

Chor Bazaar

2011

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Chor Bazaar, literally Thieves Market, is a peculiar space indigenous to colonial port cities. Urban legend has it that the name 'Chor' came from the British mispronunciation of the word 'Shor', which in Hindustani means noise, thus referring to a noisy market. Located at Grant Road, Chor Bazaar would probably have been the market hub for the native town that developed north of the Fort walls that were the foci for the city of Bombay in the 18th and 19th century.

Centuries later Chor Bazaar contains within its by-lanes shops selling antique furniture, Bollywood memorabilia and second hand artifacts collected from people's homes. The wares on display, and especially the ones not on display, have a distinct quality of miscellany. The oddity of finding a Venus statue replica standing amidst a stack of obsolete tape players is only matched by the 21st century voyeur's need for finding a link to the past, obscure as it may be. Thus the everyday common objects found in this market are elevated to grand artifacts that carry memories of a time bygone. It is after all a market, and the owners of shops, who double up as collectors, have contributed to this nostalgia in order to sell their commodities to the lowest haggler. There is order in the chaos of Chor Bazaar and the low lighting, dusty display shelves and the precariously stacked wares all are carefully curated.

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