

Bangles in Hyderabad

Hyderabad, India - February 21, 2008

Amy:



cab to airport

We woke up and hung out in Tapas and Madhumanti's place for most of the morning. Poor Tapas wasn't feeling too well, so he stayed home from work.

We had breakfast, then decided to go shopping downtown to get souvenirs. I had read in the Lonely Planet about a good souvenir shop, Kalinjali, that had slightly higher prices, but was supposed to be a good starting place to gauge prices before going to the Laad Bazaar, a crazy bazaar in the Old City of Hyderabad. Brent's friend, Sudeer, had also recommended Kalinjali, so we decided we'd go there to look for presents.

A taxi came to the apartment at 1:30 to pick us up, and Madhumanti went downstairs with us to give him directions. We drove away and the driver took us the wrong way (we didn't know it at first) to the wrong store (a bridal sari store in a mall with a similar name). The real Kalinjali store was across town, and the meter was running up and up. We realized that this was the first taxi we'd taken in Hyderabad – we'd been chauffeured around in the luxury of Tapas' car. We reached the store and told the driver that we'd get a rickshaw home and that he didn't have to wait for us.

We went into the store, which was only saris and clothing. We were then pointed in the direction of the other store (there are many of the same name) next door. We went into the next store, which looked more like a museum with huge objets d'art. We looked around for a while, then I said to a store clerk that I was looking for small small things for souvenirs. He said that there was another part of the store upstairs. So we went upstairs and found a bunch of wood, paintings, and textiles. We wandered around the massive store for about an hour or so, buying a few nicknacks for friends and family.



cab

When we were at the counter paying, I was reminded of the inefficiency that is India; i.e. employing 4 people to do the job of one person, therefore increasing the amount of time for any given action. I understand that there are many millions and billions of people in India and that it's important to employ people. During this trip, we've seen many many bathroom helper ladies who give you toilet paper or soap or towels and/or point you in the direction of the toilet, in addition to cleaning the bathroom. We've seen people pounding rocks, sweeping, and doing jobs that either aren't done in the US, or are done by machines, or are self-serve.



So buying our items in Kalanjali employed 6-8 people. Four salesman on the floor writing up sales slips, one person ringing up the slips, one person wrapping our items and putting them into bags, and one person collecting the slips, a final person handing us our

purchases, and a guard to watch over it all. I'm glad I'm not in a hurry. I'm trying to have Brent's attitude rub off on me; or., in the immortal words of Slater in Fast Times, "wherever you are, that's the place to be."

We left Kalanjali and decided to wander around for a while. We walked around the neighborhood and found an Air India office

and a few fried food stands. I was thirsty, so we got cokes (real cokes, with sugar and not corn syrup) and drank them on the side of the road. We wandered back to the store and decided to take a rickshaw to Charminar (a fort/palace in the old city) and see the Laad bazaar.

The rickshaw ride was slow and treacherous – lots of traffic. We were dropped off near Charminar, in the midst of the chaos that is the Old City of Hyderabad. There were hundreds of vendors lining both sides of the street selling mostly cloth and some bangles and lots of Arabic prayer mats, burkas, shawls, etc. We saw many Muslim women dressed head to toe in black burkas with only their eyes and wrists showing. They were swarming around the bangles (Hyderabad is famous for their bangles) b/c their hands are the only parts of their bodies that can be adorned. Go figure. Brent bought Kristen some bangles b/c she's Muslim now and therefore Allah will allow her to prominently display her wrists.



We walked along the street, with every vendor yelling "Madam, come look here" and "Madam, come see my shop". I will miss being called Madam. We walked and walked and found ourselves in the Laad Bazaar, which is a

no-car zone in the Old City with hundreds of bangle shops. We wondered how they can all stay in business. There were also tailors and many shops selling cloth.

It was really hot at this point and I was getting tired and a little cranky. We turned a corner and realized that we were at Chowmahala Palace. I hadn't realized how big the palace was until I needed something to drink and had to walk 20 miles around it. Well, maybe not 20...

We finally found a store and bought a fizzy apple drink. We decided to take a rickshaw back home to Tapas' place, so we hailed a rickshaw. He didn't understand where Banjara Hills was or else it was too far. Either way,

he drove away. We hailed another rickshaw, who agreed to take us for 100 rupees. I thought that the price was steep until we realized 45 minutes later, that we were very far away from Tapas.

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