

# Rising Stars

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## shopping WARFARE

By Ehsanur Raza

**S**hoving, pushing, and jumping over obstacles to get to a particular place is a big part of modern day shopping. Add to that arguing with people intent on transferring money from your pocket to theirs (a.k.a. Shopkeepers). All this adds up to a new-age warfare known as shopping. Here you fight for your bargains, your footing, your wallet and your sanity especially if you are a male accompanying a female. Basically there are three battles to this wargetting to the market, loitering there and getting back home.

To get to the market you have to spend a lot of time in traffic jams. All the time you keep trying to overtake other people who are also doing the same. All this frantic action may not help at all but it sure provides a sense of occasion. The good thing about traffic jams is that you can never become bored. You will always be busy doing something. Drivers are always trying to take their vehicles an inch further. Occasionally the inch is miscalculated resulting in dented cars or rickshaws with their wheels turned into a figure-eight shape. The shouting match that ensues can be quite fun. You can have a bet going on whether a fight will start or not and if so then who will win. All this is great fun providing it happens to someone else.

Once near the market one can proceed to find a path leading to the shops. The sea of humanity milling about the place can be quite a challenge to get through. This is achieved by performing a lot of elbow movements. As a result some people may be pushed into drains and experience a close encounter with the slimy kind. But you know what they say, "All's fair in love, war and shopping". Once again it is okay as long as you're not the one getting pushed around.

The next step is to buy something though not necessarily. Most people are there for loitering purposes. Mostly these are guys aimlessly walking around the female populated jewelry/kitchen utensil/sari sections. Such loiterers can easily be identified as the group of guys hanging around a lipstick stand. In case you are one such person then you should keep a mobile phone (not necessarily real) in one hand and a car key (you don't have to have a car) in the other. I cannot say it will work but loiterers are usually attired in such a fashion. It is supposed to make them look cool and suave.

If you are actually going to buy something then remember that everything is negotiable although a sigh may proclaim "FIXED PRICE". Arguments and counter-arguments are the main course to follow if a successful purchase is to be made.



During bargaining occasionally acting as if you are going to walk out might help. If the shopkeepers do not call you back inside then you can curse them all you want. Bottling up aggressive feelings is harmful for the body and soul. Let it all out. If he does call you back then return to bargaining.

After shopping comes the time to go home. Most likely, you have to face another traffic jam. These jams can be really hazardous to health because of all the noxious fumes swirling about. Though smoking a cigarette is OK, it is just all the other smoke that is harmful. Some people decrease their breathing rate to prevent taking in the dust and gases. Some people decrease the rate so much that they stop breathing completely. Usually though this is due to the hearts refusal to work because

of shock. This happens to fathers and husbands who dare to take a peek at the bill before reaching the safety of home from where an ambulance can be summoned. Besides a heart attack there are other things impeding your way home.

You might meet people who wish to transfer the contents of your wallet and everything else from your possession to theirs. No, these are not shopkeepers although they may be similar in nature. Both take your things and want to leave you with very little. The only difference is that these people may sometimes take away your life and leave you with ABSOLUTELY NOTHING AT ALL. These people are usually known as "high-jackers".

Such an intense activity is very much like basic survival training. Anyone passing this is instantly eligible for military



Chart showing the DNA Base sequences after decoding.

**V**ery soon, the private company, Celera Genomics, will announce its successful completion of a monumental task- the sequencing of the entire human genome. After that the "Human Genome Project" won't be far behind to announce the completion of their similar project.

But what is a genome?

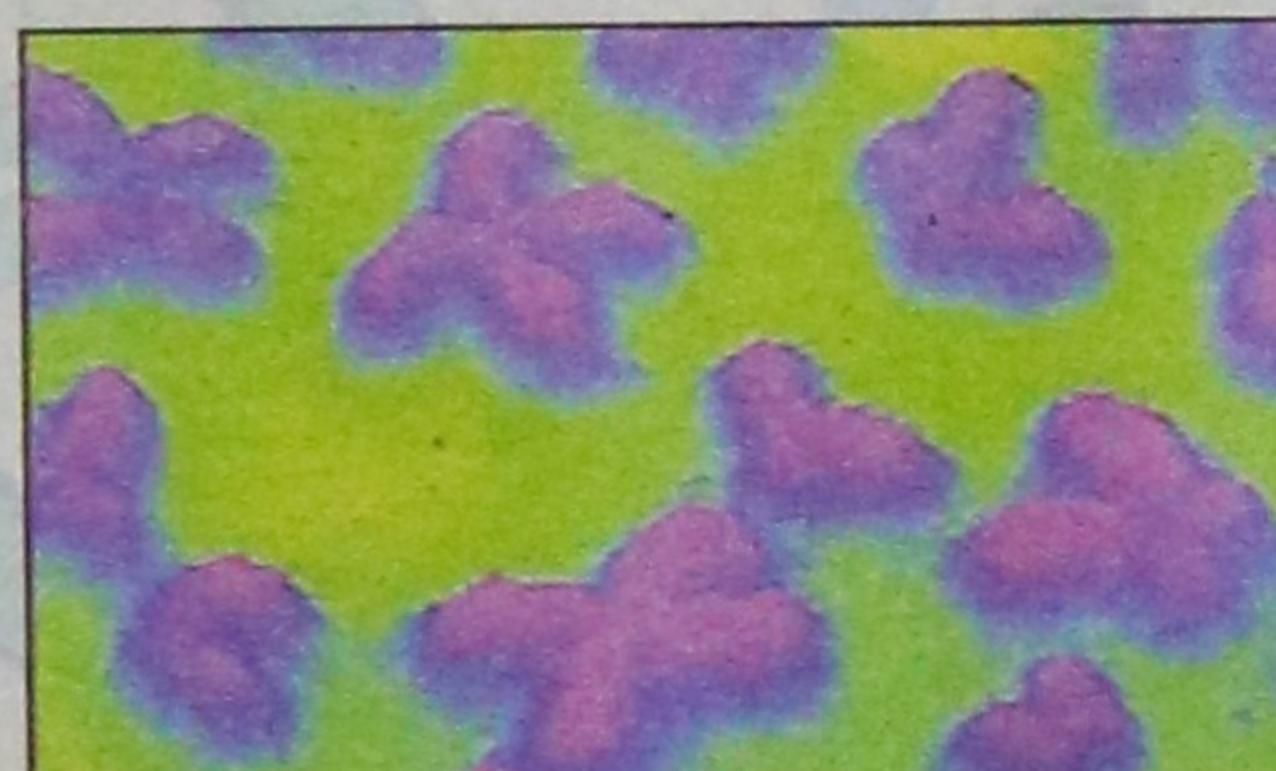
A genome is the entire DNA in an organism, including its genes. Genes carry information for making all the proteins required by all organisms. These proteins determine, among other things, how the organism looks, how well its body metabolizes food or fights infection, and sometimes even how it behaves. DNA is made up of four similar chemicals (called bases and abbreviated A, T, C, and G) that are repeated millions or billions of times throughout a genome. The human genome, for example, has 3 billion pairs of bases. The particular order of As, Ts, Cs, and Gs are extremely important. The order underlies all of life's diversity, even deciding whether an organism is human or another species such as yeast, rice, or fruit fly, all of which have their own genomes and are themselves the focus of genome projects. For one thing, the sequence is so long - some 3 billion parts - someone would have to spend more than

## DECODING LIFE

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50 years, 24 hours a day merely to write it out. For another, the sequences that researchers hope to unveil this month will still be a working draft - incomplete and filled with small errors - that might not be finalized until 2003.

Two companies are competing for a place in history books, by trying to sequence the human genome first. One is a publicly funded "Human Genome Project" and the other is the privately



An electron micrograph showing the chromosomes in a human cell during cell division.

funded company Celera Genomics. The publicly funded Human Genome Project scientists form part of a 12-year, \$3 billion program, of which \$500 million is being spent on the human genome. The project had first targeted to complete the

sequencing project by 2005, but advances in technology helped them cut two years off their plan.

On the other hand, Dr Venter of Celera Genomics first caused uproar in 1998 by saying he would decode the entire genome in just three years at 10th of the cost of the public project. He could be on course to fulfill this promise, as he says he will make an announcement in the next few days. The publicly funded group will make its findings freely available on the Internet, whereas Celera Genomics plans to sell the information.

Some of the bitterest arguments sparked by the quest to unravel the human genome have been over the merits of the different approaches to decoding the DNA. The publicly funded Human Genome Project (HGP) has taken a slower, more methodical approach. The entire DNA blueprint for humans is contained on 24 chromosomes. So they mapped out the major signposts and then chopped up specific sections for investigation. They are now filling in these details. This is rather like making a road map of Bangladesh by starting with the highways and then going around, filling in the lanes and streets. Craig Venter's company Celera started their effort eight years after the HGP, when computers were much faster and more powerful. Their approach simply chops up the whole genome for sequencing and then uses supercomputers to reassemble all the data. This is like making a road map of Bangladesh by taking millions of aerial photographs and hoping that you will be able to recognize enough overlaps to put it all back together. Skeptics said that Celera's method could only work for the relatively small genomes of bacteria and viruses.

SEE PAGE 3