

**THOUGHT CRAFT**

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# A delightful day

"Oh! This is so you. What a wonderful colour! You have to buy this right away," says one lady to another. I do not hear these words in a cold impersonal commercial Kensington High Street or Bond Street shop, but in Dhaka. Sheer pleasure! The object we exclaim over could be a scarf, or perhaps a sari, or a necklace; it does not matter. It is SHOPPING, in capital letters...

Most of us women have a fondness for shopping. It is one of the joys we can indulge in alone, or with friends. We can stop at every shop window, wonder how

we will look in such and such garment, go in, browse, come out empty-handed, and wander on to look at rings and necklaces so beautiful that they can be mistaken for the real thing. Peep through the glass of the real jewellers, not daring to go in, and stroll on to admire clothes, shoes, and handbags.

Shopping malls are a delight. There are bright-eyed women everywhere, and escalators. There are sari shops with tempting, extravagant displays, beaded and embroidered shalwar sets in beautiful hues, glittering, but uncomfortable sandals, pants, tops, shawls, and myriad other things, made to lure us in, empty our wallets or max out our credit cards.

After an hour or two of roaming the shops, we can do the best and most fun thing of all; stop at one of the tiny cafes and enjoy a dish of doi bora or chotpoti, accompanied by a glass of freshly squeezed juice. In these little stalls, it is comfortable. There is no echo, so we can actually hear ourselves speak.

Service is fast, and the food is good.

For the more adventurous ladies, there are the stalls inside Gulshan 2. They are modest, but brightly lit and packed with entrancing girly things. Ribbons and ornamental clips of every kind, scrunchies in every colour, fake hairpieces, cheap cosmetics, and a hundred other items calculated to charm the eye and gladden the heart.

I explored the stalls one day, bargained and chatted, and emerged laden with little paper bags filled with safety pins, elastic, hair accessories, and an umbrella.

If you want a custom made mattress, go next door. Or, buy yourself a pink mosquito net, pillows filled with real "shimul" cotton, or floral bedsheets. If you do not like what they have, there are tailors to make what you need. The shopkeepers remember your face and smile when you come in the next time, and give you good discounts.

If you want elastic-waisted, readymade leisure pants to wear at home, go to Gulshan 2. There are a wide array of pants, and maxi dresses for the domestic help,

and modestly priced three-piece sets; towels, dishcloths, ornas and petticoats, and blouses and tops in every size.

In the fruit and vegetable stalls, the vendor sits high on his custom-made stool/throne, surrounded by enticingly arranged produce, glistening with freshness and colour.

How can I resist?

I come away with kilos of oranges and pineapple, pomello and apples, having regretfully refused to buy several other kinds of fruit. Onwards to the video or medicine shops, where they stock almost everything useful that you could think of. If we do not want to go ourselves, most of these shops will deliver the medicines or films directly to our homes.

In the shops and markets, women are queen. The men give you space, the shopkeepers are friendly and courteous, and discounts on almost everything. If you want a day of adventure, pleasure, relaxation, and work all blended together, go shopping.

**cairnhill**

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