

LS PICK

Sights and sounds of a Jamdani haat

ONCE you've visited a Jamdani haat, you will think twice before metaphorically referring to a crowded and noisy place as a 'macher bazaar'. A Jamdani haat is no less, and at times, one may reckon that it is even more overwhelming!

With numerous people, from financiers to weavers to retailers - compounded with the fact that many of them have multiple or overlapping roles - a Jamdani haat is a whirlwind of chaos.

If you observe closely - pay the courtesy of employing a keen eye to the dynamics that generate the trade of the world renowned Jamdani, that is - you will surely find order in the chaos.

If a workshop or a factory is the brain of Jamdani, its wholesale market is its heart: the finished products are pumped out and circulated from there and sent off all across the country and the world at large.

Demra Haat is one such wholesale market. And just like the fact that someone who fervently loves fish delights in taking the 'trouble' of going to its wholesale market, so would someone, who adores Jamdani saris, happily visit such a 'haat'.

The haat takes place every Thursday, at about 11am, and runs till about 2pm. This market used to operate on Fridays before. Yet another haat takes place on the same day, at Noapara.

The place is not very far from Dhaka. Demra Staff Quarter is in the capital's outskirts, less than one hour shy of the urban jungle we live in. From there, Demra Haat is quite near. The journey should take less than 1 hour and 15 minutes, of course depending on from where in Dhaka you've started off.

On a partly-rustic-and-partly-urbane setting, a spacious one-storied building, roofed by a tin shade, the haat is buzzing with Jamdani traders. Weavers in large numbers walk through the hall carrying Jamdani saris. Traders, businessmen and retailers from Dhaka and elsewhere sit at the makeshift stalls, buying from them. The place swarms with hundreds of people, and their negotiations, bargains and haggles make the place very noisy and rowdy.

Meanwhile, a person may be both a buyer and a seller. Mohammad Abdul Kuddus, a Jamdani businessman, explains. "You may have a Jamdani factory and sit at the market to sell what your weavers have made. But the produce may not be enough for you. So, you will also buy from other weavers."

There are weavers who are independent: they make Jamdani themselves and they come to the market to sell by themselves. And there are the retailers and middlemen: those who buy from weavers or 'mahajans' (financiers) and then either sell them in their outlets in Dhaka (and elsewhere) or supply them to the retailers. And yet many others buy from there to sell them through the internet or export them to many countries.

"Be it New Market in Dhaka or the outlets of Chittagong and Sylhet or those in countries such as India, Jamdani saris are sent off in all directions from here," Kuddus informs.

So if you are planning to buy Jamdani saris -- and do not mind the hustle and the bustle of a haat - or even enjoy it, such a marketplace is an enticing option. The sheer amount and variety of saris under one roof provides a burst of colours and designs.

And prices are cheaper, given that it is a wholesale market. Mohammad Anwar Hossain, a weaver turned businessman, exemplified, "A sari that you are going to buy from a retailer in Dhaka will cost about Tk.6000 or Tk.7000 but the same sari here will cost you about Tk.4000."

So, along with traders and weavers, there are general customers as well - although the number is relatively small. "People come here to buy directly from the weavers. Sometimes, we see foreign tourists and people from the city, taking pictures and enjoying the atmosphere," Hossain informed.

At one end of the haat, several vendors remain busy selling various foods: bhelpuri, chittoi pitha, jhal muri, sugarcane juice and so on.

The finances are kept for the last bit, when the haat is nearing the end; that's when the money comes out. So when a weaver sells a sari, it is handed to the buyer, who then scribbles the name of the seller on a paper and puts it in its folds. At the end of the intense session of buying and selling, the buyer takes out each sari, gives a thorough check (e.g. whether it is torn or not) and pays the weaver.

The saris are then wrapped together, ready to go.

Shopping is not just about buying, it is about the experience, and a Jamdani haat provides you that -- the things you buy and the experience -- like no other!

By M H Haider

Photo: Shahrear Kabir Heemel

Experience the hustle and bustle of a Jamdani haat



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#ChooseBeautiful

In the eye of the beholder

ON the 25 April, Dove and The Daily Star jointly coordinated a conference held to launch #ChooseBeautiful, a campaign, designed by Dove, to change the perception of beauty from a source of anxiety to a source of confidence for women through the realisation that true beauty is on the inside. They plan on reaching 15 million young girls across the globe by holding hour-long self-esteem building programmes by the end of 2015.

The conference included many empowered women from all across the country and amongst them was Geeti Ara Safia Chowdhury, CEO of Adcomm Ltd.



Geeti Ara Safia Chowdhury

"We need to talk about women -- all women -- whether tall, short, dark, fat, skinny, they all need to be focused on and made to feel important," she said at the conference. "They say that 'the hand that rocks the cradle, rules the world' which goes to show that mothers are most important." She stressed on the fact that to become empowered, women have to help each other, and only then we can see a social change.

When asked how the culture of impunity in our society affects our women, she said, "The amount of shaming and defaming women have to face sometimes, even on our roads, can have very adverse effects on everyone. Women nowadays have low self-esteem when it comes to beauty anyway, but negative comments can make it worse." She also mentioned how, even though times are changing and the level of patriarchy in our society is on the verge of reduction, it is still important for women to stick together and fight for each other.

Lastly, Geeti Ara left a message that can maybe help every woman look at themselves differently, or at least help them to. When asked what she would like to say to all the women who are insecure about their appearance, she said, "Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. When I look at myself in the mirror, I am the beholder, and what I see is my beautiful self. Everyone should know that the 'beholder' that matters the most is you. The one thing any woman should never lose is her confidence."

By Naziba Basher

Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed

So, how do you choose to define yourself?

