Flowers of India by Vince Boisgard

by Vince Boisgard | Aug 16, 2012 | Stories, Top Stories | 0 comments

My arrival in Kolkata, India was badly planned. Being dropped off at this huge intersection in Calcutta at 4 am in the middle of rush hour, where an auto-rickshaw was stopping (as I had been told by the person who dropped me here) wasn't part of the plan... Or was it?

It all started in the Maitree express: the train going from Dhaka (Bangladesh) to Kolkata (India). I had to leave Bangladesh on a visa-run. The idea of travelling in India seemed like a good one, especially since I wouldn't have to deal with the Indian bureaucracy, as I was just passing through.

So I was sitting on the train, riding along the Ganges and across the rivers on a 'train journey'. The excitement was growing as much as the 'Pani' (Indian water) using either hoses or the trains, only five Europeans on board, and the rest being Indians and Bangladeshi, travelling for business or medical reasons.

A dark-skinned woman is using sewage water to wash herself out, while surrounded by the Indian Government Minister. I spotted him in the proper uniform to get stamped of the immigration crossing point. We engaged in a conversation, and he was very nice, offering me a ride to the capital, Kolkata. Initially offering a ride to the city and explained the situation to the driver, who said it wasn't a problem.

We set off, travelling through the streets of Kolkata in a classic yellow ambassador cab, looking through the windows at the crowds of people. The driver was a Sikh, and was very interested in conversation, but I was tired, because we didn't arrive to be picking up a fare in the city centre. When we parted ways with the driver, he English suddenly because very bad and he didn't seem to understand what we were saying.

What could we do?

Well, we started laughing about it for a bit, when the driver pulled over to the side of this multi-lane road that was intersectioned by four others, in a huge junction with quite a lot of traffic.

He was confident I just had my luck blowing away, I didn't agree and when I was and have to get a bus or a cab to reach the centre. The side of a huge highway intersection wasn't the best place for that so I remained cool and suggested we should walk to the next intersection where we could find a bus or a cab. We walked for about every cab. Thirty minutes passed, during which time I hardly figured out which buses were going where, and no cabs had stopped.

I was annoyed I had tried my best but nothing happened. I couldn't even find someone who spoke English.

I was staring at the wind-respirators in front of me, but in my thoughts, reminiscencing all my plans, when I put myself in a scenario: the train rolling from right to left. I was looking at him rolling by but he didn't see me, so he was looking at the train, and I was looking at him looking at the train. I was looking at him looking at the train, yelling up his side. He came to me and asked if I needed any help. He kindly helped me to try to stop a cab but his efforts were helpless.