



we recycle the past
CHOR बाइमार



चोर बाझार we recycle the past

A special project by
Kimya Gandhi

Guide
Prof. Nina Sabnani





thank you

My heartfelt note of gratitude towards all who were responsible towards the execution of the project and study.

The institute for providing me with a platform for this interesting project.

My guide, Prof. Nina Sabnani for helping me understand the nuances of visual ethnography and its methods.

Dhara Jain, for introducing me to the bazaar

Shopkeepers at Chor Bazaar,

Babbooji

Noorubhai

A. K. Mansuriji

Anwarji

and many nameless faces who facilitated my study at the bazaar and made the special project a very special experience.





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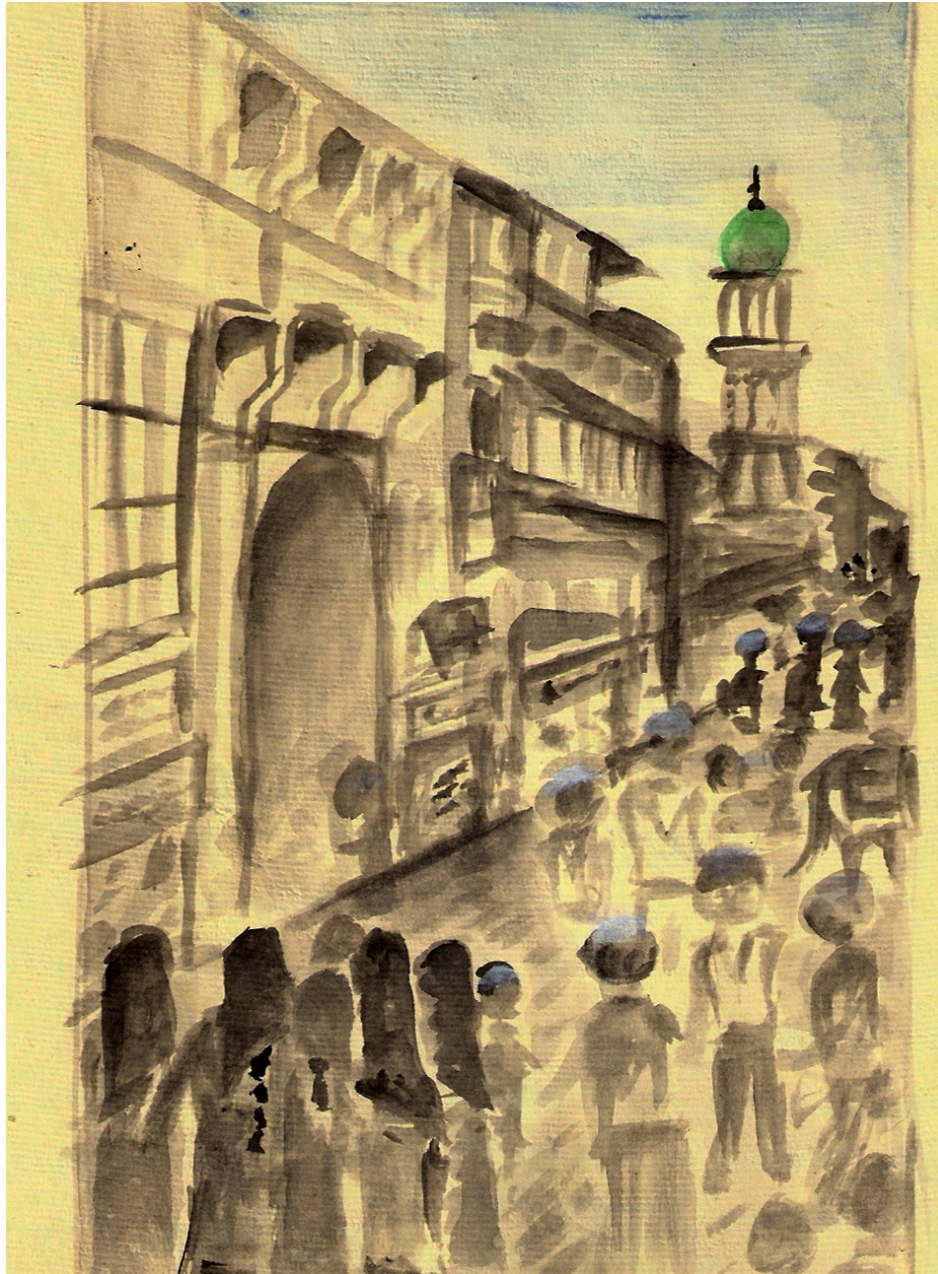
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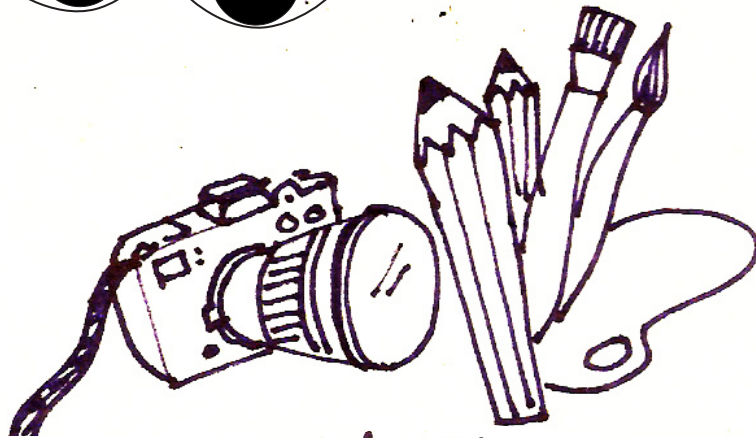
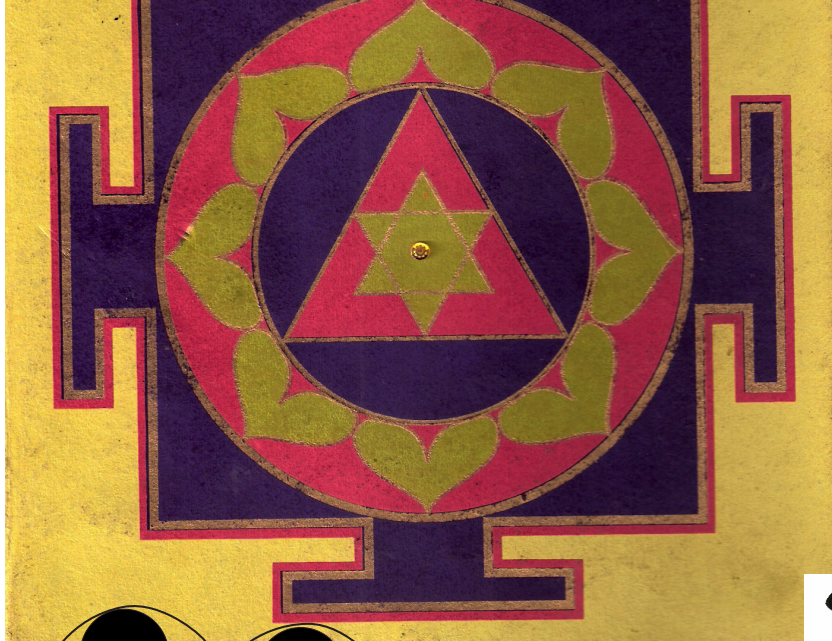
Products are never isolated from people

Products and their relationships with people and memories.



A visual ethnographer's diary

The special project has been my first attempt at doing visual ethnography. Visual ethnography essentially means the visual documentation and study of people or cultures in their respective surroundings. The special project titled 'Chor Bazaar- we recycle the past' is a study of one of the most interesting markets in Mumbai. The study involves observing people and their interactions, surroundings. The project involves keen observation of the subject and requires the person studying to become one with the environment. The visual ethnographer in me has tried to do just the same. The report is a compilation of the various things I saw, people I met and the entire experience of being in a bazaar.



DIARY
PENS
PENCILS
WATER COLOUR
BRUSHES
EYES

methodology

The methodology of visual research has been challenging for the simple reason that it is difficult to be invisible in an environment and be observant at the same time. Since the most important aspect of visual ethnography is observation, an open mind and eyes are the most important tools while doing research.

The stages of research of research have been:

General observation and getting to know the place: this included just walking around the bazaar without any particular intention. This establishes a sense of the place and people around.

The next stages involved close observation of people, products and shops. This included using media like sketches, notes and photographs to document the bazaar again with no particular focus. This helped lay a ground for study and reflection of the subject area.

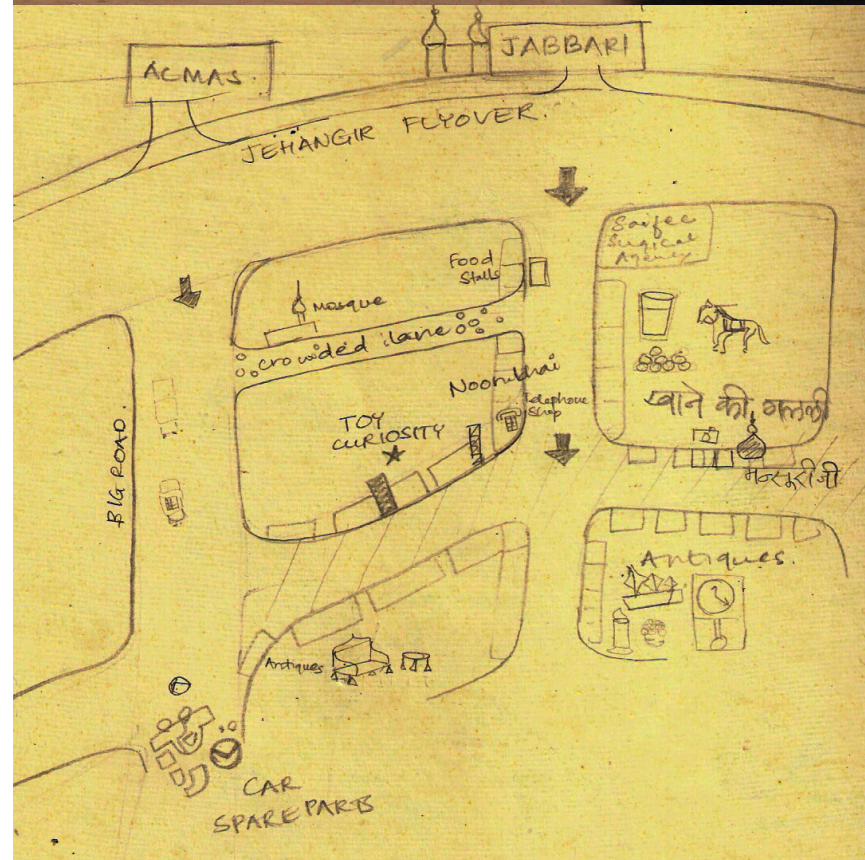
Once there was an established sense of the place the next stage has been to focus more into a particular area or person, learn and record more insights. The study thus starts from an overview of the bazaar. It then slowly enters a macro level where each aspect of study is carefully understood.

how to get there?

Chor bazaar is one of Mumbai's busiest, unexplored and interesting shopping areas. The market area below Jehangir flyover in South Mumbai is largely known as Bhendi bazaar. It lies ahead of Crawford market and an area denoted as Mutton Street is what most refer to as Chor bazaar.

There are many ways to get to this place. The closest railway station being Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CST), one can also reach from Churchgate station. As mentioned earlier a very large area under the Jehangir flyover cumulatively is known as bhendi bazaar and the many names of Chor bazaar could cause confusion, but the street where antiques are sold is called Mutton Street, which is near a masjid. But there is no better way of finding things than walking around by you.

There are many lanes lined on either sides by shops, mostly wholesalers. The streets bustle with activity throughout the day. It is best to explore the smaller by lanes on foot, than just taking a taxi to Mutton Street. The area is a maze, there are many openings to get to Mutton Street which can be best explored by walking around and finding your way.



Chor bazaar- 20.12.09

Around 100 years ago there were these streets in the interiors of south Mumbai, the then Victorian Mumbai. Streets that were not known to many except its patrons. Shops and stalls sold possibly everything and anything on these streets. These shops still stay there and are waiting to be explored, as they remain unknown to most Mumbaikars even today.

I first heard of Chor Bazaar from a friend who worked at MTV as an art assistant. I often heard her renting things from chor bazaar for most shoots. Names immediately form a perception of the place and by its sound chor bazaar did not exactly lure me into visiting it. It was only after I saw the amazing things the friend had rented, that I knew for sure that I had to visit the place sometime. The special project provided me an opportunity to explore Chor Bazaar.

As I strolled down the streets of chor bazaar, I was soon transported to a completely different place. The streets looked nothing like what one would hope to find in the new bustling 'mall- ed' Mumbai. Chor bazaar is like traveling in a time machine and space machine if there were one and is an experience for all. There are many lanes for that small an area and are all lined on either sides by shops. The place is bustling with people moving from one place to the other while shop owners sit on woven cane chairs outside their respective shops. The bearded shop keepers talk amongst themselves as most of them have grandchildren taking care of the shops. They only entertain old or big clients.

There are areas that sell specific things. There are separate areas that sell clothes, footwear, food, car spare parts and antiques. The antiques selling shops are the ones that will take you another place and time, undoubtedly. This place is no chor bazaar, it is what Noorubhai rightly called '*zaveri bazaar*', because each item you would come across here is a treasure in itself. And so many trips assured it definitely is a collector's paradise, veiled under the many lanes of Mutton Street, one has to unravel ones way to find the hidden treasures!





many things that are sold

One cant help get fascinated by the collections, and the infinite stocks of antiques in these shops, you fumble into something even more fascinating at every corner of the street and on every corner of every shelf. The shelves are abundantly stocked with antiques, all different from the other. You might feel bad about some figures with broken ears and limbs that lie unattended in some corner of the store but if you have an eye you might want to rescue something interesting from the debris as well.

The variety of antiques in that small an area is what leaves you astounded, a few minutes into the shops and you cant stop thinking about where they all came from. These owners are not very open about their origins though, some wont even let you photograph, they sense potential buyers from window shoppers and the treatment given to the latter might not be totally hospitable. The shops have different sections and smaller passages to go into dingy rooms that stock rare items, which are a definite, must see. I found statues of Buddha, picture frames of Kama sutra figures, metal armour plates, all in one small bulb lit room.

One could broadly seggregate the shops into categories according to the merchandise available in each. There are furniture shops, antiques and art shops, posterwallahs, shipping equipment shops and there are smaller stalls.

Some new shops however are just moneymaking units that sell cheap knock offs of some of the antiques like locks, compasses and watches. They manage to make very real looking imitations that could fool many. These shops isplay clean, shiny antiques that glitter in the sun and are sure to catch your attention. But the originals do not miss the true collector's eyes. Collectors manage to find their muse, be it the rarest of toy car or a Raj Kapoor poster or even a matchbox.

The antiques are priced based on their availability, origin, physical condition and of course the buyer. Babbooji says, "We price our toys by looking at the buyer! These foreigners have a lot of money and are willing to pay any amount I quote. Its not the same with Indian buyers, they love to bargain." But its difficult really to decide the price of the antiques, to me all of them seem rare and so beautiful in their own right. Most of these small treasures that sit selflessly on the shelves are priceless. The last time I saw so many pieces of art, design from the past was at a museum, and chor bazaar is no less than a museum. And what's best is that there is no entry fee to visit this museum and if you get too transfixed on any of these items, you do stand a chance to take it home!

**TOY
CURIOSITY
SHOP**
57/6, MUTTON STREET
MUMBAI - 400003
INDIA
☎(OH) 23475786 (Res) 23438183
Cell: 9820211227
babbootoys@hotmail.com
aqadarmansoori@yahoo.co.in
*A. Qadar E. Mansoori
(Babboo)*

*Indian Art
Corner*
Sunny

EXPORTER & DEALERS:
Old Telephones, Money Banks, Parsee
Borders & Handikrafts Items.
Add: 66/9, Sayed Abu Mohammed Road,
Corner of Mutton Street, Mumbai - 400 003
Off : 347 3383 | Resi : 371 0977 / 371 1056
Mobile : 98210 34436

Tel. (Resi.) : 2307 1759
Mob. : 93221 88460
Noorubhai
BUYER AND SELLER OF ALL OLD ITEMS
83, Mutton Street, Shahiwala Bldg.
Mumbai - 400 003. (India)


Aziz K. Mansuri
A1 CORNER
BUYERS & SELLERS OF :
BOLLYWOOD POSTERS, LOBBY/SHOW CARDS
OLD BLACK & WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS
Cell : 09223439284
09967858403
Email : periodic_photos@yahoo.in

A. K. Mansuri
Lucky Corner
SPECIALIST IN :
ALL KINDS OF ANTIQUE ITEMS
82, Khara Tank Road, Mumbai - 400 003.


Art Gallery
HIRE & BUYER OF FILM SET
Decorators & Old Goods
66/67, Mutton Street, Mumbai - 400 003. INDIA
FRIDAY CLOSED
Tel : 2346 5311

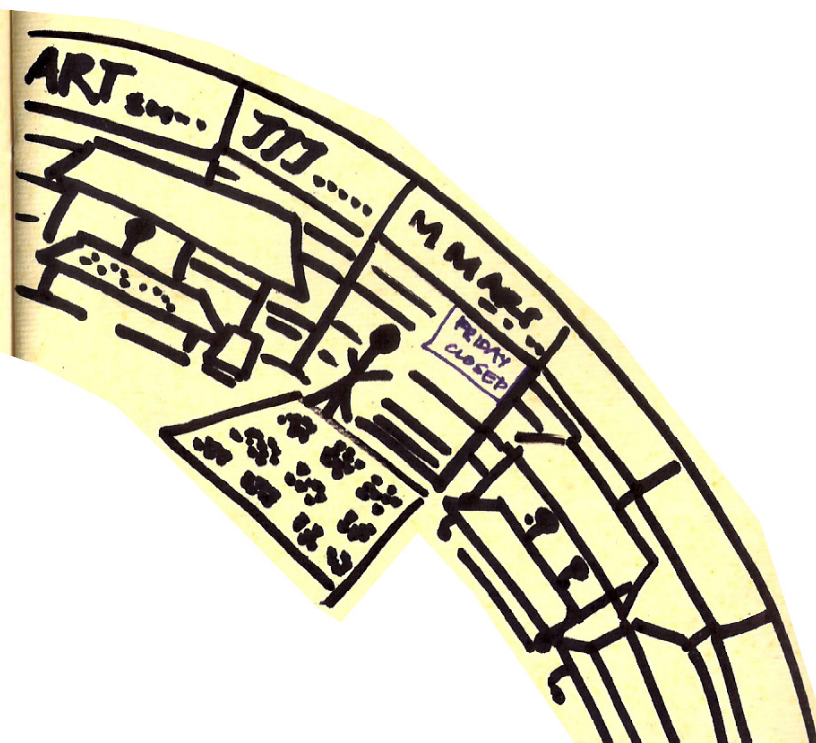
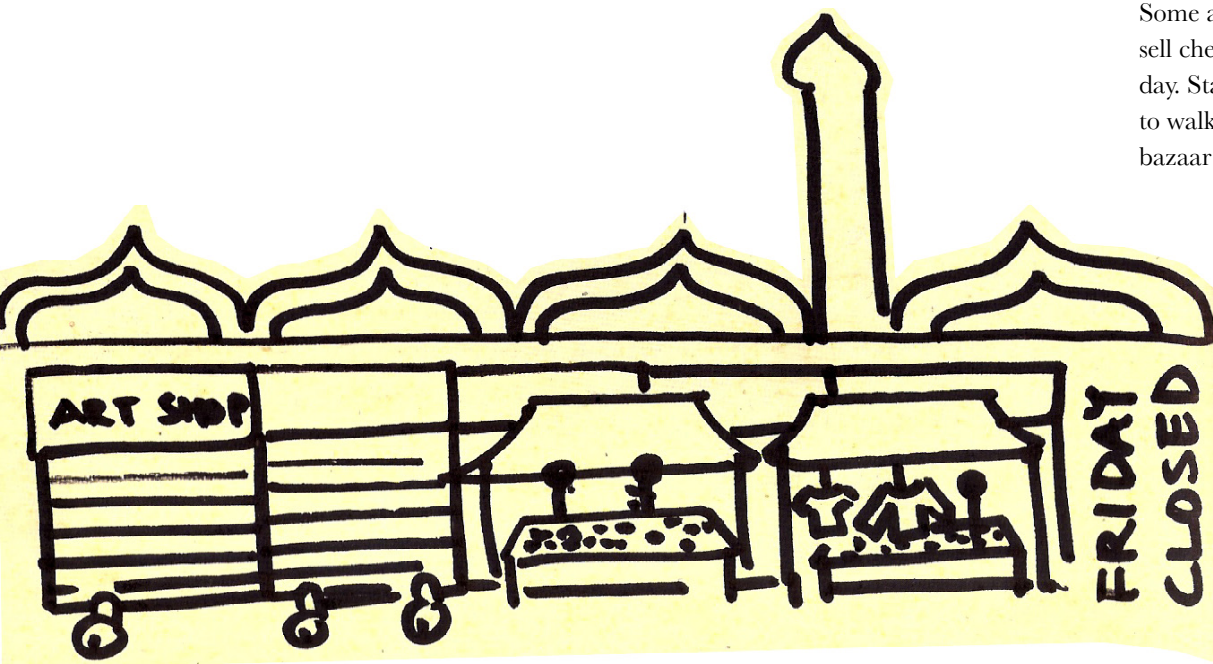
A. Arts
Dealers in :
Telescope, Sextant, Antique Telephone &
Shipping Instruments
MUTTON STREET, MUMBAI - 400 003.
©: 2346 5311




friday closed- 25.12.09

Most of the bazaar shops remain closed on Friday. This is their weekly off. The streets of Chor bazaar get completely transformed on Fridays. The shops have their shutters down and the front space of the shops is taken up by stalls. These stalls sell clothes, footwear, stationery etc. The otherwise lazy Mutton street is a total chaos on Fridays. There are people diving into pools of clothes and stall owners shouting to attract customers.

Some antique vendors set up make shift stalls on Friday. But these stalls often sell cheap items. The expensive and rare antiques are not taken out on this day. Stalls are set on either side of the road and they leave very little space to walk around. There are more women and food stalls than usual. Friday bazaar was thus an interesting and unexpected experience.



The Victorian furniture, the telephones, chandeliers, the tin boxes; everything makes me want to live in the time they would have been in use. It sets me thinking about the hands and faces of those who made them and those who used them and collected them.

*my impressions of the streets of chor bazaar,
mumbai*

*Water colour on handmade paper
27.12.09*





antique shops & art shops

These shops form a majority of the shops present on Mutton street. These shops sell and rent antiques that originate from various parts of the country and some from outside India. There are statues, masks, coins, and figurines in stone, wood, metal that crowd the racks of these shops. Some shops have original collectors items while there are recent shops who sell copies of original antiques like locks, telephones etc





From Buddha statues, vases, kamasutra paintings, masks to armour; these shops are stocked with variety that is astounding. Some of the shops who sell antiques are secretive about them and did not permit photography. There is competition in the bazaar and shop keepers strive hard to give their customers unique antiques.





shipping equipment

These are also antiques but some shops specialize in only shipping/ naval antiques and collectibles. The source of these antiques is most amusing. These shops house miniature models of ships, compasses, telescopes to wheels and weighing scales.





clocks

Huge, small, round, square, pendulum ones, old, in metal, wood and so many more types of clocks are sold in the bazaar. They are available in variety of shapes and sizes. Some shops custom make new clocks based on the old designs. The display of antique clocks on a blue worn out wall, all showing different times, seem like metaphors of frozen times.

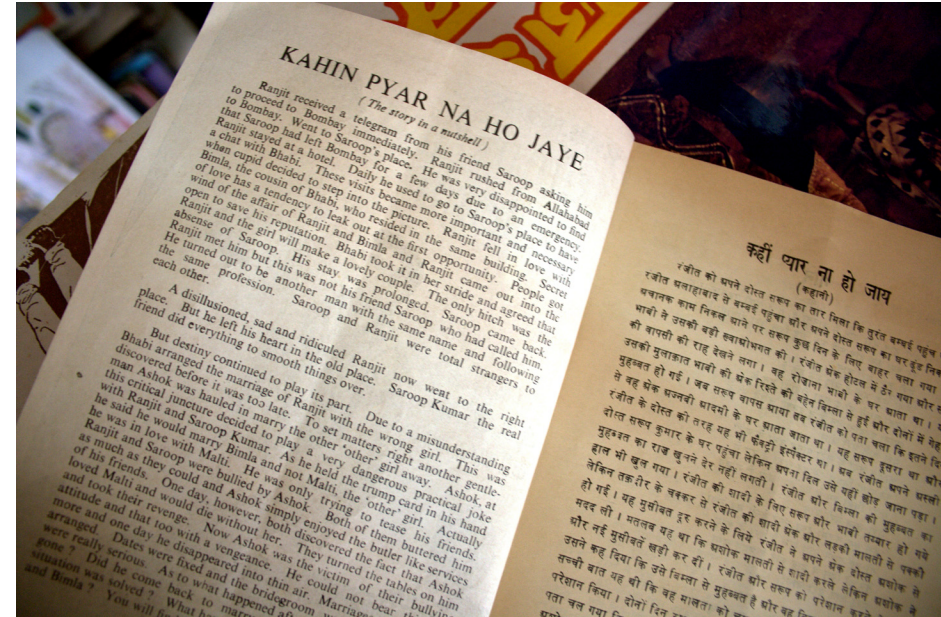




posterwallahs

These are the most colourful shops on Mutton Street. Old film posters, magazines, photographs, lobby cards of most popular Hindi films is what you will find in these stores. Bold typography and hand painted heroes and heroines swamp the walls of these shops. The main clients that buy posters are foreigners who keep them as collector's items, some for interiors of theme restaurants while some just for the love of their favourite film stars. Some rare posters of famous stars and hit films are the most expensive of their collections. These shops have been present from a very long time and are mostly run as part of a family business. For most film lovers these shops are a must visit because you will definitely find a rare item of your favourite movie in here.





The posterwallahs have lobby cards, old photographs apart from posters. They also sell small magazine called synopsis that used to be distributed in cinemas before the release of movies. Lobby cards used to be displayed in movie theatres. Some posterwallahs have rare editions of photographs, movie tickets which they don't display, they are reserved for special customers and collectors. The posters cost anything from 300 rupees for copies to 5000 rupees for original hand painted posters.



An original Pakeezah movie ticket.

The ticket is a part of a poster shop owners personal collection. Needless to say it was not for sale.

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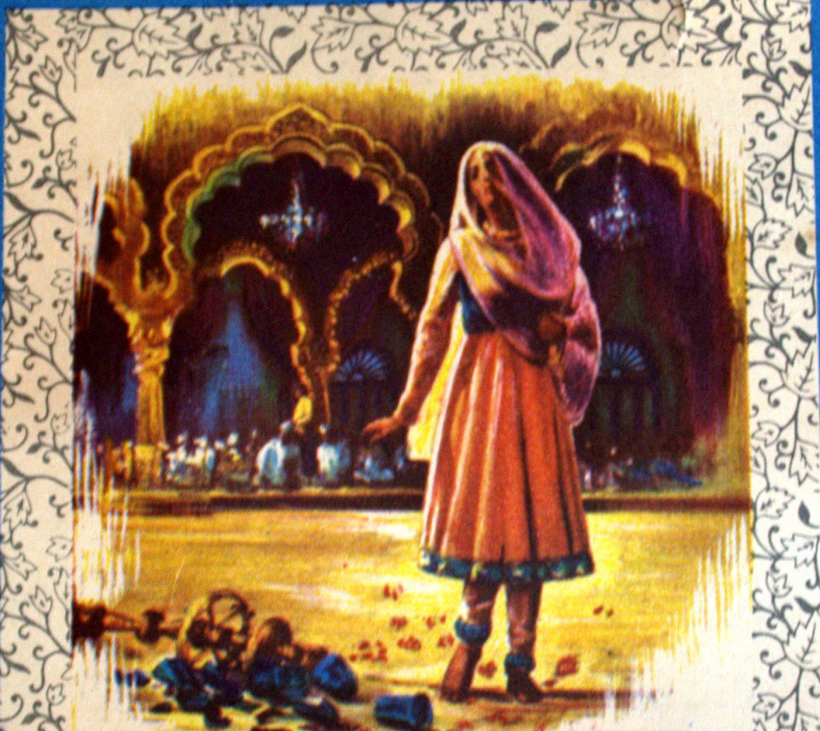
**MARATHA
MANDIR**

DRESS CIRCLE

Rs. 3.00
INC. OF ENT. TAX

SATURDAY
5th FEB. 1972
2.15 P.M.

Row Seat



KAMAL AMROHI'S
PAKEEZAH
EASTMENCOLOR
AND
CINEMASCOPE

Nº 635

**MARATHA
MANDIR**

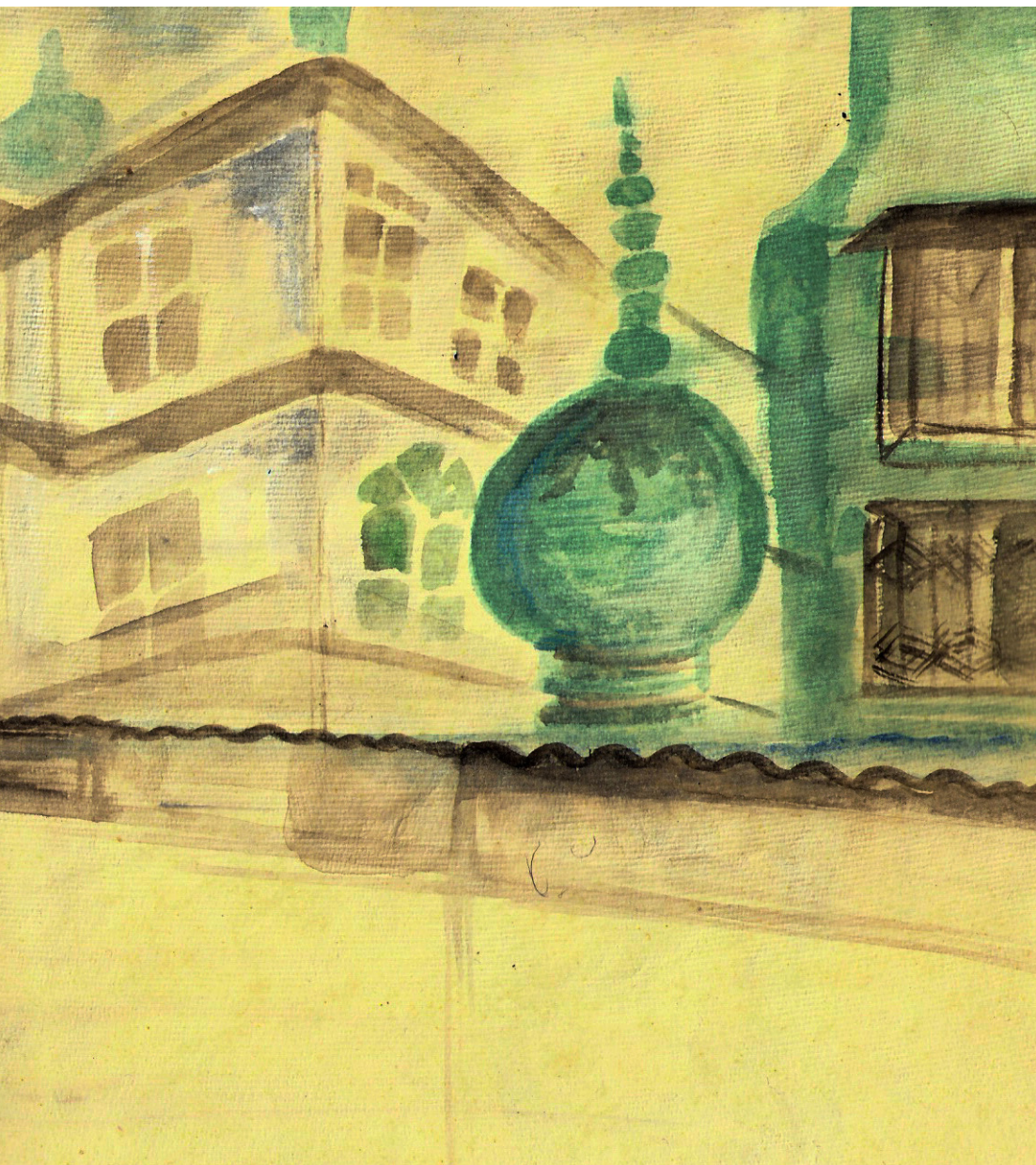
DRESS CIRCLE

Rs. 3.00
INC. OF ENT. TAX

SATURDAY
5th FEB. 1972
2.15 P.M.

Row Seat

Available only the show it is issued for. Management reserves the right to refuse admission. Money will not be refunded. To be retained and produced when demanded. Not Transferable.



first encounters

The grim alleys of Chor bazaar have much more to offer than what I assumed of its face value. The prejudices I formed after my first few minutes in the area were shattered the moment I entered one of the many shops and was greeted with nothing but a welcoming smile. Its strange I thought how one just assumes things blindly without actually experiencing. Here is where I understood the importance of observing over looking. The men in white *pathanis* that swarmed around the lanes and the men wearing white caps sitting on their chairs outside their respective shops were nothing to be scared of, they were just people busy in their daily activities.

It's amusing how things that we hear have an influence on our actions and ways of thinking. The first few trips I was either scared to move around by myself or awed by the amazing collections these shops host. It was so difficult to shift focus from the antiques to anything around me. Every trip made me more excited about the enormous range of items I saw in the racks of so many shops. I used to completely lose myself in the cluttered racks, trying to find something new and I was never disappointed because the racks keep showing you newer things every time you glance at them. It took me a few trips to start conversations with these people and actually realize that it was no harm in wandering about the streets and talking to people, clicking pictures. And once I shook my hang ups about being stared at and became one with the environment around me, I actually started observing things and people with a fresh interest.



shifting focus; products to people

As I frequented the place, I smiled at familiar faces and they smiled back too. I was no longer conscious of my camera and was not afraid of chatting with the people in white pathanis anymore. And as more time passed before I knew it, I was listening to stories of these shop owners. Without having to try for it I was comfortable and having some very interesting conversations with people who had such amusing pasts and so many stories to tell. I had made my transition from documenting inanimate figures to people. The journey thereafter was very exciting as I looked forward to every trip hoping to hear a new story along with spending time with the treasures.



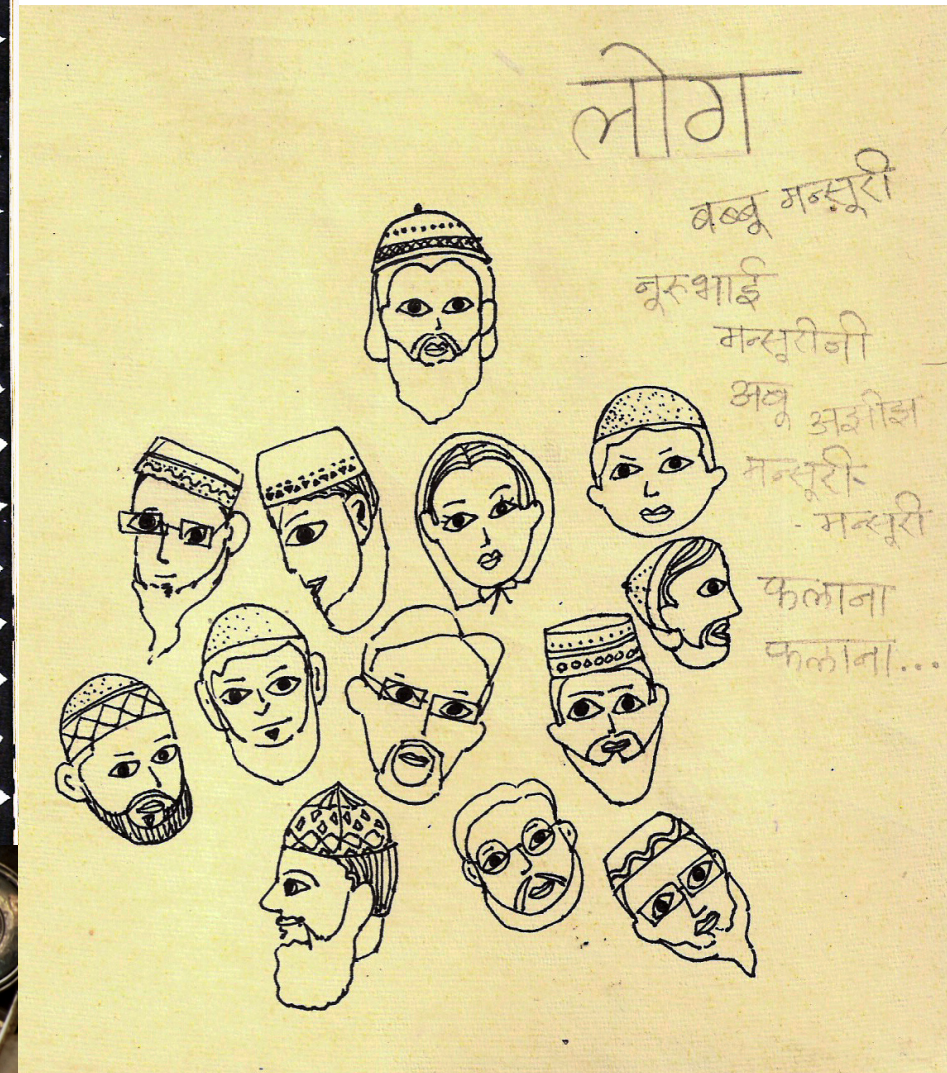


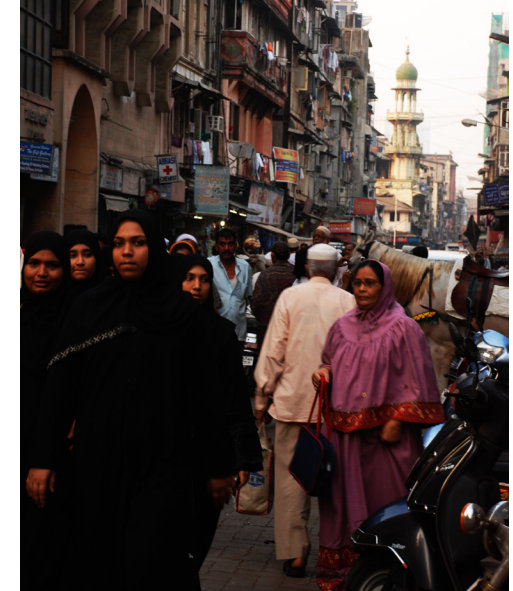
the people

Chor bazaar gets populated as the day gets old. The bazaar opens around 10 am and gets busy by evening. It is busiest in the evening and shop keepers close down by 8 pm. It is a laid back market where shop owners are in no hurry to sell. They sit relaxed on their chairs outside their shops waiting for customers. They sense the tone of their buyers and make efforts to sell accordingly. Their lunch time is from 1 in the noon. Shopkeepers guard each others shops and go for lunch. Some prefer eating in their shops itself. The people are simple and take pride in their collections. It is not mere selling like in any other market, most of these people know the worth of the treasures they house and are very attached to their collections.

Chor Bazaar is a male dominated area. The streets are filled with men wearing *pathani* suits and net *topis*. A very few men have their heads not covered with white crocheted caps, some round, some tall, some with intricate designs.

The other inmates of the bazaar are goats. There are goats tied outside almost all shops that would be slaughtered on the day of Id.





Women are a rare sight in the area except for the lane where food is sold. They walk around in flocks wearing embroidered burkhas. It is very interesting to see such many varieties of burkhas in different colours as opposed to the black burkhas one is used to seeing elsewhere. The burkhas are colourful, printed, laced or delicately embroidered on the seams. There are also horses that one sees in the bazaar by evening. Small children taking rides in the narrow yet crowded streets of the bazaar is a very common sight.







stories to tell

The following are stories of interesting people I met during my study. The earlier study included understanding an overview of the bazaar. The stories here after are however an outcome of focussed, continuous observation of a few people and their shops.

The stories describe three men, their shops and their experiences of the bazaar. It has been possible to gain a sense of the bazaar and its surroundings through their descriptions. They have spoken about their families, business and their struggle. The stories are simple and are a glimpse of the culture of the bazaar as it was earlier and as it today.



“Old is Gold”

revisiting the lanes of ‘shor bazar’ as told by A. K. Mansuri,
owner of Lucky Corner, 82, Mutton street, Mumbai- 400 003



02.01.01

Lucky Corner

Dadaji as I would refer to him, has been selling antiques in his small shop below the stairways of the *Handiwala Masjid* for over 50 years now. Lucky Corner has no walls, it is a shop that comprises of one shelf and one stall in front of the shelf. The bright turquoise building and mosque are the identifying features of the shop.

The shop is perhaps the simplest one on the street, the display not very eye catching, yet there is something peculiar about it that pulled me to Mansuriji's shop. What struck me about this shop at first was its location. The adjacent shops add to the ambience of this place. To the right is an old tape recorder shop, that plays records of old hindi songs and above the awning of the shop sits a bright turquoise dome of a mosque. The old songs that the recorder kept humming were one of the best experiences on Mutton Street. Yet again I my mind trailed off to the past.

A. K. Mansuri and the grandson

Talking to Mansuriji was like taking yet another tour into the past. When I first visited his shop, a little boy greeted me (who was dadajis grandson) and he enthusiastically spoke about the antiques. He wore a white net *topi* and he rapidly described the antiques on the shelves as if he'd been doing this



for a very long time. He looked after the shop in his grandfather's absence. He knew everything about the antiques, their prices and was well trained to handle his shop.

Mansuriji usually sits on a table near the shelves accompanied by his grandson. He is passionate about his collection and gave details of the antiques standing on his shelves as I asked about each of them. He picked up his treasures one after the other and presented them before me along with telling their uniqueness. He is very animated and has an engaging manner of narrating stories from his past. Conversations with Mansuriji were interesting, what I liked about talking to him was that he wasn't trying too hard to sell. He was comfortable with the fact that I might not end up buying or giving him any kind of profit.

His antiques collection

His shop has assorted antiques, ranging from different areas and different times. The range includes silver ware, brass mugs, *dabbas*, milk measuring units, musical instruments, figurines, tin boxes to name a few. Even though the antiques on the shelves were scanty, the next few trips and my conversations with dadaji made the experience interesting.





The story of ‘shor’ bazaar

When I asked him about why this place was called chor bazaar, he gave me a very interesting story. He replied, “*Purame jamane mein yahan baohot shor hua karta tha, sab raaste pe stall lagake bechne ke liye chillate the. Isliye bohut shor hota tha, yahinse is bazaar ka naam ‘shor bazaar’ pad gaya. Jaise din beete log isko chor bazaar bulane lage!*” (In olden times there used to be stalls, smaller ones like the ones in the Friday bazaar, and people used to call out loudly to attract customers and this used to cause a lot of noise. Noise in hindi is called shor, hence he name shor bazaar, a marketplace with a lot of noise, which over the years came to be called as chor bazaar). He laughed as he explained the origin of this name, and kept chewing on the pan he had his mouth full of for a very long time.

Dilruba

As I toyed around some small broaches kept in a dish he showed me a musical instrument called the dilruba. Dilruba looked similar to no other instrument I have ever seen. It had miniature painting on its surface and was a string instrument. He let me hold dilruba as he told me about this rare item. He is a patron of the old craftsmanship and the heritage that the products stood for. Foreigners especially get fascinated to see these vintage items being sold on streets, they like Indian art and craft forms. Indian and Tibetan antiques sell the most; they are famous for their intricate work and intelligent form he says as he points to the locking system of the brass dabba.

When I asked about why he thinks people buy these antiques, he replied, “*Log apne cheezon se lagav rakhte hain, woh unki yaadein taaza kar dete hain. Purani cheezon ki baat hi alag hai, unki karigari, unki banawat ki wajah se unki keemat badhti jaati hain. Aajkal ki cheezon mein woh baat kahan, sab ek jaise lagte hain!*” (People are very attached to products, they remind them of the past. The old antiques were of great quality and displayed exemplary craftsmanship. Their value increases with every passing year. The purity of metal, the delicate carvings, is rare now. Today’s products look similar and they have no virtue.)

And as I start to leave the shop after saying *khuda hafiz*, he smiles back and says, “**Old is Gold, madamji, that is why you came here!**”



“Zaveri Bazaar”

a simple story of Noorubhai and his journey since 25 yrs at
the bazaar



16.01.10

Noorubhai

The most interesting part of the study of chor bazaar has been meeting so many interesting people. Noorubhai was one such interesting person. Like Mansuriji he has been in the bazaar since over 25 years. He seemed like a simple old man in his plain shirt and trousers, grey scanty hair and specs that he kept adjusting every now and then. In the few visits that I made to Noorubhai's shop, I knew this was a person you would remember for long. He is like those people who do nothing special in your life, but they are just strangers you can't forget.

Passion for antiques

As time passed and I frequented his shop I realized Noorubhai was like the grandfather who could never scold, soft-spoken, understanding and had eyes that looked tired. Noorubhai's story was a little different than the rest. He himself was an avid collector in his childhood. He lived in the nearby area behind the masjid. As a child he used to passionately collect lighters and pens, later as time came for him to earn for the family, he had to give up his collections. There was still a hint of pain as he narrated giving up the treasures he had collected as a little boy. He said he knows the joy of collecting and hence he enjoys being at his shop.





What is amusing about Noorubhai is that unlike most shop owners, he did not inherit the shop as a part of family business. He started from his own collection and he enjoys being at the shop because his business is an extension of his childhood hobby. He likes helping people build their own collections. He has a collection of his own too now that he has less responsibilities to take care of. He has a small family, a supportive wife and two daughters who he has wed off happily. He is happy with his small shop and the assorted collection of antiques. He has sourced most of these from Parsi families, collector's families, and other friends in the business. His eyes sparkle as he shows off some of his rare collectibles. He says he'd rather collect all these by himself if he had the money, "*Karna padta hai, roji roti ka sawal hai!*" he adds. The thing that makes Noorubhai most happy is that he gets to spend the whole day with these lovely treasures. He was dejected when I asked about why the market was called chor bazaar he repeated the shor bazaar story and said something that remained with me for long, "*Itni keemti cheezein hain yahan, chor bazaar nahi yahi asli zaveri bazaar hai!*"





The toy collector

conversations with Babbooji, a toy collector as he speaks about his beginnings, his business and passion- his toys.



29.12.01 onwards

toy curiosity store

Old memories are revisited after seeing things one used in their childhood. These memories are priceless and they make people happy. The toy curiosity store is not a store of old toys, it is a store of countless such collected memories, which makes it so special. It takes you back to most special time of each person's life- childhood. Collector or no collector, amongst the racks filled sumptuously with toys, it is certain that you will find you very own reason to smile.

Location

The toy curiosity store is hidden inside a passage of a building, opposite to a masjid. It is sandwiched between two furniture stores. The signboard is all that is visible from the road. The shop is a one room big, about 7 sq. feet. As the name suggests the shop has a collection of toys ranging from various places and times. There different kinds of board games, dolls, cars, miniature figures, robots from various places in India as well as abroad. Apart from toys, there are matchboxes, labels, metal signs, pens and posters. A. Qadar E. Mansuri who is fondly referred as Babbooji owns the shop. The first few visits I spent in awe of all the toys neatly sitting on shelves. It was few trips later that I spoke to Babbooji and his nephew who sometimes looks after the shop.

Babbooji

Babbooji is 75 years old and was in to the antiques business since his young days. He is a commerce graduate from Burhani College and has grown up in South Mumbai. It was their family business and they owned an antique shop in the same Mutton Street area. He helped his father and uncles with selling the antiques. But there were differences in the family and after the death of his father his uncles took over the antiques shop. His brother cheated him and took over the entire business that left him with nothing but his own personal collection of tickets. Since he had seen the business closely he set out by himself to start of on his own.



The bygone years

He is extremely passionate about his business. He believes that a strong interest, passion, patience lead to a successful business. He researches toys around the world and tries to gain as much information about them. During these years he has made many great friends from around the world, mainly Europeans. He is proud of himself, the way he has reached where he is today and gives all the credit to his supportive family.

There is glint of sadness when he speaks about his past, his years of struggle when his own brothers disowned him. But he is a positive man who believes that he wouldn't have started his own business if his brothers had not abandoned him. So he thinks all is well that ends well. And he is thankful to his wife and children (one son and a daughter) who have stuck by him through his rough times.





Early beginnings: his life in the bazaar

He started with a toy that cost Rs 16 in the year 1995, and slowly he worked hard towards expanding his business. He began to deal with toys but his intention was never to mint money. He has been extremely honest in his business deals and strives to keep his customers satisfied. Babbooji owns around 108 books on toys; he travels around the country collecting toys and tries to gather as much information on the toys he offers for sale. He has been in the bazaar for very long and vouches for the honesty of all the old antique sellers. However he thinks the shops that have opened in the recent times in the bazaar are just profit making units that do not understand the worth of what they sell. They do not always sell genuine items and end up cheating their customers. Unlike them Babbooji believes in thriving his business on long-term relations with his customers. He likes his deals to be very transparent and does not fake information about his toys if he is not aware. He quotes the prices of his toys based on how much he thinks the customer can afford. He does agree that every sale is made to earn profit and if anybody says they are selling at cost price they are definitely lying.



His clientele

Babbooji sources his collectibles from various parts of the country. Owing to his long experience in the bazaar, he has contacts that intimate him of any new deal. He has collected many of his items from Parsi families. His clientele includes mainly Europeans who he thinks are eccentric collectors and understand the worth of what he has in store. Some of his customers have come to be his closest friends and they keep buying from him regularly. He proudly announces names like Cindy Crawford, Elizabeth Hurley, and Danny Squaid who have visited his shop in the past. A lady, one of his oldest customers has exhibited a unique collection of Raj Kapoor movie posters she bought from Babbooji in Paris.

His thoughts.

What make Babbooji an excellent businessman are his thoughts. He is extremely humble and honest. He is always willing to learn new things and never gets tired of his toys. He seeks long-term growth of his business and gives utmost importance to his client's satisfaction. He believes that age is no barrier to gain knowledge and that it is important to share knowledge. He swears by the fact that business is sheer communication and passion, humbleness are the key to success.

“Seekhne ki koi umr nahi hoti, hum to aaj bhi student hain!”- Babbooji.





‘products are never isolated from people’

जब लोग दुकान में आके खिलौने देखकर खुश होते हैं, वो उनको बचपन की याद दिलाते हैं। देखकर अच्छा लगता है। सिर्फ़ पैसे कमानेसे खुशी नहीं मिलती, जब लोगोंके आँखोमें चमक देखता हूँ तब तसल्ली मिलती है।

– Babbooji, Toy Curiosity Shop owner.

What are products without people? People use them and a product becomes one after it meets its user. There are stories and memories that get woven around products and people that make them special. Why do people keep products? Why do they collect them? There are individual stories that urge people to collect. If you think of the product that very close to you, it will most probably be because of a story associated with it than its usability. One likes to treasure special moments of life through objects.

Memories are intangible, a dear incident cannot repeat itself in actuality but the small things that are associated with it remain. They in turn become the symbols of those special times. They might not be momentous memories always; small little incidents that have made you smile in the past are the ones that make us happy. Be it the doll whose hair you braided all day, the greeting card your first crush gave, the earrings that you did not like but your dad got them from his work trip, the tie you bought your dad from your first salary, and so many more are all metaphors of frozen memories.

And one day when you are old and you rub the dust off these things, memories suddenly come alive. It might not always be a personal memory; products reflect the time in which they were made. An old gramophone could remind a person of its time, even if he may not have owned one. A walk in chor bazaar does the same. It brings back memories, it is a glimpse of another time and that's what makes it so special.

