

Sacred Routes, Living Histories: Muharram's Enduring Imprint on Nizamuddin Basti

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Abstract: *This study examines the role of the Muharram procession in Nizamuddin Basti as a significant influence on the spatial and architectural morphology of the area. By analyzing historical precedents, in-situ rituals, and morphological features, such as elevated plinths, minimal chajja, and pre-modern façades, the paper elucidates the interaction between ritual movement and urban preservation. Utilizing mapping analysis, interviews with local residents, and photographic documentation, the study contends that these processional practices maintain sacred geographies, promote a form of informal heritage preservation, and impact long-term urban morphology.*

Keywords: Architecture, Muharram Procession, Sacred Landscapes, Culture

1. Methodology

This study adopts a **mixed-method, interdisciplinary approach**, combining tools from urban morphology, cultural geography, and ethnographic inquiry. The aim is to understand how Muharram rituals, especially processions, influence and interact with the spatial and architectural configuration of Nizamuddin Basti.

1) Spatial Analysis and Mapping

a) GIS Mapping & Cartographic Study

Utilize GIS tools and historical maps (Survey of India, Delhi Development Authority, etc.) to:

- Map the procession routes (7th, 9th, and 10th Muharram).
- Identify streets with distinct morphological traits (no chajja, high plinths, older architectural fabric).
- Overlay procession paths on land use and building footprint data to examine areas of concentrated transformation or preservation.

b) Morphological Observation

Conduct street-level analysis of architectural features along procession routes:

- Floor heights
- Transition in materiality and typology

2) Ethnographic Fieldwork

a) Participant Observation

Attend Muharram rituals and processions (especially 7th, 9th, and 10th) to document:

- Procession sequence and crowd behavior.
- Use of space (temporary alterations, barriers, lighting, performance zones).
- Interactions between ritual and architecture.

b) Semi-Structured Interviews

Interview key stakeholders:

- Local residents and shopkeepers along procession routes.
- Caretakers of tazia and alam.
- Organizers of the Imam Bargah.

3) Visual and Photographic Documentation

Systematic photographic survey of:

- Procession routes.
- Architectural character along those routes.
- Temporary installations during Muharram (lighting, flags, stages, alam and tazia spaces).

2. Introduction

Nizamuddin Basti, a historic enclave in Delhi, stands as a testament to the rich tapestry of spiritual and cultural practices that have shaped the urban landscape over centuries. At its core is the Dargah of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, a 14th-century Sufi saint whose enduring presence continues to influence the area's spiritual and social dynamics. The Basti's distinctive character is further enriched by the coexistence of Sufi and Shi'a traditions, which have left lasting imprints on its spatial organization and architectural features.

While various festivals and rituals punctuate the Basti's calendar, the commemoration of Muharram is particularly notable for its profound impact on the urban fabric. The Muharram processions in areas like Nizamuddin Basti exemplify how religious practices shape and transform urban spaces through their commemorative, devotional, and ritualistic elements. These processions not only fulfill a religious purpose but also have significant implications for urban sociology and spatial arrangements, akin to other global cities experiencing religious events.

In the context of religious celebrations, public spaces are essential as sites for socialization and the transmission of cultural practices, which fosters a sense of belonging (Low, 2022). For instance, Muharram processions act as powerful expressions of faith and remembrance, especially for the Shia Muslim community, turning parts of the city into stages for religious observance. This phenomenon is paralleled in the transnational congregations of the Kimbanguist church in London, which use public religious performances to claim space and reshape it according to diasporic belonging and identity (Garbin, 2012).

The physical transformation that accompanies large-scale religious processions includes the establishment of

temporary structures and reorganization of traffic flows, which can dramatically alter the urban landscape temporarily. This reconfiguration raises questions about urban planning and the compatibility of modern development with historical and religious sites, as observed in cities like Karbala during Ashura (Farhan et al., 2018). The processions also lead to logistical challenges, such as waste management, as seen in other religious gatherings around the world, impacting urban cleanliness and sanitation (Abdulredha et al., 2020).

Moreover, the transformative effect of these processions is not limited to physical space. They influence social interactions and community cohesion, promoting social bonds among participants and spectators alike. These gatherings showcase the ability of religious practices to enforce a unified community identity, reflecting on broader themes of urban religiosity and secularization (Mim, 2021).

3. Muharram and its Localization in Nizamuddin Basti

3.1 Religious and Historical Overview

Muharram, the first month of the Islamic lunar calendar, is a period of mourning for the martyrdom of Imam Hussain ibn Ali who was the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) at Karbala. Across the Islamic world, this is marked through various public and private rituals, with processions being a central expression. In the Indian subcontinent, especially under the rule of Awadh Nawabs and Mughal patrons, the tazia tradition (representations of Imam Hussain's mausoleum) and public commemorations evolved significantly.

The Tazia, which symbolizes the mausoleum of Imam Hussain, incorporates artistic and cultural elements unique to the region. It involves creating intricate replicas of the Imam's shrine which are carried in processions. This tradition likely evolved uniquely in India due to the country's diverse cultural backdrop and the influences of rulers like the Nawabs of Awadh and the Mughal emperors who were known for their interest in architectural and artistic endeavors.

Under the rule of Awadh Nawabs, known for their grandeur and patronage of arts, the tradition saw significant development. The fusion of Islamic symbols with local art forms and materials resulted in diverse interpretations of the Tazia. The Nawabs' support would have provided the resources and societal framework necessary to celebrate Muharram on such an impactful scale. (Ruhanen & Whitford, 2019)

Similarly, the Mughals, known for their monumental architectural contributions and cultural synthesis, likely facilitated the refinement and propagation of the Tazia tradition. Under their rule, the integration of Persian influences with Indian traditions might have contributed to the Tazia's ornate and symbolic nature, making it a central facet of the Muharram commemorations in the subcontinent. (*Indian Culture and Work Organisations in Transition*, 2016)

In Delhi, and particularly in Nizamuddin Basti, Muharram has been observed for centuries. Oral traditions and family histories suggest that the practice of tazia processions predates colonial urban restructuring and has maintained its ritual consistency through social and political upheavals.

The tradition of Muharram tazia processions in Nizamuddin Basti, Delhi, holds deep historical and cultural significance. These processions are an essential part of the Muharram observance for the Shia Muslim community, commemorating the martyrdom of Husain, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, during the Battle of Karbala in 680 C. E. This event is a pivotal moment in Islamic history, symbolizing the struggle over political and spiritual leadership within Islam. (Wolf, 2000).

In Nizamuddin Basti, the tradition of tazia processions is not merely a religious observance but a reflection of the area's historical and cultural continuity. Despite various social and political upheavals, these processions have maintained their ritual consistency, suggesting a strong resistance to the external influences that have shaped Delhi over the centuries. This resilience can be attributed to the profound emotional and cultural connections the community holds with these rituals, rooted in the collective memory and identity of the community.

The Muharram processions in Nizamuddin Basti are marked by their unique cultural expressions, including drumming and music, which play a significant role in embodying and evoking the emotions associated with mourning and commemoration (Wolf, 2000). These musical rituals not only represent the community's historical ties to the tradition but also reflect localized interpretations of the events and emotions associated with Muharram. Such practices illustrate how cultural forms adapt and persist through generations, serving as a bridge between past and present experiences.

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3.3 Syncretic Practices and Community Memory

The spiritual culture of the Basti exemplifies a remarkable blend of religious traditions, fostering a unique environment of interfaith harmony and shared cultural practices. This syncretism is particularly evident during the Muharram

rituals, where Sunni, Shi'a, and Hindu residents come together in a collective expression of faith and remembrance. The inclusive nature of these observances transcends religious boundaries, allowing for a diverse participation that enriches the community's spiritual tapestry.

The Muharram rituals in the Basti encompass a variety of activities that engage the entire community. The creation of tazias, intricate replicas of Imam Hussain's tomb, involves skilled craftsmanship and communal effort. Chadhar offerings, where devotees drape sacred cloths over holy sites or symbols, serve as a tangible expression of reverence and devotion. The distribution of sabeel, typically water or other refreshments, embodies the spirit of charity and hospitality central to the observance. Marsiya gatherings, where elegiac poetry is recited, provide a space for collective mourning and reflection. These rituals, performed across public and semi-private spaces, weave through the fabric of the Basti, with the procession route etched deeply in local memory and observed with profound reverence by all community members, regardless of their religious affiliations.

3.4 Ritual Rhythms and Sacred Time

The rituals of Muharram in Nizamuddin Basti begin with the sighting of the Muharram moon, marked by the playing of "dhol-tashey" (traditional drums). These percussion rhythms, performed in a solemn and methodical cadence, serve as an audible invocation of grief and remembrance. The drumbeats echo through the alleys of the Basti, signaling the arrival of sacred time and collective mourning. These rhythms are not arbitrary; they are passed down through generations and are considered an intangible heritage of the Basti, embodying centuries-old emotional expressions of reverence for the sacrifice of Hazrat Imam Hussain and his family.

The **seventh day of Muharram** holds special significance with the "Alam" procession. This commemorates the appointment of Hazrat Abbas Alamdar as the commander of Imam Hussain's army. The procession originates from the Imam Bargah and makes its way through the Basti, visiting households that preserve tazias and alams. Each visit is marked by prayers, the playing of mourning drums, and symbolic gestures of solidarity. The route of this procession is ritualistically fixed and reflects the memory of devotion deeply imprinted into the spatial layout of Nizamuddin.

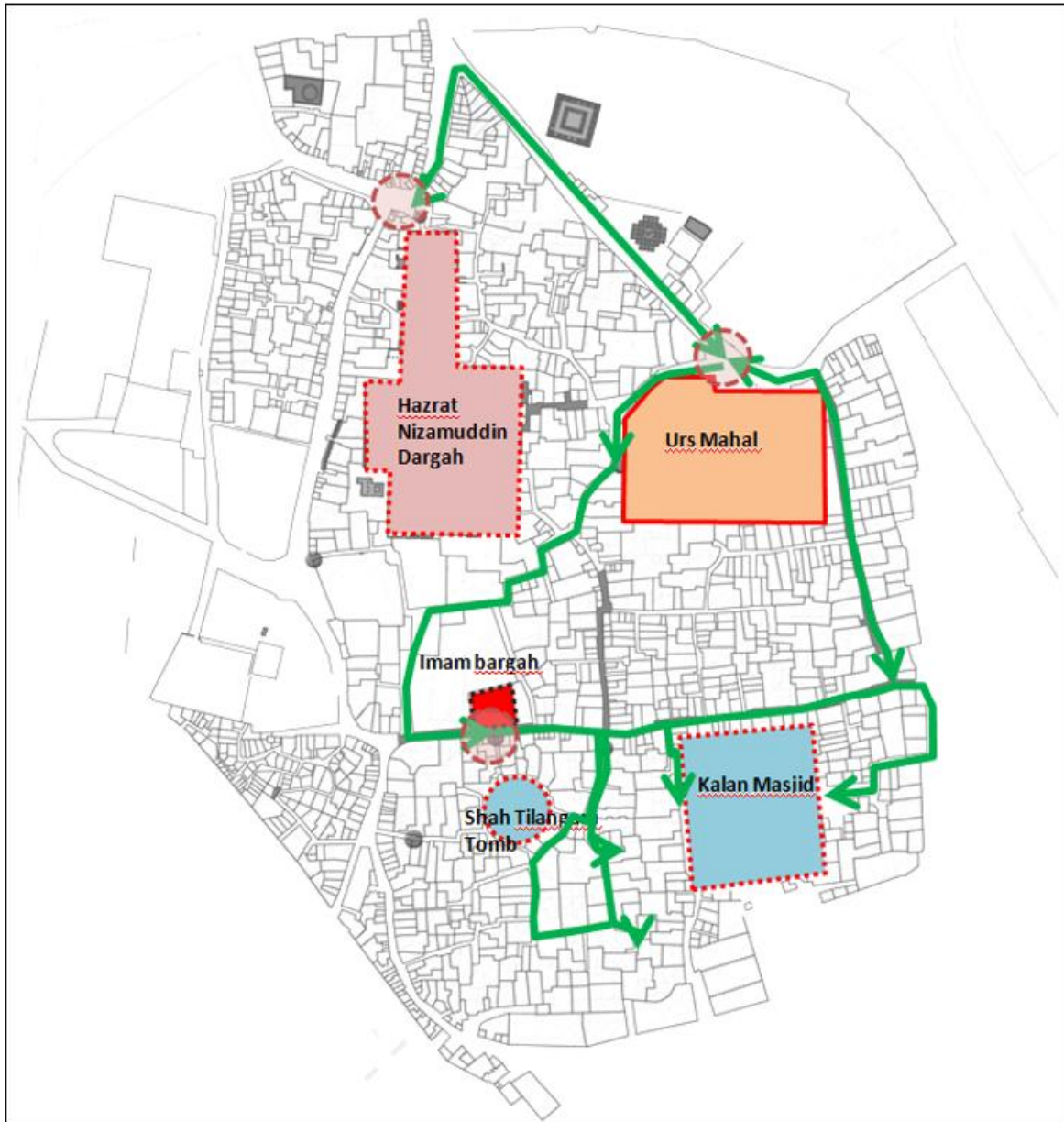


Figure 1: Map showing the Procession route during 7th Muharram

On the **ninth of Muharram**, the Basti is engulfed in devotion. Thousands of mourners, visitors, and residents gather at the Imam Bargah and private homes that house tazias (replicas of Imam Hussain's shrine) and alams. The night of the ninth is marked by the **Gasht**, or night procession, in which an immense number of participants walk in unison through the lanes of Nizamuddin carrying tazias and alams, accompanied by the profound sound of dhol-tashey. This nocturnal ritual, rich in symbolism, visually and aurally transforms the urban environment into a dynamic field of lamentation and collective spiritual remembrance.

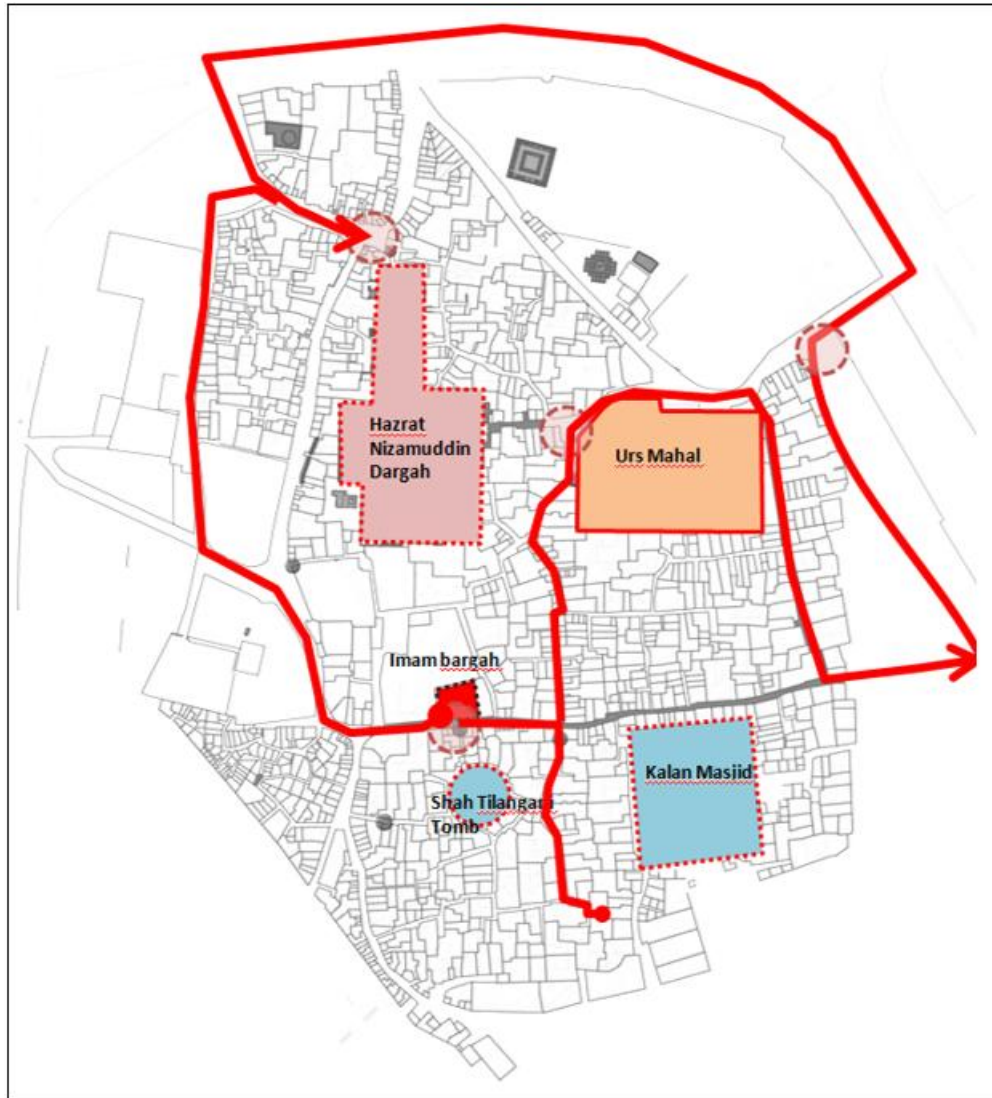


Figure 2: Map Showing the Procession Route of Tazia and Alam on 9th Muharram

The **tenth day of Muharram (Ashura)** is the culmination of the mourning. The main procession begins at around 10: 00 a. m., following a different route from the previous day but carrying forward the same ritual intensity. The spatial arrangements along the procession path once again facilitate the ritual enactments. Streets are cleared, water stations and langars are set up, and temporary lighting and banners define the sacred territory. The culmination of this procession often occurs at a designated open space, where the tazias are symbolically buried or immersed, reenacting the tragedy of Karbala.

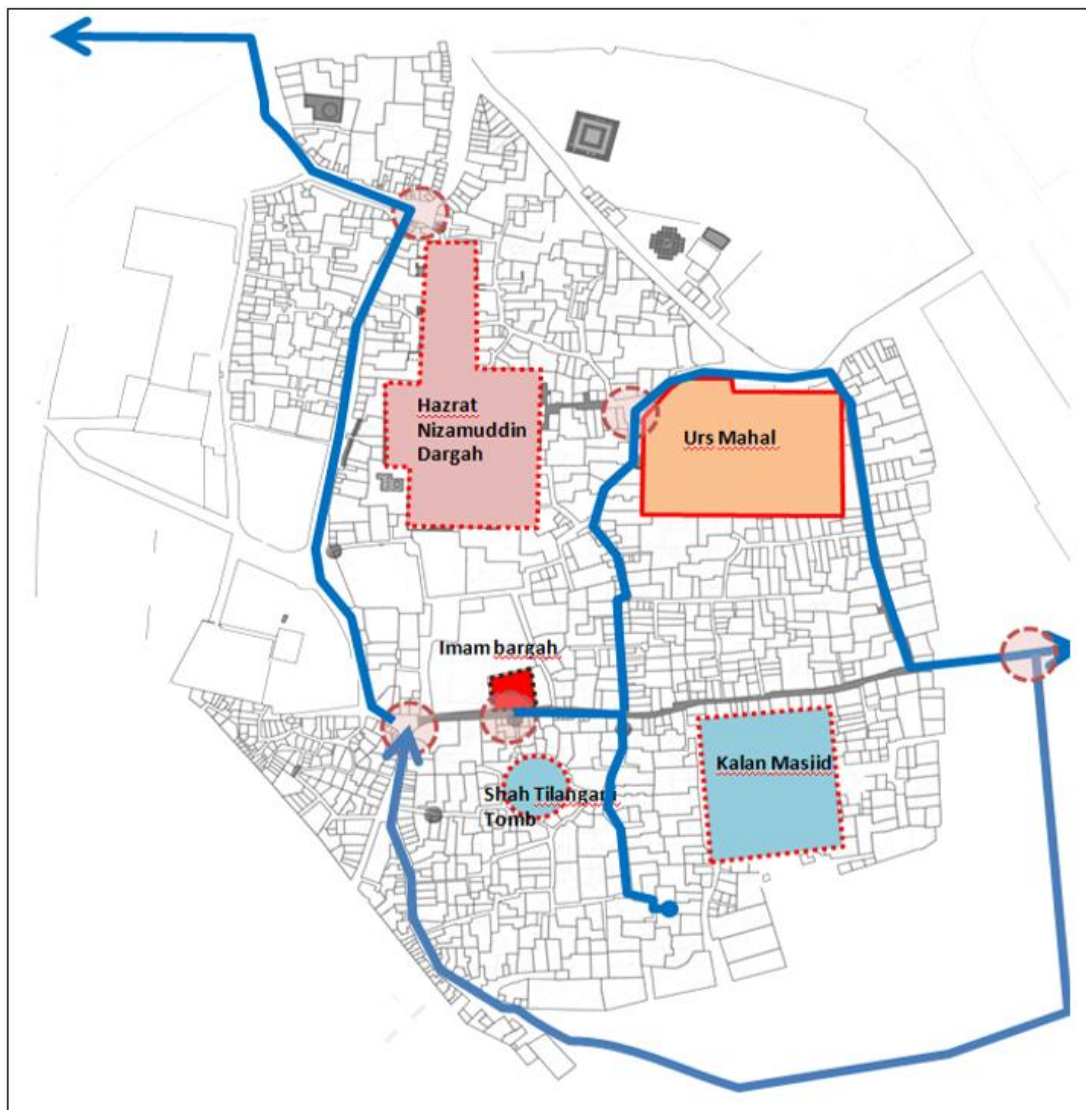


Figure 3: Map Showing Procession Route of tazia and Alam on 10th Muharram

The inscription of sacred time into the built environment of Nizamuddin Basti is a multifaceted process that shapes the physical and social landscape of the area. Through ritual events, the community's collective memory and spiritual practices become intertwined with the architectural elements and spatial organization of the basti. This integration creates a dynamic interplay between time, space, and human activity, where the physical structures serve as both containers and catalysts for religious and cultural experiences. (Whelan, 2016)

The regulation of architecture by sacred time is evident in the design and placement of religious buildings, shrines, and communal spaces within Nizamuddin Basti. These structures are often oriented and configured to align with specific ritual timings or to facilitate particular ceremonial movements. Additionally, the repeated performance of rituals in designated areas reinforces the sanctity of these spaces, gradually imbuing them with layers of meaning and significance. This process of spatial memory formation not only guides the physical movement of residents and pilgrims but also shapes their perception and understanding of the basti's layout, creating a living map of sacred geography that is continually reinforced and reinterpreted through ritual practice. (Gilchrist, 2019)

4. Spatial Transformations During Muharram

4.1 Temporary Alterations to the Built Environment

The cultural and religious significance of Muharram in Nizamuddin Basti, especially during the first ten days and notably on the 7th, 9th, and 10th days, is profound. This period marks the commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, during the Battle of Karbala in 680 CE. This event is a pivotal moment for Muslims, symbolizing a struggle for justice and resistance against tyranny.

In Nizamuddin Basti, this time of year is marked by several key activities and transformations. Streets are meticulously cleaned, and the community decorates the area with banners and black flags, signifying mourning. Temporary installations such as sabeels (drinking stations) and langar stations (community kitchens providing free meals) are set up to serve the needs of the visitors and participants. These setups are made to provide comfort and sustenance to the thousands who come to partake in the remembrance rituals.

On the 7th, 9th, and 10th days of Muharram, the community participation reaches its peak. The 9th and 10th days, known

as Tasu'a and Ashura, respectively, hold particular importance. Tasu'a is dedicated to Imam Hussain's brother, Abbas ibn Ali, known for his loyalty and bravery. Ashura commemorates the martyrdom of Imam Hussain himself. People participate in processions, listen to narrations of the events in Karbala, and engage in acts of mourning, including chest beating and reciting elegies, which are expressions of grief and solidarity with Imam Hussein's stand for justice.

These events in Nizamuddin Basti during Muharram serve not only as a religious observance but also as a testament to the enduring legacy of Imam Hussein's principles, resonating deeply with the community and fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose among the participants (Wolf, 2000; Nasr, 2007; Alemzadeh, 2018).

Crowd control barriers are installed at key intersections. Electrical wires are rerouted or insulated to ensure safe passage for the alams (religious flags) and tazias. The public realm is reorganized to support ritualized movement, making way for rhythmic chants, public grieving, and communal reflection.

4.2 Permanent Morphological Features Influenced by the Procession

Ritual movement and its associated cultural practices can significantly influence the architecture and urban morphology of an area. One of the key insights into this relationship between architecture and ritual, particularly observed in historical contexts such as the Byzantine churches of Constantinople, shows how religious and cultural practices necessitated adaptations in architectural design. These churches were not static, but dynamic spaces that evolved to meet the changing needs of ritual practices and the community they served (Marinis, 2013). This suggests that architectural forms can respond to and be shaped by ritualistic functions, contributing to an ongoing evolution in design according to the social and cultural contexts of the time.

Furthermore, understanding urban morphology requires a consideration of both two-dimensional and three-dimensional spatial uses. Contemporary studies highlight a shift towards utilizing 3D data in analyzing urban buildings, providing deeper insights into how urban spaces are utilized over time. Spatial-temporal analyses, like those conducted in the Yau Tsim Mong District in Hong Kong, reveal that urban architectural morphology evolves as local dynamics change, reflecting the efficiency of urban planning tailored to these evolving needs (Shen et al., 2024).

These findings imply that ritual movements, along with other cultural and social practices, are integral to shaping the physical structure of a city, influencing both its immediate design and long-term morphological evolution. The integration of rituals into urban design reflects not only a response to the immediate needs for religious or cultural functions but also contributes to the larger context of urban and architectural sustainability. This broader perspective on the impacts of ritual practices on urban morphology is crucial in understanding how cultural activities intersect

with spatial structures, promoting inclusive and culturally sensitive designs (Moscatelli et al., 2023).

In summary, long-standing exposure to ritual movement influences permanent architecture and urban morphology by requiring continuous adaptation to meet the cultural and social needs of the community. This ensures that architectural and urban designs remain relevant and responsive to the evolving patterns of human activity, thereby enhancing both functional utility and cultural identity (Marinis, 2013; Shen et al., 2024; Moscatelli et al., 2023).

Absence of Chajja Projections:

The absence of projecting chajjas (overhanging eaves) and balconies along the processional route serves a crucial functional purpose in facilitating the smooth passage of tazias during religious processions. Tazias, which are ornate replicas of the tomb of Imam Hussain, often reach heights exceeding two meters, making their movement through narrow urban streets potentially challenging. By maintaining clear vertical space along the route, the urban planners have ensured that these sacred structures can be carried without obstruction, preserving the integrity and continuity of the procession. This architectural consideration not only demonstrates a deep understanding of the religious and cultural practices of the community but also highlights the symbiotic relationship between urban design and ritual observance. The unimpeded vertical space allows for the tazias to be displayed prominently, enhancing their visual impact and symbolic significance during the procession. Furthermore, this design choice may contribute to improved crowd management and safety, as it eliminates potential hazards that could arise from navigating around protruding architectural elements in densely packed processional spaces.



Figure 4: showing absence of permanent chajja on the procession route. 7th Muharram



Figure 5: Showing absence of permanent chajja on the procession route. 9th Muharram.

Elevated Plinths:

The raised plinths along the processional route serve multiple functions beyond mere architectural aesthetics. By elevating the building entrances 4-5 feet above street level, these plinths create a higher ground floor profile for clear movement of the tazia and alam, also, it provides a clear demarcation between public and private spaces. This subtle height difference acts as a protective barrier, preventing easy access to the buildings and offering residents a sense of security during large public gatherings. Furthermore, these elevated platforms provide an ideal vantage point for residents to observe and participate in processions from a safe distance. The slight elevation allows spectators to have an unobstructed view of the events unfolding on the street while maintaining a physical separation from the crowd below. This arrangement fosters a unique social dynamic where residents can engage with the public spectacle while retaining a degree of privacy and control over their involvement. The plinths thus serve as transitional spaces that mediate between the intimacy of private dwellings and the communal experience of public ceremonies, enhancing the overall urban fabric and social interactions along the processional route.



Figure 6: Showing tilted projections on the procession routes

Figure 06, clearly shows the street section during the 9th Muharram procession wherein no permanent chajjas are present. Moreover, the hoardings and banners are also placed at a slant to provide easy movement of the procession. Further, the plinth level is raised to a few feet to avoid collision of the holy tazia.

Preservation of Older Built Typologies:

The procession route's intersecting areas serve as a living testament to the historical architectural heritage of the region. These spaces have meticulously preserved their original design elements, creating a stark contrast with the surrounding modernized lanes. The arched niches, a

hallmark of traditional architecture, continue to adorn building facades, providing depth and visual interest. Lime-plastered walls, known for their durability and breathability, maintain the authentic aesthetic while offering practical benefits in the local climate. Wooden doorways, often intricately carved or embellished, stand as portals to the past, inviting visitors to step into a bygone era.

This preservation of architectural language along the procession route creates a unique juxtaposition with the adjacent lanes, where contemporary design and materials have taken precedence. The contrast between the old and new serves multiple purposes: it highlights the historical

significance of the procession route, provides a tangible link to cultural heritage, and offers visitors and residents alike a visual journey through time. This intentional preservation

not only maintains the area's cultural identity but also enhances its appeal as a destination for those interested in architectural history and urban development.



Figure 7: Image showing the heritage wall of the chausath khamba during Muharram procession

Image 7 shows the broad street section in Nizamuddin Basti which is mildly changed over the years. This showcases not only the respect and sentiments towards the religious ritual but also the impact of such religious rituals on the built heritage of the area.

5. Ritual Pathways as Heritage Corridors

Religious processions have a profound influence on urban landscapes, particularly in cities like Varanasi, Najaf, and Lucknow. These processions dictate spatial arrangements and urban planning decisions, ensuring that religious routes are preserved and respected.

In Varanasi, one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities, the intersection of tradition and modernity is evident in urban planning. As a major Hindu pilgrimage site, Varanasi's layout and urban transformations are significantly influenced by religious rituals and processions. The city is also focusing on maintaining its heritage as part of India's Smart Cities Mission, blending traditional urban practices with modern infrastructure while still honoring its sacred pathways (Das et al., 2024).

In Karbala, a city with historical significance for Shia Muslims due to the annual Ashura pilgrimage, urban spaces are shaped by religious activities. The movement of millions of pilgrims annually influences municipal planning, including waste management during these events, highlighting the logistical challenges and the need for sustainable infrastructure development to accommodate these rituals (Abdulredha et al., 2020).

Similarly, in Lucknow, the influence of religious processions can also be observed in its urban sprawl and

planning stages. While specific data for Lucknow was not highlighted in the context, the city's traditional and modern planning efforts are not unlike those observed in other historical and religious cities in India (Chettry, 2022).

Overall, these cities exemplify how religious traditions and spatial practices intricately influence urban planning. They serve as memory corridors where architecture and movement co-create meanings, guiding how modern developments honor historical and sacred narratives. Such processes often involve community and religious consultation to ensure that new infrastructures respect established religious routes and practices.

6. Discussion: Spatial Memory and Resistance to Modernization

In Nizamuddin Basti, particularly along the Muharram procession route, cultural resilience manifests as a dynamic interplay between tradition and urban development pressures. Despite surrounding areas experiencing real estate transformations, these streets maintain a unique cultural identity through ritual observance. This cultural resilience is largely tied to the significance of Muharram. This event holds profound emotional and spiritual significance for the Muslim community, which engages in a series of mourning rituals during this time (Wolf, 2000).

The preservation of cultural identity through Muharram rituals reflects a broader trend of how localized interpretations of cultural practices, such as drumming and other expressions of mourning, create a sense of continuity amidst change. These rituals are not fixed but allow for an evolving morphology that respects the traditions held by the community. The integration of emotional expressions

through music and drumming during these rituals exemplifies how emotional and cultural meanings are attached to these practices, reinforcing the community's identity in the face of environmental changes (Wolf, 2000).

Therefore, the resistance to rapid urban development along the Muharram routes in Nizamuddin Basti is a testament to the power of collective cultural resilience. This resilience is maintained by upholding ritual observances that are both a tribute to historical events and a current reflection of the community's enduring spirit and identity.

Public mourning and the creation of spatial memory are deeply intertwined phenomena that play significant roles in the dynamic conservation of the built environment. The concept of public mourning as a vehicle for spatial memory refers to the ways in which collective grief and remembrance are physically embodied in spaces, influencing how these areas are perceived and valued over time.

Grief and mourning are not confined to private realms but extend into public spaces where they are manifested through memorials and commemorative practices. These spaces serve as focal points for collective memory, allowing individuals and communities to map their emotions and experiences onto the physical environment (Maddrell, 2015). Public memorials, such as those commemorating the September 11 attacks or the Holocaust, are seen as tangible embodiments of societal grief, serving as both a physical site and a visual representation of shared emotional responses to loss (Doss, 2008).

In the digital realm, platforms like YouTube are utilized for public mourning, transforming them into virtual spaces of collective remembrance, especially in the case of celebrity deaths. This digital mourning highlights a broadening of spatial memory from tangible to virtual spaces, reflecting the changing nature of communal grieving practices (Harju, 2014). These activities emphasize the interaction between technology and public memory, illustrating how digital spaces facilitate new forms of communal belonging and memory construction.

The conservation of architectural heritage has also evolved to become more dynamic, acknowledging the role of public spaces in community identity and memory. The development of these spaces is informed by socio-economic, environmental, and cultural factors that extend beyond mere architectural preservation (Fayez, 2024). This shift from static conservation to one that incorporates societal and environmental contexts demonstrates a growing recognition of the built environment as a living component of cultural heritage.

Moreover, the emotional and sociocultural interactions with these spaces influence conservation priorities and practices. For instance, the aesthetic and emotional engagement with historical sites affects public attitudes towards their preservation, emphasizing the need to balance historical authenticity with modern appeal to foster public engagement and participation (Cao et al., 2024).

In conclusion, public mourning contributes to the dynamic conservation of the built environment by embedding spaces with layers of social and emotional memory. These spaces become rich with cultural significance, influencing both individual and collective identities. While static heritage listings focus on preserving tangible elements, the lived experiences and remembrances associated with public spaces reflect a more dynamic approach to conservation. Such practices ensure that these sites remain relevant and meaningful to present and future generations.

7. Conclusion

The impact of Muharram processions on the urban morphology of Nizamuddin Basti is intricately linked with how ritual activities shape and preserve urban spaces. While the retrieved context does not specifically mention Nizamuddin Basti or explore the precise effects of Muharram processions in this locale, several insights can be drawn from comparable studies on urban morphology and religious processions in traditional city centers like Karbala.

The transformation of urban spaces through religious rituals often involves a dynamic interaction between sacred practices and urban morphology. For instance, the city of Karbala exemplifies how religious rituals and processions have historically shaped urban spaces by creating a unique blend of sacred and secular environments. The historical evolution and urban transformations in Karbala reflect the power of religious practices in maintaining architectural typologies and regulating urban behavior within a city's framework.

Recognizing the Muharram procession routes in Nizamuddin Basti as cultural heritage is crucial for fostering inclusive urban planning practices. These sacred pathways not only shape social interactions but also influence the architectural landscape of the area. By acknowledging the significance of these routes, urban planners can better integrate cultural and religious practices into the fabric of the city, ensuring that development efforts respect and preserve local traditions.

The recognition of these procession routes as cultural heritage can have far-reaching implications for urban design and community cohesion. These pathways serve as physical manifestations of shared cultural memory, reinforcing social bonds and providing a sense of continuity for residents. Moreover, they can inform future urban development projects, guiding the creation of public spaces that accommodate and celebrate cultural practices. By incorporating these sacred geographies into urban planning strategies, cities can create more inclusive and culturally sensitive environments that honor the diverse heritage of their inhabitants while promoting social harmony and sustainable development.

Urban morphology studies reveal the profound influence of cultural and religious practices on the structure and utilization of urban spaces. These practices shape not only the physical layout of cities but also the intricate patterns of movement and activity within them. The spatial arrangements and flows observed in urban environments are often a direct reflection of deeply rooted cultural traditions

and religious observances. As a result, unique heritage forms emerge and persist even amidst rapid urban transformation, serving as tangible links to a community's history and identity.

The integration of cultural dimensions into urban planning processes is crucial for ensuring the sustainability and preservation of these heritage forms. Urban planners must recognize that pathways and spaces within cities are more than mere functional elements; they are vital conduits for cultural expression and collective memory. By valuing these cultural pathways and incorporating them into urban design, planners can create more inclusive and resilient urban environments that honor diverse traditions while adapting to modern needs. This approach not only preserves cultural heritage but also enhances the overall urban identity, creating spaces that resonate with residents and visitors alike, fostering a sense of belonging and continuity in rapidly changing urban landscapes.

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