

# My Dream

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I had a dream. I envisaged a strong, vibrant India, especially Kolkata, to me the cultural capital of India. During winter the city is host to a very large number of musical and cultural programs, sometimes under the open sky through out the night.

In order to find it, I landed in Kolkata after about thirteen years in the USA in the middle of a hot dry summer with no rain in sight. The monsoon was delayed. The roads were full of pot holes and side walks were not usable. Firstly, there was no smooth surface and often the cars were parked on them. Even the motor bikes, to avoid halted cars at a traffic jam, were driven on the side walk at full speed. The mortal human beings had to be very careful in avoiding these hazards. The delayed monsoon actually aggravated the problems. The first impression of the city was, therefore, bleak. Two decades of Marxist rule had seen private sector to go away and very little direct investment from abroad. But these are all changing.

It took me therefore some effort to find the changes in Kolkata, mostly with positive development. The city is bursting with developmental activities. Everywhere the old buildings are pulled down and are replaced with multi-storied gated apartment complexes. Recently developed Salt Lake City area is well-planned with extension campuses of Jadavpur University and Kolkata University, a stadium, a science city, and is well connected by buses from all over the city. Currently a favorite developmental area is at Rajarhat near the Kolkata airport in a large vacant piece of land and connected to the airport and the city through a four lane highway. Big I.T. companies have all their offices in this area. New multi-storied gated apartment complexes are being built here. There are several ultra-modern shopping Malls in Kolkata, for example the South City Mall near our house. There was a big book fair in February, and the crowd showed how Kolkata loved books; even the shops with old books were full of people seeking books to buy at bargain prices. There are several sporting stadiums for cricket, soccer and indoor games. The city is home to the National Library of India.

Some of the roads have been improved. There are many flyovers (overpasses) and the larger roads have divider fences; the narrower ones are all one-way and may have traffic direction reversed during morning and evening hours. The roads have become smooth with less number of pot holes.

After so many years of non-development in the state, the Marxists realized the necessity for industrialization. While India is developing at a very fast rate, the state of West Bengal, of which Kolkata is the capital, could not afford to lag behind. Actually, the State is well endowed with various infrastructural facilities to allow it to develop. Firstly, it has a large harbor, where the ocean-going ships can enter, and it has an airport in the prime route to travel between Europe and Australia. It has a well-developed hinterland with many industries. The cost of living here is the cheapest among the metropolitan cities of India, and that includes renting apartments or building a house. The area has a skilled labor force with two technical universities around the city – Jadavpur University with Science and Engineering faculties, and the Bengal Engineering College across the river in

Howrah, which was recently renamed as Bengal Engineering and Science University (BESU) and further as Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology (IEST). Industrial products from Kolkata are also the cheapest compared to those of other metropolitan cities. Violent industrial disputes of the past have come to a stop. All big companies have their major offices here.

Hence Kolkata is now geared to develop at a very fast rate like the rest of India. Government here is now keen to attract capital from the rest of the country and the world and there is no doubt that the city will develop again fast to realize my dream.