural affair. After independence, the melas rapidly lost their importance and presence in the Ganapati festival. But, the white-collar middle class who fanaticizes the Ganapati festival as a sober event with lot of cultural activities in it, does rue about the waning away of the melas. Like the street plays, the melas can be used to develop social awareness about certain issues. Lately there have been attempts to revive the tradition of melas. But these attempts have not been appreciated much by the masses. Such attempt was made by the Dyanprbodhini, an educational-cultural institution belonging to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh family. The tradition of melas had been revived by the students of Dyanprbodhini from year 1997. These students performed melas in various parts of city. For performing melas, 12 batches of the students had been formed. (9-9-1997, p5)

The activists of the Ganapati festival are not much supportive about the norms of purity, pollution, order, formality, authority etc. There have always been attempts by the people from white-collar middle class who strongly believe in order, authority, propriety, formality etc, to 'discipline the festival and to make it constructive.' Sometimes this reformist intervention is in the name of maintaining religiosity or some times the reasons of modern ways of life are used for such intervention. Here is an example of such interventionist attempt. In the name of environment, even those who are opposed to superstitions (and rituals) tried to intervene in the festival and yet found a role and space in the festival. This attempt had an undertone of modern way of life and it gained some support from the masses. The Andhashraddha Neermulan Samitee i.e. a committee to eradicate superstitions declared that it was going to undertake a project by which instead of immersing the Ganapati idols in water, they be donated to the activists of the Samiti (who in turn will immerse those idols in a distant pond, with sufficient water) after the procedure of immersion is completed. The Samitee had stated the reason of pollution behind this initiative as the water gets polluted after the immersion of the idol due to the ingredients of the idol like plaster
of Paris, synthetic colours, clay etc. The herbs in the water also get damaged due to silting, it was claimed by the Samitee. (15-9-1999,p5)

The Samitee continued its interventionist attempt for the next year. The news item said, 'Donate the Ganapati idols--- the Andhashraddha Neermulan Samitee will implement the project of receiving the Ganapati idols with the flowers and leaves, donated by people to avoid the pollution. (The Samitee has appealed people to donate the Ganapati idols to it, instead of immersing them in the river to avoid water pollution) Mayor Dattatraya Gaikwad will receive the first Ganapati idol, donated. The municipal corporation has made an arrangement to utilize the used flowers and leaves for making the fertilizer. The Samitee has stated that instead of immersing the idol it should be donated to it as there are harmful ingredients in the colours used for the idol and they may cause harm to the skin.' (7-9-2000,p5)

The religious ritual prescribes that the Ganapati idol be immersed in the water at the end of the festival. Hence, the people in the city immerse the idols in the river. But in the modern times the river is not full of water as it used to be and the water that flows through it, is not that clean. So, it hurts the religious sentiments to immerse the revered idol in such polluted dirty water. On this background, the proposal of the Samitee to donate the idols to it instead of immersing them in the river (which the Samitee promised to immerse collectively in a far away pond) got a good response from people. Although the attempt of the Samitee was a direct intervention in the religious rituals, people responded to it as they found it to be convenient. The report said, 'Very good response to the project of donating the Ganapati idols to be immersed---the initiative of the Andhashraddha Nirmulan Samiti of donating the Ganapati idols to be immersed evoked very good response on Thursday. The devotees donated about 1200 Ganapati idols. The Ganapati idols installed for seven-day festival were immersed on Thursday and the Samitee had appealed on this occasion. The municipal corporation had provided all help at the ghat near the S. M. Joshi Bridge and the Nene ghat. ' (8-9-2000,p8)

The attempt by the Samitee amounted to the direct intervention in the rituals. The Samitee has been campaigning against superstitions and is seen to be against rituals. Still, there was not fierce opposition to this attempt as it was convenient to people. The number of idols donated to the Samitee as it has been mentioned in the news is 1200 and it is very small compared to the thousands of Ganapati idols installed in the houses and by the mandals. Important point is that the attempt by the
Samitee was tolerated by the masses, as it was convenient to them. Although, comparatively few idols were donated the event got lot of publicity from the newspapers. One more point has to be noted that on the day of Ananthchaturdashi, the last day of the festival when most of the Ganapati idols are immersed, the irrigation department releases more water through the river. Hence, on that the day the problem of immersing idol in polluted water is not significant. This problem arises when the Ganapati idols installed in the houses are immersed on the next day or fifth day or seventh day etc. Thus the problem of the religious sentiments getting hurt regarding immersion is more about the idols installed domestically and hence the attempt of the Samitee seemed to be helpful rather than interventionist.

As the Ganapati festival is celebrated publicly, the norms of purity and pollution are sparsely observed. Hence, one may conclude that there is less religiosity in this festival. But, that is not the fact. People have demonstrated their religious beliefs on different occasions and at the same time they have resisted any attempt of establishing religious or otherwise dogma. This phenomenon has been witnessed clearly in case of a prominent Ganapati mandal called the Shreemant Dagadusheth Halwai Sarvajanik Ganapati Trust. Masses have shown reverence towards the Ganapati idol of the mandal as well as they have opposed the attempt of the mandal to homogenize the festival. Hence, it is necessary to study the mandal and the events related to it.

Dagdusheth becomes the most prominent mandal

The Shreemant Dagadusheth Halwai Sarvajanik Ganapati Trust, a Ganapati mandal celebrating the Ganapati festival since, its beginning and located at the busy central commercial part of the city, became the most important mandal in last 15 years. The mandal has been celebrating Ganapati festival in a grand manner with millions of rupees at its disposal thanks to generous public donations. The Ganapati idol of the mandal is revered by the citizens. The mandal follows all the rituals and maintains norms of purity-pollution, order and religion. The mandal has been on the forefront as far as keeping the traditions and religiosity is considered. Yet, the mandal has become a platform for religious usurpation by the masses and helping to cross over the religious barriers.

The Shreemant Dagadusheth Halwai Sarvajanik Ganapati Trust is one of the mandals, which have been installing the Ganapati idol and celebrating the festival since the beginning of the festival more than 100 years ago. The mandal is located at
the center of the city, on the busy commercial street of Laxmi road. Mr. Prataprao alias Tatya Godase took over control of the mandal from the seniors in 1968. He tried with all his devotion and resources to celebrate the festival by the mandal in as a grand way as possible. Along with grandeur he saw to it that the religious sanctity is maintained and the norms of purity and pollution are not thrown to wind. Slowly but steadily the mandal became the richest mandal in the city. The masses believe that the Ganapati idol of the mandal is a special enlightened one, which removes obstacles when pleased. Hence, the pandal of the mandal during festival and the temple of the mandal in the remaining part of the year have acquired the status of a center of pilgrimage. The whole city expressed its love for the mandal when the Ganapati idol of the mandal was desecrated. The love of the Puneits for the mandal was never lost. When the mandal celebrated its centenary on a grand scale, the citizens participated in the celebrations with all enthusiasm. Thus the citizens have allowed the mandal to grow at its will and celebrate in more and more imposing fashion. As the mandal will be referred again and again, it will be henceforth be mentioned as Dagadusheth, its popular name.

The Ganapati established by Dagadusheth Halawai, (a sweetmeat seller) was called 'Bahulichya Houdacha Ganapati' in the beginning. After the death of Dagadusheth, this mandal was named as 'Shreemant Dagadusheth Halwai Ganapati'. Later on the mandal was converted into a trust and its management was handed over to 'Suvarnayug Tarun Mandal'. This mandal was quite small in the beginning but now the Ganapati is the most respected, revered and believed in the State of Maharashtra. (Kesari, 5-7-1992, Sunday supplement, article by Madhukar Prabhudesai)

The Dagadusheth has played a major role in the celebration of Ganapati festival in the city. Under the leadership of Prataprao alias Tatya Godase the Dagadusheth has always saw to it that the activities of the mandal are not restricted to the Ganapati festival only. He has taken social initiatives and utilized the funds at the disposal of the mandal for issues of social concern. It has helped the mandal to gain respect and support among masses. The mandal has also taken religious initiatives, which have become sometimes controversial. The conducting of religious rituals by the mandal has provided access to the masses to take part in these rituals at the same time it has helped them in crossing over the religious barriers. The Dagadusheth had tried to help the people distressed due to the draught. It took both monetary and religious
The concern news item described it as follows, ‘Dagadusheth Ganesh mandal donates one hundred thousand rupees for draught relief fund- Mr. Prataprao Godase, president of Shreemant Dagadusheth Halwai Ganeshotsava Trust, expressed readiness to give one hundred thousand rupees for draught relief measures. Talking to the reporter, Godase said that considering the severe nature of the draught this year, all public mandals that celebrate Ganeshotsava, should spend less money on decoration and lighting. Mandals should spend maximum possible part of the contribution collected from the society for the Ganapati festival, towards draught relief measures. One representative committee of all Ganapati mandals in 85 municipal wards of Pune as well as in the limits of (neighboring) Pimpri-Chinchwad municipal corporation and the (adjoining) cantonments for this purpose. Once such committee is formed and the work to collect contributions from the mandals is started, the first donation for this purpose of Rs. one hundred thousand will be given by Dagadusheth trust.’ (p5, 12-8-1987)

With an attempt to lead the effort to help people in draught prone areas financially, the Dagadusheth also tried to invoke God by conducting an ancient ritual. This religious attempt was opposed by the leftist activists in the city but was very well supported by the masses. The mandal arranged ‘Sarvashakhiya Vedparayanasaha Laxa Modak Ganesh Mahayagnache Virat Dharmanushthan’ i.e. a yagna where one hundred thousand modaks (sweet delicacy which is supposed to be dear to Lord Ganapati) would be put into the sacred fire with recital of vedas of all branches. The mandal published an advertisement in newspaper on 13-9-1987 regarding this. The mandal claimed that the ritual was being conducted because all were perturbed due to increasing dearness, insecurity and increasing disturbances in social life. The rain was badly needed in those times of draught and the yagna brings rain. The yagna was arranged so that the Ganesh would bring in prosperity to mother India and develop the feelings of patriotism and integrity. The yagna was planned to be held in the presence of Shankaracharya of Dwaraka and under guidance of Pandit Vasant Gadgil in the pandal of Ganapati for twelve hours every day. People were appealed to donate money for the yagna and participate in the religious activity.

This attempt to conduct an ancient religious ritual by the Dagadusheth was opposed by a leftist. The proposal by Dagadusheth to arrange a yagna was challenged by Baba Adhav, a prominent leader in socialist group who opposed brahminical dominance and has been working for unorganized working class in the
city. He wrote an article in Kesari, published on 21-8-1987 on page 4. He asked whether the burning of one hundred thousand modaks would really bring in rains and remove water scarcity. He said, ‘Shreemant Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati is revered among citizens of Pune. The trustees of this Ganapati (mandal) have decided to arrange ‘Ganesh Mahayag’ to remove water scarcity in the state. In this yagna, one hundred thousand modaks will be put into sacred fire. Millions of people in the draught prone parts of Maharashtra are starving and in such situation will the draught be removed by putting modaks into fire? Are these people having a motive of taking disadvantage of religious feelings and faiths of masses? These people are requested to stop this attempt of conservative religious people to utilize the situation of water scarcity and dearness. I do not rule out the possibility that the trustees are caught in some serious financial trouble. Money is required for public works and one has to always worry about how to gather money. Dagadusheth mandal should directly ask people for money for public works and nothing is wrong in it. But, they should not undertake the disaster of Mahayagna. They are requested not to start such precedent in Maharashtra.’

The Mahayag was also criticized by P. L. Deshpande, the famous and highly popular Marathi litterateur, of course in an indirect manner. According to the report on 31-8-1987, on page5, ‘Deshpande said that he congratulates the Ganapati mandal, which has worshipped humankind by donating money for the purpose of de-addiction instead of putting one hundred thousand modaks in sacred fire of Ganapati yagna. He was speaking on the occasion of first anniversary of Muktangan de-addiction center in the mental health center at Yerwada. Police Commissioner Bhaskarrao Misar chaired the function. Two mandals donated money at the hands of Deshpande, to the center.’

In spite of the criticism symbolized in the article by Baba Adhav, the Dagadusheth got good support from people for its ritual. On the background of the criticism and the uncertainty about the yagna to be held, a news item was published. It said, ‘... but the mandal asserted that the yagna would be held, come what may. Prataprao Godase, the president of Dagadusheth in a press conference, assured that the yagna would be held as the believers have promised to help for the Mahaganesh Yaga. Considering the draught situation in the state, the donation of Rs. one hundred thousand will be given to draught relief fund. The amount will be handed over to Sharad Pawar, former chief minister of the state. Considering the feelings of the
believers, we will carry out the plan of holding the yagna in spite of the severe criticism. After the criticism, we had decided to hold a symbolic yagna but the believers themselves assured to provide the modaks for the yagna and hence it is certain that the proposal will be carried out. The mandal has been arranging Ganeshyaag since 1928. This year it is proposed to arrange Mahaganeshyaga. Considering today’s response we are sure that two hundred thousand modaks will be collected. Godase told that the Dagadusheth Trust has planned to establish a confederation of Ganapati mandals, in the name of Ganeshotsava Mahamandal. In this Mahamandal, about four thousand mandals in Pune city, Khadaki and Pune cantonment as well as in Pimpari-Chinchwad area will be included.’ (25-8-1987, p5)

When the ritual took place there was not any opposition to it. Nobody opposed the Mahayag in the meeting of workers of Ganapati mandals. (26-8-1987, p5)

This whole episode regarding the Dagadusheth is significant for multiple reasons. The mandal had arranged for a Maha Ganesh Yaga (mega sacred fire to revere Lord Ganapati) with the recital of hymns from the Vedas. All this ritual is from the ancient Hindu religious practices. Hence, the arrangement of such an ancient ritual in modern times on the platform of Ganapati festival is noteworthy. Mr. Godase and the most of his colleagues in the Dagadusheth are non-Brahmins. Thus this attempt cannot be considered as an attempt of Brahmins to revive old traditions. But in fact it is noteworthy that the revival was done by the non-Brahmin leaders of the mandal. The Mahayaga was opposed by the socialists and by the class of white collar educated middle class (symbolized by the comments of P. L. Deshpande, an ideal for middle class Marathi speaking white collar class). Yet, it was carried on by the support of the masses. This indicates two trends - the masses (especially non-brahmins) had become supportive of the idea of conducting ancient Hindu religious ritual and they did not bothered about the criticism by the socialists. This incidence is representative of how the Ganapati festival has become a vehicle for masses for religious usurpation. And this usurpation was facilitated by a mandal dominated by non-brahmins. Many more such incidences are noted in the following writing which underline the observation. Apart from this socio-religious aspect, the incident is important because it brought in focus the intention of the Dagadusheth to organize the Ganapati mandals in and around Pune albeit for the purpose of draught relief fund.

Interestingly the attempts of Dagadusheth for more and more religiosity have been well received from the people but the attempt to organize mandals and in turn
homogenize the festival failed miserably. This important aspect will evolve in the following text.

It is important to know why people revere the Ganapati idol of the Dagadusheth and why it is so much supported from the masses.

The Ganapati idol of the Dagadusheth has been revered by not only the citizens of Pune but also by the people from all over the state. People believe that this idol has the power to remove the hurdles in the way of any important work. There is significant crowd to worship the idol on the days of ‘Sankashti Chaturthi (a fourth day in Hindu month on which the god Ganapati is specially worshipped)’. The long queue of the devotees in the pandal of the Dagadusheth is a common sight in the days of Ganapati festival. Even those who otherwise mince no word in bashing the carnivalistic celebration of Ganapati festival would be seen jostling in the crowd to have a good view of the God (idol) and if possible to touch the idol. The important question is why people revere this idol of Ganapati in preference to the hundreds of other idols of other mandals? After observing the situation in the pandal of the mandal it seems that the maintenance of traditions and keeping the norms of religiosity as well as the beautiful idol adorned with imposing jewelry make it possible that the people get impressed and they revere it. Although this observation is not misplaced there is more to it. As it has been stated earlier that people believe that this idol is blessed with divine powers and when pleased can remove the hurdles in the way of completing any work! Mr. Prataprao alias Tatya Godase, the president of Dagadusheth threw light on this issue. In an interview in the month of August 2000, at his residence, he told that once any idol is installed, it should be viewed not as a sculpture but as the God. If one submits before the God with all the devotion and maintain the sanctity by ‘properly’ conducting the worship, then a miracle can also take place. People from all walks of life come to worship the Ganapati idol of Dagadusheth and they believe that the idol is enlightened and has some divine powers (i.e. it has spiritual and divine powers and fulfills the wishes of the devotee when pleased). This reverence is due to the maintenance of the sanctity of the idol. He, with his colleagues has enlightened the idol. They have been making such efforts for last 60 years. This is the third idol made for the mandal. (At the end of the Ganpati festival, when the idol of Ganapati is immersed, the Ganapati mandals in Pune city do not immerse their main big idol, but instead immerse a small idol. Hence, not only the Dagadusheth, but almost all mandals would be seen in possession of the same idol for
years.) The first one was made by Shreemant Dagadusheth (after whom the mandal is named) in 1892 (or 1893?) and it has been now kept in the Akara Maruti Mandir. The second one was made in 1896. This idol has been kept in the social center at Kondhawa (sub-urban area of Pune city) built for the children of the prostitutes (most of the prostitutes reside in the area next to the mandal). These children, about 75 in number, live in the social center and an attempt is made to impart them the education as well as to teach them good manners. These children recite Atharwsheersha, (a Sanskrit prayer of Lord Ganapati, it has been discussed in earlier chapter) daily and worship the idol. In case of the third and the present idol, Godase informed that the idol was made in 1968 by Shankarappa Shilpi, who had made the idols at famous pilgrimage centers in south India and who knew the Tantrik Vidya (a belief of a certain sect which tries to please the god and appropriate its divine powers.) While Shilpi was making the idol, solar eclipse took place. On the day of eclipse, Shilpi sat in the water and developed a sacred incantation then enlightened the Yantra (a piece of copper sheet, on which specific designs and words are engraved as per the ways in Tantrik Vidya) by conducting the yagna (sacred fire) and put it inside the Ganapati idol. Shilpi had made it clear that the sanctity of the idol would have to be maintained by conducting the yagnas and reciting the Atharwsheersha, then the idol will be really enlightened. Otherwise the chief of the mandal would have to face great losses. (Mr. Godase has tried his level best in performing all religious rituals and conducting the worship in a proper manner at his house.) Shilpi also declared that if the sanctity of the Ganapati idol was maintained for all the times, then the wishes of people would be fulfilled.

With such a belief about the Ganapati idol and the maintenance of all religious rituals, the temple of idol of Dagadusheth has almost became the center of pilgrimage. The people have so much trust in this idol that the desecration of it by one Muslim had very strong repercussions in the city and around. The concerned incident is narrated in the following news items. The narration is noted in detail, so as to help understand the magnanimity of the issue as well as the approach of the politicians and social activists towards such incident.

The incident of desecration of Ganapati idol of Dagadusheth took place on 30th April 1988. The incident was followed by protest, rioting and arson. Authorities imposed curfew to control the situation. Police imposed 48 hours curfew on Saturday, 31st April, morning in the area under four police stations- Samarth,
Faraskhana, Vishrambaug and Khadak to control the agitated mob after the desecration of the idol in the Ganapati temple of Shreemant Dagadusheth Halawai Trust. These police stations control almost all the downtown area. Many incidences of stone throwing and arson took place in the city during the period of curfew. The police arrested three persons regarding the desecration of the idol and 41 persons were arrested for disturbing peace in the city. The guardian minister of district Sushilkumar Shinde, all Muslim leaders in the city and leaders belonging to all parties appealed people to maintain calm. All shops in the city were closed and all other activities came to a standstill after the desecration of the idol. A strike was observed in Pimpri-Chinchwad, Khadaki and Saswad also. The situation in the city was tense on the next day and police force had been deployed all over in large numbers. The news of desecration of idol of Shree Ganapati spread like a wildfire in the city. Member of Parliament Vitthalrao Gadgil, Mayor Chandarkant Chhajed, members of Municipal Corporation Shantilal Suratwala, Ankush Kakade, Yogesh Gogawale, Vijay Kale, Shivasena activist Ramesh Bodake, Patit Pawan Sanghatana leader Pradeep Rawat, Nitin Sontakke declared ‘Pune Bandh’ (strike) in front of the temple. Before the declaration, police had imposed curfew in the city after the incidences of stone throwing took place. The activists of Shreemant Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Trust informed about the incident. They said that, on the day of the incidence, a young man of age 22 years came to the temple at 8 a.m. to 8.15 a.m. in the morning and stood before the temple. He hurled a plastic bag (filled with filth) in his hand towards the Ganapati idol and started running towards Vasant theatre. The priest of the temple, Madhukar Bhagwat immediately chased him. After noticing this sudden chasing, the activists of the mandal viz. Vijay Jamdade, Vijay Gosawi, Mahendra Akhade followed the priest. When all four of them caught hold of the young man near Vasant theatre, he tried to resist with all his might. The activists who were sitting at the square rushed to the Faraskhana and Vishrambaug Police stations behind the temple and informed the police about it. Police immediately rushed to Vasant talkies and they found the scuffle was on between the young man and the four activists who stopped him. Meanwhile, some more activists of the Mandal reached the spot. Police intervened and stopped the fighting. According to the police the name of the young man was Rafiq Noormohamad Shakeel Choudhari (941, Kasaba Peth). Filth was put in the bag that was hurled towards the Ganapati idol. It fell on the silver canopy behind the idol and stuck to the ceiling of the temple. Meanwhile, hundreds of
activists of the mandal gathered near the temple. President of the trust (mandal) Prataprao Godase and other trustees viz. D. K. Rasane, Dr. R. V. Paranjape, K. G. Rasane, Shankarrao Suryawanshi appealed the mob to remain calm.

When the mayor Chandrakant Chhajed, members of municipal corporation Shantilal Suratwala, Yogesh Gogawale, Ankush Kakade, Rambhau Ganpule, Patit Pawan Sanghatana leader Nitin Sontakke, Shivasena activist Ramesh Bodke and others reached the temple, a mob of thousands of activists had gathered there. Meanwhile a large mob gathered in nearby Budhawar square. Various slogans were being raised. Mr. Chhajed, members of the legislative assembly Prakash Dhere, Ulhas Kalokhe and leader of Patit Pawan Sanghatana tried to calm the mob. But there were no signs of the mob being controlled. Godase was making repeated appeals to all to remain calm. But the mob was consistently demanding that the mayor should declare ‘Pune Bandh’. After some time Mr. Chhajed appealed to observe the strike all over the city. After that appeal this mob of about thousand people gathered in Sonya Maruti square. Loud slogans were raised in this square also. When the shops in this area were being closed, attempts were made to throw the burning bundles of cloth in to those shops. The shops on Laxmi road were already closed. (Laxmi road is the most important commercial street) When terrible chaos was on in the Sonya Maruti square, the police arrived in vans and started lathicharge immediately after arrival. The mob instantly dispersed. During this mayhem the mayor Chhajed was manhandled and the member of the municipal corporation Vijay Kale was beaten up during the lathicharge. After this incident, curfew was clamped in the city immediately.

Different mobs pelted stones in the areas of Kasaba peth, Rameshwar Chowk, Pasodya Vithoba Mandir, Mahatma Fule Mandai.

The news of attack (on a Hindu activist) in Kagadipura area spread in the city and the mobs roaming around in lanes became more violent. During this violence, the shops selling gulal-bukka and other items situated between old Meenarva Theatre and Fule Mandai police chowky were burnt. About eight shops were burnt due to this arson.

The president of the city unit of Bhartiya Janata Party Anna Joshi and secretary Vishwas Gangurde termed the act of throwing filth in broad daylight as a humiliation of the whole Hindu community. They demanded that the criminal who did this act and those who supported him should be immediately arrested under the national
security act. They said that all the suspicious places of worship in Pune should be searched.

Once the news of desecration of idol spread in the city the hoardings with slogans protesting the incident and appealing people to observe a citywide strike for three days were displayed by various groups of youth. In response to this appeal, all shops in the whole city were closed immediately. The passenger traffic by autorickshaw halted immediately. The buses of Pune Municipal Transport stopped plying in the city. The traffic in the outskirts of city continued. The guardian minister of Pune, Sushilkumar Shinde visited the riot-affected area, in the night. The district chief of Shivsena, Shashikant Sutar alleged that there was a wide conspiracy behind all these developments and demanded that the police should investigate it. He informed that the whole incident had been reported to Shivsena Chief and he was likely to come to Pune on the next day. The Seerat committee of Muslims deplored the incident of desecration of Ganapati idol and expressed grief over the hurting of the feelings of Hindus. Important leaders of Muslim community like Ameenudin Penwale, Wastad Riyaz Ahmad, Meerza Hammeed Beig, Kareem Attar, Ahamad Ali Jeena and Ismail Bagwan were present for the meeting.

Various leaders in the city had issued statements strongly deploring and protesting the desecration of Ganapati idol. One statement was signed by (prominent Muslim personalities like) chairman of the standing committee of Pune Municipal Corporation Rashidkhan, former MLA Aminuddin Penwale, member of Municipal Corporation Naseeruddin Inamdar, president of the minority cell of the Congress party S. M. Kadari, chairman of Muslim Co-operative bank P.A.Inamdar and former deputy mayor Ali Somaji. Dalitoddhar Republican Party and Vishwa Hindu Parishad issued statements protesting the desecration of Ganapati idol and they had appealed to maintain peace. Secretary of Chhatrabharati, Vinay Sawant protested efforts of inciting communal riots in Pune City. He also alleged that deliberate attempts were being made in Pune city to hurt religious feelings of people belonging to certain religion and incite riots. (1-5-1988,p1)

The Dagadusheth mandal under the leadership of Godase tried to sanctify the (Ganapati) idol and the temple with religious rituals. President of the Shreemant Dagadusheth Halwai Ganapati Trust Prataprao Godase on the next day of the incident of desecration, informed media that religious rituals were being performed to sanctify the idol and the temple which had become impure after the incident of hurling filth
towards it by an antisocial element. He said that after the incidence of throwing filth, the temple and the idol have been washed with water and recital of Atharwsheersha had begun. The temple as well as the idol would be painted again. The religious rituals of purification continued until 5th May. Godase declared that on 5th May on account of Sankashti Chaturthee, Ganeshyaag and Homhavan would be performed. (1-5-1988,p1)

The incidents of arson and stone throwing by angry mobs continued on the next day also. Some incidences of arson and stone throwing by angry mob took place on Sunday, in the area where curfew was not imposed. Police informed that although the situation in the whole city was tense but it was under control. District guardian minister, Sushilkumar Shinde declared that a thorough inquiry of this riot would be done. Curfew imposed in the city had been relaxed on the next day morning for the period 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. The curfew had been imposed in the areas of four police stations viz.- Faraskhana, Vishrambaug, Samarth and Khadak. The curfew was not imposed in the territories of Swargate, Deccan Gymkhana, Wanwadi, Chatushringi, Khadaki, Pimpari, Yerwada and Vishrantwadi police stations. Incidences of arson and stone throwing took place in these areas. The number of companies of State Reserve Police Force deputed in the city were increased to five. Police recorded 40 different crimes in the city.

Leader of Congress (I) Sharad Pawar visited the riot affected area. Chief of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) Balasheb Deoras had the darshan (view with reverence) of Ganapati idol after visiting the temple of Shreemant Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Trust and performed pooja and aarti. Reacting to the situation in the city, Deoras said that, he got information of the whole event after arriving in Pune. Desecration of ‘Aadi Daiwat Shree Ganesh’ was shocking, he said. He commented that it was not in the interest (of society) to attack the object of pride of Hindu community. If the anti-national elements recognize this fact, then the process of conciliation in the society will be speedier.

A statement protesting the desecration of the Ganapati idol of Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Trust had been released by Maharashtra Anjuman Ittehad Tamboli Community (of Muslims). President of the Jamat, Kamaruddin Haji Karimbhai demanded that the government should take stern action against those guilty in this case.
Shivsena leader Dattaji Salave visited the Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Mandir. He demanded that the government should immediately make a thorough inquiry of this recent incidence.

During the rioting on Saturday (i.e. the day of desecration), shops of *gulal-bukka* and bangles in Mandai were burned. Former chief minister Sharad Pawar and Member of Parliament, Suresh Kalamadi visited this area and consoled the riot-affected people. Pawar assured that an alternative arrangement would also be made within two days regarding the shops burnt in arson.

The incidences of arson and stone throwing started taking place after Saturday midnight. A mob attacked a place of worship at Khadakwasala and damaged it.

A voluntary strike was observed in the areas of Hadapsar, Mundhawa, Satavwadi, and Mahadeonagar on Saturday to protest against the desecration of the idol.

Theatres and talkies all over the Pune City were closed on Sunday (the next day) continuously for two days.

Many marriages on Sunday were postponed due to the tension, curfew and riots in the city. (2-5-1988,p1)

It was opined in a high level meeting on Sunday that the police commissioner Bhaskar Rao Misar and Divisional Revenue Commissioner Chandrakishor Modi failed to control the situation in Pune City. It is understood that the opinion was expressed in a meeting of senior leaders who were called to take stock of the situation in the city. Those present in the meeting included former chief minister Sharad Pawar, chairman of the legislative council of Maharashtra Jayantrao Tilak, members of Parliament Vitthalrao Gadgil and Suresh Kalamadi, members of legislative assembly Vasant Chavan and Prakash Dhere, mayor Chandrakant Chhajed, leader of the party in municipal corporation Vitthalrao Ladkat and important leaders of Congress (I). (2-5-1988,p6)

Additional Director General of Police Satyaprakash Singh on Monday told journalists that the desecration of the Ganapati idol of Shreemant Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Trust was done out of thoughtlessness of a person and there was no any political or religious force behind it. Singh said that some friends of the person who indulged in this act had challenged him to do such a thing. He accepted the challenge (a bet) and did this act on Saturday morning. It was clear by the statement, the person had made. This thoughtless act of desecrating an idol, led to hurting sentiments of citizens of city and created tension. Singh also clarified that the person...
who did this act was not mad. He did not do this out of madness. It was an effect of the bet with friends. Hence, politicizing the issue was meaningless. (3-5-1988,p1)

A decision to rehabilitate 41 shops (shopkeepers) burnt by antisocial elements on the same place was taken on Monday (third day from the day on which the incident took place) in a meeting chaired by the mayor Chandrakant Chhajed. The meeting was held in the Ganapati temple in Mandai (vegetables and fruit market) with the help of Akhil Mandai Mandal. The representatives of people present for the meeting included Vasantrao Thorat, Mohan Dhariya, Namdeo Rao Mate, Ramesh Khanna, Satish Desai, Rambhau Ganpule, Yogesh Gogawale, Rameshchandra Shah etc. Director of Maharashtra Bank, Suresh Nangare and senior officers of the bank were also present. It was decided that the shopkeepers of the shops, which were burnt, should be provided with the shades built by the municipal corporation on the same place. The Maharashtra Bank assured to make available proper loan to those (shopkeepers) who have suffered. (3-5-1988,p3)

A news report during the riots throws light on the undercurrents. It said, "It is learned from reliable sources that the additional director general of police Satyaprapakash Singh has instructed that the police reinforcement should be increased and the precaution should be taken that the curfew imposed is not violated if the tension is to be reduced. After arriving in Pune on Sunday night, he reviewed the situation in the city at a meeting of senior police officers. He visited all the riot-affected areas to verify the information received in the meeting. He visited all 45 places where arson and stone throwing took place. It is expected that he will submit today (Tuesday) the report of his visits to the riot affected areas to chief minister Shankarrao Chavan, minister of state J. T. Mahajan and director general of police D. S. Soman. It is also understood that Singh remarked that if the police had taken particular precaution after the incidences that took place in the city after Shivjayanti procession and the curfew imposed at that time, the situation in the city would have been different today."(3-5-1988,p3)

The incident of desecration and subsequent riot took place on Saturday and the situation was not well controlled within next three days. The deployment of police force in the whole city was changed on Tuesday due to increase in the incidences of arson and stone throwing in the areas where curfew had not been imposed. The curfew had been imposed in the areas under four police stations- Vishrambag, Farasakhan, Khadak and Samarth and it was relaxed on Wednesday from 4 a.m. to 6
It was clear that the riots, which started at many places in the city on Saturday after the desecration of the idol in the Ganesh temple of Dagdusheth Halwai Ganapati Trust, could not be brought under control even after four days. Major incidences of disturbing peace did not occur during the period when the curfew is relaxed. But it has been observed that when the curfew is imposed at night, many incidences of arson and stone throwing took place at various places in the city and suburban areas.

(4-5-1988, p1)

The organization of Anjuman Taheri Wasudi Bohara Community protested the desecration of the Ganapati idol on Tuesday. The organization had stated in its press release that the antisocial forces, which did this act of madness and irrationality with a purpose of flaring communalism, were bent upon sowing the seeds of hatred and suspicion in this nation and spreading anarchy.

A progressive organization called Bohara Progressive Education had protested the incident and had appealed to maintain conciliation.

The president of Dagdusheth Halwai Ganapati Trust, Prataprao Godase demanded that the conspiracy behind the desecration of the idol should be unearthed. He said that nobody would believe that the incidence took place out of a challenge or a bet. He also said that nobody would believe that a single person could indulge in such an antisocial act. It could not be denied that when such a person does an act, which would blacken the face of humanity, then he must have been doing it with the support of certain group in the society. If such antisocial tendencies were not crushed then they are likely to grow and pose a threat to the integrity, stability and peace in the nation, he said. (4-5-1988, p3)

The president of Dagdusheth, Prataprao Godase on Tuesday informed the journalists that the religious ceremony of Udakshanti would be organized in a grand manner in the temple of the trust on Wednesday and Mahaganesh Yaga would be done on Thursday on account of Sankashti Chaturthi. He said that keeping in mind the hurt sentiments of people and with an expectation that people will enjoy stability, peace and happiness by clearing the vitiated environment in the city, the religious function of Udakshanti would start in a grand manner at 10 a.m. with recital of hymns from all four Vedas by noted personalities. The Mahaganeshyaag would be started at the hands of Pandit Bhimsen Joshi (renowned classical singer), on Thursday at 11 a.m. It was told that noted Brahmmins including Vasantrao Gadgil, Vedmurti Yashwantrao Rahurkar, Vedmurti Shreepad Kinjawadekar Shastree and Vedmurti
Ghaisas Gururji would participate. This religious function would start with playing Sanai and with the performances by Swarzankar Band, Mayur Band, Prabhat Band, Rajkumar Band and Shreekrushna Band. The poornahuti of the Ganeshyaag would be done at 2.50 p.m. and the prasad (sacred food, distributed after worshipping God) would be distributed to the devotees after that. (4-5-1988,p3)

Deputy police commissioner of police Dr. Pramod Bisariya on Wednesday declared in a press conference that the curfew imposed in Pune City had been lifted completely. The curfew was imposed on Saturday, 30th April to control the mob which had become enraged after one antisoical person had desecrated the idol in the temple of Shreemant Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Trust by throwing filth at the idol. The curfew was imposed in the territories of Vishrambag, Faraskhana, Khadak and Samarth police stations. (The area under these police stations is almost all area of downtown.) The curfew was relaxed on Wednesday early morning at 4 a.m. and it was lifted completely by 12 a.m. All the crimes; arson, stabbing, stone throwing and looting that took place in the city after the desecration of the Ganapati idol, would be investigated together and a special squad had been set up under leadership of deputy police commissioner Prakash Pawar for the purpose. (5-5-1988,p1)

The work to build 65 new shops in place of 41 shops burnt in Mahatma Fule Mandai started on Wednesday at the hands of Mayor Chandrakant Chhajed. On these occasion, president of the Akhil Mandai Ganapati Mandal and former mayor Vasantrao Thorat, told that the members of the mandal will share the responsibility of rehabilitating these 41 shopkeepers. President of the city unit of Congress (I) and member of the legislative assembly Prakash Dhere assured that he will try to transfer the amount of Rs. one hundred thousand towards rebuilding these shops. (5-5-1988,p5)

The sanctification of the Ganapati idol, arranged by Shreemant Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati trust in its temple ended on Thursday with Mahaganesh Yaga. The trust had undertaken the sanctification due to the desecration of the Ganapati idol for last two days. The religious event of Udakshanti was held on Wednesday. Mahaganesh Yaga was held on Thursday on account of Sankashti Chaturthi at the hands of noted classical singer Bhimsen Joshi and his wife Mrs. Vatsalabai Joshi. (6-5-1988,p3)

The Bhartiya Janata Party had held a dharana near the Ganapati temple in the Budhawar Square to protest the desecration of the Ganapati idol. Member of
legislative assembly Anna Joshi, general secretary of the city unit of the party Vishwas Gangurde and senior leader Dr. Arvind Lele participated in the demonstration. (6-5-1988,p3)

Shivsena chief Balasaheb Thakare arrived in Pune from Mumbai on 7th May. He performed the pooja and aarti of the Ganapati idol by visiting the Ganapati temple of Shreemant Dagadusheth Halwai Ganapati trust. After addressing the huge crowd gathered there (at the temple) he went to Aurangabad by car. Meanwhile, in a press conference, he said that those who are desecrating the gods and goddesses of Hindus would have to be ‘fixed’ permanently. We will do that job after coming to power. The Shivsena would fight in the next assembly election on its own without having understanding with anybody. Mr. Thackarey criticized Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Bharatiya Janata Party. Insisting that the loyalty of his party in Hidutwa is more than that of the Bhartiya Janata Party, he said that that party (BJP) believes in Gandhism and his party doesn’t. The meaning of the statement by (the chief of the RSS) Balasaheb Deoras that if Bhartiya Janata Party is not supporting Hidutwa, then RSS will support congress, could not be understood. He should have selected Shivsena (to support), Thackarey asked. Thackarey appealed that the Hindus should become powerful to repulse injustice.' (8-5-1988,p1)

As the events unfolded, the riot described above turned out to be watershed one. In this incident the support to the Dagadusheth and the reverence to the Ganapati idol of Dagadusheth was demonstrated and henceforth Dagadusheth became the most important mandal. Thanks to the support shown by the people the leaders of Dagadusheth especially Godase, tried to unite Ganapati mandals in the state and form a confederation of them. Thus, he tried to develop a united power of the mandals. As the news reports suggested, he was assisted in this attempt by the Sangh parivar (RSS family). But, the masses that showed wholehearted support to the mandal when the idol was desecrated and who enthusiastically participated in the religious rituals arranged for sanctification of the idol and the temple reacted differently to the attempts of forming a confederation and homogenizing the festival. The details of this important development are noted in the later part of the chapter. Various parties and leaders reacted differently to the incidence of desecration and subsequent riot. The Bhartiya Janata Party and the Shivsena (two Hinduist parties) demanded that the conspiracy behind the desecration should be unearthed. The RSS chief and the Shivsena chief visited the temple (independently) and performed religious ritual of
Both of them raised the issue of Hindu pride although differently. The Muslim organizations and prominent Muslim citizens deplored the desecration and appealed for peace. Congress party protested disturbance of peace in the city. But, the Congress did something significantly different from other parties. Prominent leaders of Congress took initiative in rehabilitation of the shopkeepers whose shops were burned during the riot. These shopkeepers used to sell *gulal-bukka* (colored powders used in worshipping Hindu gods and goddesses) and as per the reliable information most of the shopkeepers are Muslims. The meeting to rehabilitate was arranged in the community hall of another prominent mandal viz. Akhil Mandai Ganapati Mandal. This mandal is controlled and led by former mayor and member of legislative assembly as well as prominent Congress leader in the city, Vasantrao Thorat. For a long time the Mandai mandal had been considered to be equally important as the Dagadusheth. The meeting was held by the leaders of Congress party. The meeting was arranged swiftly and later on the rehabilitation was also done swiftly. There is an important development that has taken place in the last decade. The Dagadusheth has well surpassed Mandai Mandal in gathering popular support and public donations. Of course the lagging behind of the Mandai mandal can not be solely attributed to its initiative to rehabilitate Muslim shopkeepers after the riot but it does lead to some doubts. (Mr. Thorat won the election to the assembly in the area in the 90s well after the riot.) The advancement of Dagadusheth over other contemporary mandals is a subject of independent research and is out of scope of present study. But, as it has been noted Dagadusheth gained great public support during the incident of desecration and riot. The mandal tried to celebrate the festival in more and more grand manner as well as it tried to form a confederation of mandals. The events regarding this have been noted as follows. (For the sake of information it should be noted that similar riot had taken place in 1970s regarding the Akhil Mandai Mandal. That riot is called as Halyachi Dangal.)

**Dagadusheth continues to celebrate**

The Dagadusheth has always tried to celebrate the festival in a manner as grand as possible. The mandal has made golden ornaments for the Ganapati idol. The ornaments are expensive. These are put on the idol and the idol looks impressive due to it. It has helped to develop the feeling of awe among the masses about the idol, as it is their unique opportunity to observe such expensive golden ornaments so closely.
The ornaments help in creating the atmosphere of reverence in the pandal. Normally all those who visit the pandal get impressed by the display of expensive golden ornaments on the idol. Here is one such example of the pursuit of the mandal for the ornaments. The concerned news item said, ‘This year the Gold ornaments weighing 2.5 kilogram have been made for the Ganapati idol of Dagadusheth, thus the total weight of the golden ornaments on the idol will be six kilogram, informed Prataprao Godase, the president of the trust. The cost of this gold is about Rs.2.4 million. Godase said that the management of the Dagadusheth Halwai Ganapati Sarvajanik Ganapati Trust is done by the Suvarnayug Tarun mandal. For last three-four years, the activists of the mandal do not collect contribution by going to the houses in the area. This year the mandal has continued this method and has appealed through letters to voluntarily donate for the festival. This appeal has got a good response. The activists and the office bearers of the mandal were collecting Rs. 70 to 80 thousand by going to houses. There used to be complaints when the activists were interacting with people for contribution. But now, thanks to new method people themselves give about Rs.0.25 to 0.3 million.’ (5-8-1991,p3)

The news item indicates that due to the reverence among the masses about the Ganapati idol, the mandal is getting enough donations and it does not have to depend upon the collection of the contribution for the festival. This is a major difference between this mandal and other mandals.

Here is one more example of the grandeur of the mandal. The news said, ‘A golden peetambar (waistcoat) weighing 10.5 k.g. has been prepared for the Ganapati idol of Shreemant Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Trust. This peetambar has been developed by famous jeweler, P. N. Gadgil. This will be presented to the lord after proper worship, informed Prataprao Godase, president of the trust.’ (13-9-1999,p5)

Grand celebration of the centenary by Dagadusheth

Mr. Godase and others who manage Dagadusheth have been well aware of the reverence among people for the Ganapati idol of the mandal as well as the popular support mandal enjoys. The mandal celebrated its centenary on a very large scale with elaborate arrangements. With participation of the thousands of people, the celebrations turned out to be the most important event in the city. It included cultural, social as well as the religious events and all of them commanded very good response
among masses. People showed their love for the Dagadusheth and the centenary celebrations established the Dagadusheth as the most important mandal in the city.

The celebrations were held for 55 days. For this purpose a public ground admeasuring 570 feet in length and 500 feet in breadth was taken on lease for three months. On this ground a pandal of 300 feet in length and 225 feet in breadth was erected. About ten thousand people could sit on the chairs in the pandal and enjoy the programs. A replica of the palace at Beekaner was developed at the entrance of the pandal. The festival was inaugurated on 14\textsuperscript{th} July at the hands of the chief minister of Maharashtra, Sudhakarrao Naik and the chairman of legislative council, Jayantrao Tilak. The cultural festival started on the same day in the presence of melody queen Lata Mangeshkar. The cultural festival continued to 8\textsuperscript{th} September. Various 55 artists of international reputation presented events in singing, playing instruments, dance, acting, drama, folk arts and poetry. The public was allowed to enjoy the programs free of charge. (The festival elicited tremendous response.) It was expected that about 50,000 to 100,000 people would daily visit the site to observe the huge pandal and the equally huge replica of the palace as well as to enjoy the cultural events. About 1500 activists of the trust and the Suvanayug Tarun Mandal were working at the site to manage the things. Every day the religious functions were held since five in the morning. An arrangement for providing food to five hundred people daily had been made. Apart from the cultural events, religious discourses and lectures of noted speakers were arranged everyday. The trust had sent letters to 100,000 families in Pune city appealing to participate in the festival and 30,000 letters were received in response to it. The trust used the voters' list of Pune parliamentary constituency for reference while sending letters. The trust had made provision for spending Rs. 12.5 million and it expected to get about Rs.15 million to 20 million. The trust had sent invitations to many people to come to the festival to perform \textit{Ganeshyaag}. The devotees were required to pay Rs. 5,125 for the Ganeshyaag. It was expected that about 1250 such Ganeshyaag would be performed. Besides the coupons of Rs. 11 and Rs.21 and Rs. 31 and Rs. 51 and Rs. 111 were prepared and those who bought these coupons were allowed to participate in various \textit{Ganeshpooja}. This scheme also elicited good response. The trust has become rich thanks to the belief of people about the Garapati idol of the trust. About 30,000 devotees visited the place daily, where the idol was kept permanently except in the days of festival. (Kesari, 5-7-1992, Sunday supplement, article by Madhukar Prabhudesai)
The Ganapati mandal founded by the great nationalist leader Lokmanya Tilak also celebrated the centenary. The following news item describes the celebration. It says, 'Mr. Jayantrao Tilak, trustee of Kesari-Maratha trust and chairman of state legislative council, on Monday told in press conference that the programmes of centenary celebrations by the trust were arranged in order to express the purpose for which Lokmanya Tilak started the festival and to explain his thoughts to new generation. (He said) Lokmanya Tilak in 1894 started Kesariwada Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava. This year the centenary of Kesariwada Ganeshotsava is being celebrated. On this occasion various intellectual and cultural programmes have been arranged. The events will take place from 20th August to 28th September for 40 days, every evening at the Kesariwada. The Ganeshotsava of Kesari-Maratha trust is celebrated as per Tilak almanac. When there is additional month of Bhadrapada, the festival of the trust is celebrated in this month i.e. one month prior to others. Hence, the trust will celebrate Ganeshotsava one month earlier, this year. But the immersion will be done on 29th September 1993 along-with others and the Ganapati of the trust will be on the fifth position as per the tradition.' (17-8-1993, p1)

Such celebrations by important mandals have continued and people have been taking part in the celebrations. But, the Ganapati festival has not been all fun, festival and merriment. Sometimes the communal tension between Hindu and Muslim communities have been witnessed during the festival. As it has been discussed in the last chapter, the festival started 100 years ago on the backdrop of the first Hindu-Muslim communal riots. In the modern times also such tensions and occasional rioting has been witnessed. One such major incident regarding Dagadusheth has been noted above for different aspect. Interestingly the Ganapati festival has also served (or has been utilized) as a platform to develop harmony among Hindu and Muslim communities. Such incidences of tension and harmony have been noted in the next section. Here one point has to be noted that in modern times on various occasions, the tension among Hindu and Muslim communities has developed in the same way as it used to develop hundred years ago. The most important reason of developing tension is hurting religious sentiments of one or other community. It is important to note the relationship between Hindu and Muslim communities with respect to the Ganapati festival.
The relationship between Hindu and Muslim communities

The riots during the Ganapati festival on some pretext are of common occurrence in the state of Maharashtra. Such incidences have been occurring in the Pune City also. When such communal riot erupts, it is always blamed that the forces which insist on the mobilization of Hindu community and which take aggressive, militant stand against the non-Hindus, especially the Muslims are responsible for the violence. Similarly, conservative and militant factions among non-Hindus, especially the Muslims are also blamed for the violence. But, majority of the common people prefers to stay away from the violence and they believe more in peaceful co-existence. It is very well clear that the communal flare up provides an opportunity to the extremists in either religion to gain the visibility and some support. Some important incidences of communal flare-ups during and on the eve of Ganpati festival (during the period of study 1985-2000) have been enlisted below. One of the most important of such riots regarding the desecration of the idol of Ganapati of Dagadusheth has been already discussed. These news items about tension and riots not only describe the communal situation at those times but also they provide information about the approaches of various socio-political groups towards Hindu-Muslim relationship and religious events.

In the very first year of the period selected for the study i.e. 1985, such a situation was developed. The concerned news item said, ‘this year Ganapati festival and Mohurrum are celebrated simultaneously. The Sainath Tarun Mandal in the camp area will celebrate both the festivals in the same pandal. The idol of Ganapati and the tabut of Mohurrum will be installed in the same pandal. After the aarti (distress call) is performed before the Ganapati, the holy book of the Muslims i.e. Koran will be read in front of the tabut. Common committee has been formed for both the festivals.’

An all party meeting had been called on 17th September to discuss the ways to peacefully celebrate Ganapati festival and Mohurrum. Mr. Shivajirao Patil, the chief minister of Maharashtra, was expected to take part in the meeting, according to Prataprao Godase. (13-9-1985, p3)

As stated earlier, by and large the masses prefer peaceful co-existence and avoid tension. This news item provides information about this trend among the masses. It says, ‘it is estimated that this year, in the Mohurrum, 65 tabuts, 200 panje and 40-50
Sabils will be installed. Last year 62 tabuts and 180 panje were installed. This year at about 35 places in the city pandals for Ganapati festival and the tabuts will be installed next to each other. In many places Hindus install tabuts (of Muslims). In territory of Chatushringi police station, 64 panje are installed, most of which are by Hindus. In short, although tabut, panje and sabil are part of Islamic tradition, in Pune City they are not limited to Muslims only. This picture was there since long ago and it is the same this year also. On the contrary the interest in it has grown.' (14-9-1985 p1)

As the potential of communal flare-up during the Ganapati festival is always there, those who are at important positions in the society are always on the forefront in the attempts of maintaining law and order in the city. The following news item describes the response of the elite class towards the possibility of the Hindu-Muslim tension. The news says, 'a peace committee for Ganapati festival under the chairmanship of Mayor Datta Ekbote has been formed. This committee has been formed to maintain peace as Ganapati festival and Mohurrum are falling in the same period. The members of the committee are- S. M. Joshi, N. G. Gore, Jayantrao Tilak, Chandrakant Ghorpade (Editor, Kesari), S. K. Kulkarni (Editor, Sakal), Police Commissioner Sudhakar Bhave, Mirza Hamid Beg, Abdul Karim Attar, Members of State legislature- Prakash Dhere, Ulhas Kalokhe, Sharad Ranpise, Anna Joshi, Rambhau Moze, Vitthal Tupe and Narayanrao Vaidya, former M.L.A.s Dr. Arvind Lele and Aminuddin Penwale. The members also included Prataprao Godase (President, Suvarnayug Tarun Mandal), Dr. Baba Adhav, Bhai Vaidya, S. A. Rahman, Mohammed Hussein, Ibrahim Jeena. The presidents of the city units of the political parties- Shivajirao Dhamdhere (Samajwadi Congress), M. V. Akolkar (Janata Party), Shankarrao Yadav (Bhartiya Janata Party), Bajirao Kamble (Republican Party of India), Nandu Ghate (Shiv Sena), B. D. Killedar (Peasants and Workers’ Party), Kamalabai Bhagwat (Communist Party of India). The editors-Chittaranjan Pandit (Taran Bharat), S. D. Wagh (Herald), Madhawrao Khandkar (Prabhats)’ (14-9-1985 p3)

The news item quoted above provides information about how the most important politicians and journalists took interest in diffusing the possible tension among Hindu and Muslim communities on account of Ganapati festival. This is also a representative news item. Almost all the times the authorities have feared possibility of communal tension among Hindu and Muslim communities and they have been
taking extra precaution. The attempt of involving prominent citizens in such a committee to maintain communal harmony is in accordance to the extra precaution.

By and large masses are opposed to communal tension between Hindu and Muslim communities and hence, on both sides, there are attempts to avoid those events, which may lead to the communal tension. Such initiatives are witnessed time and again. Here is one example of discontinuing the old tradition to avoid communal tension. The news item said, 'the preparations for Mohurrum are complete. In the city 65 tabuts, 200 panje and 40-50 Sabils will be installed. The Mohurrum will start on 17th and the immersion will be on 26th. The tradition of 'Davi-Ujawi' will be discontinued this year as Ganapati festival and Tabuts are in the same period. This tradition has been going on in the city for last four hundred years. The path of the procession is also changed.' (16-9-85)

Leaders of both the communities at least overtly try to maintain communal harmony and diffuse the situation, which might lead to communal tension. As it is a common observation that those who are really interested in some kind of communal conflict are always less in number. The newspaper has some reasoning about the communal tension. The concerned editorial said that, 'this year the Ganapati festival and Mohurrum are falling in the same period, but tension would not be created due to that. Some persons are very much interested in disputes arising among Hindus and Muslims and the subsequent conflict among them. The interests of some political leaders and rich people are involved in such a situation. To avoid all this, The Shreemant Dagadusheth Halwai Ganesh Mandal has taken lead and organized meetings of the activists of Ganeshotsava Mandals and Tabut Mandals since the end of May.' (18-9-1985 p4)

As it has been noted in this news item a prominent Ganapati mandal like Dagadusheth had taken lead in diffusing the tension between Hindu and Muslim communities. This initiative was well before the communal riot that took place due to the desecration of the Ganapati idol of Dagadusheth. Although the Ganapati mandals have emerged as the centers of powerful social groups, there are many incidences that these mandals have taken lead for social harmony instead of using their power for destructive work.

The relationship between Hindu and Muslim communities is not of total enmity. There are numerous examples of peaceful co-existence of the members of these two communities. There are many instances where the people belonging to the Hindu and
Muslim religions participate in each other’s religious festivals. Here is one such example reported by the newspaper. The report said, ‘The Sangamwadi mitra mandal in Yerwada has installed Ganapati (idol) and Tabut together. The Tabut of Dadubhai Babanbhai Sheikh is 101 years old.’ (24-9-85, p1)

Similar incidence had been reported in the next year also. The report said, ‘the Sainath Tarun mandal has installed Ganapati idol and tabut in the same place to convey the message of social unity, as it had done last year.’ (11-9-86)

Although by and large Hindu and Muslim communities peacefully co-exist and participate in each other’s festivals, there are also instances of communal flare up due to some small cause. The relationship between two communities is complicated. It is difficult to predict when the members of either Hindu or Muslim communities will be provoked and when they will show large heartedness and insist on reconciliation. Both trends appear simultaneously with the trend of co-existence being more prominent. The most important religious-cultural-social festival of Ganapati festival is obviously used as a platform for both conflict and reconciliation. Some examples of understanding between two communities have been seen earlier. Now here is one example of tension among two communities. The report said, ‘Tension in Nana, Bhawani and Ganesh peths (sectors) due to stone throwing---riot due to an attack on Shivsena office.---Tension developed in this area after verbal dispute and stone throwing between two groups at the Satranjiwala square near Sonya Maruti square on Laxmi road by the end of Shivjayanti procession on Monday night. Tension increased after the Shivsena office in Ganesh peth was torched on Tuesday. Shivsena and Patit Pawan Sanghatana (an aggressive front related to RSS) had appealed to observe a strike in Ganesh peth and Somwar peth. Police declared curfew on Tuesday night in some parts of jurisdictions of Samarth, Faraskhana and Khadak police stations to control the situation in Ganesh, Bhawani, Nana and Ravivar peths (sectors). Tension developed in these areas since Monday due to some incidents of stone throwing and stabbing. The curfew has been extended till 2 p.m. on Wednesday. The problem of riot was serious on both sides of Laxmi road from Sonya Maruti square to Quarter Gate in the areas of Ganesh, Ravivar, Nana and Bhawani peths. A huge pile of stones and bricks was there in the square near Alpana Theater. The police commissioner Bhaskarao Misar informed Chief Minister Shankarrao Chavan about the riot and requested for more reinforcement from outside the city.’ (20-4-1988, p1)
After this incidence of communal tension a communal riot broke out in the city on 30th April 1988 after the desecration of Ganapati idol of Dagadusheth. This riot has been discussed earlier in other aspect.

As it has been stated earlier the Ganapati festival has been used as a platform for both, conflict and reconciliation between Hindu and Muslim communities. The earlier example is useful to understand the pattern of development of such conflict. Now here is an example, which clearly shows how a temple constructed by Ganapati mandal became the center for trouble due to some antisocial elements. The report said, ‘tension in Dattawadi due to attempt of desecration of Ganesh idol--- Tension developed in the area on Thursday morning due to an attempt to desecrate the Ganesh idol of Navyug Bal Mitra Mandal near Chandani Chowk in Dattawadi. An attempt was also made to throw burning pieces of cloth in the temple of Bajarang Mitra Mandal near here. Police have taken in custody four persons as a precautionary measure. Burning pieces of cloth were thrown in the temple of Bajarang Mitra mandal at 3.30 a.m. after midnight. Due to this, the table inside the closed door started burning and other items also got damaged. An attempt was made to desecrate the 2.5 feet tall Ganapati idol of Navyug Bal Mitra Mandal in Chandani square. After that stones were pelted on the houses in Dattawadi area. But no one was injured.’ (10-6-1988,p1)

This is a typical case of the start of a disturbance between Hindu and Muslim communities. After such small incidences of attempts of desecration, the social atmosphere is vitiated and it gives rise to suspicion among Hindu and Muslim communities. The hard-liners on both the sides take advantage of the situation to increase hatred and sometimes such developments lead to a full-scale riot. One such example is quoted in the later part. The point to be made here is that a small temple of Ganapati in public place can become a center of disturbance easily. This phenomenon takes place due to the faith; most of the Hindus have in the Lord Ganapati and their reverence towards this God, which make it all an emotional issue.

Ganapati festival and allied activities are used for conflict and reconciliation. Some times the changes in the social equation among Hindu and Muslim communities affect the Ganapati festival. In the year of 1988 there were repeated incidences of communal flare up between Hindu and Muslim communities and it affected the celebration of Ganapati festival. The report said, ‘lack of enthusiasm in organizing the Ganapati festival in some parts was noted this year. It is felt that the
lacking enthusiasm was due to the communal riots in the months of April and May. The area in which this development has been noticed is of mix population of different communities. The mandals in these areas consist of activists of all religions. (Kesari, 20-9-1988, Ganeshotsava supplement).

The following incidence reported in the newspaper is a classic example of how conflict starts and how the Government reacts to it. The report has been quoted in detail in order to help to understand the phenomenon. The report said, 'tension in Pune city due to desecration of Ganapati idol- Social tension developed in the city due desecration of a Ganapati idol in a temple in Shivajinagar area. A strike was called in the city to protest this incident. Barring two incidents of stone throwing the strike was observed peacefully. All parties and organizations have protested this event and have appealed to maintain peace in the city. The prohibitive orders against gathering have been issued in the city. It was noticed yesterday early morning that some pieces of bone and meat were thrown in a Ganapati temple near Institution of Engineers. Milind Ekbote, who looks after the management of the temple noticed these pieces of meat and called some people. Rumours spread by eight in the morning. Deployment of the police was increased in this area and the entire city. The activists of Hindu organizations like Patit Pawan Sanghatana, Hindu Ekata, Vande Mataram, Shivsena started gathering in this area. Some activists moved around in mobs and asked to close down shops and establishments. Some activists raised slogans like 'Jai Shivaji, Jai Bhavani' and asked to close down the nearby school. Rumours spread in various parts of city and the tension increased. By 12 p.m. the mayor, D. J. Khilare visited the Mandir. The mob gheraoed the Mayor and pressurized him to declare strike in Pune city. Then Khilare called for a strike. The police commissioner, P.S. Nayanswami called a meeting of Political parties and organizations in the city, to review the situation and maintain peace. Such meeting has been called on today, Sunday in the office of Pune Municipal Corporation. A public meeting has been arranged in front of historical Shaniwarwada to protest the desecration. Milind Ekbote lodged a complaint about the incident and took out a morcha in the area with Subhash Jeur. Then a ‘mahapooja’ (worship) was done by Chintamani Gurav.' (5-8-1990, pi) (Important point is that the Ganapati idol was worshipped at the hands of Chintamani Gurav. As the surname makes it clear, he is not a Brahmin. Thus, this incidence is a good evidence in support of the argument that the Ganapati festival and the worshipping of Ganapati idol in Pune city is not
totally a brahminical enterprise but the people belonging to other castes have been integral part of it.)

Regarding the incident of desecration, 'The district guardian minister Vijaysinh Mohite-Patil on Sunday suggested that all-party peace committees be formed in all municipal wards considering the ensuing Ganapati festival, Navaratra festival, Diwali and the elections to municipal corporation. He was speaking at a meeting of all party peace committee yesterday on 5-8-1990, called after the attempt to desecrate the Ganapati idol by some unknown person.' (6-8-1990)

There is no social prohibition for anybody to participate in the Ganapati festival and this provides an opportunity for non-Hindus to participate in the activity of Hindus and develop very good communication. There have been many instances where the Ganapati festival has become a platform for conciliation among Hindu and Muslim communities and some such examples have been stated earlier. Here are two more such examples. The concerned news item said, 'In the area of Hadapsar, the participation of Muslims is the same as that of the Hindus. The Muslim activists are seen to be enthusiastically participating not only in the decoration of some of the mandals but also in overall working of the mandal. Mr. Ismail Sikandar Inamdar, president of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Market Mitra Mandal, is a famous social worker in the area. A. G. Sayyad of Sayyad arts has a major contribution in completing the decoration of a mandal in Gandhi Chowk. Besides this Raju Sayyad, Ismail Sheikh, Ramjan Sheikh (Mahadeonagar), Imtiyaj Sheikh (Vithalthanagar) are actively participating in the mandals in their areas, for last few years.' (31-8-1990, p8)

'This year the participation of Muslims in the immersion procession was significant. Many activists of Tamboli, Attar and Bagwan communities (part of Muslim community) participated in the procession. In the eastern part of the city many Muslim women wearing veil had come on to streets to observe the decoration of mandals. The Muslim leaders like Ameenudin Penwale, Rashid Khan, Sheikh Ahmad Chand, Ali Somaji, Vazeerbhai Mutvalli, Ishaq Kalami were on the forefront of the procession.' (6-9-1990, p7)

Depending upon the composition of the community in the given area, the participation of the Muslims in the Ganapati festival varies. Here is one example where the Muslim community has taken all the initiative in celebration of Ganapati festival. The concerned news item said, ' The Muslim community in the area has taken up all the responsibility this year of the Ganapati festival celebrated by the
Ram-Rahim Mitra mandal in Ghorpade peth. The president and all other office bearers of the mandal have been chosen to be Muslims. An activist of the mandal, Vilas Kulange told that the Muslims in the area got together and took the decision to celebrate ‘Ganeshotsava of Hindus’ so that the cordial relationship between the Hindu and Muslim communities will be maintained forever. He said that the young boys and girls would also be participating in the Ganapati festival.’ (3-9-1997, p5) (More information about this mandal has been noted in the next chapter, where the report of survey of Ganapati mandals has been stated.)

It has been stated earlier that Ganapati festival has been utilized for conciliation among Hindu and Muslim communities. In such cases the Muslims have participated in the Ganapati festival and it has helped in establishing good communication among the members of two communities. Such exercise has been facilitated due to the openness about participation in the Ganapati festival. Anybody who wants to join the festival is socially and culturally allowed to join it. But the fact remains that although for the sake of conciliation, the Muslims have joined a festival of Hindus. Now, this is a complex phenomenon. It is an increased participation of non-Hindus in a Hindu festival thereby increasing Hindu religiosity in the society and on the other hand a celebration of a festival of Hindu god has been helpful for non-Hindus to serve their most important social interest of having conciliation with majority community and in the process the orthodox norms of purity and pollution are thrown to wind due to their participation. The Ganapati festival celebrated as a social event has become reason for such complex developments. Some other such developments are noted in the following text.

As it has been stated various social groups have been entering the social space of Ganapati festival without any social prohibition. This process has ultimately helped in developing social harmony. Here is one such example where a religious group of those belonging to Sikh community has taken an initiative about Ganapati festival. The concerned news item stated, ‘The Gurudwara Shree Gurusingh Sabha has declared that the prizes will be given to the Ganapati mandals in Khadaki, Bopodi, Dapodi, Kasarwadi, Bhosari, Aundh road, Rangehills and Sangamwadi. The first prize will be of Rs. 1000, the second will be of Rs. 500 and the third will be of Rs. 101. The consolation prizes will also be given. The mandals in the said area should contact the office in Khadaki. The group of examiners will visit the Ganapati mandals, which have participated in the competition, on 3rd and 4th.’ (3-9-1987, p6)
The great Dalit leader Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar undertook an agitation at Mahad against the unjust practice of untouchability. He later adopted Buddhism, rejecting Hinduism. But followers of Ambedkar or those who respect him have utilized the social, cultural and religious space of Ganapati festival (of Hinduism). This phenomenon makes clear the accommodative nature of the Ganapati festival. The accommodative nature of the festival and those who celebrate it, is demonstrated in the following news item. The news item said, 'The Satatoti Houd mandal in Kasaba peth has erected a large replica of 'Chavdar Tale' at Mahad and the satyagraha done by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, as a decoration this year. A tank measuring 18 feet long and 16 feet in width has been built for the purpose and a fountain has been set in this tank. The statue of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar has been put on the platform in the tank. This replica will be inaugurated by Ramdas Athawale, social development minister. The expenditure for this decoration has been Rs. 80,000.' (2-9-1992) Dr. Ambedkar had undertaken a satyagraha or an agitation at Chavdar Tale at Mahad to protest against the practice of untouchability and norms of purity and pollution. (And incidentally the inauguration was done by Ramdas Athawale, a staunch Dalit leader in the state.) Thus the Ganapati festival can not be viewed only as a religious festival of the Hindus. It is also a social event with participation from all sections of society including of those who have rejected Hinduism. Yet, the religious essence of the festival is there. This is a paradoxical situation. Such situations have been witnessed during the Ganapati festival on various occasions.

But as the Ganapati festival has become more and more popular and more and more people have participated in it, the norms of purity and pollution have been thrown to wind. The masses have shown tendency to reject such norms although while indulging in more and more religiosity. There is rejection of norms of purity and pollution as well as of propriety, order, homogeneity and uniformity. This rejection by masses has always been a bone of contention for the white collared educated middle class. The so-called educated and cultured class has always rued that the Ganapati festival is not celebrated 'properly.' There have been numerous attempts (although largely unsuccessful) to maintain the norms of order, purity and pollution, religiosity etc. These have been sometimes utilized to establish control. Such attempts have been successful to increase religiosity to some extent. Here is one example when the government tried to intervene in the festival with a disguise of maintaining the sanctity of the festival. The concerned news item stated, 'Government to take action
against the producers of Gutakha if they advertise their product during the Ganapati Festival. The minister of health, Daulatrao Aher on Saturday warned that a stern action will be taken against the concerned producers of Gutakha (scented tobacco used for chewing) if they advertise Gutakha during the Ganapati festival. He was talking to journalists. He said that the Gutakha producers have given him a written undertaking some time ago about not advertising Gutakha during the Ganapati festival and stern action will be taken against them if they do not keep the promise. The Ganapati festival has become the Gutakha Festival for last some years. The government is going to impose tough sanctions against such advertisements to maintain the sanctity of the festival. To maintain the sanctity of the Ganeshotsava, the mandals should strongly refuse to accept such advertisements, he appealed. Yet, if there is a need, he will protest against these advertisements by standing before the mandals (pandals). He also warned that such advertisements should not be made by using the loopholes in the law.’ (23-8-1998,p1)

Although the Ganapati festival has acceptance among all castes in Hindu community and all classes, the enthusiasm of celebrating the festival publicly is not uniform. The non-brahmins have always been on the forefront in celebrating the Ganapati festival as a public event. Now, here again the complex phenomenon as in the case of relationship between Hindu and Muslim communities, is witnessed. The Ganapati has been the tutelary God of some of the Chitpawan Brahmins. The Peshawas and their nobles who belonged to the Chitpawan Brahmin community used to celebrate the Ganapati festival in their mansions with great religiosity as well as with grandeur. As Ghurye has argued, the Brahmins in and around Pune had been on the forefront in establishing Ganapati as an important deity (This point has been discussed in the second chapter.) When festival was started to be celebrated as a public festival (thanks to the great nationalist leader Lokmanya Tilak, who also belonged to the Chitpawan Brahmin community) it made it possible for non-Brahmins to participate in the celebration of Ganapati festival publicly. The more and more participation of non-Brahmins in the Ganapati festival provided them the opportunity to worship the god and at the same time this phenomenon has led to increased importance of this God as compared to other Gods and also increasing the awareness among Hindus. The following news item informs about the intensity of the celebration of Ganapati festival with respect to the geographical divisions of city. But, interestingly it coincides with the proportion of Brahmins and non-Brahmins living in
those areas. The report said, 'As far as the Ganapati festival is considered, the city of Pune is divided into two parts. The locality on the east of Shivaji road is considered to be more important in view of the festival. This part consists of Shukarwar Peth, Bhawani Peth, Guruwar Peth, Ravivar Peth, Ghorpade Peth, Budhawar Peth and Nana Peth. In this area the Ganapati festival is celebrated with great fervor. The density of Ganapati mandals in this area is also significant. On the contrary on the western side the Ganapati mandals are scattered.' (30-8-1987, p1) (Conventionally, the Brahmins have been living in the western side, in the peths (sectors) of Sadashiv, Shaniwar and Narayan.)

The newspaper has some explanation for the less enthusiasm in celebrating the Ganapati festival in one of the Brahmin dominated peths i.e. Shaniwar Peth. The report said, 'In Shaniwar peth the Ganapati mandals are more in numbers and the population is relatively less. About two-three mandals go to the same family to collect contribution. Hence all mandals (in this area) get less money. Majority of mandals in Shaniwar peth has decided to celebrate the Ganpati festival with austerity, due to lack of money.' (7-9-1989, p2)

As it has been stated in the beginning, the celebration of Ganapati festival in the period 1985-2000 is marked by increase in the religiosity and religious rituals as well as heightened awareness of Hindu identity. By the news reports quoted earlier, this observation will be very much evident. But, this is not the complete story as it has got an important twist. Although the festival and the religiosity have grown to a great extent in the given period, it has not led to establishment of religious dogma. But, on the contrary there have been numerous incidences where the very masses who indulged more and more in religious activities have rejected every attempt to organize the mandals and to homogenize the festival and thus develop a power in the hands of certain individuals or a group. The masses have also rejected the attempts of establishing order, norms of purity and pollution. The attempts of homogenizing the festival and develop a uniformity have also failed miserably. So, again this is a paradoxical situation where there is marked increase in religiosity and awareness of Hindu identity and yet failure in the attempts of developing a uniform religious (Hindu) force. This is due to opposition from masses who have always tried to maintain their autonomy and rejected authority of any type. In the following part of the chapter the reports which show the rejection of the social and religious norms as well as authority have been compiled.
There is religious ritualistic norm that the Ganapati idol to be worshipped should be made of clay and it should be in small size. People have been celebrating Ganapati festival with great enthusiasm and making Ganapati idols of different materials other than clay. Thus, the festival is celebrated and the idol is worshipped but the traditions are easily broken.

According to the reports, the Ganapati idol was made from fiberglass by Khatawkar (16-9-1986)

The attempts to prepare the idol of Ganapati with the materials other than clay and thus to break the norm and the tradition continued. A news report stated, ‘for the first time in Pune City, this year the idol of Ganapati has been made of thermocoal. This idol is six and half feet tall. Girish Murudkar and his mother Kunda Murudkar have made this idol. This idol is composed of 21 parts. This idol is in seated position. The objects held by the idol are also of thermocoal.’ (7-9-1988, p7)

Here one more point is noteworthy that a woman had participated in developing the idol of thermocoal. This is contrary to the conservative norms of religion where women are discouraged in case of rituals and other religious activities.

Such changes are reflected in the decoration and the scenes before the Ganapati idol. According to D. S. Khatawkar (famous artist, involved in Ganapati festival activities for very long time) in the precedent two years of 1986 a change in decoration was taking place. In Ganapati festival, less emphasis was being given on the electrical lighting and instead the proportion of expressing the stories from Puranas or history was increasing. (16-9-86)

The contemporary social situation does affect the decorations before the Ganapati idols of the mandals and the message conveyed through them. In 1987, there was more emphasis on social problems. (2-9-1987, p4) The frustration in the post independence period was expressed in the decorations. (3-9-1987, p7)

The reporter had reported that while observing the decorations before the Ganapati idol it seemed that the Ganapati mandals had taken note of and they were aware of the Bofors scandal, The N. C. Joshi scandal in the University, increasing corruption in various fields, the social work by the social workers like Baba Aamte, the movement for de-addiction, the dangers before the nation from inside and outside, social and political situation. (4-9-1987, supplement, p1)
Participation of women

The orthodox, conservative Hindu approach is that the lower castes and women are not welcome as far as religious practices and rituals are considered. The Ganapati festival has provided a platform for women and those belonging to lower castes to publicly indulge in religious practices and thus for religious transgression. Yet, here is also a paradoxical development. The religious, ritualistic norms of purity and pollution are thrown to wind due to increasing participation of women in the festival at the same time the religiosity of the festival has increased due to increased observance of religious practices. Thus, it is difficult to brand the development as either religious transgression or religious observance, because it is both at the same time. The women have utilized the social platform of the Ganapati festival for acquiring the social and cultural as well as religious space, which was denied to them, thanks to the conservative male dominated social practices. During the festival women can roam around in the city until late in the night under the pretext of watching the decorations before the Ganpati idols of various mandal, they can participate in the procession and dance on the street in the presence of thousands of men and thus assert their existence. Women can form their social groups and conduct some activity for the celebration of Ganapati festival. (There is one mandal at Kalas, on the periphery of the city, which is solely composed of women!) Thus the Ganapati festival has become a platform for women’s liberation from conservative social traditions and interestingly the process is carried out by performing the very religious rituals. The women in the city knowingly or unknowingly have utilized the social platform of Ganapati festival for religious, cultural and social transgression and assertion of their existence. Another important factor of this development is that there has been a general consensus about women’s participation in the Ganapati festival and by and large the (male) activists of Ganapati festival have been accommodative towards women. There have been numerous instances, which lead to this observation. In the following part, these instances as reported in the newspapers, have been noted.

Dagadusheth tried to involve women in the most important part of the festival, the immersion procession. The news item stated, ‘Mr. Prataprao Godase, president of Dagadusheth Halwai Sarvajanik Ganapati Trust has appealed that women, educated people, contributors and patrons should take part in the immersion procession of the mandals in their respective areas.’ (23-8-1992,p1)
Sanjivani Mitramandal in Sahakarnagar (no.1) had undertaken an innovative initiative that year. All management of the mandal was to be handed over to women. About 15 women in Sahakarnagar, Yashawantnagar and Santnagar had taken up the responsibility. The mahila mandal (women’s group), which would be considered the best regarding the participation, would be rewarded. (26-8-1990, p5)

The enthusiastic participation of women in the Ganapati festival is relatively a new phenomenon. In this report in 1990, the participation of women from all religions was appreciated and thus it is clear that women participation has not become an obvious thing in the early 90s. The concerned news report said, ‘The immersion procession in the city will start on Tuesday and participation of women from all religions is a salient feature of the procession. The Doke talim mandal will start its own immersion procession one-day earlier on Monday at midnight. This procession will be taken out with co-operation of some other mandals. The Chhatrapati Shivaji Market Yard Ganesh Mandal at Gultekadi has taken initiative to take out the independent procession consisting 30 mandals along the Tilak road.’ (3-9-1990, p3)

In the early 90s the women started participating more and more in the Ganapati festival. The participation of women in the festival was not limited to those who were from well to do religious families. But women from the social groups who are out of the mainstream like the prostitutes also participated in the festival. The news report said, ‘First time in the 96 years’ history of Ganapati festival in the city, the prostitutes participated in the immersion procession. About 50 prostitutes under the leadership of Shalini Kurhade, participated in the procession with the Ganapati of Vaibhav Mitra mandal near Akhade Talim in Budhawar Peth.’ (6-9-1990, p10)

In the case cited above, there is more to it than participation of women in the festival. It was not the participation by ordinary housewives but it was by prostitutes. The phenomenon underlines how, the norms of purity and pollution (and exclusion) are thrown to wind while celebrating the festival. The accommodative nature of the Ganapati festival is also indicated well by this example. The Vaibhav Mitra Mandal, cited above is well supported by the sex workers and is located at the center of the red-light area. (There is more information about this mandal, in the next chapter.)

Women continued to utilize the festival to explore more social space (earlier solely occupied by men) and the Ganapati festival has been accommodative for every experiment. The caption below a photograph said, ‘this year a group of young girls will play Dhol and Tasha and for that rigorous practice is being done on the grounds
of Maharashtra mandal.' (3-9-1997,p1) This photograph shows girls practicing to beat drums as a part of preparation to participate in the immersion procession.

More social space was made available to accommodate women at the most revered Ganapati mandal of Kasaba Ganapati. The Kasaba Ganapati temple was built by Jeejabai, mother of the great warrior king Shivaji. This Ganapati is considered as the 'village deity' of Pune City and visited by most of Puneits before any auspicious event or any other important event like marriage. The mandal is dominated by Brahmins and by those belonging to Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). The part of the news item said, 'Women are going to look after all the arrangements at the Shree Kasaba Ganapati Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava, today. Innovative initiative of this mandal viz. one day of women, is lauded by all. Women activists will recite the Atharvsheersha at 7.30 a.m. Various competitions will be held for women in the afternoon from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. The aarti will be performed by the young women from the Kasaba peth and surrounding area. In the evening Ms. Seema Gaikwad will play musical instrument, Sanaee. The winners of the competitions will be given the awards in the night.' (9-9-2000,p5) Thus, women had an opportunity to occupy social, cultural and religious space at the mandal related to the 'village deity' of the city and which is effectively controlled by RSS. Now, it is difficult to decide why the women were accommodated here in the festival? Was it because of the increasing social awareness among women? Was it because of the increasing tendency and assertion by women to occupy more and more social, cultural, religious space? Was it because the perspective of male has changed and they do not mind women occupying space at the 'village deity'? Was it because the members of RSS have become more accommodative towards women? Was it because the nature of the Ganapati festival is such that it is difficult to maintain norms of purity and pollution and one has to be more and more liberal as well as accommodative? These are important questions to be answered. But, these questions are beyond the scope of present study and only noting this important phenomenon which indicates the rejection of norms is considered to be sufficient. The points raised through these questions are applicable in case of other such incidences also.

The Dagadusheth has been making continuous attempts of accommodating women in the festival. The news item said, 'The preparations for the immersion procession speeded up--- The Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Mandal has arranged for a new initiative this year to increase the participation of women in the festival.
151 young ladies wearing traditional dresses will perform aarti of five revered Ganapati idols at the pandal of Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Trust.

Here is one important example where, women formed their social group, called Ganapati mandal and celebrated the Ganapati festival just like men. The news item said, ‘The women at Kalas have come together and started celebrating the Ganapati festival since last year. These women do not collect the contribution and themselves spend money for the festival. Ms. Nirmala Kand is the president of the mandal.’ (11-9-2000,p5)

Dagadusheth appealed women to participate in the immersion procession through an advertisement, the advertisement said, ‘In the centenary celebration (of the Dagadusheth) thousands of women in Pune participated. This time to establish a new standard, we are appealing women to participate in the royal procession of Dagadusheth. For this purpose a lot of women have registered their names. About 24 horse-ridden women will participate in the procession. You are requested to collect special badges of the procession by registering name at following places...’ (9-9-1992,p8)

As it has been stated earlier, the Dagadusheth has been located at the heart of the city and it commands the support and faith of people. Hence, any activity performed in the pandal of the Dagadusheth is witnessed by the masses and is widely talked about. This location was used by women to assert their religious right by performing a ritual. The incidence got good publicity. The caption below a photograph described that innumerable women performed Maha-aarti on Tuesday before the Ganapati of Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Trust. Related news story said, ‘about ten thousand women performed Maha-aarti in the pandal of Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Trust. These women were wearing traditional dresses. The event began with blowing conch. Atharwshirsha was recited at this time (by women). The program of Maha-aarti (mega aarti) was held in order to increase the participation of women in the public Ganapati festival. The vice-president of the trust D.K.Rasane called on women to participate in the immersion procession in large numbers and try to carry on an ideal procession.’ (18-9-1996,p1&p5)

The location of the Dagadusheth, geographically, socially, religiously and culturally, has been utilized by women for the disguised transgression. Here is one more such incidence. The caption below the photograph said, ‘On the occasion of Rishipnchami, about 11 thousand women in the area recited Atharwshirsha and
performed *Maha-aarti* before the Ganapati of Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati trust. Municipal commissioner Arun Bhatia was present at this time along with his wife. The event was organized under the leadership of Shubhangi Bhalerao and Alaka Jadhav.’ (8-9-1997,p5)

The presence of thousands of women at the Dagadusheth for public indulgence of religious rituals has been witnessed again and again. The caption of the photograph said, ‘about ten thousand women participated in the group recital of *Atharwsheersha* on Tuesday, organized by Shreemant Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Trust at its pandal.’ (15-9-1999,p10)

The Dagadusheth has led the way in accommodating women in the Ganapati festival. Other Ganapati mandals have also taken initiatives in this regard. The women have thus got an opportunity to break free from the restrictive social, cultural and religious norms and in turn this phenomenon has led to increased religiosity.

**Masses reject dogma, authority and formality**

The very masses that revered Ganapati and celebrated the festival have always rejected dogma, authority, formality, order, as well as norms of purity and pollution. This has become evident in many aspects, especially in case of the immersion procession on the last day of the festival. Although there is not only one procession and every Ganapati mandal is socially allowed to take its own procession according to its convenience, the procession on the central commercial street of Laxmi road has become a battleground for those who try to establish authority and who reject it. The important members of Government, almost all important representatives of people and hundreds of thousands of citizens gather on the Laxmi road to witness the procession and thus the procession on Laxmi road gets prime importance and newspaper coverage. There have been simultaneous processions on the nearby streets (and in other parts of city) and they also get good popular appreciation.

The immersion procession of Ganapati idols is the most important event in the festival. The procession occupies major part of the public space and time in the city. The main roads in the central part of the city are closed for traffic during the procession. The authorities get irritated with the procession taking longer time (most of the times the procession has continued for more than 24 hours). There have been attempts to complete the procession in lesser time. But since these efforts amount to encroaching upon the space and time of the participants as well as an intervention by
an organized power, the mandals (and thus the activists as well as masses) have successfully resisted these attempts. The attempts of disciplining the festival were made with different ways. Using the power of government, judiciary and appeals to religiosity have been the important ways of disciplining the festival. But neither coercive nor persuasive methods worked and the mandals asserted their own right of celebrating the festival. But, interestingly the mandals and their activists supported the efforts of self-discipline. Again here is a paradoxical situation where the activists of Ganapati mandals have insisted upon their right over the social space and time and rejected all the attempts of establishment to discipline but at the same time they have tried to imbibe self-discipline and adopt modern ways of life.

The rejection of authority and dogma is about many accounts. Here is one example where the ‘superiority’ of some mandals, which was established due to tradition was rejected.

Some Ganapati mandals due to historical reasons have got privileges during the main immersion procession on the Laxmi road and the activists of these mandals do assert their superiority. But other mandals, which are not privileged, have been resisting the dominance of the privileged mandals (which are called revered mandals). Here is one such example, which shows the centrifugal tendencies of the mandals. The concerned news report said, ‘Due to the increasing gap between the Ganapatis (of mandals) in the immersion procession, the mandals with electrical decoration were getting the entry in the procession late. To avoid this problem, nine mandals will take their Ganapatis along the Kumthekar road on Friday evening. Nimbalkar Talim mandal, Khadakmal Aali mandal, Natubaug mandal, Shree Gajanan Mandal, Garud Ganapati mandal, Rajaram mandal, Peruget Chowk mitra mandal, Khajina Wihir Mitra mandal and Vande mataram mandal are the mandals which will establish this new tradition (of changing the route of the procession).’ (27-9-85)

There is internal competition among the privileged or ‘superior’ mandals also. All is not well among the privileged mandals. They also have differences among themselves. The news report stated, ‘New history was created in the 93 years of Ganapati festival in Pune city, on 17-9-1986, when the Ganapati of Dagadusheth Halwai Sarwajanik Ganapati trust, participated in the immersion procession on the Laxmi road, that of Akhil Mandai Mandal, entered the procession on Kumthekar road. The Mandai Mandal suddenly took the decision to change the route of the procession. A serious situation was developed at the Tilak Square as the Ganapatis
(idols) of Dagadusheth and Mandai which followed the procession by two different paths came together in the Tilak square. But both the Ganapatis were immersed in a peaceful manner without any untoward incidence. The procession continued for 22 hours 35 minutes. In the procession there were 321 Ganapatis out of which 68 were decorated with electrical lighting.’ (19-9-1986)

The important mandals like Dagadusheth and Akhil Mandai Mandai are given preferential treatment in the main common immersion procession. But there had been opposition to any hegemony, one such example is, ‘The Doke talim sangh mandal started its own procession. Breaking the tradition of joining the main immersion procession, the Doke talim sangh in Nana peth, started its own immersion procession one day earlier at 12.05 a.m. Before the procession started, the aarti was performed. Member of Parliament Vitthalrao Gadgil, Members of legislative assembly Prakash Dhere, Sharad Ranpise, Ulhas Kalokhe, Deputy Mayor Prakash Pawar, Chairman of the standing committee Raja Mantri, members of Pune municipal corporation Bharat Sawant and Tatya Aarade (most of whom were important leaders of Congress party) had the darshan of the Ganapati of Doke talim sangh. The president of the mandal, Rajabhau Shinde had declared two days ago that the mandal has decided to start its own immersion procession one day advance at 12 a.m. in view of the delay in the completion of the immersion procession and discriminatory treatment given to the smaller mandals.’ (23-9-1988, p3)

The Doke Talim Sangh had rebelled against the dominance of the privileged mandals and it had the support of the important leaders of Congress party. But later on this rebel rejoined the mainstream. The concerned report stated, ‘The Ganapati of Doke Talim Sangh in Nana peth will participate in the main immersion procession from this year, declared Bharat Inmake, president of the mandal by a statement. The mandal used to start its immersion procession on the previous night at 12 a.m. Mr. Prataprao Godase had appealed the mandal to participate in the main immersion procession.’ (16-9-1991, p3)

The immersion procession is never disciplined and never follows any timeframe. In fact no such timeframe could be established in the hundred years of celebration of Ganapati festival. Establishing timeframe or timetable means establishing order and homogenizing the celebration of the festival to some extent. Perhaps this is the reason behind the failure to establish the timeframe. Some times, this aspect of the procession (lack of any fix timetable) becomes a reason for public inconvenience.
The editorial on 5-9-1987 raised a question about immersion procession. It said, 'the immersion procession completes in a peaceful manner but always there is lack of discipline in it. The gap among the first five respected Ganapatis (which results in delaying the procession), splashing gulal, dancing to the tunes of vulgar songs with equally vulgar gestures and day by day forgetting that this is a festival of pleasure are the things to be avoided. But these things are not avoided in spite of such pledges.'

The immersion procession has been taking longer time with every passing year. The traffic and the business in the central part of the city come to a standstill until the procession is completed. Hence, there have been attempts to complete the procession earlier. An attempt was made to complete the procession earlier by starting early. The concerned report stated, 'the immersion procession will start today at 10 a.m., earlier than usual so that the procession will be completed before next day breaks. The important Ganapatis of Bhau Rangari, Akhil Mandai Mandal and Dagadusheth will participate in the procession between six to seven thirty in the evening.' (23-9-1988, p1)

The attempt of disciplining the festival by the establishment has failed miserably. As it has been stated earlier, reducing the time of the procession means occupying less space and time in the most important part of the city. Hence, the attempts of reducing time-period and disciplining the immersion procession have never been successful. This case is one of the most important such cases. The following reports state it.

'There was unprecedented delay in the completion of the immersion procession. All the attempts to complete the immersion procession without delay and to see that all the Ganapatis are immersed before the next day breaks failed due to adamant behavior of some mandals. Hence, the procession continued for about twenty-eight and half-hours. This is a new record of delay in last 24 years. As it was decided by Mayor Ankush Kakade and some members of Pune Municipal Corporation, the procession was started one and half hour earlier at ten-thirty in the morning so that the procession will be completed earlier. But since some mandals took the stand that it was decided to start the procession early but it was not decided to complete it early, the idea of starting the procession earlier became meaningless. It was noticed that those mandals, which agreed unwillingly to start the procession at ten thirty, disrupted the attempt. It was felt that the procession moved on slowly (than usual). The divisional revenue commissioner and the district collector participated in the
immersion procession for the first time. The political leaders and government officers were seen for the first time, playing whirlwind together. The procession started at ten-thirty on Saturday and finished at 2.50 p.m. (in the afternoon) on Sunday. Total 304 Ganapatis participated in the procession.’ (27-9-1988)

The editorial in the Kesari on 27-9-1988, on page 4 said, ‘this year lot many initiatives about the (Ganapati) festival and (immersion) procession were declared but nothing was implemented. The newly formed Ganesh Mahamandal set the rules like there should not be vulgar dance of rhombasomba, the gulal should not be sprayed, the pooja should be performed at a particular time, the immersion procession should be completed before the next day-break etc. But no rule out of these was implemented. The crowd gathers before the Shreemant Dagadusheth Halwai Ganapati due to some beliefs spread in the society about it. But it dose not mean that the society has accepted the leadership of this mandal in totality. If some people go to the extreme in vulgarity and indecency, under an impression that whatever done on this day is tolerated, then the faith of the whole society about this festival will not remain the same. Shree Gajanan is a symbol of auspisciousness, but this is not kept in mind in the procession. The police department dose not take any tough stand to avoid bitterness in the whole procession. The (Ganesh) mahamandal was formed hastily with a motive of drawing attention and gaining importance. It didn’t serve the purpose. A group of activists should be developed to discipline the procession. Office bearers of all the mandals should be brought together and these things should be explained to them. Nobody should think that this hooliganism in the procession would be tolerated for long. Whatever happened this year was done deliberately. There is no doubt that it was done to defeat the efforts to complete the procession earlier.’ Here in these comments there is a mention of the Ganesh Mahamandal i. e. confederation of Ganapati mandals. The attempt of Dagadusheth to unite Ganapati mandal under the banner of the confederation and its failure has been discussed in the later part of it. This attempt has been a significant attempt and its failure is equally significant.

On 29-9-1988 the editor of Kesari, Chandrakant Ghorpade in his article titled, ‘Childish decision and Uncalled Chaos’, commented that the decision to start the procession earlier by one and half hour was wrong as well as ridiculous and childish. He said, ‘Those who knew nothing about the reason of unnecessary delay had taken this decision. But this decision dose not imply that the procession will be completed
earlier by at least one and half-hour. The Mayor, the police commissioner or their colleagues who expected that the procession should be completed earlier by at least one and half-hour, have not understood the city of Pune, properly. This year the procession started earlier by one and half-hour. Thus, some mandals could occupy the Laxmi road for one and half-hour more. These mandals took disadvantage of this decision. This was the reason why the initiative taken by the mayor and the police commissioner failed miserably. There was no reason to invite trouble by implementing this childish concept of starting the procession earlier. The reason behind the delay in completing the immersion procession in Pune city is the motive of occupying the whole Laxmi road for maximum possible time on the day of procession. The important reason of the delay is the tendency of some particular mandals among those of first five revered mandals, to hold the whole city of Pune to ransom.'

The initiative was taken to complete the immersion procession earlier by starting early. But, it had two aspects. Completing the procession in lesser time means the space and time occupied by the activists of Ganapati festival thanks to the opportunity of the procession will be reduced. Second point is that if the initiative had succeeded in getting results, the Mayor Ankush Kakade and the police would have got the credit for it, thus increasing importance of Mr. Kakade as a politician and also that of the police commissioner. Such change of equations is not convenient for many in the establishment. The failure of the attempt to lessen time of the procession should be understood with this aspect. Due to this failure the police learned the lesson and did not intervene in this festival of masses in the following year. The concerned report stated, ‘Has the police department decided not to intervene to speed up the procession? --- It is understood that there is no unanimity among the mandals about the time at which the Ganapati immersion procession will start on Anant chaturdashi. Meanwhile it is known that the senior police officers are of the view that this year there should not be any intervention in the procession.’ (11-9-1989, p1) There is one more such report, which says, ‘Will the immersion procession be delayed this year? - The number of mandals, which have shown inclination to participate in the procession, has increased by 100 and it has become 413. A. K. Seth, the police commissioner has appealed that the police department will not push forward the procession but the activists should understand their responsibility and maintain the
speed of the procession. Hence, this year's procession is likely to be delayed." (12-9-
1989, p1)

In the earlier year the attempts of reducing time period of the procession resulted
in more time for the completion of the procession. Now, in this year the police
department remained passive and still it took longer to complete the procession. The
conclusion is that the masses want to occupy more and more public space and time
(which they can't otherwise) The concerned report said, 'A new record of 28 hours
and 50 minutes was set on Friday when the Ganapati immersion procession
completed. The policy of the police department not to intervene in the procession and
the insistence of majority of the mandals to go by Laxmi road than by Kumthekar or
Kelkar road, were the important reasons of the delay. The police did not make any
serious attempt to push forward the activists in the procession. It has been
experienced in last few years that there is no effect of any attempts to speed up the
procession. Hence, the police officers had decided to hand over the control of the
procession to the activists. In all 413 mandals had asked for permission to participate
in the procession but the police in the Khandujibaba square has noted that 302
Ganapatis have been immersed. It is clear that some mandals withdrew from the
procession due to the delay. (The procession started at 12 p.m.)' (16-9-1989)

Here is a table, which records the time taken to complete the main immersion
procession on Laxmi road. It is clear from the table that more and more time has been
utilized for the procession. The increase in the time taken to complete the procession
has been disproportionate to the increase in number of mandals. Over years the
festival is celebrated with increasing enthusiasm at the same time the political and
social establishment has submitted to this festival of masses. This is the reason of
delay. The masses have utilized the opportunity to occupy more and more space and
time and the establishment is in a way helpless in this regard. The growth of the
festival is terms of participation and enthusiasm is also indicated by the increase in
the time taken to complete the procession. The police department gets in a trouble if
the immersion procession gets delayed. Hundreds of thousands of people participate
in the immersion procession. Such a huge mob remaining on the streets for hours has
potential of serious law and order situation. Hence, the police department has to
remain alert for any eventuality. Staying alert continuously for more than 24 hours is
a punishment. Thus, delaying the procession has also become a weapon of the
activists and hence the masses to put the police in trouble and defying the authority.
The time taken to complete the procession noted below in the table has been noted from various newspaper reports over years.

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
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The data about the time taken to complete the procession is about the main procession on the Laxmi road. There are other small and big processions in the city, but they take less time than the one on the Laxmi road. Although the procession on the Laxmi road is considered to be the most important, there have been efforts to
encourage the Ganapati mandals to take other routes. (So that the procession on Laxmi road will be less occupied and it will take less time.) Here is one such an example of the efforts of finding alternatives to the mainstream. The concerned report stated, 'Due to lack of understanding between the police officers and representatives of people, the Ganapati immersion procession continued for 26 hours. In spite of the raining, the procession, which started at 12 a.m. on Tuesday, ended at 2 p.m. on Thursday. The number of Ganapatis on Tilak road were 37, last year this number was 22.' (6-9-1990,p1)

The police department with a group of elite class dangled carrot before the mandals in order to discipline them. The establishment has been never tired of attempts to control this assertion of the masses. The report said, 'Deputy Police Commissioner Ramrao Ghadage, on Sunday declared that the Pune city police and the Citizens’ Forum have arranged a competition for Ganapati festival and immersion procession, from this year. The Faraskhana and Khadak police stations have arranged competitions for mandals in their respective areas.' (9-9-1991,p3)

The attempts of streamlining the procession continued, but with little success. The news recorded the failure as, 'In spite of the fact that the immersion procession was taken by four routes, it took 26 hours 15 minutes to complete. The procession started on Sunday at 12p.m. and ended at 2.15p.m. on Monday. There were 389 Ganapatis in the procession. The police had declared that the immersion processions would be taken by Tilak road, Kumthekar road and Kelkar road as well as by Laxmi road. This proposal got good response. The number of Ganapatis on various roads which participated in the processions were as follows- Tilak road-60, Kumthekar road-32, Kelkar road-31, Laxmi road- 266.' (24-9-1991,p1)

The police had their persuasive method to establish the order (and they have support of the social establishment for the pursuit). The news item said, 'Deputy Police Commissioner Vikram Boke, on Thursday declared that the Vighnaharta Paritoshik Yojana would be arranged this year also to encourage the activists to follow rules and to maintain the sanctity of the Ganesh festival. The Vighnaharta awards will be given to the mandals, which will follow the rules, set by police. A twenty-member committee has been formed to observe the celebration by mandals and to recommend awards. Sub-committees have been formed for every police station. The Police Commissioner, P.S.Narayanswami is heading the committee formed for the city. The vice presidents are Bhujangrao Mohite, additional police
commissioner, Prakash Kardaley (editor of Daily Indian Express) and N.P. Bhog. The general secretary is G. Nadkarni. The members of the committee are Prataprao Pawar (owner of Daily Sakal), Vijay Kuwalekar (editor of Daily Sakal), Arvind Gokhale (editor of Daily Kesari), Shreepad Wagh (editor of Daily Maharashtra Herald), Ranganath Malawe (editor of Daily Prabhat), Vasant Kane (editor of Daily Sandhya), Rajiv Sabade (Sakal), Harry David (Times of India), Deepak Tilak (owner of Daily Kesari), Anil Takalkar (editor of Daily Loksatta), Chandamal Katariya and Krishnakumar Goyal.' (8-8-1992,p2)

The important feature of the news report above is that the respected and influential citizens (including editors of dailies) in the city joined the police department in its pursuit of establishing order and thereby controlling the festival. But the Ganapati mandals bother little about the government and its coercion. One news report throws light upon the tendency of the activists of Ganapati mandals. The report states, 'It is legally mandatory on the public Ganeshotsava (Ganapati festival) mandals to obtain permission of Assistant Charity Commissioner to collect contribution from people. The Assistant Charity Commissioner on Tuesday warned that a criminal action would be taken against the mandals, which collect contribution without permission. Special arrangement has been made in the office of Assistant Charity Commissioner to give permission to mandals. Last year permission was given to 1758 mandals, most of which are in Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad area. To obtain the permission of the police to celebrate the Ganapati festival it is necessary for mandals to have license from the Charity Commissioner. The police will not issue permission for raising pandal, using loudspeakers and taking out procession. There is a condition of obtaining permission of the Charity Commissioner to participate in the Vighnaharta Award scheme declared by the police commissioner. It is observed that in spite of these provisions, the public Ganeshotsava mandals seem to celebrate the Ganapati festival without the permission of charity commissioner. Last year 1758 licenses were delivered from the office of Assistant Charity Commissioner. Pune City and Pimpri-Chinchwad are included in it. It has been noted at the office of the police commissioner that last year 1702 mandals celebrated Ganapati festival. The jurisdiction of the Charity Commissioner consists of two municipal corporations of Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad, two cantonments of Pune and Khadaki and some rural area. There are 1702 public Ganapati mandals in this area and the assistant commissioner has issued 1758 licenses. It means that except for the jurisdiction of the
police commissioner, there are only 56 mandals in the Pune district. Prima facie this conclusion is wrong. The numbers indicate that some Ganapati mandals (in the city) have not obtained permission from the charity commissioner. Even though there is a legal provision to take criminal action against the mandals which collect contribution without permission and do not present last year's accounts, there is not enough machinery at the disposal of the charity commissioner to find out such mandals and take action. Hence, no such action has been taken against a single mandal in last many years. The Assistant Charity Commissioner or his representative is not invited to the common meetings of the police commissioner, Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad municipal corporations and office bearers of Ganapati mandals. Some mandals are found to use a different trick to avoid presenting the accounts of income and expenditure. The activists of these mandals get permission under one name in the first year and next year establish a new mandal and get permission with a new name. The Assistant Charity Commissioner has formulated some rules to prevent such mal practices. It has been made mandatory for new mandals to present the recommendation letter of the member of the municipal corporation or the Sarpanch (village chief) or a prominent citizen in the area.' (19-8-1992,p5)

The activists consider it to be their own festival and do not like any intervention by the government. When the masses get together in large numbers and occupy the social space the authorities can not do much but they have to submit. The following incident indicates this. The report said, 'The activists of four mandals rioted in the Tilak square to protest against the beating up of some of their co-workers by police. The police resorted to light cane charge on the mob in the square. It led to great disturbance. The procession continued smoothly only after the police commissioner P.S. Narayanswami assured to make an inquiry into the incident. The disturbance continued for about two hours. In spite of making all the arrangements to complete the procession earlier, this year it continued for 25 hours 15 minutes. The last Ganapati was immersed at 1.15p.m. on Friday.'(12-9-1992,p1) Here one important point to be noted is that the powerful police commissioner had to resort to persuasive methods rather than force to control the mob. Those in the mob know very well that the hands of the police are tied and they can not forcefully intervene in this religious event with participation of hundreds of thousands of people and the activists do exploit this situation.
The establishment consisting of the government machinery (including police) and the elite class in the city have always opposed the attempts of the masses to occupy more and more space and time in city. Hence, the establishment has been trying to maintain an order in the celebrations so that it will be easier to control and contain the celebrations. Due to this, there has always been a tussle between the establishment and the masses for the space and time. The attempts of the police to establish order and discipline continued. The police prepared a model code of conduct for Ganeshotsava mandals. The model code was prepared to avoid any untoward incident during the Ganapati festival. There were 32 instructions in the code. The instructions included that sweets or flowers should not be accepted from those present at the time of aarti in the Ganeshtsava. (This instruction was in view of the activities of antisocial elements.) Every mandal should issue photo-passes to their volunteers and activists; a precaution should be taken so that the explosives are not taken near the pandal or in the immersion procession. The code also prescribed that the promoter of every mandal should register his mandal at the charity commissioner, the contribution for Ganapati festival should not be collected from people by obstructing their vehicles, no mandal would be permitted to use loudspeakers after midnight, information about the decoration developed for the Ganapati festival should be submitted to the police in advance, the scenes presented in the decoration should not lead the communal passion. (4-9-1993,p5)

The police department may have prepared the model code of conduct for the Ganapati mandals, but that could not be implemented effectively. The government can not rule single handedly and it has to negotiate with the mandals (which are the informal groups of local residents). This small incidence represent the opportunity made available by the festival to common people to ‘fight’ against the government and to force it to concede at least to some extent. The report stated, ‘The police on Sunday appealed that those related to Ganapati mandals should reconsider the decision to close the decorations of Ganapati festival for three days to protest the extermination of the president of Shanipar Mitra Mandal by the police.’ (20-9-1993,p4)

Although the activists of Ganapati mandals are opposed to any intervention by the authorities and sometimes resort to anarchist methods, they do behave when they are left to themselves. Here is one such example. The report said, ‘For the first time in last 18 years, the Ganapatis of Akhil Mandai Mandal and Dagadusheth Halwai
Ganapati trust were immersed before daybreak. This was the important feature of this years' immersion procession. The procession started on Wednesday at 12p.m. and completed by 11.20a.m. on Thursday. The procession took 23 hours 20 minutes to complete and this was the minimum time in last seven years. The procession was carried on by four routes and 353 mandals took part in it." (1-10-1993,p1)

Efforts of establishing order and appeals to the religiosity have continued. The report said, 'The Mayor Ali Somaji on Wednesday appealed that the activists of the Ganapati mandals should strive to maintain the decorum of the Ganapati festival. The meeting of activists of Ganapati mandals in Pune City was arranged yesterday, in which the Mayor was speaking. There was a consensus about the suggestion that the discipline should be visible in the Ganapati festival. Member of Parliament Anna Joshi, MLA Prakash Dhere and others participated in the discussion. It was suggested in the meeting that an effort should be made to bring together small mandals in the neighborhood, there should not be compulsion for contribution and the loud speakers should not be used until late in the night.' (1-9-1994,p5)

There have been persistent efforts of the government especially the police department for asserting and establishing the authority with regard to the Ganapati festival. The state has used various methods for it. Here is one such example. The report said, 'Survey of obstructions due to pandals of Ganapati mandals- It was understood on Monday that a common committee has been formed by Police commissioner, Municipal commissioner and Divisional (revenue) commissioner to survey whether there was not any obstruction to the traffic due to the pandals of Ganapati mandals. The members of the committee have begun the survey in various parts of city since three days. The complaints for last some years that there has been obstruction to the traffic due to the pandals raised by Ganapati mandals. This year there has been maximum number of complaints from citizens to the Police and Municipal Corporation. Besides one citizen has filed a petition before the Bombay High Court and has alleged that the police and the municipal corporation are responsible for the traffic congestion due to Ganapati mandals (due to pandals of the mandals, to be precise). He has also asked for action against the police and the corporation. On this background the divisional commissioner V. P. Rane, Police commissioner Gyanchand Verma, Municipal commissioner Ratnakar Kulkarni had a discussion. It was decided in the discussion that a common committee be formed and survey the obstruction to the traffic due to the pandals. During the survey done by this
committee it was noted that the Dastur Meher mandal in cantonment area has raised a pandal by occupying more space than permitted. Then the mandal was ordered to reduce the size of the pandal. Senior police officers told about the possibility of immediate action against the mandals which have raised the pandals by occupying more space than permitted. To avoid the unnecessary tension the action against the Ganapati mandals, which break rules, will be taken after the Ganapati festival.' (6-9-1994,p4) This point of civic inconvenience raised in the report quoted above is of significance. The mandals raise their pandals on the roads or some public place in the neighborhood. This causes inconvenience to the traffic. With increasing number of vehicles, this problem is getting serious. Hence, there is opposition from some people to big size of the pandals. But, the mandals are reluctant to reduce the size of pandals, as in effect the pandal is the physical existence of the mandal. After all it is the matter of occupation of public space.

Again and again one pertinent question has been addressed by both the sides in their own ways. The question is, whose space is it? With the backing of a group of intellectuals and members of elite class, the government especially the police department tried seriously to contain the festival with regard to the use of public space. The well-educated people appealed to the judiciary to intervene and contain the festival for the sake of public order. But these attempts led to a serious law and order situation as the mandals and their activists fought tooth and nail against this assertion of the establishment. Ultimately those who tried to discipline the festival had to withdraw. The concerned news reports about a very important episode in the history of Ganapati festival are as follows. Considering the importance, the reports have been quoted in detail. The reports are as follows -

'The disputes regarding the pandals for Ganapati festival will be avoided in advance- to avoid the possible dispute between Pune Municipal Corporation and traffic control Police regarding the erection of pandals on the roads, a meeting of office bearers of all Ganapati festival mandals is being shortly arranged. Some senior government officers in Pune are tying to fit in the public Ganapati festival of Pune in the frame of discipline, law, rules and restrictions with the help of Pune Municipal Corporation and some intellectuals who are away from the festival by all means. In the meeting this attempt of the government officers will be discussed and the activists of the mandals are preparing for doing a satyagraha if necessary at their places of celebrations. The Ganapati festival will start on 29th August. People are discussing the
decision, understood to be taken by the traffic control police to allow Ganeshotsava mandals, to erect pandals only two days before the festival starts. In order to implement the decision notices have been issued that the contractors should start erecting the pandals (shades) only after verifying the order permitting concerned mandal to raise the pandal (shade), otherwise the erection of the pandal by the contractor will be considered as illegal encroachment and the material used for erecting it will be confiscated. The decision has been taken that the Pune Municipal Corporation should not give permission to raise a shade unless the mandal gets the no objection certificate from the traffic control police. The number of mandals, which erect pandals on the roads, is more than 2500. The big contractors in the city accept contracts of one or two big mandals. But the number of small contractors who raise the pandals (for majority of mandals) is about 25-30. If the permission is given to erect pandals only two days prior to the festival, then it is not possible to erect shades for all mandals in time.' (5-8-1995,p5)

'The director General of the police in the state, A. V. Krishnan on Sunday directed city police commissioner A. K. Agarwal, to allow Ganapatni mandals in the city except Dagadusheth Halwai Ganapati mandal to erect pandals ten days prior to the Chaturthi (first day of the festival). The Dagadusheth mandal is allowed to erect pandal at any moment. Minister of state for social welfare Dilip Kamble, after knowing about the problems the Ganeshotsava mandals are made to face regarding the erection of shades, immediately met Krishnan in Mumbai and discussed the situation with him. After the discussion, Krishnan issued this order.' (7-8-1995,p1)

'The editorial- Intellectual Plague-

Some officers who do not have any relationship with the basic Marathi psyche took initiative to make mischief in the Ganeshotsava. But they had to suffer themselves. They had to change the decision of allowing pandals only two days prior to the festival. The reasons which were put forward hundred years ago, when Lokmanya Tilak started the Ganeshotsava, are again put forward today on the eve of twenty-first century. This is an intellectual plague. The rat, which entered through the bundles of English newspapers, started biting everybody. (This is a veiled criticism on the newspaper, The Indian Express, as it led the campaign about civic inconvenience due to Ganapati festival.) It had an intention to create hurdle in the Ganapati festival in Pune City. The police did not issue the no-objection certificate to three mandals including the Shreemant Dagdusheth Halwai Sarvajanik Ganapati trust
and hence the municipal corporation was not ready to issue permission to them. The number of contractors in Pune city, who erect shades for the festival is about 40 to 50. Unless they start erecting pandals from Naralipournima or at the latest by Gokul ashtami, is not possible to complete erecting the shades for all mandals in the city even before the Anant Chaturdashi (when the festival ends).’ (7-8-1995,p2)

‘About 150 activists of Patit Pawan Sanghatana (an outfit which is close to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) demonstrated against the decision of the police commissioner to give permission to Ganeshotsava mandals only two days prior to the festival.’ (7-8-1995,p5)

‘The police commissioner A.K. Agarwal on Monday declared that the Ganapati mandals in the city would be allowed to erect pandals from 18th August, i.e. ten days before the festival starts. A delegation under the leadership of Prataprao Godase (of Dagadusheth Ganapati Mandal) met him.’ (8-8-1995,p1)

‘The problem of erecting pandals remains unsolved even after the discussion- as the police commissioner A. K. Agarwal did not clarify about when the Ganapati mandals should start erecting pandals and when they will be issued the no objection certificate for it. The problem of giving permission to erect pandals remained unsolved even after the hot discussion on Tuesday and hence, there is confusion among the activists. The mayor Mauli Shirvalkar had called an emergency meeting of members of Municipal Corporation and the activists of Ganapati mandals. In this meeting, all speakers lambasted the Police commissioner and municipal administration for the confusion about the permission to erect shades. All speakers alleged that the police officers under the influence of handful of so called intellectuals are trying to impose unjustified restrictions on the festival, which is a religious festival and people from all castes and religions participate in it.’ (9-8-1995,p5)

A news report published in The Indian Express regarding the meeting of the activists called by the mayor Mauli Shirwalkar, says, ‘the special meeting convened by Mayor Mauli Shirwalkar on Thursday to resolve the impasse over the Ganesh pandal issue ended in a fiasco as the unruly corporators (members of Pune Municipal Corporation) and Ganapati mandal volunteers created a ruckus in an apparent bid to pressurize city police commissioner A. K. Agarwal to concede their demand unequivocally. The meeting witnessed unprecedented pandemonium at the end even as an unrelenting Mr. Agarwal refused to budge to the vociferous demand from the mandal volunteers for removal of all restrictions on erection of pandals and allow the
work to commence with immediate effect. Mayor Mauli Shirvalkar took hold of the microphone at this stage and announced on behalf of the police commissioner that the mandals may start digging trenches for installing the panda! structures. "Whatever be the decision of the police, I will break the coconut tomorrow," he announced amidst loud cheers from the mandal volunteers. The meeting was heading for a smooth passage after an emotionally charged speech by municipal commissioner Ramanath Jha, who tried to impress upon the mandal volunteers the need to maintain the religious and cultural sanctity of the Ganapati festival. All those present at the meeting were visibly moved by the municipal commissioner's candid admission of the administrative gaffe and an open apology for hurting the sentiments of Puneits, at the beginning of his speech. But a bunch of corporators led by former mayor Bharat Sawant resorted to pressure tactics at the last minute when Deputy Mayor Nandu Mozhe got up to propose a vote of thanks. "What is the conclusion of the two-and-a-half-hour exercise," they sought to know. Mr. Sawant charged at the dais with some of his colleagues provoking the restless mandal volunteers who seemed let down by the mayor's failure "to extract a concrete assurance" from the police commissioner. The mob virtually gheraoed the dais even as Mr. Agarwal remained seated with stiff upper lip. The Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) leader in the PMC Mr. Vijay Kale took charge of the meeting and urged the unruly mob to take their seats. Mr. Agarwal maintained that he had already announced on Monday his decision to allow ten days for erection of pandals and had gone a step ahead at the civic meeting by conceding the demand for beginning the processing of applications for 'no objection certificates (NOCs)' from Wednesday. But this did not satisfy the mandal volunteers who wanted to know whether they can commence the installation of pandals with immediate effect. They sought to know from Mr. Shirvalkar his stand on the issue and on getting an expected reply, began shouting slogans including "Ganapati Bappa Moraya." Earlier the ball was set rolling by Akhil Bharatiya Ganapati Mahamandal President Prataprao Godase, who called for an end to the inconclusive debate triggered off by "30-35 people influenced by European culture." "I request Mr. Agarwal on behalf of the mandals with kind permission of the mayor to end the impasse by making a welcome announcement at this meeting," Mr. Godase added. The civic and police officials were at the receiving end as the speaker after speaker challenged their propriety in imposing restrictions on the traditional Ganapati festivities in the city at the behest of a few people, who were portrayed as 'elite', 'fashionable', 'westernized'
and ‘narrow minded.’ Congressmen Bharat Sawant and Shreekant Shirole, BJP men
Shivaji Adhav and Vijay Kale and Shivsena man Ramesh Bodake came down heavily
on the official machinery for attempting to impose rules on the Ganapati festivities.
The only exception were Republican Party of India (RPI) man and Leader of the
opposition Uddhavrao Waware and Congressman Gopal Tiwari, who upheld the
administration’s endeavor to discipline the festivities.’ (Indian Express, 9-8-1995)

‘The work to erect pandals without getting permission from the municipal
corporation started- Some mandals in Pune city have already erected shades in spite
of the fact that they have not received the permission from the office of Pune Police
Commissioner and the Pune Municipal Corporation. The erection of shade of the
Dagadusheth mandal will start tomorrow on 11th. The Police Commissioner A. K.
Agarwal has not yet clarified when the no objection certificate will be issued to the
mandals. Due to this adamant stand of his the Ganapati mandals have started erecting
pandals without waiting for anybody’s permission.’ (Kesari 10-8-1995, p1)

‘Transfer the Police commissioner-Thackeray: Shivsena chief, Balasaheb
Thackeray on Wednesday called on the deputy chief minister Gopinath Munde to
warn the police commissioner of Pune, A. K. Agarwal for delaying the permission to
erect the pandals for Ganapati festival or to transfer him from the post. While
answering the questions by journalists about the controversy regarding the permission
for pandals, Thakare heavily criticized Agarwal. (At this time Thakare’s party was
part of the ruling alliance in the state and he was controlling the government.)’ (10-8-
1995, p4)

‘The condition of not erecting the pandals ten days prior to the start of the festival
scraped. - The police commissioner at last withdrew the condition of erecting the
pandals only ten days prior to the festival. In a statement issued on Thursday for
publicity, he says that the Ganeshotsava mandals will be allowed to erect pandals in
the same way as that in the last year.’ (11-8-1995, p4)

‘Notices issued by the High Court regarding erection of pandals- Mumbai-
Regarding erection of pandals for the Ganapati festival, the High Court has issued
notices to Shreemant Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Trust, Pune Police, the
municipal commissioners of Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad Corporations and Pune
Cantonment board. While giving orders on the writ petitions by Express Citizens’
Forum and three others, the bench comprising of Justice A. C. Agarwal and Justice G.
R. Majitha gave some instructions about erecting the pandals. They said, the pandals
should be erected after obtaining the no objection certificate from the municipal corporation and in such a way that there will not be any hurdle to the occupants of residential buildings and commercial places. In the petition filed by the Express Citizens’ Forum, the Shreemant Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Trust has been made the respondent. The justices have instructed the Pune Police and Municipal Commissioner to see to it that the responsible officers will be present with necessary documents at the next hearing of the case. Meanwhile it was told that 20 Ganapati mandals have deposited the necessary amount for erecting the pandals. All these 20 mandals have been issued the no objection certificates by the police.’ (15-8-1995,p1)

The report in the Indian Express about the petition being admitted by the high court is as follows, ‘in a significant development, Mr. Justice Ashok Agarwal and Mr. Justice G. R. Majithia of the Bombay High Court directed the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) on Monday to grant no objection certificates (NOCs) to Ganesh mandals in the city for erection of pandals, ‘only on accepted norms’ and prescribed the norms themselves. The judges gave this direction in an interim order passed by them, on a writ petition filed by Express Citizens’ Forum (ECF), the ECF co­ordinator Mr. Prakash Kardaley, a citizen activist Ms. Aroona Nafday and Mr. G. P. Joshi, a resident of Sadashiv Peth. The petition has been filed against the Pune Police Commissioner, Municipal Commissioner of PMC, Shreemant Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Trust, Pune Cantonment Board and Pimpari-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) on the contentious Ganapati pandal issue. The norms prescribed by the high court are: “Where the road width is 25 feet, 15-feet width of the road should remain unaffected; and where the width of the road is 50 feet, 30 feet should remain unaffected; and where the width of the road is 70 feet, 40 feet should remain unaffected.” The judges told the civic authorities that care should be taken to see that pandals do not cover the entrance of shops or residential premises. The judges issued a notice to the police commissioner and the PMC to depute a responsible officer with relevant records to the court, for the hearing for admission on August 21, 1995. The petitioners in their 79-page plea, stated at the outset that they had no grievance whatsoever about the ongoing controversy over the number of days prescribed by the commissioner of the police for erecting pandals. According to them, the police commissioner has initially decided to permit mandals to construct pandals only two to three days prior to the Ganapati festival, which is due to start on August 29. The decision was not welcomed by Ganesh mandals. A controversy has been raging with
the mandals on one side and the police commissioner on the other. The petitioners reiterated that their petition had not been filed in connection with the controversy. They submitted that their grievance was the total absence of any norms, for granting the permission, under the provisions of the Bombay Provincial Municipal Corporations Act and the Bombay Police Act for erection of pandals to mandals. "On account of a total absence of any norms, a chaotic situation has been created where an ordinary citizen finds it impossible to lead a decent life. The chaotic situation ultimately has resulted in the violation of fundamental right of life guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution and for that purpose of enforcement of that right, on behalf of various citizens, who are inhabitants of the Pune city, the public interest litigation has been filed. None of the petitioners are interested in personal capacity in the outcome of the petition and they are fighting it for the public cause." The petitioners said.' (Indian Express, 15-8-95, p1)

'Demand to arrest the members of Express Citizens' Forum- The activists of Ganeshotsava mandals unanimously demanded that the action be taken against all members of the Citizens Forum and they be arrested for vitiating the environment in Pune, by taking the issue of public Ganeshotsava in Pune to the Mumbai High Court. These activists were speaking at the peace committee meeting on Thursday. The activists demanded that since the police can take action against the persons who are making harm to the public peace, they should take such action against few members of the forum and see to it that they will not be released from the Yerwada Jail until the festival is over.' (18-8-1995, p1)

'Forum withdraws; the restrictions on the pandals of Ganapati festival scrapped: Mumbai- the Express Citizens Forum on Monday withdrew the petition asking for restrictions on the size of pandals. The bench of Justice Ashok Agarwal and Justice G. R. Majithia decided to lift the interim stay. Hence the controversy over the issue of pandals for Ganapati festival in Pune is now over. The co-ordinator of the Forum Prakash Kardaley, Ms. Aruna Naphadey and G. P. Joshi had filed a petition in Bombay High Court requesting for formulating the rules for size of the pandals for the Ganapati festival celebrated in Pune and the volume of loud speakers and strict implementation of these rules be done. The hearing on this petition was held yesterday. (While withdrawing the petition) the Forum stated that it has been its stand that there should not be any problem of law and order in the Pune City.' (22-8-1995, p1)
The report published in Indian Express gives details about the affidavit filed by the Express Citizens’ Forum in the Bombay High Court on Monday. The news item titled Government assures smooth festival as ECF withdraws petition states, ‘the Advocate-general C.J. Sawant assured the Court that the state Government would ensure that the noise pollution was controlled, traffic regulated and law and order situation maintained. He had submitted that Pune roads were not of the standard width and the Court could not lay down norms on the basis of their width. It was urged that there were about 1800 Ganesh Utsav Mandals in Pune and surrounding areas and no blanket norms should be issued. Following is the text of the affidavit filed by the Express Citizens’ Forum in the Bombay High Court on Monday—We, ... place before your lordship the following observations in connection with the writ petition we have filed along with our unregistered citizen pressure group, Express Citizens’ Forum.--- After the interim order given on Monday, August 14, there were loud protests from several leaders of Ganapati mandals in metropolitan Pune. We were subsequently approached by senior police officials who informed us of the belligerent stance of some of the mandal workers and expressed their apprehension of a serious threat to the law and order situation in the city during the 10-day festival if we pressed for a final order in the matter. The ECF has always been a group of law-abiding citizens pressing for obedience of the law, as is clear from the contents of the present petition. We would never wish to precipitate a law and order situation, which would be difficult for the administration to handle. The forum has always been cooperative and has always adopted conciliatory approach towards solving various civic problems. We have since been requested by the member of the Lok Sabha from Pune, Mr. L. S. alias Anna Joshi, to seriously consider withdrawal of our petition in view of the sensitive nature of the issue. Subsequently, we have received similar appeals from the minister of State Mr. Dilip Kamble and the member of the state legislative assembly Mr. Girish Bapat, orally and in writing. We respect the appeals. The forum believes in initiating processes on the various issues taken up by the forum. In keeping with our tradition, we had attempted to initiate conciliatory process first with mandal leaders and the administration on the issues highlighted in the petition. Having failed in the same, we were constrained to approach the court with our grievances as a measure of last resort. Subsequently to the interim order granted in the public interest, there has been a realization amongst leaders and karyakartas (activists) of Ganapati mandals of the magnitude of the problems suffered by lay
citizens during the 10-day Ganapati festival. By this realization, the main purpose of
the forum relating to highlighting of citizens’ problems and their redressal has been
served without any disrespect towards festival itself. ... In view of the above, the
forum hereby submits that having initiated the process of reforms and expressing the
faith that the same would be diligently continued in the future, with due respect to
safeguarding the civil rights of citizens, and wishing to respond positively to appeals
by well-wishers of the forum among the elected representatives and senior officials,
we pray that we be allowed to withdraw this petition.’ (Indian Express, 22-8-1995)

‘Satisfaction among the activists as the Forum withdraws- Various institutions
and activists expressed satisfaction over the withdrawal of the petition by the Express
Citizens’ Forum. The president of the Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Trust Prataprao
Godase said that in view of the petition, all the activists and office bearers of the
mandals got together. We are not those types of activists, who attach importance to
who got defeated and who succeeded.’(22-8-1995,p1)

‘The mayor, Mauli Shirwalkar on Thursday declared that an independent
Shreeganesh Mahamandal comprising of all public Ganesh mandals in Pune City will
be established within three months.’ (25-8-1995,p1)

[The Ganapati festival started on 29th August 1995.]

The immersion procession at the end of the Ganapati festival which marked the
tussle between the establishment and the masses, took very long time to complete.
The more time the procession takes to complete, the more headache the police
department has. Hence, there is every scope to believe that the activists deliberately
delayed the procession to put the police department in trouble and thus teach the
police and the entire establishment a lesson for encroaching upon domain of the
masses. The report states about the unprecedented delay in the completion of the
procession. It stated, ‘ the immersion procession went on slowly and took 28 hours
and 45 minutes to complete. The procession which started at 12 p.m. on Friday was
completed by 4.45 p.m. on Saturday. This year there was significant presence of
women in the immersion procession. The use of gulal (red colored powder splashed
to express excitement) was less than usual.’ (10-9-1995,p1)

In the earlier part the tussle between the elite class represented by the Express
Citizens’ Forum along with the Government and the masses represented by the
Ganapati mandals is well described. Ultimately the establishment had to concede. The
Forum carried its battle through the English newspaper, The Indian Express (which
has a huge circulation in the city and maximum impact). The forum also appealed to
the judiciary to contain the indiscriminate celebration by the Ganapati mandals. The
mandals were supported by the Marathi newspapers. The Kesari wrote an editorial in
support of the mandals and lambasted the forum. Thus, the tussle took the turn of a
fight between English speaking elite class and the Marathi speaking masses. The
significant part of the developments, which followed this episode, is that those who
supported the masses in their celebration of the Ganapati festival, raised the same
issues of public order and convenience which were raised by the Forum in its
unsuccessful attempt of containing the festival. Thus it becomes clear that those who
celebrate the Ganapati festival by using public space and time and whose ways of
celebration sometimes cause public inconvenience are not in fact opposed to the
solution of civic problems but they are very much opposed to the coercive methods of
the establishment with an intention of containing the festival and establishing order.
Also, along with the inherent anarchic tendency there seems to be an urge for
modernization and sanskratisation. This is one more example of the paradoxical
developments in the Ganapati festival.

Regarding the civic inconvenience caused by the Ganapati festival, the Kesari
said, 'Traffic caught in the shackles of mandals- In last few days after the pandals for
Ganapati festival were erected this problem (of traffic jam) has been experienced
frequently. Encroachments on the footpaths and vehicles parked here and there
without order are also the reasons of the traffic jams. Nobody complains against the
Ganapati pandals, as it is a religious matter, yet it is criticized through the letters
to the editor columns in newspapers. A suggestion that the size of the pandals should
be less is always made but a lot of mandals especially those in small alleys have been
ignoring this suggestion with a pretext that this is the problem only for ten days. But
it has to be noted that the pandals are on the roads for long time before and after the
festival. Since issuing permissions to the mandals is in the jurisdiction of the
municipal corporation, all anger is expressed through criticizing the corporation. In
fact the municipal corporation has already made it mandatory on the mandals to fill
the form with detailed information regarding length and breadth of the concerned
road, the size of the pandal, the remaining space after the pandal is erected on the
road, the map of concerned place and the no objection certificate by the police. A
specific time limit for how long the pandal should be on the road was also prescribed
by the corporation. There is rule regarding this that the traffic control police should
give permission only after ensuring that no hurdles are created in the traffic by the pandals. But to avoid disturbances, the police department and the municipal corporation started granting the permissions without insisting on the rules. It has been observed that very few mandals follow the rule of getting permission before erecting pandal. Last year, only 402 mandals out of 2075 public Ganapati mandals had got the regular permission from the municipal corporation. With an enthusiasm of celebrating the festival at a large scale, banners are tied from square to square. The norm that the pandal should be within one-third area of the road is also ignored. A lot of mandals first expand the pandals to huge proportions and then get the permission of the corporation later but before the immersion of the idol. The municipal officers have stopped objecting (about the irregularity) if there is no objection certificate from the police. Earlier, the pass to participate in the immersion procession was provided by the police only to those mandals, which were having the permission from the municipal corporation, but now there is laxity in this case also. It is well known that the problem of traffic congestion and expansion of pandals cannot be solved by force and coercion. In such a situation, this problem has to be explained to the workers by political leaders and people’s representatives. Efforts should be made to make this festival of ten days a pleasant one. Presidents or patrons or advisers of majority of mandals are members of Municipal Corporation. Once they understand the problem, the sizes of the pandals will certainly remain less and the problem of traffic congestion in ten days (of festival) will be solved amicably without getting serious.

(13-9-1996)

The police department has been consistent in its attempt of disciplining the Ganapati festival and it has been trying to establish the rule of law. Here is an example described by a news report. The report said, 'The police have filed a complaint to the anti encroachment squad of the municipal corporation against the Aadarsh seva mandal in Ravivar peth for erecting disproportionate pandal for the Ganapati festival. It has been understood that a show cause notice will be issued to this mandal and also to other two mandals regarding this. There are 2075 mandals and till yesterday, very few of them had taken permission from the municipal corporation.' (16-9-1996,p5)

Although historically the government or the establishment has always been forced to concede to the masses and the establishment has preferred to keep a low profile with regard to the Ganapati festival, they have not hesitated in taking the action whenever they can. In this case the police department took an action against a mandal
of which a state minister was one of the members. The report said, ‘The delayed procession continued for 27 hours 30 minutes- This year’s Ganapati immersion procession took 27 hours 30 minutes to complete and it was marked by insistence of activists of big mandals to dance at the same place for longer time, sluggishness of the procession as the police lost control, increasing gap between the mandals, reduced number of Ganapati idols with electrical decoration and the protest of the police by the first revered Kasaba Ganapati Mandal. The procession started at 12 p.m. on Thursday and completed at 3.30 p.m. on Friday. Police cane-charged the activists of Samasta Gaokari Mandal of Kothrud for stalling the procession in the Belbaug square.’ (28-9-1996,p1) (Mr. Shashikant Sutar, the then minister in the cabinet of the state and a prominent Shivsena leader in the city, has been a member of the mandal)

The activists of the Ganapati mandals are opposed to the authority of any kind and they insist on their right of celebrating the Ganapati festival in their own way. It has been seen in the earlier part that the masses have opposed the authoritative attempts of the Government and the elite class. Here is one example where the masses have rejected the attempts of establishing the order by one of the Ganapati mandals also. Such attempt was made by the Dagadusheth. Considering the fact that the Dagadusheth is an integral part of the festival in the city and with the support and faith of the masses it has become the leader of the mandals (it should be noted that when the petition about the Ganapati mandals was filed, Dagadusheth was made one of the respondents), the rejection of its attempts is significant. More importantly the mandal was joined by another prominent mandal, Akhil Mandai Mandal. The Dagadusheth along with the Akhil Mandai Mandal had appealed to complete the immersion procession in less time. But since less time means less occupation of the public space and time, the mandals rejected this attempt of their ‘leader’ also. The report said, ‘The immersion procession, which started at 12 p.m. on 15th September, was completed by 1.54 p.m. on 16th September. It took about 26 hours to complete. The appeal to immerse the Ganapati idols of Dagadusheth Halawai Ganpati trust and Akhil Mandai Mandal in time did not succeed.’ (17-9-1997,p1)

The rejection of any attempt of establishing order by Dagadusheth by the Ganapati mandals i.e. by the common activists has been more prominent when the Dagadusheth tried to establish a confederation of mandals, homogenize the festival and develop an organized power of the mandals. This important development which
took place after the desecration of Ganapati idol of Dagadusheth and the subsequent riot has been discussed in the later part of this chapter.

The urge of self-discipline and sanskritisation among the masses who celebrate the Ganapati festival is there along with the inherent anarchic tendency. This paradoxical trend has been evident on many occasions. Here is an example of such development where those who successfully led the opposition against the effort of the elite to establish order, joined hands with them to establish order. The news report said, 'Pandals should be raised in such a way that will not obstruct the traffic—The joint committee of Express Citizens' Forum and senior activists of Ganapati Festival, on Monday appealed that the public Ganeshotsava mandals should raise the pandals in such a way that they will not create any hindrance to the traffic. Statement issued by the committee has been signed by president of Shree Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Trust Prataprao Godase, member of legislative assembly Girish Bapat, president of the city unit of Congress party Mohan Joshi, president of MHADA Vijay Kale, Dr. Satish Desai and others. It has been stated in the statement that the Ganapati Festival of Pune is something the nation can be proud of. Ganapati mandals are maintaining the tradition of the Ganeshotsava. But, some problems are created due to increasing population and indiscriminate growth in the number of vehicles. A committee has been established recently to solve these problems by communicating with Ganapati Mandals. Prataprao Godase is the president of the committee. An appeal has been made in the statement that the mandals should raise their pandals in such a way that they will create minimum hindrance to the traffic. It has been stated that the size of the pandals should be such that unidirectional traffic will be possible. The direction of the pandal should be such that there will not be any hindrance to the traffic in the remaining part of the road due to the crowd gathered to have the darshan (view). It has been suggested in the statement that activists of the concerned mandals should appoint some volunteers to help smooth passage of the traffic. If a loud speaker or the sound system is used then the volume should be such that the voice will be audible in the vicinity of the pandal only also, the mandals should not play songs in the movies.' (11-8-1998,p5)

Caption of a photograph on front-page says, 'the anti-encroachment squad of the municipal corporation removed on Monday the pandal near the Bhuleshwar society in Dhankawadi, which was raised unofficially.'
As it has been stated earlier, the masses represented by the Ganapati mandals are not opposed to the modern ways of life but they are very much opposed to the authoritative intervention. The incidents noted above make this point more clearly.

The Ganapati festival gives an opportunity to the masses to enjoy the freedom of expression but it is not without limitations. The police department has been intervening in the festival for the sake of keeping the law and order. The report said, 'A sensation was created when police implemented partial ban on the decoration presented by Bharat Mata Mitra mandal, which criticized the (Shivsena-Bhartiya Janata Party) alliance government and Shivsena chief Balasaheb Thakare who allegedly did not kept the promises.' (20-9-1996,p1)

The tussle between the masses and the establishment over the occupation of public space and time has continued all the time. The establishment tries to contain the festival and the masses reject every attempt of containment. In this case the police department tried to rush the immersion procession so that it will be completed in a lesser time period. But, as the lesser time period for the procession means lesser occupation of public space and time, the activists resisted such attempts. The concerned news report said, 'In spite of raining the immersion procession continues for 27 hours--- rain could not dampen the spirit of procession and the grandeur of the procession on the Laxmi road was intact this year also. The procession got a blot on it due to the attempts of the police to rush the procession under pressure from some self-proclaimed people and the lathicharge by police on devotees of Ganapati and activists of Ganapati mandals. The procession was delayed due to these developments. Even the children were not spared from the lathicharge by the police. Ultimately the police commissioner had to apologize for the lathicharge. Ganapati idols of total 493 mandals were taken for immersion by Laxmi road, Tilak road, Kelkar road, Kumthekar road and Karve road.' (7-9-1998,p1)

The immersion procession on the main Laxmi road is the most important procession and more and more mandals try to participate in it, which leads to the delay in the completion of the procession. Hence, there have been attempts to encourage the processions on other roads and thus indirectly containing the main procession on the Laxmi road. The concerned report said, 'For the first time in the history of a century of Ganapati festival the immersion processions on Tilak Road
and Kelkar Road will commence at 9.30 in the morning before the main procession on the Laxmi Road.' (23-9-1999,p5)

As in the case of the attempt by the Express Citizens' Forum in 1995, one more serious development took place in 2000, which effectively meant containment of the festival, establishment of the discipline and protection of public order. This time it was the Supreme Court order about sound pollution, which prohibited the playing of loud speakers after 11 p.m. in night. As it was a Supreme Court order (although the judgement was given in some other case and not regarding the Ganapati festival) it was mandatory on the Police department to implement it. The order to prohibit use of loudspeakers in late night was implemented as far as possible and the elite class and those who strongly believe in the rule of law (and discipline) heaved a sigh of relief but the bitterness among the activists and the enthusiastic masses was observed. As it has been stated earlier the attempts of establishing the order and propriety have been opposed by the masses that celebrate their festival, this time also they registered their protest about the high handedness of the police in implementing the order. The immersion procession was delayed to a record level and there is every scope to believe that it was a sort of protest against the over-enthusiastic implementation of the order containing the use of loud speakers (of course, it is an observation based on the earlier incidences and there are no evidences which establish it in a one to one relationship. Since, it was an order by the Supreme Court, everybody was cautious and nobody took any overt step, which will amount to disobedience of the Court. Hence, the moves became indirect, it became difficult to establish one to one relationship between the evidences and the inferences.) Considering the importance of the development, the news items (which are the evidences) regarding it have been noted as follows.

'Prohibition on using loud speakers after 11 in night--- A resolution was passed at the meeting called by the Police Commissioner suggesting that the mandals in the city should not use the loud speakers as per the judgement of the Supreme Court. The resolution also called to celebrate the Ganapati festival in an ideal way by taking precaution that there will not be any room to complaint as well as there will not be sound pollution. The resolution asked the mandals to follow the model code of conduct. According to the resolution the loud speaker can be used only for the period of six in the morning to eleven in the night. All participants welcomed the judgement of the Supreme Court. It was felt that the sound pollution has increased to intolerable
level and it is the need of hour to control it. It was also appealed that all Ganapati mandals should cooperate in this regard. It was decided that the legal action should be taken against those mandals which will not cooperate. Those present for the meeting included Mayor Dattatraya Gaikwad, members of state legislative assembly Girish Bapat, Deepak Paigude, Chandrakant Chhajed, Viswas Gangurde, Gajanan Babar, member of legislative council Prakash Jawadekar, chairman of the statutory development board for rest of Maharashtra Ulhas Pawar, president of the city unit of Congress Mohan Joshi, Republican Party of India leader Avinash Salave, Sandeep Khardekar (Patit Pawan Sanghatana), Shailesh Tilak (Kesariwada Ganapati), Mama Rasane (Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Trust), A. N. Morgaokar (Akhil Mandai Ganapati Mandal), Praveen Pardeshi (Guruji Talim Ganapati Mandal), D. S. Khatawkar (Tulashibaug Ganapati Mandal).’ (3-9-2000, p1)

‘How the sound pollution on Ananthchaturdashi will be controlled?'

Pune- There is good response to the appeal made by police to stop using the loud speakers after 11 p. m. About 80 percent mandals are stopping the use of loud speakers in response to the appeal by the police. But the police have not yet decided how to control the sound pollution on the day of Ananthchaturdashi, when the immersion procession is taken out. Under the leadership of Prataprao Godase, president of Shreemant Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Trust, presidents of some mandals met the police commissioner K. K. Kashyap, yesterday. These activists requested to give some concession in the order by police for using the loud speakers after 11 p. m. Some activists expressed unhappiness about presenting the scenes in the decoration without using the audiocassettes. But Kashyap made it clear that it was obligatory for all to follow the order of the Supreme Court and he explained that the order is in interest of the society. He said that if the use of loud speakers were stopped after 11 p. m. in Pune, then this example would be followed all over the state. Godase and some other activists agreed to it. Mr. Kashyap informed that some mandals do not stop using loud speakers after 11 p.m. and in such a situation instead of threatening to take legal action, it is tried to persuade the mandals to follow the order of the Supreme Court. The revered mandals have stopped using loud speakers as per the appeal made by police, since the second day of the festival.’ (7-9-2000, p4)

‘Double standards adopted by the police about forcing the mandals to stop using the loudspeakers--- It has been observed that in some areas the police have been adopting double standards about forcing the mandals to stop using the loud speakers
after 11 p. m. Some activists complained that the mandals related to the members of Municipal Corporation and other important citizens were allowed to use the loudspeakers after 11 p. m. As per the order of the Supreme Court the police had appealed to the mandals in Pune city to stop using the loudspeakers after 11 p. m. But the citizens of Pune, after dinner, come out on streets by 10 p. m. to enjoy the decorations in the festival. Until last year the roads were full of enthusiastic crowds until 3 a. m. or the daybreak. This tradition is disrupted this year due to the action by police. Many mandals arrange electric decoration and it is necessary to play songs on the loudspeakers for it. The mandals, which present the scenes from the history or the puranas, need a loudspeaker to explain the scene in the decoration. But, the police vans move around in the city in night and order the mandals to stop the loudspeakers. They ignore the pleas by the activists to allow playing the loudspeakers at low volume. The activists have complained about the double standards by the police, that the mandals belonging to the members of Municipal Corporation are shown leniency and if the mandal is not having such a patron then they are issued strict warning.' (8-9-2000,p8)

* For last two days the police have not adopted tough stand about stopping the use of loudspeakers. It was observed that the activists of the mandals also adopted reconciliatory stand and saw to it that people in the surrounding area will not be disturbed by the volume of the loudspeakers. In the downtown area there was movement until daybreak on Saturday. Various sounds were heard.' (11-9-2000,p5)

* The procession likely to be completed earlier this year---the first five revered mandals and Akhil Mandai Mandal as well as Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Trust have assured to traverse the route between Belbag square to the Tilak square near the Alaka talkies in less time. Since these mandals have decided to bring in least number of troupes, the immersion procession is likely to be completed earlier than last year. The police are trying to start the procession on Laxmi road at 12 a. m. and on other roads at 10 a. m. This year 280 mandals will go by Laxmi road while on other roads the numbers are- Tilak road 130, Kumthekar road 50, Kelkar road 80.' (12-9-2000,p8)

* The procession continues for (record) 30 hours---The procession took record 30 hours to complete due to delaying tactics of some revered Ganapati mandals and other major mandals. Total 1842 public Ganapati mandals had installed idols. Independent immersion processions were taken out in Pune cantonment, Khadaki,
Pimpri-Chinchwad, Karve Road and Dattawadi. The number of Ganapati idols of mandals which participated in the procession were—Laxmi road 207, Tilak road 127, Kelkar road 56 and Kumthekar road 43 (total 434) Although the procession was delayed due to some revered Ganapatis and major mandals, the enthusiasm of the activists of the mandals waiting in the queue to participate in the procession was not dampened. The box item says—Assurance of completing the procession remains unfulfilled...the procession delayed for record 30 hours due to some revered Ganapati mandals and other major mandals. The appeal to complete the immersion procession earlier was made as usual. Many meetings were held for it. The office bearers of revered mandals and major mandals had assured to complete the immersion procession earlier. The office bearers of Shreemant Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati mandal had declared rewards of total Rs. 2,00,000 for the Ganapati mandals, which will traverse the path from the Belbag square to the immersion place within three hours. On this background people had expected that the Dagadusheth mandal would immerse its Ganapati idol within three hours. In fact all the projections failed. Out of all the five revered Ganapati mandals the only Ganapati idol of Kesari Ganeshtotsava mandal was immersed within three hours i.e. in 2 hours 55 minutes. For other revered Ganapati mandals the time taken for immersion was— Kasaba Ganapati mandal 4 hours 20 minutes, Tambadi Jogeshwari mandal 4 hours 5 minutes, Guruji Talim and Tulashibaug mandals—3 hours 40 minutes each. Time period of the immersion procession increased due to the gap between the Ganapati idols of the revered mandals. The procession was delayed to record timing due to long time taken by the Akhil Mandai mandal and Shreemant Dagadusheth Halawai mandal. The Akhil Mandai mandal took maximum 6 hours 50 minutes for completing the path of immersion procession. Dagadusheth mandal took 6 hours 5 minutes to complete the procession. Last year 218 mandals participated in the immersion procession on the Laxmi road. This year the number was reduced to 207. Yet, the procession took more time to complete.' (14-9-2000,p1)

As it has been stated in the earlier part, a record was set regarding the time taken to complete the procession and it led to increased tension, stress and anxiety for the police department. The police personnel are deployed before the procession starts and they have to be continuously vigilant until the procession is completed. Thus, in 2000, as the immersion procession delayed to the record level, the police had to be awake and attentive and vigilant for continuous 30 hours and this is a severe punishment as
far as the physical and psychological health is considered. Important part of it is that as the hundreds of thousands of people are present on the streets for the procession and the police can not use force but have to use only persuasive methods. On the other hand the activists of the Ganapati mandals do not have to be present in the procession continuously for 30 hours. They can have a break for having food, water and some sleep and thus they do not get as tired as the police personnel do. Of course, as it has been stated earlier, this is an attempt to explain the unprecedented delay in completion of the procession and the argument can not be established on the basis of the evidences which show one to one relationship. But, this argument becomes tenable considering the fact that in the subsequent year of 2001 the use of loud speakers was contained more enthusiastically by the police department and it took about 32 hours to complete the procession setting a new record!

Failure to organize mandals and homogenize the festival

In the earlier part it has been seen that the masses frustrated all the attempts of the establishment to contain and control the Ganapati festival. The masses have supported every effort of religiosity but paradoxically they have opposed any attempt of religious dogma. The failure of the Dagadusheth in establishing the confederation of the Ganapati mandals is a very significant pointer towards the opposition of masses to establishing order, uniformity and dogma. The Ganapati idol of Dagadusheth was desecrated in 1988 and it led to a serious law and order situation in the city. The city of Pune and the surrounding areas witnessed the reverence; people have towards the Ganapati idol of Dagadusheth and the mandal itself. This development has been discussed in detail at the earlier stage. On this background the members of Dagadusheth and especially its president Prataprao alias Tatya Godase took initiative in establishing the confederation of Ganapati mandals in the state of Maharashtra. For this purpose he extensively toured the state and tried to gather support for the concept. According to reports, the attempt was supported by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the organization provided men and material for this mammoth task. Formation of the confederation meant unification of the festival (and thus encroaching upon the identities, of various mandals and their individuality) establishing a religious pattern and thus developing an organized power of Hindus. But, the attempt failed miserably. Now, the confederation is still there on paper but it did not succeed in organizing the mandals. This development underlined the most
important aspect of the Ganapati festival that although it is a religious festival and have been performing a major role in social mobilization, it can not be utilized for developing a power of any sorts. Considering the historical importance of this development, the incidences as they have been reported (which are the evidences of the observations and the argument) are noted as follows in detail.

"The confederation of Ganapati mandals called Ganeshotsava Mahamandal will try to complete the immersion procession of Ganapati festival in Pune, prior to the day break on the next day of Ananthchaturdashi, informed Prataprao Godase, president of Shreemant Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Trust. He said that the Mahamandal will make an appeal to start the immersion procession at 11 a.m. instead of 12 a.m. A state level rally of representatives of Ganapati mandals to establish a state level confederation of Ganapati mandals from all over the state to be called Ganeshotsava Mahamandal is being held tomorrow (on Tuesday) at the Municipal Sports Ground near the Sarsbaug. The Shreemant Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Trust has taken the initiative to establish this Mahamandal. Five point programme for all Ganapati mandals in order to maintain the dignity of the festival and to maintain the discipline by avoiding the indecent practices in the festival, will be presented in the rally. These five points are as follows-

1) The Ganapati idol should be installed with all the rituals all over the state on the day of Ganesh Chaturthi, exactly at the auspicious time decided by the Mahamandal.

2) During the festival the aarti of Ganapati should be performed all over the state at 9 a.m. and 7 p.m.

3) During the festival every mandal should display the images of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaja and Lokmanya Tilak at the prominent place in the pandal of the mandal.

4) Every Ganapati mandal should hoist a saffron flag of Bhagwat Dharma at the top of the pandal.

5) During the Ganapati Festival every activist should be a teetotaler for the period from Ganesh Chaturthi to Ananthchaturdashi. The indecent acts like gambling in the pandal of the mandal should be stopped."

"The rally of Ganapati mandals will be inaugurated by Jayantrao Tilak, Chairman of the Legislative Council. Those who will deliver the speeches include Sumitraraje Bhosale (the royal mother in the family of the descendents of the great
warrior king Shivaji), Babasaheb Purandare, member of parliament Vitthalrao Gadgil, pro-vice-chancellor of the Pune university S.N. Navalgundkar, mayor (of Pune) Ankush Kakade, mayor (of Pimpri-Chinchwad) Tatya Kadam and mayors of Kolhapur, Solapur and Thane as well as members of legislative assembly of the state. The rally will be held between 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. A huge pandal admeasuring 80,000 square feet on the area of 1.75 acres has been erected for this rally. The arrangement has been made to accommodate about 20,000 representatives. Godase also informed that the attempts would be made to complete the immersion procession by five in the morning. The president and the trustees of the trust had undertaken a whirlwind tour of the state except Konkan region, since 9th May. In this tour the Ganapati mandals, local representatives of people, journalists and intellectuals have co-operated very well. Hence, it is expected that the representatives will be present in the rally in large numbers, said Mr. Godase. A temporary committee at the state level will be appointed for the Mahamandal. Committees will be formed for every district and big cities. Two committees will be formed for Pune district and (the urban agglomeration of) Pune city, Pimpri-Chinchwad, Khadaki, Pune Cantonment. There will be wardwise sub-committees under the committee for Pune City. The ward-level sub-committee will consist of chiefs of Ganapati mandals, police chief of the concerned police station, member of Municipal Corporation etc. Godase informed that there are about 25,000 public Ganapati mandals in state and the contribution of Rs. 450 million is gathered. He also informed that the mandal will undertake the initiatives like helping poor, intelligent and promising students to get education; making available good libraries, study rooms, facilities for technical education; holding medical camps, developing mobile hospitals; undertaking self employment programmes for widows, helpless women; propagating Indian ways of physical exercises, games and Yoga; adopting villages; undertaking development schemes; helping in the event of natural calamity.

The editorial in the Kesari raised an important question, ‘For whom is the Ganeshotsava? --- The establishment of the Mahamandal should be welcomed as it is being formed to remove all ills, which disturb the sanctity and piousness of the festival, and to give good turn to the Festival. But...if the same rituals and traditions are tried to be justified by this new form of Ganesh mahamandal, then it will be closing our minds permanently. The activists belonging to all religions participate in the festival with all their faith, money and efforts. Nobody considers this festival as
that of one particular religion or caste. But just because the concept of the Ganeshotsava Mahamandal was sponsored by some political party, the whole festival should not be allowed to be controlled by that party. Because it will lead to spreading the strong-arm tactics developed under particular political ideology to other sectors of society. The Mahamandal to be established in Pune today, should make this festival more grand and accommodative. The attempt to glorify the rigid norms of religiosity should not be made through it under the disguise of purification by playing with beliefs of somebody. The only expectation of Kesari is that this festival should become national by all means.' (9-8-1988,p4)

Ganeshotsava Mahamandal Established. The news report said, 'Present on the dais were Jayantrao Tilak, chairman of the legislative council, Ankush Kakade, mayor of Pune, Chandrakant Padwal, mayor of Mumbai, Dinkarrao Patil, mayor of Kolhapur, Shivajirao Bhosale, president of Satara municipal council, Anna Joshi, MLA, Ulhas Kalokhe, MLA, Rameshchandra Dhamale, president of Zilla Parishad, Mohan Joshi, president of Maharashtra pradesh Indira youth congress, Prakash Pawar, deputy mayor, Vasantrao Thorat, ex mayor, Ulhas Pawar, Babasaheb Purandare, Prof. Shivajirao Bhosale, Uttamsheth Pokarna, Shreeniwas Patil, district collector and members of many municipal corporations and municipal councils. .... Kakade said that in order to mobilize society, nationalistic nature should also be given to the festival. Mr. Chandrakant Padwal described this initiative as one which will give new directions to Hindutwa. While criticizing the editorial in Kesari, which raised the question for whom, is the Ganapati festival, Mr. Padwal said that nobody should teach us secularism. We have ideals of Mahatma Fule to Babasaheb Ambedkar and Chhatrapati Shivaji to Rajarshi Shahu maharaj. We do not treat any religion with contempt and do not disrespect anybody. But, we will never allow any attempt to attack Hindutwa to succeed. We have assembled here to take oath of repulsing such attacks with equal force. We have a straightforward demand that the rule which is applied to Ganapati (festival) should also be applied to people from other religions and minorities. The only thing we know from heart is that every attempt to weaken Hindutwa should be opposed and whatever sacrifice required for it should be made. We are not ashamed or embarrassed to declare that we are Hindus. We consider it to be our prime duty to repel any threat to our religion. Henceforth, we will not tolerate a system where the Marathi (literally means Maharashtrian but here it should be read as Hindu) community is asked to follow secularism and others are
given favorable treatment. The mayor of Kolhapur Dinkar Patil dissented with Padwal and said if somebody is trying to keep the Ganapati festival in the stranglehold of particular castes and religion, then we can not agree with their thoughts.'

The related news item said, ‘Change the nature of Ganapati Festival to organize Hindus--A resolution was passed at the rally to establish the Mahamandal which calls for a confederation to well organize public Ganapati festival in Maharashtra, to overcome the situation which is giving challenge to existence and aspirations of Hindu community, to constructive awakening of Hindu community, to establish the proper way of the religion by homogenizing the community and to introspect by following the inspirations of Lokmanya Tilak. The resolution was tabled by Jayantrao Salgaonkar and was passed unanimously in the open session after many representatives spoke in favor of the resolution. It has been said in the resolution that it has been observed that the Hindu community has weakened after the independence. A belief has been spreading that it is wrong to be proud of Hindu nation. In a way a situation prior to hundred years is again getting established.

Highlights of the rally--* While the speakers were delivering their speeches there were slogans like, 'Jaga Zala, Jaga Zala; Akhil Hindu jaga zala' (awakened, awakened, all Hindus are awakened), 'Shivsena Zindabad' (Hail Shivsena), 'Ganapati Bappa Moraya'. * The expectation of the organizers that about 25,000 activists will turn up for the rally did not come true. The Ganapati mandals in Pune City didn't give response to the rally. The activists from other places were present in good numbers. * Jayant Salgaonkar called to celebrate Ganesh Chaturthi like 15th August, 26th January and 1st May.’ (10-8-1988,p1&4)

‘Ganeshotsava Mahamandal to use different flag-- it was understood on Wednesday that the Mahamandal is going to use its own flag to remove doubts and establish that it is not working under influence of Shivsena or any other hard-liner Hinduist organization. This flag will be of saffron colour and will have shape of the flag used by Varkaris (who walk to Pandhrpur for pilgrimage). But at the middle of the flag there will be the picture of Ganapati and on the circle around it the letters, ‘Ganeshotsava Mahamandal’ will be written. A sketch of this proposed flag has been developed and thousands of such flags will be produced and distributed to all Ganapati mandals. It has been decided that all Ganapati mandals in the state should install the Ganapati idol at the same time in the morning on the day of Ganesh
Chaturthi. For this purpose the time of 11.15 a.m. has also been decided. This timing will be communicated to all Ganeshotsava mandals and they will be appealed to install the idol of Ganapati at this particular time. The mahamandal is also going to make efforts to start the immersion procession in Pune City at 10 a.m. instead of 12 a.m.

'Although the powers to establish a temporary committee of the Mahamandal in order to form districtwise committees of the Mahamandal have been conferred to Prataprao Godase and Jayant Salgaonkar, it will take three to four more days to form such committee, it was known. While a state level rally was held to establish the Ganapati mahamandal, some speakers had appealed that the Mahamandal should not stray away from the original aim of the festival of unifying the whole society and this Mahamandal should not be allowed to be controlled by the hard-liner Hinduist group. Those who took initiative in establishing this Mahamandal have taken serious note of these opinions, it was understood. The temporary committee will be formed in such a manner that all political groups will be given representation on the committee.'

'It was decided earlier that the Ganapati mandals should hoist saffron flags. But since it was criticized that this saffron flag is of Shivsena, a different flag of Mahamandal is being developed.'

'The criticism that the Ganeshotsava Mahamandal will act according to the Hidutwa ideology of Shivsena, Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh; is being made from Congress party. But, it has been said that when the efforts were made to establish the Mahamandal, the leaders and activists of Congress took apathetic stand about it and the organizations which insist on Hidutwa took advantage of the opportunity. This has been the effect of the groupism, internal squabbling and jealousy in the Pune City Congress, it is said. The chief minister Sharad Pawar has also taken note of the establishment of Ganeshotsava Mahamandal and the political developments behind it. Mr. Pawar has spoken twice about it to Mr. Prataprao Godase, president of the Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Trust. It has been expected that he will again talk to Mr. Godase.' (11-8-1988, p3)

'The nature of the Mahamandal should be made clear-Kolhapur...Dinkarrao Patil, mayor of Kolhapur, on Wednesday warned that no one grown up in the land of Rajarshi Shahu will remain with the Mahamandal if this mahamandal is going to work as a common front of Shivsena, Bhartiya Janata Party and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and keeping aside the larger perspective of national integration
and spread venom of communality. Mr. Patil had replied to the speech by Chandrakant Padwal, mayor of Mumbai in a very straightforward manner in the rally held in Pune on Tuesday to establish the Maharashtra Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mahamandal. In this regard when Mr. Patil was contacted yesterday he said that everyone should be proud of the religion and nothing is wrong in it. He is also proud of Hindu religion. But it is different to be proud of the religion and to be communal.’

‘Patil explained that, Ganeshotsava is a festival of Hindus and it is all right to ask all to participate in the festival. But the provocative language used by Padwal, mayor of Mumbai, was not proper. Hence he had to give a reply.’

‘Patil said that after Padwal’s speech he had decided not to participate in the Mahamandal (confederation) unless the nature and purpose of it was clarified. We can not be disloyal to the thoughts of Rajarshi Shahu.’ (12-8-1988, p5)

An article by noted journalist Chandrakant Ghorpade ‘Ganeshotsava Mahamandal and the flag... It has been published that only two thousand people were present for the rally of the Mahamandal and only one-third part of the pandal was occupied. (Sakal, 10-8-1988) It is seen that there is a significant influence of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Shivsena on the newly formed Mahamandal. Hence, it will not be wrong if it is alleged that this is an attempt to create conflict between Hindus and Muslims under the name of Hindutwa, said Vasantrao Thorat, president of Akhil Mandai Ganeshotsava mandal. (Sakal, 12-8-1988) These two developments do carry some meaning. It should be stated that Vasantrao Thorat has spoken minds of majority of Ganeshotsava activists. Because, if what he said was not the fact then the pandal at Sarsbaug on 9th August (when the confederation was established) would not have been remained empty. Dagadusheth Halawai Ganeshotsava mandal has made an appeal to establish the Mahamandal, but who are those who are standing behind the Mahamandal? Who provided the set of disciplined workers to the Mahamandal? Who had taken the initiative to organize everything from press conference to the public meeting for the activists of Dagadusheth Halawai Ganeshotsava mandal, who had traveled to various parts of Maharashtra to propagate the Mahamandal? The Dagadusheth Halawai Ganeshotsava mandal has prepared itself to become a puppet under the control of these people. A conspiracy has been hatched for long to take over the Mahamandal by sidelining the Dagadusheth Halawai mandal once it is established. Many days prior to the establishment of the Mahamandal it was decided in Mumbai, how to take advantage of the Mahamandal.
In this regard the news item in Loksatta (a Marathi daily) on 3rd August 1988 speaks volumes. According to this news item the president of the Mumbai Public Ganapati Festival Co-ordination Committee Arun Chaphekar said in one public meeting in Mumbai that, after the desecration of Ganapati idol of Shreemanant Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati mandal in Pune, the Ganapati festival in the state has come to the field from the pandal. From this year during Ganapati festival, popular awakening will be done to protect Hindu religion also hundreds of thousands of activists of various mandals will participate in the struggle to liberate the Ram Janmahboomi. Informing that the Ganeshotsava Mahamandal will be formed soon, Chaphekar said that once getting organized like this it will be possible to strongly reply to the ‘long march’ (of Babari Mosque Action Committee) by spreading consciousness in every nook and corner of the state. The Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Mandal has been for at least last three to four years toying with the idea of forming a Ganeshotsava Mahamandal and initially this experiment should be limited to Pune City. But after the desecration of the Ganapati idol of the mandal, it gave new turn to the idea of establishing the Mahamandal and floated the plan to unify Ganapati Mandals in Maharashtra at once. The Muslim fundamentalists selected the Ganapati idol of the Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Mandal because they know that not only Puneicts but also people from Maharashtra believe in this Ganapati (idol). They knew that if this Ganapati idol is desecrated then the Marathi people would get furious.’ (17-8-1988,p7)

**Now this was the social audit of the mandal by the newspaper.** In an article in Ganeshotsava supplement in Kesari on 20-9-1988 it has been noted that the Ganapati festival in Pune City is progressing towards centenary. It says that the Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Mandal in its report has stated that, the Ganapati festival to be celebrated in 1993 will be 100th. Hence it is the duty of all Ganapati mandals to reform the festival. The mandal took the initiative and established *Maharashtra Ganeshotsava Mahamandal* to reform the festival. The establishment of mahamandal has to be noted as a controversial and important event in this year’s Ganapati festival. This trust (Dagadusheth) had been conducting a competition named ‘*Rashtriya Ganeshotsava Paritoshik Yojana*’ to give impetus to certain changes in the Ganapati festival in Pune city, to encourage some constructive work and to see to it that the discipline be maintained in the immersion procession. The competition was held for last eight years. The trust has stopped to hold this competition from this year and this...
is one more important event. The mahamandal had provided a five-point program to all mandals. The programme prescribed that all Ganeshotsava mandals should install the idol of Ganapati exactly at 11.15 a.m., the aarti should be performed at nine in the morning and seven in the evening, the activists should avoid vulgar dances to the tune of songs in the movies and the activists should take oath that they will not indulge in boozing and gambling in the times of festival. Although this programme is good one, it was not implemented by most of the mandals. The establishment of the confederation itself turned out to be a controversial. Some thinkers thought that this is an attempt to move away from the secular spirit (of the festival). The flag of the mahamandal was not seen anywhere. Now the answer to the question that whether the establishment of the mahamandal led to bringing together the mandals or distancing them from each other has to be found out.

It has been observed that the Ganapati mandals in Pune have not responded to the establishment of mahamandal and attempt of uniting Hindus through it. This becomes evident if the annual reports of the Ganapati mandals published this year are gone through. About fifty reports were studied as a sample. No mandal has mentioned the establishment of the mahamandal. The only exception about mentioning the mahamandal is the report of Dagadusheth. Only three mandals have mentioned that the Ganapati festival is to organize Hindu community. One mandal has supported the five-point programme. Eight mandals have considered the Ganeshotsava as a symbol of secularism. One mandal has expressed the purpose of the Ganapati festival in the words-'success in unity and decay in diversity'. By warning that the revival of religious thoughts is being done one mandal has raised a question that whether it was fair. It has also said that this revival is in fact of conservative thoughts. Other mandals have not expressed any opinion about this and have not mentioned it at all.'

The evidences noted above almost in their original form of news do support the observation and argument made at the beginning that although the Ganapati festival is an important religious festival of Hindus, it can not be utilized for developing some organized religious power or establishing some religious dogma, as the masses are opposed to such attempts. This is a paradoxical situation as the masses have shown enthusiastic support to the attempts of religiosity. The news items and articles chosen as evidences are self-explanatory and the details need not be repeated here. The systematic attempt of the Dagadusheth under the leadership of Godase, tacit support to this attempt by
the RSS, submission of the politicians (including those of Congress party) to this attempt of forming a confederation and ultimately the failure of the attempt due to lack of response (and thus an indirect rejection) of the masses to it are important developments. There was a clear Hinduist agenda behind the establishment of the Mahamandal and it was quite normal to expect it to succeed after the reverence shown by masses while the Ganapati idol of the Dagadusheth was desecrated. But, this attempt of developing a religious force failed due to indirect rejection by masses who have always been enthusiastic in religious activities. Thus, the importance of this failure of the attempt to organize mandals and homogenize the festival (by a uniform code of conduct) becomes clear.

The wish of the educated and disciplinarian class is that the Ganapati festival be celebrated in a very much orderly manner and without fuss or causing inconveniences. This expectation has underlying protest for revelry and carnivalistic approach of the masses. But, such wish is never fulfilled. Here in this case the festival was celebrated as per the wishes of the educated people and the mandal, which made such an attempt, lost the vigor and enthusiasm. There has been a section of people in the city all the times that have deplored the coercive tactics of the activists of Ganapati mandals, which they adopt while collecting contribution. It is not just the aggressive way of collecting contribution but all other expressions of those who celebrate the festival and which do not confirm to the conventional norms of purity, pollution, order, authority and formality are also criticized by this group. The group is mainly consisted of bunch of educated people who do not participate in the social activities and believe in the norms of purity, pollution, order, authority and formality. People belonging to this section waste no opportunity in bashing the festival by writing letters to the newspapers and through the speeches on public platform. There is appreciation among the so-called educated class for not so rigorous ways of celebration. It influences the journalists and editors of newspapers. One such appreciative news item is as follows- 'a mandal, which does not collect contribution for the Ganapati festival-, the number of Ganapati mandals is increasing continuously and there is a suggestion that neighboring mandals should get together and collectively celebrate the festival to decrease the ever-increasing number of Ganapati mandals. But nobody follows this suggestion. In spite of this situation, the Umbarya Ganapati mandal on Laxmi road brought together four mandals before 25 years. For last 12 years the activists of this mandal do not ask for contribution to celebrate the
festival. Earlier the number of activists who worked for the mandal was 300 but now it has reduced to 30.' (6-9-1993,p4)

This news item is appreciative of the mandal, which has taken initiative in reducing the number of Ganapati mandals, and for not collecting the contribution from the citizens. But there is a twist to the story. This mandal has lost its vigor and the following, the number of members of the mandal has come down by ten times.

The carnivalistic aspect of the festival

The Ganapati festival commands maximum popular participation, religious support and social recognition. Due these characteristics, it becomes easier for revelers to enjoy in public places while celebrating the Ganapati festival. Hence the Ganapati festival, although a religious event, has also become an occasion to booze, gambling, dance and merriment. This aspect of the festival has been criticized by the ‘educated class’ almost from the beginning of the festival about hundred years ago. The criticism has continued in the present times also. This carnivalistic aspect has many effects on the society. Due to the carnivalistic aspect, the Ganapati festival has become a safety valve regarding the law and order situation in the city. The festival provides the youth an institutionalized way of throwing away the social and cultural norms for a while and thus the ‘steam’ is let out. Most of the young men get a well recognized opportunity to dance, scream, sit on the street, roam around until late in the night, eat spicy fast food, jostle with the crowd, stay with the group etc. It has been observed that the young men in the city remain relatively calm in the remaining part of the year. It is a well-known experience that there is a comparatively low crime rate and very good law and order situation in the city. It appears from the evidences that the well-established channel of the Ganapati festival helps in letting out the steam. Here is one report that narrates the experiences of a folk artist when he participated in the Ganapati immersion procession. The narration was reported by the daily Kesari. This experience is quite representative of the situation in the immersion procession, but the point to be noted is that this is only one aspect of the immersion procession and the Ganapati festival in general. It would be erroneous to consider the Ganapati festival as only a carnival. Considering the significance of this representative report, it has been quoted in detail. The report said, ‘The workers who came from the rural area around Pune city were amazed, at watching that in the just concluded immersion procession, barrels full of liquor were kept in the truck which
also carried the Ganapati idol and this liquor was given to the boys of age-group ten to twenty. The shops, which sold liquor, were closed as per the orders by the Police commissioner, but it was available in abundance in the back of the shops, in the pandals of Ganapati and in the trucks used to carry the idol. Every year the boys who play Dhole-Lezim come to Pune from neighboring Haveli, Mulashi, Velhe, Baramati, Purandar, Maval etc for the procession. Shantaram Thakar from Panshet told the reporter that his group had accepted a contract from a small mandal in Budhawar Peth for Rs.300. He told, "our entire group of Lezim players gathered at 8.30a.m. near the pandal. The activists of the mandal started gathering near the pandal when they saw that we had come. Then the activists started preparations for the immersion procession. The senior members of the mandal asked to start the procession by 10a.m. We started playing the Dhole-Lezim. One group of activists among those who had gathered in the beginning went behind the pandal, raised to install the Ganapati idol. We saw that the youngsters in that group were sitting together. Slowly the procession came to the main street. We were demonstrating our skills. Some young activists had booze and they were dancing before us. We were engaged for one more Ganapati, from Mandai, at 2p.m. The procession slowly came to the Belbaug square (on the main Laxmi Road) the activists of the mandal started throwing gulal heavily. The activists were making erratic movements while dancing. One youngster lost the balance and fell on a kid. This kid was gathering gulal. He was suffering; perhaps the hand was broken. Nobody cared for him. Young activists had booze and were lost in their world and were dancing vigorously. We were engaged also for one more Ganapati (mandal). This idol was being taken for immersion in the night. We reached the mandal at 9.30 in the night. Every activist was telling us to start playing. We displayed our skills in the small ally before the Ganapati. But some activists were drunk and they were continuously interfering. One activist snatched the drum from one of our colleagues before his house and started paying it without rhythm and ultimately broke it. One of them while playing the zanj hurt him. The procession was moving slowly in this narrow ally. This mandal had used blue colour instead of the gulal (red colored powder, splashed to express excitement) These activists were throwing colours on us and they were also throwing colours on the women and young girls who had gathered to watch the procession. The kids were standing near women. The activists were throwing colour on the kids also. Our procession came to the Shivaji road. When we were displaying our skill in a square, the activists were going
towards the truck decorated for the immersion procession. They were drinking liquor kept in the truck and were returning to dance among us. This was going on continuously. We somehow reached the Fadget police station by 1 a.m. We had stayed in the same place (in the procession) until 3 a.m., hence some of the activists of the mandal went to the Mandai (market place), and we also went to the Mandai. There were stalls selling snacks and tea. The tired activists were coming to these stalls with bottles of the liquor and while drinking it they’re using the glasses on the stalls. Policemen in plain clothes were moving around in the same area. The proportion of teenagers under twenty years of age among these groups (who were having booze) was significant. I asked an activist that the shops, which sell alcoholic drinks, were closed (for Ganapati festival), then from where did this much liquor was obtained. He told that our mandal has bought a can of locally made liquor from Katraj for Rs.275. Only the chosen few of us (who are important activists of the mandal) take quality liquor. These activists were buying liquor from the backdoor of the shop (as by rules it had to be closed for the Ganapati festival) About ten-twenty school-going children were made to drink liquor and dance in the procession.' (10-9-1987,p1)

It is not only the revelers who utilize Ganapati festival for merriment, but some anti-social elements also make their presence in the festival. The following report describes such event; ‘ The police have arrested six activists of Shanipar Mitra mandal who created disturbance in shop named Jayashree Thread Company for the sake of contribution.’ (2-9-1992,p4)

Ganapati mandals are sets of young men in the locality. There is also competition amongst them and sometimes the festival is also used as a pretext to settle scores. The following report has one such example. The report said, ‘The police told that a president of one Ganesh mandal was beaten up on Thursday out of a dispute regarding the activists of mandals. This incident took place on Wednesday at 10.30p.m. in the Mangalwar Peth square. Chandrakant Sarjerao Takale is president of Nehru Vikas Tarun mandal. The activists of Nishchay Taum mandal in the same area beat him up before the office of his mandal.’ (10-9-1993,p5)

Although the Dagadusheth mandal is well respected and it has played a pivotal role in the process of sanskritisation, it has not remained clear of charges of hooliganism. The report in Kesari on 22-9-1988 said that 25 activists of Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati trust beaten up great grandsons of Shreemant Dagadusheth Halwai (who founded the mandal) for giving less contribution. Nobody was arrested.
As it has been stated earlier, the reports about the merriment in the Ganapati festival, which indicate the carnivalesque aspect of the festival, are chosen to help in understanding the phenomenon. There are many more such reports which give more information about the merriment. But, here only few representative reports have been noted, as the aim is to note down the carnivalesque aspect of the festival. The white-collar educated middle class is very much opposed to this aspect of the Ganapati festival. Every year whenever there is Ganapati festival, letters to the editor from the readers belonging to this class appear in the newspapers. In most of the letters, the readers complain about loutish behavior of the activists of Ganapati festival. Now, the question is whether this behavior of the young men (and some women) in Ganapati festival, who otherwise behave well in the remaining part of the year, is a symbolic rejection of social and cultural norms of propriety? It can be considered as a transgression of such norms, which are well followed, in the remaining part of the year. Hence, it has been argued in the beginning of this section that the festival acts as a safety valve, which helps in letting out the steam, and diffuses the situation. These are the inferences based on the evidences in the form of news reports (some of which have been quoted above) and the observation of the festival. The participation of masses to the gigantic levels helps in view of the local economy also. This aspect has been discussed in the following part.

The festival helps local economy

As stated earlier, the Ganapati festival commands enthusiastic and voluntary participation of hundreds of thousands of people and the businessmen have been utilizing the festival for their interests. The Ganapati festival is celebrated from the fourth day of bright fortnight of 'Bhadrapada' to the Anantchadurdashi (in the months of August-September). It's a rainy season in these days and a slack period for daily wages laborers in the city. Also there is not much turnover in the market as the consumers are not eager to venture out in the unpredictable weather of the season. But the Ganapati festival provides fillip to the market and employment as thanks to the belief of masses they celebrate the festival with enthusiasm and it leads to vigorous activities in the market. The laborers get casual employment for decoration of the mandals, erecting pandals, transporting material which is sold on mass scale due to the festival as well as setting temporary shops along the roads and making quick money. There are lot many aspects to the increase in the economic activities
due to the festival. Not only Hindu professionals from priests to the traders benefit from this festival but the businessman from other religions also benefit equally. This ‘fair’ is for anybody. People are in a mood of celebration and they don’t bother to which religion the businessman belongs. There are numerous examples about this development. The news reports about the utilization of Ganapati festival for business purposes have been quoted in the following part. They are as follows,

‘Swagat karuya Ganarayache— like Diwali and Goodhipadawa, the greeting cards for Ganapati festival have also been made available at the Archie’s. It is for the first time, that such cards are made available. Archie’s had prepared greeting cards for Durgapooja and Pongal and they evoked good response. Hence, they have created cards for Maharashtra on the occasion of Ganapati festival.’ (12-9-1999, article by Pradeep Kulkarni in Sunday supplement)

In an article in daily Samana published on 12th September 1999, by Anand Saraf, the account of the increased economic activity due to Ganapati festival is well narrated. The article says- On the occasion of Ganeshotsava there is a great turnover in the market. During the festival the sale of flowers increases by three times, sale of fruits is doubled, 25% more sweets are sold. The total sale of the sweets made from milk, like pedhas is more than 40,000 kilogram. For this season about sixty truckloads of coconuts are brought to the city for sale. (Each truck carries about 6,000 coconuts) More than 6,000 kilogram gulal is splashed during the procession. About one hundred thousand Ganapati idols worth Rs. 40 to Rs. 70 each are sold during the festival. The rent charged for a pandal of the size 12 feet by 15 feet is about Rs. 8,000 to Rs. 12,000. There is not much insistence on making great profit while lending the material for pandal as they are rented as per the tradition. Still the point to be noted is that during the festival not a single piece of cloth or bamboo is left (and everything is taken on rent). Considering the material used for Ganapati idol the turnover of this material is more than Rs.15 million as one hundred thousand kilogram of clay and two thousand kilogram colours are used for the making of Ganapati idols. The material of about Rs. 50 is used in each household for worshipping the Ganapati idols installed domestically. During the festival the 30% more such material is sold. The sale of incense sticks is of more than Rs.2.5 million. Ashtagandha (saffron colored powder used to apply on the forehead during auspicious occasions) is sold at the rate of Rs. 60 to Rs. 600 per kilogram and the total sale of it during the festival is of more than 300 kilogram. Hundreds of thousands of villagers from surrounding areas visit
the festival and roadside vendors (to the restaurant owners) make good money due to this influx of population. Many petty shopkeepers make provision of income for next two months by the money they earn by the sale during the last five-six days of the festival. It was evident from the survey of 250 vendors in the vicinity of Hirabag mandal. The clay and plaster from which the idols are made is brought from Gujarat. More than 20,000 Maharashtrians are involved in the work of making Ganapati idols. Those who supply bamboo for pandal and stage are mostly from Muslim community. It is to be noted that during festival they don’t provide this material for construction in spite of the possibility of making more money. Bamboo is supplied from Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamilnadu. The tarpaulin used for pandals is brought from Culcatta. People belonging to Kutchhi (those who have roots in the Kutchch region of the Gujarat state) community supply tarpaulin on rent. The cloth used for pandals is woven in Bhiwandi. (Bhiwandi is near Mumbai and is dominated by Muslims.) The Punjabi community controls the business of artificial flowers. Most of the people who play band in the procession of Ganapati idol are Kathewadi.

Thus, the commercial implications of such a great festival of people are well explained in the article quoted above. The increased commercial activity due to the Ganapati festival is also indicated by the trends in advertising business during the festival.

A report states that, there was a great influence of advertising campaigns of industrial and commercial houses on the 99th Ganapati festival, celebrated in the year 1991. (24-9-1991, p1)

The international business houses recognize the importance of the sea of humanity that assembles due to Ganapati festival. Concerned report said, ‘Advertisements worth Rs. ten million to lure the crowd of Ganapati festival---It has been estimated that some big multinational companies have spent about Rs. ten million to establish their brands among the citizens' who turn out in hundreds of thousands in ten days of Ganapati Festival. With a view that the citizens who come to streets for Ganapati festival are the future customers, many companies have been advertising through Ganapati festival for last many years. From this year, big multinational companies in the sector of consumer goods have turned to these potential customers. It has been told that these 5-6 companies have spent more than Rs. ten million for this purpose. It is understood that the international companies including LG, Sony, Akai, Samsung, Sansui, Onida have given advertisements to
many Ganeshotsava mandals. But, only those mandals which have been drawing crowds to watch their decorations, which are considered to be important ones and which are at strategic locations where there is a great turnover of the citizens are selected for giving advertisements. It is necessary to establish the brand among the consumers to sell the consumer goods like television sets, music systems, washing machines, refrigerators etc. Hence, considering the participation of devotional citizens from middle and upper middle class each company out of these has given advertisements to 15 to 20 big mandals. The 'bombardment' of posters and banners is done in the area (of the mandal) by giving advertisements of Rs. 15,000 to Rs. 80,000 according to the size of the mandal. Thus, every company has spent Rs.15 hundred thousand to Rs. 20 hundred thousand and together these companies have spent more than Rs. ten million, it is understood.' (30-8-1998,p5)

The sale of the audiocassettes of devotional songs has been increasing every year. This aspect has been discussed in earlier part. In this case the increased sale indicates the increasing religiosity and increasing business at the same time.

There are various aspects by which the Ganapati festival provides fillip to the local economy. Some important points are noted here. This economic aspect shows how the interests of hundreds of thousands of people from all castes and communities are involved in this religious-cultural-social event of Ganapati festival. The study of this aspect helps in understanding the great popular support the festival enjoys among masses.

**Politicians and the Ganapati festival**

Just as the business community tries to cash the mass participation in the Ganapati festival, the politicians and the establishment also try to gain legitimacy, popular image and if possible some support by participating in the Ganapati festival. As in the case of businessmen the reason for the politicians to participate in the Ganapati festival in some way or other is the same. The enthusiastic participation of the hundreds of thousands of people is the reason why the politicians have been trying to associate themselves with this mass festival in some way or the other. Participating in the festival and especially in the immersion procession provide the politician an opportunity to communicate with the activists at the grass roots level as well as to project his or her image among the citizens. This trend of the politicians taking more and more interest in the Ganapati festival is more significant in recent years. Some
reports which indicate the trend among the politicians and the establishment regarding the Ganapati festival have been noted below.

The report said, 'this year (1986) for the first time the political parties namely Congress (I), Shivsena and Bhartiya Janata Party had raised the centers for help like civil defence group. (At the immersion procession)' (16-9-1986, p3)

The municipal corporation gives coconut to every mandal as an honor. But now almost all organization and political parties have started to adopt the same method (of giving coconut) and hence, the importance of the scheme of corporation has become less. Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Dr. Hedagewar Birth Centenary Committee, Hindu Rashtras Tarun Mandal, Pune city branch of the Shivsena, Patit Pawan Sanghatana, Guruji Talim Mandal etc. gave coconut to president of every mandal in the procession'. (26-9-1988, p5)

The news item about the immersion procession noted, 'the Ganapati festival, which is known as nationalist and secular, was utilized for religious and political party purposes. The shadow of ensuing Loksabha election was seen on the immersion procession. The (controversial) issues of Ramjanmabhumi and Hindutwa were prominently expressed. The slogans like 'Be proud of Hindutwa' and 'Ramjanmabhumi has to be given' were given before the first revered Kasaba Ganapati. In the Kandojibaba square the slogans 'Prabhu Ramchandra kee Jai' (hail the Lord Ram), 'Tala todo Ram chhodo' (break the lock and free Ram, at Ayodhya), 'Mukt kara Mukta kara, Ramjanmabhumi mukta kara' (free the birthplace of Ram) were given from the tent erected by Patit Pawan Sanghatana (this organization belongs to the RSS family). The saffron bands with the letters, 'Jai Shreeram' written on it were tied on the forehead by the organization, Pariwartan. Dhundibaba of Ramdara was present in the tent at this time. The presidents of Ganapati mandals were given the models of proposed Rammandir and portrait of Ram. Also, deliberate anti-government comments were made from tents in some places.' (16-9-1989, p4)

The political parties spare no opportunity in demonstrating how they care for the Ganapati festival. Here is one such example regarding the Congress party. The report stated, 'Rush to fill the pot-holes on the roads before the Ganapati festival- the members of Pune Municipal Corporation who belong to the Congress party met municipal commissioner Ajay Dua, under the leadership of Vitthalrao Ladkat, president of city unit of Congress (I) and leader of the party in the corporation and
assured that the party will co-operate for road repairing (for Ganapati festival) The Congress (I) will provide the bulldozers for leveling.' (23-8-1990, p3)

The number of political parties and the organizations having their presence in the immersion procession has been increasing. The news report said, ‘The Bhartiya Janata Party, Patit Pawan Sanghatana, Bank of Baroda, Leo club, Pune Kala Krida Kendra (Ganesh Festival, propagated by the politician Suresh Kalamadi), Rashtriya Hind Tarun Mandal, Shivsena had erected pandals on the path of the (main) procession. In the pandal of Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), the idols of Prabhu Ramchandra and Seeta were placed and an appeal was made to participate in the victory parade to be taken out in Pune on Saturday in view of the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya as well as to register names of those who were interested in doing Karseva to construct Ram temple in Ayodhya. The president of every mandal was invited in two different tents of Bharatiya Janata Party and Shivsena and they were felicitated by giving rose and coconut.’ (6-9-1990, p5)

Not only the politicians but also the entire establishment had to ultimately submit to the mass event of Ganapati festival. The government and its agencies have to make provisions for the smooth conduct of the festival. The important part of this aspect is that the state has not been able to prevail but it had to submit before the masses. Some examples regarding this as have been reported are noted below.

The electricity board had to help the Ganapati festival. The advertisement said, ‘A central control cabin of electricity board during the Ganapati festival- The Maharashtra Electricity Board has made a special provision to maintain continuous power supply in Pune city and surrounding area during the Ganapati festival. For this purpose all complaint alleviation centers in the city and surrounding area will remain open all the times and will make all out efforts to immediately alleviate complaint. Besides, a central control room has been opened at the head office in Rasta peth. - Chief engineer, Pune city circle.’ (9-9-1994, p1)

‘Electric supply to Ganapati mandals at discounted rate- the chief engineer of the electricity board, S.D. Bhale, on Saturday, declared by a statement that the board will provide electricity to the Ganapati mandals at the discounted rate’ (8-9-1996, p5)

Masses can reject but the state has to submit

As the Ganapati festival commands maximum participation of masses and the social recognition, the government and the establishment have no option but to
submit to the masses who celebrate the festival and to those who enjoy support of the masses. This aspect became evident in case of the allotment of the land at a prime location to the Dagadusheth. While considering this episode it will be helpful to remember that the very Dagadusheth was snubbed by the activists of Ganapati mandals when it tried to establish the confederation and develop the organized power and take over the leadership. The episode about the allotment of piece of land to Dagadusheth has been noted as follows in detail.

The news report said, ‘Proposal to allot the land of fire brigade to the Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati trust--- The Maharashtra Seva Sangh, which runs Khadi Bhandar (near the temple of Dagadusheth) has decided to launch an agitation to oppose the efforts of handing over its space to Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Trust. The municipal corporation has decided to hand over the land of adjacent fire brigade center and Khadi bhandar to the trust for expansion of Shreemant Dagadusheth Halwai Ganapati Temple. This proposal was put forward by mayor Dattatraya Gaikwad and leader of the house Chandrakant Chhajed and the standing committee had sent it to the administration for comments after passing it. The administration has passed this proposal. The state government has allotted the plot of land next to the temple of Dagadusheth Halwai Ganapati Trust to the municipal corporation for fire brigade. The municipal corporation has sent a letter to the district collector in order to take over this land and hand it over to Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Trust. The center of fire brigade will be shifted to the plot reserved for Garden near Dengale Bridge. The administration has obtained the permission of the standing committee to the changes according to town planning rules in order to raise the office of fire brigade at the place reserved for garden. The land occupied by the Khadi Bhandar Kendra next to the fire brigade is owned by Dagadusheth. It has been opined in the remarks that Dagadusheth Halawai Trust should take over this land and provide space somewhere else to the Khadi Bhandar. Meanwhile, the Maharashtra Seva Sangh is not ready to vacate the land.’ (7-3-2000,p5)

Thus, the proposal to hand over a plot of land to the Dagadusheth was cleared by the government agencies including the local self-government. The Dagadusheth has support of hundreds of thousands of people in Pune. This support was expressed when the Ganapati idol of the mandal was desecrated in 1988. The support of the masses to the mandal and their faith in the Ganapati idol of the mandal is witnessed every year at the time of the Ganapati festival. Hence, it was not prudent for the
government and the establishment in general to reject the proposal to provide land to the Dagaduseth for its proposed big temple. The plot of land in question is at prime place located at the center of the city. Although the government had to submit and sanction the proposal to hand over piece of land, the people and members of Ganapati mandals could oppose the proposal. The following news reports throw light on these developments.

The news items said, ‘--- the decision (of handing over land to Dagaduseth) evoked strong reaction in the meeting of city unit of Congress party arranged on Sunday in Congress House. Many members of Pune Municipal Corporation strongly opposed the decision to hand over the plot of land in downtown area to the trust. A strong demand was made to reconsider this decision in the presence of Suresh Kalamadi. Sanjay Balgude and other raised this issue in the meeting. (He) warned that if land were handed over to Dagaduseth then many mandals in the city would come forward to demand land to the municipal corporation. (He) also warned that the Puneits will have to face traffic congestion daily if a big temple was raised in the area and a crowd of believers gathered near it.’ (20-3-2000,p5) The member of PMC Sanjay Balgude leads one prominent mandal in the downtown area, called Khadakmal Ali Mandal. Thus, his opposition to the proposal to hand over land can not be termed as opposition to the festival as such. Not only Balgude but another prominent member of PMC belonging to the Congress party, Hiraman Shinde also opposed the proposal. Ultimately the proposal was cleared by the general body of the PMC (since politicians can not afford to oppose the Ganapati mandal with such great support).

The news report gives details of the general body meeting where the proposal was cleared. The report said, 'The land of fire brigade handed over to Dagaduseth, bypassing the public interest--- A resolution to hand over the land of fire brigade, Kondwada and Khadi Bhandar to the Dagaduseth Halwai Ganapati Trust for its expansion of the temple was passed in the general body meeting of the municipal corporation on Friday, bypassing the public interest and with the help of majority. Sanjay Balgude and Hiraman Shinde of Congress party strongly opposed the resolution. They also warned to approach the court in this case. But, the resolution was passed by the support of other members except these two. Suhas Kulkarni and Vikas Mathakari (of BJP) spoke in support of the resolution.' (25-3-2000,p5)
Thus, the municipal corporation submitted and the resolution to allot the land to Dagadusheth was passed. Most of the politicians did not oppose the resolution, as it is not politically correct to oppose the religious body, which has so much following among the masses. Those who opposed the allotment of the land to the Dagadusheth are not opposed to the Ganapati festival as such. In fact the two politicians viz. Sanjay Balgude and Hiraman Shinde have been closely associated with the festival as activists of Ganapati mandals. Yet, as it has been noted that the government and the establishment had to submit before a prominent mandal with popular support while only the activists of Ganapati mandal could oppose it.

The Ganapati festival of the elite class

The Ganapati festival in Pune has been by and large the festival of masses with its all inclusive, flexible, accommodative characteristics. As it has been well discussed earlier, that there are no social, cultural and religious prohibitions in the festival. Thus, while the masses have been celebrating the festival, the elite class, most importantly the educated and ‘modern’ class has been away from the festival. This elite class in the city of Pune has found a channel in getting associated with the Ganapati festival through Pune festival. The Pune Festival has been celebrated on the occasion of Ganapati festival but it is celebrated like a city festival of upper class and not as a traditional mass event. The Pune festival was started by today’s top most politician in the city, Suresh Kalamadi. (Kalamadi is member of the upper house of the parliament and he controls the politics and functioning of the Pune Municipal Corporation) The festival was started with the name of Ganesh Festival. This name of the festival is misleading. This festival is celebrated during the period of Ganapati Festival, but is totally alienated from the festival of masses. Since, beginning the Ganesh Festival is marked by participation by the elite class. This festival is not open to everybody. This festival was later renamed as Pune Festival. Some news reports are helpful in understanding the nature of the Pune Festival. The reports have been noted bellow.

A report said, ‘About one thousand foreign tourists are expected to visit the Ganesh festival to be celebrated by the Tourism department. In this festival, cultural and sports events will be organized, according to Suersh Kalamadi, the organizer of the festival. District collector Shrinivas Patil, Babasaheb Purandare and Chittaranjan Kolhatkar gave information about this festival. The festival will be inaugurated at the
hands of Union tourism minister Shivaraj Patil and the tourism minister of the state Vilasrao Deshmukh will chair the inauguration function. Chief minister of Maharashtra Sharad Pawar will be the chief guest.' (3-9-1989, p5)

' The Ganesh festival was inaugurated with lot of fanfare and in the presence of hundreds of foreign students. The president of tourism development board, Suresh Kalamadi worshipped the stage by breaking the coconut. He said that Lokmanya Tilak started Ganesh festival in Pune for public awareness. The cultural movement is carried on due to this festival. The Tourism Development Corporation has arranged this cultural and sports festival so that the nature of cultural festival in our nation is known.' (5-9-1989)

'Mr. Jayantrao Tilak, the chairman of state legislative council, criticized for changing the name of Ganesh Festival by Tourism Corporation as Pune Festival. He was speaking after inaugurating the decoration of Dagadusheth Halwai Ganapati Mandal.' (12-9-1991, p1)

'Co-chairman of the Ganesh festival, Suresh Kalamadi, clarified in a press conference that this festival is Ganapati festival at its core, but the name has been changed to avoid some misunderstandings and to spread the reputation of the Pune City.' (13-9-1991, p1)

The festival became the reason of importance for Suresh Kalamadi- the report in Indian Express about the Pune Festival says- `India's chattering come to Pune this weekend- Ganapati has reasons to be pleased. At a time when everybody in Pune is vying with whomsoever to catch wise lord's eye, a huge spectacle is unfolding, courtesy Pune's best known friends-turned-foes Suresh Kalamadi and Sharad Pawar. Extending their political war to the city's best known event, Pune's Ganesh Festival, the two camps of Kalamadi and Pawar have turned the city and the adjoining township of Pimpri-Chinchwad, which is part of Pawar's Baramati constituency into two huge culture melas. It is as if the very stars are descending from the heavens. For the Pune festival, which opens this evening, celebrities are pouring in from every field, every part of the land. Honored guests all, being especially flown in for the event, they promise a star parade. In the Festival tradition of rolling out the red carpet, cars are being made to wait at the airport to escort their eminencies, hotel suites booked en bloc being given last-minute looks and chefs told to bring out from the larders all that topline culinary skills can cook. In this tenth year, the Pune Festival is being touted as an extravaganza, which will have people screaming for more. Never
mind what critics, cynics have to say. So what if Pawar who has fought with Kalamadi and is no longer the festival chairman. So what if the event list does not sound as exciting as it did when Pawar and Kalamadi were the best of chums who chaired the festival together. After all, Pawar still has a festival on at Pimpri-Chinchwad and Kalamadi in Pune. Festival watchers say the big names are missing from Pune this year. But even then the fare sounds exciting what with performances by Mallika Sarabhai, Pratibha Prahlad, Shovana Narayan, Kishori Amonkar, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, Pandit Shivkumar Sharma, Kumar Sanu, Rajendra and Neena Mehta, Altaf Raja and Usha Uthup sure to pull crowds. By Friday afternoon, the crowds in Pune were already fighting to have a dekko at the guests from filmdom-Hema Malini, Dharmendra, Shashi Kapur, Rakhee, Om Puri, Aruna Irani and Pooja Batra. Turbaned Ramkrishna Hegade, Manohar Joshi and Raj Thackeray too were inviting looks. Hotel Blue Diamond and Holiday Inn-two best addresses in town if you are visiting Pune- were awaiting the arrival of a certain Mrs. Michael Bates and her husband who is Britain's High Commissioner to India; Argentina's Ambassador Biritus; and, you said it, R. K. Laxman; Shobha De; Ustad Amjad Ali Khan and sons; Pratibha Prahlad; Yashodara Raje; Mrs. and Mr. Ajatshatru Singh; Uma Gajapati Raju; Ramesh Sharma; Ritu Beri and Divya Singh. At the Totem Pole in Holiday Inn, a surprise bash was being organized for one of the honored guests. The Kalamadi camp is ecstatic though they deny they are trying to settle scores with the rival camp. "Why is that the media treat a festival as an extension of political rivalry? True, Pawar and Kalamadi are no longer together. But isn't it nice Pawar is participating in one festival while Kalamadi is working hard to ensure that the Pune festival is a resounding success?" retorts a Kalamadi supporter. In neighboring Pimpri-Chinchwad, Pawar had more or less the same lines to sing when he attended the inaugural function of the Pimpri-Chinchwad Festival on Thursday. Maintaining that the festival was not organized because of "any political fallout", Pawar said, "at least some events should be kept away from controversies." Yet in the same breath he justified the holding of the Pimpri-Chinchwad festival "since every village has its own Ganesh festival, it is also proper for elected corporators to think of holding an independent festival for the industrial township." The Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) which until last year shared the entire expense for a two-day village fair organized as part of the Pune Festival pulled out this year. The village fair will be held as part of the Pimpri-Chinchwad Festival. Not to be caught
napping by the star parade in Pune, the festival organizers have invited the likes of Sonu Nigam and Jaspal Bhatti to entertain the crowds.' (Indian Express, 28th August 1998, p1)

Kalmadi with his all might and great influence in the city has tried to make the Pune festival as the city festival like the Edinburgh festival. But the fact remains that the Pune Festival with its elitist and exclusionist characteristic does not have the support of the masses and hence, in spite of the fanfare and participation of important people, the Pune Festival has not become the city festival in true sense. In fact the Pune Festival has become the celebration although on a grand scale, part of the Ganapati festival just like some celebration by a Ganapati mandal.

Conclusion

The Ganpati festival during 1985 to 2000 in Pune city is marked by the ever increasing gigantic participation by masses. This trend is indicated by the fact that in 1991 the Pune Municipal Transport Authority carried 2.4 million passengers within eight days of the Ganapati festival. The masses have been so much enthusiastic about the Ganpati festival that all main roads in the downtown area of the city have to be closed for vehicular traffic in the later half of the ten days festival when people venture out of their homes to watch the decorations by the Ganpati mandals and stay on roads until late night. The number of people crowding to enjoy the festival has increased so much in last few years that in 2000 the concept of unidirectional traffic like that for the vehicles had to be adopted for the pedestrians. This attempt of controlling mob has succeeded and the concept has been adopted for the next year also. These few examples are quoted here to express the magnanimity of the participation of masses in the Ganpati festival. Except Ganapati festival, no other social, religious, cultural or political event in the city commands such participation and response from the masses.

As the Ganpati festival has become festival of masses, it has not remained for only one community or caste. In the last chapter it has been noted that historically the Brahmins especially the Chitpawan Brahmins have played pivotal role in establishing Ganapati as an important deity. The Ganapati was tutelary god of the Peshwas and some other Chitpawan Brahmins. But, once the Ganpati festival became public festival anybody from any caste or religion could worship the God and participate in the festival publicly. This phenomenon became quite clear in the contemporary
period. The example of the Twashta Kasar Sansatha in the downtown area is noteworthy in this regard. The Twashta Kasar community is traditionally engaged in making of utensils and is categorized as the other backward caste. This institution of the community celebrated centenary of its Ganpati mandal with fanfare and lot of religious activities. The Sanstha had invited couples from all 27 castes and five religions to worship the idol. In the Kasaba sector, where the Sanstha is located, people belonging to total 27 castes and five religions live and couples from each community were invited with honor to worship the idol. Just as there has been more and more expression of reverence towards God Ganapati by people belonging to various castes, the increasing initiative by the Ganpati mandals for social activities has also been witnessed during the period. Thus, the non-Brahmins have been always enthusiastic about the Ganpati festival. But, as it has been noted in the chapter by recording the news items, the public Ganpati festival has not been celebrated with much enthusiasm in the Brahmin dominated areas.

It became clear that the activists of Ganpati festival and hence masses in general are not much supportive about the norms of purity, pollution, order, formality, authority, hierarchy etc. At the same time the masses have shown tendency towards religiosity and modern ways of life. This trend became clear in the events regarding the Dagadusheth as well as regarding the Express Citizens forum.

The Dagadusheth Halwai Sarvajanik Ganpati Trust, a Ganpati mandal located at the center of the city, became the most important Ganpati mandal, during the period of 1985 to 2000. The Dagadusheth undertook Mahayaga (mega sacred fire) in 1987 considering the draught in the state. It also took initiative in gathering money from mandals to help financially the draught prone people. The Mahayaga was opposed and criticized by the leftists and 'educated people' but went on smoothly thanks to the popular support. This incident showed the increasing popular interest in religious activities. In the subsequent year, in 1988, a Muslim youth threw filth towards the Ganapati idol of the Dagadusheth. This incident took place on 30th April 1988. This desecration of the idol, led to riot and uneasiness all over the city. Curfew had to be imposed for four days in the downtown area. The government had to take serious note of the incident. Thus, the reverence towards the Ganapati idol of the Dagadusheth was expressed.

On this background, Dagadusheth, especially, its leader, Prataprao alias Tatya Godase took initiative to organize the Ganpati mandals and create a confederation of
them. The confederation named, Ganeshotsava Mahamandal was established on 10th August 1988. Most of the prominent politicians in the city and from some other cities participated in the inauguration. In this ceremony and after, the Hinduist tilt of the Mahamandal and its attempt to homogenize the Ganapati festival became clear and the Mahamandal failed to take off. The confederation remained on paper and majority of the Ganapati mandals in Pune preferred to stay away from it. This failure of organizing and homogenizing Ganapati festival is significant on the background of the support expressed to the Dagadusheth, when its idol was desecrated few months ago. Although, Dagadusheth was snubbed by Ganapati mandal activists, it again received popular support, when it celebrated its centenary in 1991. People participated enthusiastically in the religious and cultural events organized by the Dagadusheth on account of the centenary. The participation of hundreds of thousands of people underlined the popularity of the mandal.

Thus, people supported Dagadusheth whenever it organized religious and cultural activities. But, the very Dagadusheth was snubbed by people when it tried to organize mandals and homogenize the festival and thus to develop a social and religious power.

Whenever the establishment including the government and the elite class tried to create some order to limit the celebration, the attempts were opposed tooth and nail by the masses. In such cases the otherwise disunited and pluralistic mandals and their activists got united temporarily to oppose the dogma. This tendency became clear when the attempt of the Express Citizens’ Forum to limit the festivities was frustrated by masses. The forum raised civic problems caused due to Ganapati festival and this point was a valid one. But, since such attempt meant organized intervention in the festival and encroaching upon the social and cultural space of the festival, it was opposed and the forum had to retreat. Interestingly, those who opposed the forum in this episode raised the same issue of civic inconvenience due the festival, later on.

Thus, the masses participating in the festival have also shown the tendency to sanskritise and adopt modern ways of life.

While the masses opposed intervention in the festival, they have tolerated it when it was convenient to them. The committee to eradicate superstitions, named Andhashraddha Nirmulan Samitee intervened in a way in the festival in the name of conservation of environment. But it was not strongly opposed, as it was convenient for people to immerse the idol in clean water.
In case of relationship between the Hindu and Muslim communities, the festival has become both the causes of estrangement and reconciliation. In fact both the forces interested in estrangement and reconciliation could utilize the festival for their interest. The Sainath Tarun Mandal installed both Ganapati idol and Tabut in the same pandal in 1985. Such examples of reconciliation are not rare. But, at the same time incidents of riot and arson related to some issue regarding some Ganapati mandal are also there. Such, incidents of tension and conflict between two communities are noted in detail earlier in the chapter. Thus, the relationship between Hindu and Muslim communities with regard to the Ganapati festival denotes that the festival provides ample social and cultural space to be utilized by the forces interested in conflict and conciliation.

This aspect of space is witnessed in case of Dalits and women who have utilized the festival and thus the space created due to it to transgress the social and cultural prohibitory norms as well as to declare their arrival in the mainstream. There are many examples in support of this observation and they have been noted in detail in the chapter.

The developments in the period of 1985 to 2000 about the Ganapati festival in Pune City demonstrate the significant growth of the festival in terms of popular participation, economic turnover, political support, religiosity and enthusiasm of the masses. There have been paradoxical situations where the Ganapati festival that is basically a religious event was appropriated by traditionally oppressed classes like women and Dalits to occupy social space which was denied to them and it led to increased to religiosity. The festival became a reason for increased tension among Hindu and Muslim communities at the same time it was used as a platform to develop conciliation among these two communities. The masses that participated in the festival in increasing numbers indulged more and more in religious rituals but strongly opposed the efforts of establishing a certain religious pattern or dogma. The Dagadusheth became almost the leader of the Ganapati mandals in the city but was snubbed by the very mandals when it tried to establish a confederation of the mandals and thus develop a socio-religious power through it. The hundreds of thousands of activists of Ganapati mandals utilized the festival as a carnival at the same time took major social initiatives with great responsibility. Thus, the masses have rejected order, propriety, hierarchy, norms of purity and pollution as well as authority through Ganapati festival. At the same time these very masses have utilized the Ganapati
festival for their urge for sanskritisation and modernization! This paradox is the most important aspect of the contemporary celebration of Ganapati festival.