

# THE JAIPURIA BUILDING IN BALLIMARAN

'House in the Neighbourhood'

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Jaipuria Building (highlighted)

The residents of the house in Ballimaran are so diverse in their religion and caste that their mixture of social practices would make anyone believe that the main core of the haveli is not less than a neighbourhood by itself. So it depends on the scale of the house we consider in the study of house in the neighbourhood whether the neighbourhood is the whole of Ballimaran or the surrounding households within the haveli to any particular household. Both the studies however, would have a stark contrast since the neighbourhood of Ballimaran is a highly Muslim populated area whereas not a single Muslim family resides in the Jaipuria building.

The residents of the building consists of a Brahmin family; who has the most control over most things and common decisions, a Jain family; which moved in quite some years back from a neighbouring locality, a family of Kashmiri Pandits; who have lived in the building for more than seventy years and have built a portion of the building themselves during this time.

The neighbourhood of Ballimaran once belonged to the oarsmen who depended on the Yamuna river for their livelihood. The etymology of the name 'Ballimaran' itself comes from 'balli' which means oar. At present the neighbourhood is a very crowded area like the rest of Shahjahanabad and especially due to its vicinity to Chandni Chowk and Nai Sarak. The majority of the population comes from the Muslim community and this reflects in the cultural markers in the neighbourhood. The area is known for its non

vegetarian food joints which is a direct outcome of the Muslim population inhabiting the area.

The residents of the house have expressed through their statements that they are not happy with the neighbourhood having a majority of population from another religious and cultural background.



View of a mosque from the terrace of the building



The entry to the Haveli from the *gali*

Especially standing out in this context was the statement made by a middle aged woman of the family who said even the kids of the other religious sects make religious debates with her own kids.

Interaction with the neighbourhood comes up when either the society influences the home or when the people within the family move out of their private areas into the society. The men in the building work in and around the Chandni Chowk region. One of the men, a widower who was born and raised in the same Haveli is now running a property dealings firm just outside the Haveli. In his case, he was born into this neighbourhood and has to professionally mingle with the people around. He says he likes the neighbourhood irrespective of the religion or caste he or his fellow neighbours belong to.

The Jain family consists of an elderly couple who stays with his son's family. Although they have lived in Shahjahanabad for a long time, they come from the area where majority of the population practiced Hinduism. Even though they like their current living space better, they prefer their old neighbourhood to the current one due to cultural rather than religious reasons.

So as a whole, the religious disparities lead to idea clashes within the house and neighbourhood although the people who have been there for long enough has gradually got accustomed to these changes.

In terms of education the women aren't encouraged as well as men. Although children are sent to nearby schools most of their education comes to a halt then and there, only very few pursue it further on to college and among these few majority are usually men. Women usually end up getting married after this creating a barrier for further studies

for many of them. Even among the residents of the Haveli you will find that among 10-12 families only one of them has a woman working outside for a living while the remaining are burdened with house chores. Although some of them may be educated they are not encouraged to work outside. There are very few that try to rebel against this system but it is not supported by others. For example in the Jain family one of the daughter in laws has done her graduation in literature and is working in a library. She unlike many others want girls in their community to study outside and make their own living but her family members had never supported her for her ideas about education and because of this she sent her kids to her brothers place as she didn't want her kids growing in such an environment. Hence from a broad perspective we can say that women aren't given much preferences when it comes to education as men are given.



A view from Nai Sarak



A kebab shop in Ballimaran

The place in general is diverse in terms of culture and tradition. The Haveli we studied is actually located at the middle of Ballimaran and Nai Sarak which is a mix of both Muslim and Hindu traditions that can be well portrayed on the streets outside. Although the region is a clash between two very different religions the Haveli mainly consists of Hindu families. The Haveli is such that there is a courtyard at the centre where all the main functions take place. Although they are many different families with different castes and backgrounds they are usually considered as one. Rather than celebrating their festivals individually they celebrate it together as one family rather than separate ones. Although there is a Muslim influence from Ballimaran along the streets of the Haveli it isn't much prominent among the residents. In fact few of the residents aren't exactly that supportive towards the Muslim community in general either.

Most of them work at Chandi Chowk or own a shop along the streets near the Haveli. The place still hasn't exactly urbanized yet but is at the verge of doing so. Among the woman very few actually work and even if they do so it isn't promoted well in the society. In the Haveli for instance only one woman works outside but she isn't well supported by her own as well as other families residing there. However there is a noticeable improvement regarding this matter in the next generation as education is



well looked at and promoted for both boys and girls. Previously children were only educated till school and not many would take the effort to go to college but would rather help their parents out in the family business or get married but a change is well noticeable in the present generation.



A wide view of buildings built congested around the Jaipuria Building

The locality has many mosques in vicinity as compared to temples like the one in Nai Sarak and the one in Charke Walan. The Nawab Qazi Masjid is not too far either. Due to lack of temples in the immediate neighbourhood the older people usually set up all their prayers at home while the middle aged women in the family visit the temple once a week by means of rickshaws. The Shani Dev temple and Gauri Shankar Mandir are the prominent ones within travel limit.

The children in the family goes to school at Maliwara and they are often forced to be escorted to school in spite of its closeness to their dwelling due to the growing crowd and lack of safety in Chandni Chowk as they complain. The families on being asked what they did for recreation pointed out the immense variety of food and scope for shopping available in the neighbourhood. They also said they used go for movies at Excelsior Cinema near Lal Kuan until it was shut in 2012.



Cinema Excelsior in Hauz Khazi Chowk



The School in Maliwara

The haveli has been built up in a *gali* between Ballimaran and Jogiwari. The *gali* is too narrow for the scale of the Haveli facade like most other buildings on the street. The courtyard in front of the main core of haveli which is also included in the complex of Jaipuria building, occupied by Dalits and Biharis belonging to the lower classes who work within the carpentry unit in the haveli or depend on construction, loading, rickshaws or menial jobs for their livelihood. The older people in the inner core of the Haveli consider this outer courtyard to be 'outside' for them and normally don't go beyond the large courtyard into the *gali* unless the reason is unavoidable.

Most of the residents belonging to the current generation are not happy with the living conditions in the Haveli and says this building was a subject of pride long back when their previous generation migrated into the neighbourhood. More than religious and cultural reasons, the common areas of the building which needs collective supervision to be maintained well have been abandoned long back. Lack of clean water and compulsion to share grounds with others and depend on their convenience to get the basic requirements done have tired out the residents. But still they live happily praying to their *native gods* to show them a way out of this *foreign land*.