



Kings of our World

I'm looking up at the sky, the sky is azure blue
A black crow dives so close his eyes glaring and cruel

The city calls all the time, the sounds echo below
The walls of this hotel in Sudder Street

And in the streets where we trod, dodging beggars and dogs
And I wonder how come we're the lucky ones

*It's the luck of the draw twist of fate
To find ourselves Kings of our World
Into this we were born just like roses and thorns
We're the lucky ones Kings of our World*

The flower market at dawn or in the Newmarket stalls
People living their lives into which they were born

The beggars come as I walk, I drop a rupee or two, or three, or four
But that just draws a crowd expecting much more

I take all of this in, I ruminate on the thought
Of how our lives are defined, of how our lives are defined
By where we were born

Chorus

Instrumental

*It's the luck of the draw twist of fate
We find ourselves Kings of our World
Into this we were born just like roses and thorns
We're the lucky ones We're the lucky ones
Lucky ones We're the lucky ones
Kings of our World
Of our world x4
Kings of our World*



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Backstory

Sitting on the rooftop of the St Maria Hotel in Sudder Street, Kolkata, minding my own business and jamming on my little travel guitar, when out of the blue I got attacked by this deranged and monstrously large crowd. The fright caused my hands to shake and suddenly I found myself playing the core riff of this tune. That crowd is the strangest muse I have ever had!

The ideas: I had been to countries with a lot of poor people before, but Kolkata was something new. This song expresses my emotions and thoughts of only a few days in the country. Though India is rapidly changing for many, my thoughts about the poor haven't changed

The American philosopher John Rawls posed this cool thought experiment when trying to work out rules for distributional justice (that is, who should get what). He asks: what rule would we make if that rule would determine who got what share of resources and opportunities in this world?

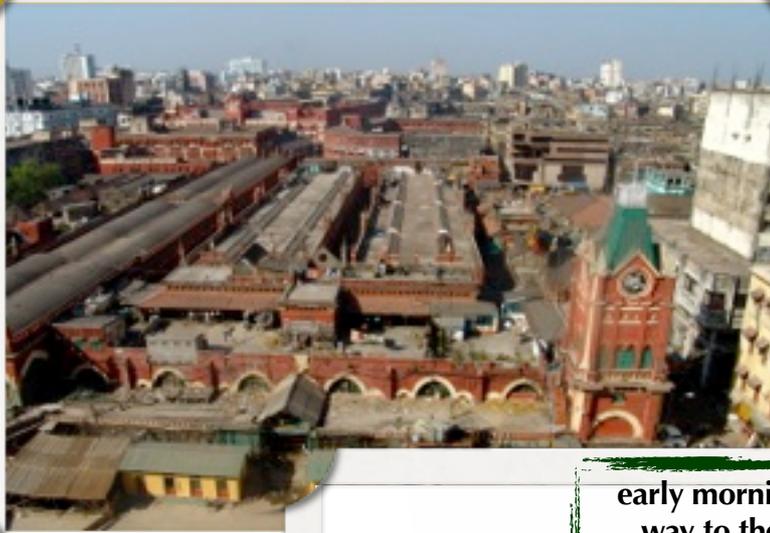
Now the neat bit; we have to make this rule from behind a curtain of ignorance. We will be bound by this rule, but we don't know into what family or society we will be born

So, let's say we decide that a just rule is that whatever we inherit belongs only to us (no-one else has a right to a share) which includes money and opportunities, the spoil of a rich society. But ... we then have to gamble; fine if we are born into a fortunate and wealthy society and family. But if we were born into destitution? Would we still consider this a fair rule?

Rawls developed the most influential theory of moral justice of the 20th century, though I leave it to you to read further if interested

But it did remind me that my good fortune is largely that; the luck of the draw. I didn't earn the right to live in a wealthy society any more than that beggar boy I sang about on my first album (Voyager) deserves to work 12 hour days begging for a few rupee

I am tremendously grateful for my good fortune, and I think it moral arrogance when we claim that somehow we deserve all this. Everyone deserves a decent chance in life, not just us lucky ones ...
... us kings and queens of our world ...



looking over
the city of
Kolkata

The early
draft of this
song, with
some lines
that didn't
make the cut

He begins only as I walk
I drop a rope or two
But that draws a crowd expecting much more
He goes bang on his drum
With the strongest rhythms
I remember that dance this is not just a dance
I take all of this in
I am not in the thought
of how our lives are defined by what we see but
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early morning on the
way to the flower
market



The
morning
flower
market

Photo - Fiona Owens



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How to play

This song is played on the 12 String Guitar tuned to DADGAD. Mostly it holds a D drone while the melody is picked out on individual strings, but the chorus employs what is effectively an F and G (fingered on just the two bottom strings)

The recording

This song is very dynamic when played live, but it was surprisingly difficult to reproduce that same energy in the studio. I played three layers to this, first the basic guitar structure, then played the melody again over top and finally added in the strummed high drone

We also added in a tanpura (or tambura), an indian instrument that provides the low drone often used in Indian music. You can hear this at the start before the other instruments come in

Heidi McDermott then provided the lush and unusual harmonies that appear throughout the song. Damon added the lower bass guitar to this, something I initially attempted to do but I didn't have enough time to play around with this in the studio

The final question was what to do for percussion. I did get some drums recorded but while interesting, they never quite worked. In the end I went back to my original impulse which was for a strong stomp beat, which is how I play it live with the stomp box (Its like a foot drum)

