

High fashion at a low cost



So your fashion sense says Chanel, but your budget says Colaba causeway. No need to worry, help is at hand and it isn't too haute to handle

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THE size of your purse should not influence the label on your handbag, believes Fatema Lokhandwala, owner of Branded Bargains. If you've been eyeing a Louis Vuitton handbag but haven't had the heart to spend the better part of your paycheck on it, then Lokhandwala is the person to meet. Branded Bargains is an innovative solution to the demands of ladies who like to dress smart and spend wisely.

The store specialises in selling

pre-owned designer goods. Lokhandwala says the idea came to her when she realised she had friends from both ends of the spectrum who could benefit from each other.

She explains, "I have friends who want to buy branded stuff but don't want to spend that kind of money and I have friends who shop so much they don't know where to keep half those things. Besides, branded bags are too expensive to just pass on. So, I thought if one could pass on her extras to another who really wants it, it would be a happy situation for everybody."

A widely known and practiced concept in South East Asia, America and Europe, the store works out an agreement with those interested in selling their handbags. "Sellers consign their goods to me for a period of three months. We sign an agreement that covers important clauses. I don't buy anything outright. At the end of three months, I pay the seller the money for whatever has

sold and return what hasn't. If we both wish to continue the arrangement, we renew the agreement."

At present, Lokhandwala's Fort store has a collection of about 50 items that primarily includes handbags. The store also stocks sunglasses, scarves, belts, shoes and apparel. "People thank me because now they can get rid of their clutter and make some money while they're at it," smiles Lokhandwala.

And the buyer gets a good deal. Lokhandwala slashes the price tag down to half the original cost. She says, "There have been at least three women who have purchased their first branded accessory from me. A Salvatore Ferragamo, Coach and Gucci. Not everybody wants to spend their savings on off-the-rack designer goodies. However, that doesn't mean they don't want to have it. When they get a bargain of almost 50 per cent on a branded bag or belt, they're more than happy to lap it up. Besides, once you carry something, how is someone to know whether it's brand new or pre-owned?"

Clearly, the underground fashion revolution is here. Lokhandwala emphasises the importance of privacy in her business. She doesn't want one friend spotting her old bag on the arm of another. To ensure such goof-ups don't happen, she avoids selling to relatives, friends or acquaintances. That's also why a visit to her store is 'by appointment only', whether you're a seller, buyer or browser.

While the case of the cost-conscious, fashion-literate buyer carries credible logic, we wonder if the allure of a Hermès crocodile skin clutch lies in its glossy packaging and showroom smell.

"There are some customers who are apprehensive at first. But when they realise that brands are being given a lot of importance, they come around. Of course, the price matters. But again, when a buyer is getting a good deal thanks to the seller's generosity, no one is complaining."

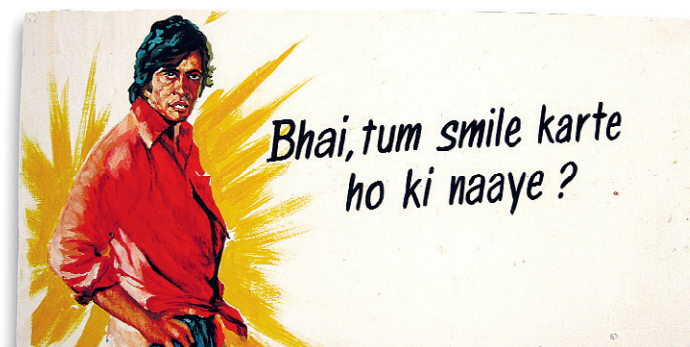
That's as real a deal as it can get, even for someone who prides herself on carrying only the best, original stuff.

Call 9820143573 or email brandedbargains.info@gmail.com to set up an appointment.

Owner of Branded Bargains, Fatema Lokhandwala, is flanked by generously donated handbags, shades and belts at the Fort outlet. PIC/BIPIN KOKATE



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